

## Political Participation of Women in Gram Panchayat: A Study of Silinda 1.No Gram Panchayat

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### Abstract

Political participation simply refers to the way through which the citizens of a country take part in the electoral as well as in policy making process. In other words, political participation is a way or a process through which the aspirations and needs of the people can be represented. Generally, the term “political participation” refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy. These activities include casting votes, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meetings, staging strikes and demonstrations, communicating with the legislators and the like. Women constitute more or less than half of the population of any country. Women have to recognize, collectively and critically, the forces that limit them and to work collectively and continuously to change the unequal power structure. The family, community and state should together create a situation wherein elected women representatives act effectively in PRIs. They need to be endowed with capacities and incentives to tackle the emerging challenges after entering into panchayat system. More favorable environment should be created which would enable the women to play more effective role in the decentralized development. Above all, the Gram Panchayats should act more actively and vigorously. In this gram panchayat members are leading in economic planning, agriculture and resource development, education and health monitoring, household industry monitoring etc.

Keywords: Women Participation in election, political leadership.

### Introduction:

Political participation simply refers to the way through which the citizens of a country take part in the electoral as well as in policy making process. In other words, political participation is a way or a process through which the aspirations and needs of the people can be represented. Generally, the term “political participation” refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy. These activities include casting votes, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meetings, staging strikes and demonstrations, communicating with the

legislators and the like. Women constitute more or less than half of the population of any country. But their involvement in politics is insignificant compared to men. Many psychological, social and physical factors hold women back from active political involvement. This is true as far as the state and national level politics is concerned. A democratic country cannot progress if energies of its half population are concerned in the kitchen only. After attaining independence Indian constitution ensured gender equality through various provisions and regulations. It was presumed that these rights would automatically get translated into political development of the women in the country. Women constitute a little

less than 50% of the state's total population. Their socio-economic status is, however, relatively low and they are discriminated against in all walks of life. For centuries, women have been confined to the home, suppressed and deprived of their right to get fair treatment from the male-dominated society. The issue of women's participation in politics cannot be viewed in isolation from the general position of women in a society but despite their vast strength, women occupy a marginalized position in the political system<sup>1</sup>. According to Herbert Mc. Closky, "Participation is the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and the rulers are made accountable to the ruled." Political philosophers like J.S. Mill, Rousseau and Bentham have strongly advocated the need for participation of people in different spheres of political life. As Noorjahan Bava puts it, "direct and indirect participation of citizens in public affairs is the lifeline of a participatory democracy". In this gram panchayat members are leading in economic planning, agriculture and resource development, education and health monitoring, household industry monitoring, animal husbandry etc.

### Objective of The Study

1. To know about how far and to what extent, the rural women participate in different spheres of activities ranging from decision-making to exercising the right to vote in the gram panchayat.
2. To know the leadership qualities of women.
3. Explore the willingness of women representatives to participate in the electoral process of Panchayati Raj System.

### Review of Literature

Bhargava and Bhaskar (1996): In this paper I found that the women reservation system is introduced in order to increase the representation of rural women in the rural political institution. They argue that the reservation system enhance self confidence among the rural women. Again it

will create an opportunity to raise their grievances on issues of women and other socio- economic problem of the Panchayat in a formal forum.

Manikyamba (1990): In her study of Andhra Pradesh found that socio-economic background in general and political background in particular are important determinants of shaping the nature and level of participation of women members in political institutions and her study concludes that the participation of poor women members is mostly found insignificant.

S.Panda (1996): *This paper* shown that study of village panchayats in Orissa found that women entered into politics due to the mandatory provision of reservation or pressure from their family members or pressure from their village community.

Indian Institute of Social Science (2000) highlights the progress of women representatives in a study of Panchayat Raj in Haryana. It reviewed the performance of some hundred elected women in four districts; majorities of the elected women Panches including younger women were illiterate when elected to office. After two years in office, they demanded literary skill and generally feel the need of education for their daughters.

### SAMPLE

Silinda 1No. Gram Panchayat is situated at Chakdaha block of Nadia District has been selected for the study. This Panchayat consist of 18 wards, comprise of ten villages. According to 2011 census, total population 22961, male female ratio 52.01:47.99, total sc population 8307, total st population 1392, total obc population 4757, total Muslim population is seen in this area.

### DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Schedules were employed to collect data from the sample respondents. I also conducted personal interviews with the women respondents'. Case

study and focus group discussion method have been followed in order to collect information. Position holding as well as former women representatives' are selected as sample respondents. There are 17 ward members, 3 panchayats samiti member and 1 zilla parishad representatives seen. We selected 9 ward members, 1 panchayats samiti member and 1 zilla

parishad representatives female for the study. In order to get information regarding the non-participation of so called higher castes qualitative interview is conducted among them.

Table No.1 General Panchayat Elections 1997- Status of Women Participation in Silinda 1.No Gram Panchayat

PRI Elected Members	Total Elected Members	Scheduled Caste(SC) Women	Scheduled Tribe(ST) Women	Backward Class Women(OBC)	General caste women	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	23	05	Nil	02	02	09
Panchayat Samiti Member	03	01	Nil	Nil	Nil	01
Zilla Parishad Member	01	01	Nil	Nil	Nil	01

Table 1 reveals that during 2013 General Panchayat Elections, out of total 90, 27 elected PRI members, women constitute only 11 of total elected members. Division of women member is elected in ward wise member 09 (sc 05, st nil, obc 02), Panchayat Samiti Member(sc 01, st nil, obc nil, genral nil) and Zilla Parishad Member(sc 01, st nil, obc nil, genral nil).

women have some sort of apathy towards politics whereas young and middle aged women are more interested in politics.

Table No.3 Caste-wise distribution of the Respondents: (N=11)

Caste	Number	Percentage (%)
General	02	18.20%
SC	07	63.60%
ST	00	00.00%
OBC	02	18.20%
Total	11	100%

Table No.2 Age wise distribution of Respondents: (N=11)

Age Group	Number	Percentage (%)
Young Age (21-35)	04	36.40%
Middle Age (36-50)	05	45.40%
Aged (Above 50)	02	18.20%
Total	11	100 %

From the above table it is found that majority of the women participated in the electoral process from the SC category (63.60%), followed by General Category (18.20%), OBC (18.20%), and no women participate from ST category. So, the women of OBC and General category are less interested in politics so far as their social, cultural, educational, and economical condition is concerned. No one interested from ST in politics.

The above table shows that majority of the women were from the middle aged category (45.40%) followed by young age category (36%) those who participated in panchayat elections and panchayat affairs. Only 18% were from aged category. It is quite clear from the above data that the aged

#### VI. Conclusion:

As the objective of this survey is concerned, it is found that the contribution of women in the affairs of the Panchayat administration is not up to the

mark as compared to their male counterparts. The awareness, interest and taking part of women in Gram Panchayat election is still in the darkness of conventional culture. Simple addition of political reforms, constitutional provisions & rights are not enough; the issue is very serious, and, it requires introspection by women at first hand and of course by men. It is only through a new way of thinking, a broad perspective of analysis, an objective approach, a rational stream of thoughts irrespective of gender; we can think some degree of change. Political participation of women demands the values of equality and justice in daily life, the support of citizens groups in protest against oppressions, and acceptance of the feminist perspective in the public sphere. Women have to recognize, collectively and critically, the forces that limit them and to work collectively and continuously to change the unequal power structure. In this gram panchayat members are leading in economic planning, agriculture and resource development, education and health monitoring, household industry monitoring, animal husbandry etc. The family, community and state should together create a situation wherein elected women representatives act effectively in PRIs. In this gram panchayat members are leading in economic planning, agriculture and resource development, education and health monitoring, household industry monitoring, animal husbandry etc. They need to be endowed with capacities and incentives to tackle the emerging challenges after entering into panchayat system. More favorable environment should be created which would enable the women to play more effective role in the decentralized development. Above all, the Gram Panchayats should act more actively and vigorously for the development of women in order to realize them the benefits of rights, equality and justice as enshrined in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

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