

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN KARNATAKA PANCHAYAT RAJ

Mahadevi M.Tugave*

Introduction

In this paper, the study is carried out to find the reasons for Women to enter into Panchayat Raj and her role and present status is been investigated.

The family wanted to retain a seat for which usually a male member would contest. But, with an introduction of Panchayat Raj reservation for a Women was also introduced which drew Women into politics. The Karnataka panchayat raj act draws power for women to contest and to elect in rural local self government with reservation of seats. Women as a leader actively working at home and for the people enable them to work better by sharing power at local level. Women are more accurate to take in decision making process, and women will compel the government agencies to implement the programmes and schemes.

Objectives:

1. To understand the historical backgrounds of women in panchayats
2. To examine demographic profile of women in panchayats
3. To study the political status of women
4. To understand the functions and role of the members of the panchayat raj institutions concerning health and family welfare activities
5. To analyze the problems of women in panchayat.

* Research Scholar, Dept of Political Science, Gulbarga University Gulbarga

Universe of the study:

The present study is based on primary source hence the study is empirical in nature. For the present study Gulbarga district panchayat raj with selected villege panchayats and the most backward in terms of development in Karnataka is selected out of total number of panchayat member i.e, gram panchayat taluka panchayat and zilla panchayat, 150 women members were selected for the study.

1. Historical Background

The Karnataka government recognized the fact that the welfare and economic development programmes for women have not proved to the sufficient for effective and durable change in the status of women, and deciding to delegate women for managerial roles and particulars in the decision making process. Accordingly, in 1983 the Karnataka government launched the panchayat system in the state. The zilla parishats taluka panchatyat samitis, madal panchayats and Nyaya panchayats act 1983, received the presidential assent in july 1985. Elections were held in January 1987 and these institutions started functioning from april 1987. To ensure adequate participation of women in these local institutions, 25% seats were reserved for women, out of which one seat again was reserved for SC/ST.

Some of the reasons women got into Panchayat Raj are:

1. The family wanted to retain a seat for which usually a male member would contest. But, with a introduction of a Panchayat Raj reservation for a women was also introduced which dew women into politics
2. Women who are actively working for the people wanted to contest on their own because they felt it would enable them to work better as they.
3. Could have better knowledge a government schemes and also get the government agencies to implement the programmes and schemes

2. Demographic profile:

Table No. 1
Age of the respondent

Sl. No.	Age group	Frequency	Percentages
1	21-30	33	22.00
2	31-40	54	36.00

3	41-50	25	16.66
4	51 above	38	25.33
Total:		150	100.00

The data from this table reveals that a higher 36% of respondent's age group belongs to 31-40. While 25% of the respondents are from the 51- Above age group 22% of the respondents are from the age group of 21-30 and 16.66% of the respondents are from 41 - 50 age group which is the lowest percentage of the entire group.

Table No. 2
Education Level of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Educational attainment	Frequency	Percentages
1	Illiterate	81	54.00
2	Primary	44	29.33
3	Middle	16	10.66
4	Secondary and above	09*	6.00
Total:		150	100%

Education level of the respondents is a very important variable for the study. United Nations had defined (1982) literacy as an ability of person to read and write with understanding. Every individual's status depends on his educational level.

From the above table, we come to know that among the 150 respondents, 54% are illiterate 29.33% obtained education up to primary, and 10.66% obtained education up to middle while only 6% have obtained education up to secondary and above. Point to be noted that 50% of the respondents are illiterate.

Table No.3
Marital Status of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentages
1	Unmarried	4	2.66
2	Married	134	89.33
3	Widow	12	8.00
Total:		150	100%

From the above table it may be ascertained that, 89.3% of the respondents are married, 8% are widow and only 2.66% are unmarried.

Table No. 4
Family type

Sl. No.	Nuclear family	Frequency	Percentages
1	Nuclear family	52	34.66
2	Joint family	98	65.33
Total:		150	100%

The family is the primary unit of human society. On the basis of the depth of generations, families can be classified into joint families and nuclear families. A joint family consist of Blood relatives living together under one roof, participating in common meal, worship and holding property jointly. The nuclear family is small it is more than two generations deep that is only husband & wife with or without children live together.

As seen in the table 4, a large majority of the respondents (65.33%) are living in joint families and only about 34.66% belonging to nuclear families, this shows that the process of modernization has no nearing upon the integrity of the families. As the modernization goes on, it is expected that the individuals, especially women would find it more preferable to establish independent nuclear families, but above cited data speaks differently.

Table No.5
Occupation of Respondents

Sl. No.	Occupation type	Frequency	Percentages
1	Household	43	28.66
2	Cottage industry	08	5.06
3	Cattle field	12	24.00
4	Agriculture labour	73	48.66
5	Employee	14	9.33
Total:		150	100%

Occupation speaks of economic status of panchayat women. We understand that in the sample survey, among 150 respondents, 48.66% respondents are engaged in Agricultural activities. 28.66% of panchayat women engaged in household activities. 9.33% are employees, 24% are engaged in cattle field and only 5.06% of the total respondents are engaged in Cottage Industry.

Table No.6
Respondent's Income

Sl. No.	Income (in Rs.)	Frequency	Percentages
1	Rs. Less than 5000	119	79.33
2	Rs. 5001-10000	30	20.00

3	Rs.10001-25000	01	0.66
4	Agriculture Labour	00	00
TOTAL:		150	100%

Income is one of the indicator to measure the economic condition of the family. The above table shows the monthly income of the panchayat women's husband.

It is evident that only 0.66% of the respondents i.e. only one earn income between Rs. 10001- 25000. 20% of the respondents earn between RS. 5001-10000. interestingly, 79.33% of the respondents earn less than RS.5000/-.

3. Political status of women

Man is a Political being. He cannot himself aloof from Political activities. With a view to unearth the respondent's opinion regarding contesting for elections, we enquired the respondents whether they contested for election. Following table shows the respondents interest in contesting for elections.

Table No.7
Respondents' opinion regarding contesting Election

Sl. No.	No. of times contested election	Frequency	Percentages
1	1	130	86.66
2	2	12	8.00
3	3 or more	08	5.34
Total:		150	100%

The above table gives the following information:

- Of the total 150 respondents, 130 respondents have contested for election only once. And their percentage to the total is as high as 86.66%.
- 12 of the respondents have contested election twice and their percentage to the total is 8%.
- Only 8 respondents have contested election for 3 or more times and their percentage to the total is only 5.34%.
- From the above data we learn that significant number of respondents have contested election only once.

- e) However it is interesting to note that all the respondents are willing to contest for election respective of number of times they contest.

Table No. 8
Number of Times the respondents have attended the Meetings

Sl. No.	Number of Times	Frequency	Percentages
1	N.A.	00	00
2	1 to 5 times	15	10.00
3	6 times and above	135	90.00
Total:		150	100%

The above table shows that significant number of respondents i.e. 135 respondents have attended the meeting for more than 6 times and their parentage to the total is as high as 90%. 15 respondents have attended the meeting for 1 to 5 times and their percentage to the total is 10%. It is important to note that everybody have attended the meeting without fail. It shows their awareness about attending the meetings.

Table No. 9
Respondents' Membership in other Societies

Sl. No.	Members	Frequency	Percentages
1	No Response	12	8.0
2	Women organization	73	48.7
3	Co-operative society	29	19.3
4	Farmers Society	14	9.3
5	Others	22	14.7
TOTAL:		150	100%

A close analysis of the above reveals that of the total 150 respondents, 48.7% of respondents are members of Women Organization, 19.3% are members of Co-operative societies, and 9.3% are members of farmers Society. 14.7% are members of other Societies. Interestingly, 12 of the respondent's i.e 8% of the respondents do not have membership of any of the Societies.

Table No.10
Source of Inspiration to Enter Panchayat

Sl. No.	Source of inspiration	Frequency	Percentages
1	Social welfare	66	44.00
2	Village improvement	19	12.66
3	Family pressure	21	14.00
4	Women welfare	08	5.33

5	People pressure	36	24.00
Total:		150.00	100%

The above data shows that 66 respondents out of 150 have entered Panchayat to extend their Social service and their percentage to the total is 44%, 12.66% of respondents i.e. 19 respondents have entered Panchayat with a view to improve their village. 21 respondents have entered Panchayat due to their family pressure and their percentage is 14%. 36 respondents have entered Panchayat because of people's pressure and their percentage is 24. 5.33% of the total respondents have entered Panchayat with intention of Women Welfare.

Table No .11
Respondents' knowledge about Panchayat Activities

Sl. No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentages
1	Yes	147	98.00
2	No	03	2.00
TOTAL:		150.00	100%

From the analysis of the above table we learn that, 98% of the respondents are aware of Panchayat activities and their number is as high as 147. Only 3 respondents are not aware of the activities of Panchayat and their percentage to the total is only 2%.

Table No. 12
Respondents Programs involved

Sl. No.	Programs	Frequency	Percentages
1	Road construction	30	20.00
2	Drainage system	02	1.34
3	Toilet construction	28	18.66
4	Bore well	36	24.00
5	Electricity	18	12.00
6	None of these	36	24.00
Total:		150.00	100%

A close study of the above table reveals that of the total 150 respondents, 30 respondents have involved themselves in Road construction program and their percentage to the total us 20%. 24% of the respondents are concerned about water facility and have involved in Bore Well digging program and their number id 36. 28 respondents are interested and involved in Toilet construction program and their percentage to the total is 18.66%. 12% of the respondent i.e. 18 respondents are concerned about Electricity facility and hence involved in the same. Only 1.34%

of the respondents are Drainage system program. It is to be noted that as many as 36 respondents are not involved in any of the programs and their percentage to the total is 24%.

Table No.13
Respondents involvement in Women's Development Programs

Sl. No.	Women programs	Frequency	Percentages
1	Ladies Toilet	60	40.00
2	Pension scheme for aged	02	1.34
3	Widows pension	15	10.00
4	Others	23	15.33
5	None of these	50	33.33
TOTAL:		150.00	100%

A study of the above table reveals that 60 respondents are involved in Ladies Toilet construction program and their percentage is 40. Only 1.34% i.e. only 2 respondents have involved in facilitating Pension scheme for aged. 15 respondents are involved in facilitating Widow Pension and their percentage to the total is 10%. 23 respondents are involved in other programs and their percentage to the total is 15.33%. 33.33% of respondents are not involved in any of the programs and their number is 50.

Table No. 14
Attitudes of Males towards Respondents

Sl. No.	Attitude	Frequency	Percentages
1	Equal	134	89.34
2	Inferior	16	10.66
Total:		150.00	100%

From the analysis of the above table we can understand that, 89.34% of the respondents expressed that male have not made any discrimination and in fact treated them equal. But 10.66 respondents have contrary opinion i.e. they opine that men have inferior attitude towards them.

Table No. 15
Respondents Consideration Suggestion

Sl. No.	Attitude	Frequency	Percentages
---------	----------	-----------	-------------

1	Yes	132	88.00
2	No	18	12.00
TOTAL:		150.00	100%

The analysis of the above data reveals that, 132 respondents i.e. 88% opine that their suggestions are being considered in Panchayats. And 18 respondents opined that their suggestions are not being considered in Panchayats.

4. Health and family welfare activities

Table No. 16
Awareness of Health and family Planning Activities

Sl. No.	Programs	Frequency	Percentages
1	Health and family planning	20	13.3
2	Pulse polio	20	13.3
3	Health camp	22	14.7
4	Sanitation	06	4.0
5	Safe distilled water	08	5.3
6	None of these	74	49.3
Total:		150.00	100%

Analysis of the above table indicates following totally 40 respondents are aware of Health & Family planning and Pulse Polio activities and their percentage to the total is 13.3% each. 14.7% of respondents are aware of Health Camp activities and their number to the total is 22. Only 4% respondents are aware of Sanitation and 5.3% are aware of safe distilled water, It is strange and sorry to note that as many as 74 respondents are not aware of any of these activities and their percentage to the total is nearly 49.3%.

Table No. 17
Participation in Health and family planning programs

Sl. No.	Programs	Frequency	Percentages
1	Health program	48	32.00
2	Immunization	22	14.66
3	Women and children health program	20	13.34
4	None of these	60	40.00
Total:		150.00	100%

From the above table we learn that 48 respondents participated /in Health Program and their percentage to the total is 32%. 22 respondents participated in Immunization program and 20

in Women & Children Health Program and their percentage is 14.66% and 13.34% respectively. But again it is sorry to note that 40% of the respondents do not participate in none of the Programs and their number to the total is 60.

Table No. 18
Respondents suggestion to Improve Participation of Women in Panchayat

Sl. No.	Suggestions	Frequency	Percentages
1	Adult education	41	27.33
2	Compulsory attendance in Panchayat Meetings	83	55.33
3	Awareness of women development program s	26	17.34
Total:		150.00	100%

Study of the above table reveals that 55.33% respondents have suggested the compulsory attendance in Panchayat meetings and 27.33% have suggested Adult Education as a means to improve participation in Panchayat and 17.34% respondents suggested that awareness of Women Development Programs can exert influence to participate in Panchayat.

5. Problems of women in Panchayat

The role of Panchayat Raj members could play in the panchayat process was only inconsequential or less fructified after all the structure and process of Panchayat are equally pivotal as they really bring into bear and entitle the role of members to perform. If the overall scenario or the story of Panchayats was largely despairing another definitely disquieting aspect is that one half of rural population was virtually kept out of Panchayat arena.

Since the establishment of Panchayat Raj in independent India effort to secure and enable women to participation in rural development process was evident. But the self interested male politicians used to recruit those women who are apt to benefit in their design or only those who are not expected to and capable of threatening their hegemony. In other words, the able and willing women could not come through election simply because the very purpose of family or group domination might than face challenges. It was not the ability and worth of women members but they passively and complicity that actually determined their membership.

They could not acquire political experience take up issues/programmers concerning women, articulate demand or represent gender. Seen in over all perspective, women's contribution to the panchayat raj decision making was out-and-out inconsequential.

Suggestions:

1. Women members should exercise powers assigned to them efectively.
2. They should not depend on the male co-members or family members.
3. Women should take independent decisions in the interest of all.
4. Women members should be educated.
5. Women members should develop political consciousness. They should grab opportunities.

Conclusion:

Though women comprise half of the Indian population they have been subjected to discriminatory social ethos resulting in denial of equal of status and opportunities in social – economic and political field. Further, more rural women lag far behind their country part urban women.

Half hearted efforts were made to improve conditions of rural women. From 1993 on words women have got the meaningful and even chance to occupy one –third seats in panchayats and further it has to de increased to 50%.

Women panchayat member are emerging out of their homes, they are moving from place to place, word to word sometime accompanied by male colleagues. People are coming to the, their opinion are sought. Villagers are increasingly led to concede that women panchayat members are also capable and are to be counted upon. These are some emphatic changes already visible, which would not have happened without reservation provision.

Reservation is a means not an end, not a penance but only a precursor. To make it prolific and successful both men and women should strive level best to ensure that the end is achieved.

Reference:

- [1]. "City of tombs and domes" *The Hindu* (Chennai, India). April 4, 2011.
- [2]. Inamdar.1991. 'panchayati raj leadership- Emerging dimension'. Journal of rural development. Bol.10(5)
- [3]. 1995 women in panchayati raj- perspective from different states.
- [4]. Ramchandra and lakshi. 1993. Women and political-a study in political participation. Book link corporation, Hyderabad.
- [5]. Shramasakti: Report of the National commission on self employed women and women in informal sector. June, 1988. Ministry of human resource development, vol.7 (4).

