



Role of Women in the Rural Development through Innovative policy making: A Case Study of Jegurupadu Village, Andhra Pradesh

Dr. M. Roja Lakshmi,

Assistant Professor – Center for studies in Social Management, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar

Abstract: *After Indian Independence, for the first time the UPA Government introduced the concept of inclusive growth. Women's Empowerment and inclusion in India is highly dependent on many different variables such as geographical location (urban/rural), educational status (caste and class), and gender gap. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state, and local (panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence, and political participation. The constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1993, provides for reservation of elective positions for women. It has been provided that not less than one-third of total number of positions of members and chairpersons at all three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions (i.e. Gram Panchayat, Intermediate Panchayat and District Panchayat) shall be reserved for women. In India, at present there are 9, 74,255 women elected to Gram Panchayats; 58,012 women to Panchayat at Intermediate level and 5778 women to Panchayat at district level. The findings of the study revealed that the reservation of women brought a significant change in the women's decision making capacity, inclusion, women participation and empowerment with enhanced leadership qualities are out-performing in the male political hierarchy through the democratic decentralization.*

Key words: Role of Women, Panchayati Raj, rural development, political hegemony

Introduction

The Passage of the constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1993 marks a new era in the federal democratic set up of the country and provides constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. As a result, 2, 32,278 Panchayats at village level; 6,022 Panchayats at intermediate level and 535 Panchayats at district level have been constituted in the country. These Panchayats are being managed by about 29.2 lakh elected representatives of panchayats at all levels. This is the broadest representative base that exists in any country of the world. One of the important features of this amendment was to give reservations

to the schedule castes (SCs) and schedule tribes (STs) and women. It also states that 33% of the gram Panchayat seats and 33% of the Sarpanch seats should be reserved for women. This was indeed a crucial step for considering the female sarpanch by rotation and the gram sabha is reserved for a female sarpanch after every ten years.

The well-being of the villagers greatly depends on the efficacy of the gram Panchayat and further it is expected from the sarpanch initiative and interest. Women's Experience of Panchayati Raj Institution has transformed many of them. The transformation includes empowerment, self-confidence, political



awareness and affirmation of identity. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women the traditionally underprivileged ones in the society. The constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1993, provides for reservation of elective positions for women. It has been provided that not less than one-third of total number of positions of members and chairpersons at all three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions (i.e. Gram Panchayat, Intermediate Panchayat and District Panchayat) shall be reserved for women. In India, at present there are 6, 81,258 women elected to Gram Panchayats; 37,109 women to Panchayat at Intermediate level and 3153 women to Panchayat at district level. In Andhra Pradesh, there are 7269 Women Sarpanches out of 21807 hailing the provision 1/3rd of the seats are reserved for Women. The Present paper attempts to look into the dynamism of the process whereby women empowerment is achieved through legislation or women participation in the Panchayati Raj Institution.

Some of the ways in which women, through PRI, are changing governance are evident in the issues they choose to tackle; water, community toilet facility, alcoholism, education, health and domestic violence. A decade of women's empowerment through local government in India is very satisfactory after the declaration of 'Year of Women Empowerment' in 2001. In 1976 the committee on the status of women in India was established and published a report recommending an increase in elected women at the grassroots level, which led to the introduction of the 33.3% reservation at the Panchayati level

in 1988. It was only in 1993 that an amendment in the constitution made the proposed reservation at the Panchayati (village level governing councils) a reality. From the last decade since the reservation of women in elected Panchayats was passed, the number of women representatives has certainly increased at the grassroots level.

Orientation training for elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions is primarily the responsibility of the state Governments/ Union Territory Administration. The constitution has place enormous value and responsibility on the Panchayats to formulate and execute various programs of economic development and social justice, and a number of centrally sponsored programs and schemes are being implemented through local governance. Thus, women members and Chairpersons of Panchayats, are basically new entrants in Panchayats, and have to acquire the required skill and be given appropriate orientation to assume and execute their rightful roles as leaders and decision makers. The Ministry of Rural Development also extends some financial assistance to the States/UTs with a view to improve the quality of training programs and to catalyze capacity building initiatives for the PRI elected members and functionaries.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions in India has completed 50 years of its inception. These celebrations were marked the observance of year the 2009-2010 as 'Year of Gram Sabha'. In order to enhance the empowerment of women at the grassroots, the Government has already decided to earmark it at 50 %. Women's involvement in PRIs was dominated by two inter-related themes: representation



of women in these bodies and effectiveness and outcome of their participation. The present study was undertaken pivotal issues of Inclusion and empowerment of women in PRIs and to examine the obstacles which they faced during their regime.

Objectives of the Study:

- To Assess the growth of inclusion and empowerment of women through PRIs
- To study the nature and extent of Participation and role performance in decision making
- To know the causes and obstacles that infringe the participation of women in the Panchayat Raj and Urban local bodies
- To elucidate the role of women sarpanch for the inclusive rural development

Review of Literature

The empowerment and political participation of women occurs in reality with the 73rd Amendment Act. When women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources and therefore, improved socio-economic status. In Indian society, the women experience discrimination and prejudice in the work place and are commonly hinders the opportunities of socio-economic development, participation in different activities, availing educational facilities and various other developmental programs associated with improving the quality of life. Political system and decision making process is seen clearly in the changes incorporated in the PRS. Empowerment of women will not be possible unless they are provided proper

representation in the political system. Under 73rd amendment of constitution of Panchayati Raj System, one-third of the total seats for SCs, STs, BCs and general caste women members. Consequently the newly introduced 77th amendment act provides 50% reservation in PRI election, it would enhance the possibilities of increasing equalities in the process of socio-economic development, decision making process, and finally it leads to the women empowerment and her role in the development of rural India.

Jayabharati (2011) article enumerates about the forward step of 50% reservation and positions for women in PRIs from 2012 elections. He highlighted the significance of the panchayati election and the role of women representatives for the grassroots development and effective implementation of welfare programs such as plantation, constructing roads, community toilets and prohibiting the alcohol in villages. This is a case study of Orissa, through the 73rd amendment act women participated 33.3% but the increased quota of reservation will lead to the path towards gender equity and social empowerment.

Kamla (2009) in his article explains the historical back ground of Panchayati Raj system and its roots traced from Ancient Indian institutions of which 1000 years back. Here the villages were titled as little republics governed by their Panchayats. After Independence, regarding panchayati election he highlights the 73rd and 74th amendment acts, mandating reservation of 1/3rd of the seats of women representation in all village block and district level elected bodies. The role of female panchayat members in the political decision making process has been examined critically on



the basis of failure in the effective participation and male dominance, interference in decision making. The women representatives ignored the non co-operative behavior of their colleagues and pushed further their own efforts to resolve the problems of that area. He concluded that to achieve women empowerment, advancement can be facilitated with the co-ordination different sections such as male gentry. Religious heads, political leaders should come forward in order to give a chance to improve the status and decision making capability.

Lal (2007) explains in his article about the issues and challenges in empowerment of women through their in the Panchayati Raj Institution. He emphasized the women empowerment is depends essentially in the involvement of process of upliftment of economic, social economic and political status of women. The study addressed the traditional male domination and the challenges in empowerment of women and in decision making process. The case study largely reveals that increased that increased political participation of women in village panchayats, does not have a significant change bearing on women empowerment for by and large elected women representatives lack audible forums and fail in seeking the redressal to women specific issues and he further explained that women are primarily dummy surrogates subservient to the dominant male class.

Jyoti (2009) in her research paper she highlighted the facts of women empowerment in panchayati Raj. She explained the 73rd Constitution amendment act, the major change that took place in the context of women

functionaries of PRIs was political representatives of women through reservation. The paper reveals the main problems that women face in the PR, and how either husband or son use to play a key role in decision making process and the women representative has a dummy role in decision making and in view sharing. She highlighted half of the women representatives are not participating in the Panchayati meetings, despite her, the male member of her family will take the decision. She suggested some important things, in order to empower women and political participation there should be some advisory committee to supervise the free participation, accessibility of religious heads, co-operation of family members and change in the attitude of male mindset. If this kind of co-operation they receive majority of women will show their determination to achieve the developed target. Though this just a small beginning and much remains to be done before actually claim to have empowerment of women.

Singh (2008) articles explain the impact of 73rd amendment act on women's leadership in PRIs. The act has given a new dimension to the process of women's empowerment in India. Apart from 1/3rd reservation of women in PRIs the act has given Constitutional powers and responsibilities for a range of issues including resource management, family planning, health and educational facilities. His study highlighted the Karnataka state PRIs and women participation. The women representatives are equally contributing the services as male representatives; they are involving in meeting and are advising the proper implementation of welfare schemes and related women and child health issues.



Women representatives from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are won the wards for their services at the village level Nirmal Gram Puskar and best panchayati president awards.

Santhosh (2010) enumerates the critical perspective on women's empowerment and national development policies. Though Indian population constitutes half of the women population there is no space to raise her voice and share her view among the public. He explored the issues of traditional rigid customs which arrest women freedom and equality in decision making; he emphasized that woman empowerment is a long way to go to achieve in the Indian society if the husband would play a key role in place of women representative. He suggested that women must help be helped to equip themselves to face the challenges being thrown in her profession, the male involvement should be less in her decision making process, and the cooperation and cordial relations of friends, relatives and family members will make her stand in the form of effective leader and a good political representative.

Manikyamba (2000) in her study in Andhra Pradesh revealed that the extent of participation of the young and middle age is generally more than that of old age. It is interesting to know that the educated women elected representatives are more active in participation and in decision making process than illiterate and male elected representatives.

Dhanmajiri (2013) in their study focused on the impact of mandated reservations for female sarpanch on the perception of service delivery and women's democratic participation. This is comparative study based on male and female sarpanch

panchayati villages and found that the basic services availability is significantly higher in female sarpanch villages than male sarpanch representation. Secondly, they highlighted that the reservations have had a positive mark on the democratic participation of women in female sarpanch villages though the positive effects in terms of service delivery and democratic participation has to take some more time to materialize. Lastly, the reservation that implies that over a period of time, female sarpanch become more effective than male sarpanch.

Methodology

In this study, we have taken the State of Andhra Pradesh as Case Study and Jegurupadu village of West Godavari as study area. The Present study was focused on the village which won the 'Nirmal Gram Puraskar Award' and the women elected Panchayati President Won the prestigious "Google Earth Award" for her services to the village. The Primary sources are mainly collected data by the researcher from the Jegurupadu village elected woman representative and members of village panchayati board, and Panchayati Raj Commissionerate, Hyderabad. Additional resources collected from the State Election Commission, details of Panchayati Raj elections 2006, Hyderabad. The Secondary sources are collected through a survey of literature of published books, articles, and vernacular newspaper reports as well as articles. The data is analyzed by both qualitative and quantitative techniques; the researcher used only the simple tabulation and percentage techniques to highlight the women robust participation in the



Panchayati election and village development.

We applied purposive sampling technique for selecting the sample from different village women representatives of gram sabha members and urban local body representatives. Interview schedule and focused group discussions were used to elicit the required information. The Interview schedule was prepared in English, but the members were interviewed in Telugu which is a regional language of Andhra Pradesh, in order to make them comfort and get access

between researchers and respondent, otherwise it is an onerous task to complete in two phases and evince the statements of the respondents. The interview schedule comprised of three sections- respondent profile, factors affecting women members from performing their roles, expectation and suggestions for better leadership. The present study was conducted with the aim to study the "Role of women in the rural development through Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies". The information is elicited as per the objectives of the study.

Details of Women Representatives in Local Bodies in Andhra Pradesh

S.No	Name of the Office	No. of offices	No. of Seats Reserved for Women	No. of women Representatives	% of women
1	Ward Member, Gram Panchayat	218310	73252	82941	37.99
2	Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat	21807	7266	8419	38.61
3	Member, MPTC	16148	5341	6170	38.21
4	Member, ZPTC	1097	368	403	36.74
5	President, Mandal Parishad	1097	366	453	41.29
6	Chairperson, Zilla Parishad	22	7	7	31.82

*Source - State Election Commission

The above table explains about the details of women percentage in local bodies of Andhra Pradesh. Majority of 41.29 percentage women are in the position of Mandal Parishad President, followed by the Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat and MPTC member. There are 37.99 percent are ward members of Gram Panchayat, and 36.74 percent are ZPTC members in the local bodies of Andhra Pradesh. The chairperson of Zilla Parishad is having 31.82 percentages of

women representatives in the Local Bodies. (Report of 2006 Panchayati Elections)

In Andhra Pradesh, the women participation in the election of local bodies is improving through the reservation. Now the reservation system got increased from 33.3% to 50 %. One can observe the change of women political participation, status and capacity building through empowerment.

Urban Local Bodies (Municipal) women representatives of Andhra Pradesh



S.No	Name of the office	No. of offices	No. of seats Reserved for Women	No. of Women Representatives	% of Women
1	Member, Municipality	3179	1110	1223	38.47
2	Chairperson, Municipality	104	38	47	45.19
3	Member, Municipal Corporation	686	236	250	36.44
4	Mayor, Municipal Corporation	13	5	5	38.46

*Source - State Election Commission

The above table enumerates urban local bodies of Municipal women representatives of Andhra Pradesh. Majority of women representatives are from chairperson, Municipality. Municipality member and Mayor of Municipal Corporation have placed in the second status with the percentages of 38.47 and 38.46 respectively. In A.P., there are 36.44 percentage of member of Municipal Corporation.

Among the urban local bodies (Municipalities) women representatives are more popular regarding their

profession in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The Hyderabad former Mayor B. Karthika Reddy advertised the slogan – Avoid plastic bags and keep the city clean through the print and TV media. Kurnool chairperson of the Municipality also won the UNICEF award for her services. Though the political hegemony curtails the participation and decision making of women, the burgeoning awareness about their role and onus towards their duty prove them as role models for the future candidates of panchayati Raj system.

Details of the Women Elected Representatives of PRIs in Andhra Pradesh

S.No	Office of PRI	ST-Women	SC-Women	BC-Women	UR-Women	Total
1	Chairpersons, ZPPS	1	1	2	3	7
2	ZPTCs	32	69	123	144	368
3	President, MPPs	30	67	124	145	366
4	MPTCs	356	1028	1833	2124	5341
5	Sarpanches of Gram Panchayats	717	1324	2501	2724	7266
6	Ward Members	6295	14009	25058	27890	73252
Total		7431	16498	29641	33030	86600

*Source – Panchayati Raj Commissionrate

The above data explains the details of women elected representatives of PRIS in

Andhra Pradesh category-wise. In ZPPS, chairpersons there are 3 upper caste



women, followed by BC women and SC and ST Representatives. Among the ZPTCs, and MPP Presidents also have the highest women elected representatives among the upper castes and lowest among the scheduled tribes. The sarpanches of Gram panchayats are totally 7266 members of elected women representatives, in which 37% are from general category women, BC women comes under 34 percent, 18% are from SC category and 0.9% are ST women. The MPTCs are 5341 in total; the tribal women are very low among the elected representatives of PRIs. In Andhra Pradesh the Ward members representing the colony heads, it has total of 73252 members, which has 38% are from general women, 34% are from BC community, the SC women won the 19% seats, 0.8% are Tribal women elected representatives.

If there is no interference in her decision making process, there is 100% success in the achieved target. The Jegurupadu village is the best example of women empowerment and decision making capacity, and role of women in the rural development. The Noble Laureate Mohammad Yunus rightly observes that 'Empowerment leads to political power and political power leads to decision-making'. So give a chance to women to change the world round you.

A Case Study of Jegurupadu (East Godavari - Andhra Pradesh)

Jegurupadu is a small village comes under Kadiyam Mandal of East Godavari district. The village has 2400 houses and with population of 5211 members. The villagers' are living with the age group of 0-95 years. It is a Gram Panchayat with 14 Panchayati members plus one

sarpanch. Jegurupadu village sarpanch name is Yadala Deva Deevana Kumari, her Qualification is Intermediate. She is Chairperson of village council. On August 21st 2006, the sarpanch of the village focused on the basic infrastructure facilities such as community toilets construction and allotted the key to the respective families. After constructing the toilets, she implemented strict prohibition of open toilet and urination, if any one violates the rule they will not get that month Ration rice and they are imposed by punishment with fine of 100 rupees. Simultaneously, she took initiation of plantation on both sides of the roads. The village constructed a bridge on the canal with the sponsor of GVK power plant which is short distance to enter in to the village, and constructed 3 primary schools and upper primary school. The literacy of these village women is 90% and they have bank accounts with debit cards, the women are the members of Dwakra group and 5 Anganwadi centres are working. The village is having pakka cement roads and good drainage system, the Government schemes called Indiramma Housing loan and Rajiv Yuva Shakthi loans are availing in order to construct their own house and the youth are motivated as self-employed. Every year, Jegurupadu village youth are undergoing training in APARD and in NIRD.

Jegurupadu village sarpanch Miss. YAdala Deva deevana Kumari become president in 2006 election. She utilized all the panchayati funds in an appropriate manner and she got the co-operation from panchayati members and advisor. She is the second lady president and the former president is from upper caste representative. There is no development when she took the charge, she focused on



the main issues related to village development and introduced prohibition of arrack in the village with the help of village women support. Jegurupadu has very active women playing very active role in the developmental issues through various committees such as construction of roads, plantation, Drinking water and sanitation, Health and Education, and SHG as well as DWAKRA group members. The women of this village are running small scale industries such as stitching training center, weaving and embroidery training centers, and paper plates unit. For community toilets they collected 300 rupees from each house plus 2700 panchayati money used to construct one toilet. In 2007 Jegurupadu village won Nirmal Gram Puraskar for Health and Hygiene. In 2009 the village president won the prestigious Google Earth Award for her services. The Google committee and team visited village for two days and they gave 5 lakhs cash award and that prize money utilized for the construction of Market yard, Kalyana Mantapam (Marriage Functional Hall) for village marriages and Veterinary hospital. The water pipe line proposal is in process, one community hall constructed for DWAKRA meetings and small village festivals as well as gathering purpose. There is a strict prohibition of child labour in this village and elders will get 200 rupees per day wage. She constructed one shopping complex, it has given for rent to the villagers and the rent will be collected by the panchayati, the rented money will be utilized for further development of village and right now they are giving salaries to 5 Asha Nurses to aware them about the family planning, as well as educate them to prevent from vulnerable diseases. Though she is first generation lady sarpanch to the village from her family,

her work reflects the effective leadership quality, possess good decision making capacity, affirmative plan of action and strict implementation of rules and regulations made this village to won the Nirmal Gram Puraskar Award and identified as a best village for health and hygiene in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Her self-less efforts and service towards village development identified as a model woman representative and this led to attenuate the former political hegemony.

In Andhra Pradesh there is a drastic change after the women participation in the election of Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies. The Study largely reveals that inclusion and increased political participation of women in village panchayats as well as in urban local bodies in the state of Andhra Pradesh, led to the rural development and empowerment of women. The notable women elected representatives in A.P. are Banda Karthika Reddy, Greater Hyderabad former Municipal Mayor, Fathima Bee, Sarpanch won (UNICEF-Award) from Kurnool district, Rajana Ramani Vizag Corporation Mayor, Anuradha Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Chairman, Dharavath Dhanmanthi Z.P.Chairman Warangal, Yerraballi Swarna Warangal Corporation Mayor, and lastly, Yadala Deva devena Kumari, Sarpanch (Google Earth Award &Nirmal Gram Puraskar) from East Godavari won the national and international awards for their outstanding and dynamic Performance irrespective of their positions.

The findings of the study revealed that the reservation of women brought a significant change in the women's decision making capacity, inclusion, women participation and empowerment



with enhanced leadership qualities vindicate the Gandhian thought of Gram Swaraj. The rural development not only entails the colors of gram Swaraj but also the active participation of rural and deprived women in a democratic decentralization. As far as many critics about the role of female sarpanch in the village development and in decision making, with the status of women being low in India, there is always a possibility of bias and non-cooperation against female sarpanch, but our case study has very interesting features such as highly supportive family, villagers and Panchayati members. When examining the gender of a sarpanch a female sarpanch has a sizeable positive impact on democratic participation. According to the State Panchayati Commissionerate the political participation of women is higher in female sarpanch villages as compared to male sarpanch villages in terms of development and service availability. Thus, having a female sarpanch affects the political participation of women in a village positively and it is likely to be through this channel that the availability of services improves over a period of time. The policy implication that comes out of this is that mandated reservation for female sarpanch would work better if the time period is increased from five years to (say) 10 years. Thus, instead of increasing reservation for women to 50% as has been done, or in addition to it, it may be a good step if the time period of reservation is increased as well. According to the Lindberg et al (2011) by using sociological methodology find that 'reservation for women in local politics have not only changed the conditions for local collective actions, but has led to several potentially positive advances for

women as well as for the local political system and administration.

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