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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE WOMEN COUNCILLORS OF MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS IN HARYANA

Dr. Parvinder Jeet Singh¹ and Ms. Saroj Bala²

¹Associate Professor in Sociology, OPJS, University, Churu(Raj.).

²Research Scholar in Sociology, OPJS, University, Churu(Raj.).

ABSTRACT: -

Indian women have had little representation in institutional political activities since independence. There was more concern in the last two decades towards increasing women's participation in political institutions thereby leading to empowerment. Affirmative action



has been accepted as a means to political empowerment. Leadership is necessary not just to govern but to change the nature of governance. Women have been struggling for self-respect and autonomy. Since mid 1980's owing to questioning by women themselves about their oppressed status and plight through varied

women's movements, the issue of 'women empowerment' came into focus. The objective of bringing improvement in the socio-economic condition of women could be successful only by taking suitable initiatives and measures for empowering them. Women empowerment is the most used and discussed term today.

KEYWORDS: Indian women , institutional political activities , political empowerment.

INTRODUCTION :

The empowerment of women is becoming an increasingly popular term in human rights and developmental discourses. Women play significant role in all walks of life. Empowerment of women is a necessary basic condition for socioeconomic development of any society. Although women constitute one half of the population, they continue to be subjugated, unequal in socioeconomic and political status. Women have been struggling for self-respect and autonomy. Since mid 1980's owing to questioning by women themselves about their oppressed status and plight through varied women's movements, the issue of 'women empowerment' came into focus. The Constitution of Independent India only spoke of local self-governing bodies in Part-IV, the Directive Principles of State Policy, and did not make any provisions for specific reservation for women in Urban or Rural Local Bodies.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women in all spheres and in particular the political sphere is crucial for their advancement and for the foundation of gender equal society. It is central to the goals of equality, development and peace. The Indian democracy which is more than half a century old has entered the next century. But a large mass of women are kept out of political arena still. There can be no true democracy, or no true people's participation in governance and development without equal participation of men and women at different levels

of decision making. Participation of women in political life is integral to the advancement of women.

Article-21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of the country, directly or through the freely chosen representatives. A proper representation of women in political affairs will ensure their views and needs reflected in public policies that affect their lives most. Indian women have had little representation in institutional politics since independence. There was more concern in the last two decades towards increasing women's participation in political institutions thereby leading to empowerment. Affirmative action has been accepted as a means to political empowerment. Leadership is necessary not just to govern but to change the nature of governance. Unfortunately affirmative action and women participation have failed to move beyond local government in India.

The 74th constitutional amendment was a significant landmark in the evolution of grassroots democratic institutions in the country which transforms the representative democracy into participatory democracy by making the reservation of one-third of the total number of seats for women (including the number of seats reserved for the SCs and STs). Further not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the municipality shall be reserved for women on rotation wise.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There available a lot of literature on empowerment of women in political arena in India which reflects some of the particular aspect of their representation such as Rounaq (1987) pointed out that the involvement of women in political activities at local bodies, their participation in the process of decision-making is very marginal Deshpande (1989) found that ineffective participation of women in political process is due to socio-economic constraints Manikyamba (1989) observed that socio-economic background in general and political background in particular are important determinants of shaping the nature and level of women empowerment in political institutions. The study further found that women members having secondary educational qualification are have more participated whereas the participation of the poor women members is found mostly insignificant. The women from middle class and rich class showed greater degree of participation. Lakshi (1993) revealed that reservation has merely brought in a quantitative change in the empowerment of rather than ushering qualitative developmental efforts. Jain (1996) highlighted that most of the women are elected to the PRIs due to the status of their husbands, fathers or sons. They often act as proxies for men in the councils and at many times, they felt powerless. Similarly, Bohra (1997) observed that even though women electorate constitute half of the voters but maximum of them are reluctant in campaigning activities. Chand (1997) found that the role of women members in local bodies is controlled by the male members of their families, particularly by their husbands due to the lack of education, political, and social awareness among women, on the one hand, and to the traditional feudal and male dominated social context of rural Haryana, on the other. The study of K. Jayalakshmi (2000) found that reservation in local bodies ensures entry for all sections of society including women and thus visualizes as the harbinger of equality and social justice Palanthurai (2001) observed that after the women's reservation in local bodies, the outlook of the society has started changing towards them. Singh (2002) found that though women in Haryana have been able to get representation in village Panchayats but it has remained formal on account of proxy system. They are generally represented by the male members of their families. Patnaik (2005) pointed out that numerical representations of women belonging to weaker sections have been increased in the terms of exercise of power Bhavnani (2009) found that after the implementation of the reservation policy of women in local bodies, women's candidacy and chances of winning are secured in reserved constituencies mainly, but in non-reserved seats they have meagre chances. A Report of International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) of UN (2012) on Opportunities and Challenges of Women's Political Participation in India reveals that the family remains a key determinant of success and participation in the political process. Rai (2014) criticized the way by which the women reservation in local bodies is being implemented. By this, the women representatives are working only proxies for men who still make the actual decisions.

Methodology, Sampling and Data Collection Techniques

The present study is micro in nature whereby descriptive and exploratory type research design has been

employed. The study is conducted upon 80 Female councilors in all the nine Municipal Corporations in Haryana namely Panchkula, Ambala, Karnal, Yamuna Nagar, Panipat, Hisar, Gurgaon, Faridabad and Rohtak by using census sampling method. There are total 214 councilors including Mayors, out of which all the 80 female councilors (including five Mayors in 2014) have been selected in the present study. With a view to collect the primary data, the respondents were interviewed with the help of interview-schedule to get relevant information. In the secondary sources – govt. records, census report and other concerned literature have been used.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The socio-economic profile of the respondents, their political backgrounds and their motivations to enter politics, are questions which are at the centre of the debate on women's political participation in Urban Local Bodies (ULB's). The implementation of the 74th constitutional Amendment Act, ensuring 33% reservation for women, in urban local bodies, saw a dramatic increase in the proportion of women in urban local bodies, from a meagre to 33%. The socio economic background of the respondents will allow us to understand the specific constraints and resources of women respondents and may also help in being an indicator of their potential performance. So, in this part of the present study, I have analysed the data with a view to know about the socio economic profile of the elected representatives i.e. area, present age, caste, income, occupation, marital status, age at marriage, size of house, educational levels (of self and parents) and type of schools/education/occupation of their children as well.

DATA INTERPRETATION

With view to analyse the data and its systematic arrangement in tabular form, the raw data was filled up in the SPSS and following information were appeared-

Table-1
Annual family income of the respondents

Income(in Rs.)	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
2-5 lacs	6	7.5	7.5
5-8 lacs	16	20.0	27.5
8-10 lacs	25	31.3	58.8
Above 10 lacs	33	41.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

In the present study, the majority of the family of respondents(41.3%) were from the higher income group of Rs. Above 10 lacs p.a., followed by 31.3% respondents' family who had their annual income between 8-10 lacs, 16% have upto 5-8 lacs p.a. and only 7.5 were from the income group of 2-5 lacs. Hence, the participation of poor people in municipal politics is negligible.

Table-2
Size of House(in yards)

Size of House	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 100 yards	1	1.2	1.2
100-200 yards	23	28.8	30.0
200-400-yards	36	45.0	75.0
Above 400 yards	20	25.0	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

Above table shows that all the respondents have their own house and a vast majority of them i.e. 75% have the size of their house from 100-400 yards in area followed by 25% who have owned big sizes of their houses i.e. above 400 yards in area.

Table-3
Educational Status of the respondents

Edu. Status	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	3	3.8	3.8
Middle	1	1.2	5.0
Matric	21	26.2	31.2
U.G.	31	38.8	70.0
P.G.& above	15	18.8	88.8
10+2	9	11.2	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

The data collected shows that a majority of respondents i.e. 42.2% are educated upto 10+2, followed by 38.8% graduates and 18.8% of women councillors were post graduates & above.

Table-4
Major Family Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Traditional Occupation	7	8.8	8.8
Cultivators	25	31.2	40.0
Artisan	1	1.2	41.2
Business	36	45.0	86.2
Others	11	13.8	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

From the above table, it is revealed that these categories were not mutually exclusive, for instance one could be both a housewife and a social worker or a business person but here the family occupation was taken into account for analysis that largest group of respondents families (45%) runs their followed by 31.2% cultivators, 13.8% in other occupations and a least percentage of 1.2 was engaged in artisan works.

Table-5
What is your present age?

Present Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
25-30 yrs	4	5.0	5.0
31-35 yrs	16	20.0	25.0
36-40 yrs	20	25.0	50.0
41-45 yrs	16	20.0	70.0
46-50 yrs	12	15.0	85.0
Above 50 yrs	12	15.0	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

The above table shows that the largest group of respondents i.e. 50% belong to the ages between 25

years and 40 years and only 15-15% respondents each were from the age group of 46-50 and above years of age. The greater numbers of women, in the younger age groups, goes against the widespread assumption that women usually enter politics, only once they have been set free, by age, from domestic and family duties.

Table-6
Your age at marriage

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 18	21	26.2	26.2
18-21	41	51.2	77.5
22-25	17	21.2	98.8
26-29	1	1.2	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

The above table that there are 51.2 % respondents who were married between the age group of 22-25 years followed by 26.2 % married at the age of less than 18 years and 21.2 % respondents married between age group of 26-29 years.

CONCLUSION

The study arrived at the conclusion that prior to 74th constitutional amendment, there was a nominal representation of women in municipal bodies but after this, there found a significant increase in the representation of women from all socio-economic back-grounds. In the present reveals that majority of the family of respondents were from the higher income group of above Rs.8 lacs p.a, all have their own house ranging from 100sq. yards and above, educated upto 10+2 & above. 45% are business men, followed by 31.2% cultivators, 50% belong to the ages between 25 years and 40 years. Despite this, positive achievement, there is a dire need for their capacity building so that their entry into local governance system become more effective and meaningful. This will also need changes in the social structure, culture and mindset of the rural society. It is also anticipated that the legal provision of education (which otherwise was an excuse for the poor representation of women) will enable women leader to act as catalyst for bringing result oriented changes.

SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN'S LOCAL BODIES

Some of the following suggestions found during the study to increase the participation of the women:

- The government should take a strict action against the un-necessary intervention of political parties and elections should be conducted fairly.
- We should change our negative mentality and government should also organize sensitization programmes to restrict male members from intervening in their independent functioning.
- The government should organise awareness programmes with the help of local administration from time-to-time to create awareness among women. And special training and refresher courses for women representatives should be conducted from time-to-time with a view to generate a sense of confidence and empowerment among them so that they may realize about their powers, functions and leadership capacities in letter and spirit.
- There should be a provision to give honour to the women representatives who have been elected unopposed from open seats.

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