

Women's political participation in panchayati raj: in reference Nadiad taluka

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ABSTRACT

Women participation is very necessary in the nation building process. If this participation is not there in the proper proportionate then it is difficult to balance the social and political system in the appropriate manner. India is a country of villages and its majority population is residing in the villages even today. Due to the ancient established social system since some centuries, women are devoid from many opportunities. The social situation of women in the villages of India is more serious and dissatisfactory. Women in villages are more socially and culturally backward compare to the cities. To improve this situation the Government has kept reservations for women in the Panchayati Raj. The author has tried to analyze the problem and has presented the optimum findings and suggestions for a better future of women empowerment in India.

Keywords: *Panchayati Raj, Women, Political Participation, Social Reformation.*

Women participation is very necessary in the nation building process. If this participation is not there in the proper proportionate then it is difficult to balance the social and political system in the appropriate manner. Looking at the gorgeous past of the India, in the ancient Vaidic Era, women were having key positions in the society and women like Lopa, Maitreyi, Apala, Gaargi etc. were also creating 'Rucha's' for Veda.¹

There was a vast change noticed in the Medieval Era in women position and the contaminations like 'Sati Pratha', child marriage, drowning daughters in the milk, dowry system, curtain system etc. were started. Many social reformers and thinkers gave their contributions to change such contaminations from the society. In the same manner, even after the independence many such efforts were been done to improve the social position of women in the society, which were changes in the constitution and basic rights to women, special reservations for women in politics and 73rd amendment in constitution to provide women a unique identity in the society and to make them self-dependent, thus, in many segments women participation and changes in the women position is visible.²

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Women's political participation in panchayati raj: in reference Nadiad taluka

The problem

India is a country of villages and its majority population is residing in the villages even today. Due to the ancient established social system since some centuries, women are devoid from many opportunities. The social situation of women in the villages of India is more serious and dissatisfactory. Women in villages are more socially and culturally backward compare to the cities.³ To improve this situation the Government has kept reservations for women in the Panchayati Raj. Thus, today women are playing active role at all the three layers of the Panchayati raj as a member or the Sarpanch, and it is necessary to study about the problems women are facing while performing her role at Panchayati raj.

The present study presents the awareness of women about their political participation at Panchayati raj, their level of involvement and role at political participation, their involvement at meetings, decision making, social activities etc.

A questionnaire was prepared for this study and 16 village panchayats out 49 villages of Nadiad Taluka were selected as the research universe. The author visited total 60 women representative who were acting as the Sarpanch or deputy Sarpanch in these respective villages and meet 13 women members of Taluka Panchayat (which were in accordance to 50% reservation out of total 26 seats), and 2 women members of Kheda district Panchayat. Thus, in total the author visited 75 women representatives for this study.

Study Area

Nadiad taluka is the part of the Kheda district of Gujarat state of India. Long after the Gujarat state was established, in 1997-98 Kheda and Anand districts were divided. During the British rule Kheda was known as KAIRA. ⁴ The total area of Nadiad taluka is 404.06 square kilometers and total population of the taluka is 5,50,330, in which, according to the current changes, total 49 Gram Panchayats are situated.⁵

WOMEN RESERVATION AND PANCHAYATI RAJ

The ancient proofs prove that the Panchayati raj system was established in India prior to some centuries. Immediate after the independence, India made many provisions and changes in the constitution and particularly in the directive principles of state policy. Then after also to empower more, various committees like Balvantrai Mehta Committee were formed out of which the Balvantrai Mehta Committee gave major contribution at the establishment of the three levels' Panchayati Raj. After that, the Ashok Mehta Committee, G.V.K. Rao Committee, L. M. Singhavi Committee, P. K. Thungan Committee etc. were formed and also then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi tried to make the 64th and 65th constitutional amendment, but at that time their government was proved in minority and later the government of Shri Narasimha Rao made the 73rd amendment on 24-04-1993 in the parliament, and as it passed, the Indian women got 33% reservation in the Panchayati raj of India.⁶

Discussing about Gujarat, on 1-5-1960 becoming apart entity from Mumbai state, Gujarat became a state. Then Rashiklal Parikh Committee was appointed for the suggestions at the Panchayati raj in Gujarat and their suggestions were implements on 1-4-1963. Then after, Jadavjibhai Modi Committee, Dahyabhai Nayak Committee, Jinabhai Darji Committee, and Rikhavchand Shah Committee and later to implement the 73rd amendment of constitution was

Women's political participation in panchayati raj: in reference Nadiad taluka

put in the Assembly. On 15-04-1994 33% reservation for women was implemented in Gujarat. Since 1961 to 1993, total 45 changes were made in the Panchayati Dhara.⁷

In Gujarat, in 2009 a bill was presented in the assembly to increase the women reservation in politics from 33% to 50%. In 2014, during the tenure of Anandiben Patel as Chief Minister, the Governor of Gujarat signed the bill and thus, a revolutionary step was taken towards the women participation at politics.

Looking at the above moments, various roles of the women in the political participation, decision making process and the problems faced at it, the author has presented here with the major findings, which are as follows:

Findings

1. The majorities of the women representative means 61.4% was found young and were of below 40 age group.
2. 17.3% women representatives were having higher studies whereas 9.3% women representatives were found illiterate.
3. 56% women representatives told that their political interest was due to their family background.
4. Here a fact describing the social system of India came to know that according to the women representatives, 90.7% women are not taking part in the active politics due to their family pressure.
5. On searching the reason for women representatives taking part in the social service, 88% women representatives took part due to the inspiration and direction of their father, husband or brother.
6. 86.7% women representatives believe that economical soundness is necessary to take part in the politics.
7. The 68% women representatives believe that due to the family and children responsibility general women are not taking part at active politics.
8. The 68% women representatives believe that they won the election due to their family status, thus, we can say that even today in India social status plays an important role at winning the election.
9. The 96% women representatives believe that the less participation of women in politics is due to their lack of education and 94.7% women representatives believe that if an illiterate woman is been elected, she is facing more problems at management.
10. The 54.7% women representatives believe that education is necessary to obtain the political position.
11. The 76% women representatives believe that a personal interview should be taken prior to allotting any political position.
12. The 89.3% women representatives believe that person having criminal background should not be allowed to participate in the politics.
13. The 66.7% women representatives accepted that in reality their father, husband or brother is using the power of representative instead of them.
14. The 97.3% women representatives believe that the family support and guidance is necessary for any type of political participation and they also suggested that to improve

Women's political participation in panchayati raj: in reference Nadiad taluka

the political knowledge of women, the education related to political science should be included in the course since the primary education.

15. The 82.7% women representatives believe that they are getting appropriate support and co-operation to rule, and the 96% women representatives believe that they are getting appropriate honor.

Even though some of the representatives feel that sometimes some suggestions given by the tribal or socially backward representatives are not accepted and they are not co-operated in appropriate manner, but in overall average they accepted that the average response and co-operation is very good from all the government officials.

Suggestions

Looking at the findings obtained through this research, the author has suggested some suggestions to improve the political participation of women representatives in the Indian politics and Panchayati raj:

1. The viewpoint towards women should be changed in the society and male dominating social system should be removed and equalization of male and female should be established in the society.
2. The government should organize various training seminars for the elected female representatives so that their management skill can grow, they can improve their confidence and can also get the information about the various laws and rules, this will let them to give their best input.
3. If the male officers and elected male representatives will maintain the spirit of equality, then it will be helpful to the elected female representatives and thus they will be able to perform their duty with better confidence.
4. The society should do efforts to help females to obtain their basic rights like education, laws, property etc.
5. Just like local self-government, the equal women participation should be provided at legislative and parliament assembly so that maximum women can come ahead and can actively participate in the elections and political participation.
6. The duties performed by the female representatives should be admired publically and should be published in the newspapers and television so that they can gain their confidence.
7. Suppose any elected representative is illiterate then such a provision should be applied that the literate women of that village can support to that representative, or else the provision can be done like the illiterate women can attend a combine meeting with the literate female members of the city so that they can learn from them.
8. The government should provide economic support to the NGO's and women groups running at the village level so that these organizations can increase the literacy rate and also can create the political awareness among the village women.
9. The literacy programs should be published or presented in the print and electronic media so that the awareness and political participation can be increased.
10. The women representatives, who are performing their duties well, should be admired through the social media and also various useful applications for Panchayati Raj should be published in the social media so that the last person of the society can gain its benefits.

Women's political participation in panchayati raj: in reference Nadiad taluka

11. The political parties can organize various women training sessions to encourage the women for political participation.
12. The education drop out ratio of women should be decreased and the reasons for the drop put should be identified and should be cured.
13. In the primary education course the syllabus should be conducted including the basic concepts of our constitution and women rights so that the women can have the knowledge of their rights and duties and thus can perform better at the political participation publically.

CONCLUSION

In India the women literacy ratio is low, their political participation is less, and the economic payout is less and also is getting very less opportunities compare to the male. For the entire development of India the concept of equality is very necessary. Keeping this in mind the Indian government passed the 73rd amendment in the constitution and thus the Indian women got 33% reservation in the politics. Moving the step ahead, the Gujarat government provided 50% reservations to the women in the Panchayati raj (Local self government) elections. The result, now largely women are taking part in the public sector and also their political participation is increased which has boost up their confidence and importance.

This reservation played a role of entrance of women in the political sector and even if they are not having any economic, social or political background, they are performing a better role through acting as an elected member. Even though during this study, the author identified that though the laws are been made, but up to and until the change in social and traditional system will not take place, the laws will remain on the paper and will be found useless.

Illiteracy is the biggest reason for less political participation of women. At many places it was found that not even the illiterate but also the literate women representatives were not aware of the rules and regulations. So, it can be said that the political power to the women without education, knowledge and training will not be found fruitful. So, the government should present various programs from the primary education level and also the knowledge of our constitution.

In this study it was also found that the women coming from the traditional families are still not able to take participation in the politics due to their social limitations, and suppose if they are joining and are elected, even though they are not able to perform their real political power but instead their father, husband, son or brother are using that power.

The positive point author found in this study is that the elected male members are found very co-operative towards the women representatives and such elected women representatives are trying their best to balance their social and political carrier with their house and children duties and also are providing their optimum input. The women representatives said that due to their political participation, their dignity in the family and the society is increased and in some matter, the male of their house have also started the positive approach which is a rise of the new horizons.

According to the law, if half of the elected members are female, then not only on the paper but in actual they can perform their duties, so the political parties, NGO's, representatives and social leaders should provoke women for such participation.

Women's political participation in panchayati raj: in reference Nadiad taluka

Through Panchayati Raj, the social reformation of women in Indian culture has started. Thus, due to the Panchayati raj, the lower social category women have started to give their input in the society growth through local self government which is creating the large opportunities for the better political participation of women. To encourage such growth, the efforts from all the sides should be continued, so that in future a large picture of women participation at politics can be created.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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