

Political Participation of Upper Caste and Dalit Women: A Comparative Study of Bathinda Rural Assembly Constituency

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Women constitute half of the universe so without their development; the progress of a nation is not possible. As far as women social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to the men in the society. Women are often considered as inferior to the men in all spheres of life. Due to the patriarchal nature of society, men are always dominating in economic, social and political fields. Women role is confined only to the household chores. Women empowerment has become an important issue of concern for the development of women in all spheres of life. Empowerment is providing them equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities, and eradicating the existing gender discrimination from the society. So, they can have their distinguished place in society.

Women political participation is global issue of concern. Women Political participation means their equal share in the decision making process. All the women should participate in the formulation of governmental policies and developmental plans. Women must enjoy all the political rights such as exercising right to vote, becoming the members of political parties, attending party meetings, holding public offices and contesting elections etc.

At the global level, only few countries across the world, have given access to women to participate in politics. In countries like Norway, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland women's participation in the decision making process is substantial. Sweden has become the first country with 47% female participation in parliament which is almost equal to men. In India, women political participation is not commendable while compared with men. Due of lack of acceptance from male dominant society, the women of India suffer immensely. Women are solely responsible for all the household duties and this has confined her role.

Position of Indian women in society has been subjected to many changes while tracing the Indian history. During Vedic time, women got equal rights as men. They were fully powerful and got equal opportunities to participate in the decision making process. Their position in Indian society has started deteriorating during the later Vedic period. Women position in the society changed and religion, traditions and

patriarchy played a negative influence on women's political status. Women condition became worst during Muslim period. Many bad customs were performed against women and they were secluded completely. When the Britishers ruled over India, the status of Indian women declined in all the socio, economic and political fields. Many attempts have been made by Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Arya Samaj to improve women's social position. Many women have participated in freedom struggle movements launched in the middle of 19th century under the leadership of Gandhi. After independence, many initiatives have been taken to improve the socio-economic status and empowerment of women. The equal rights have been granted by the Constitution to raise the status of women. However, it has remained in theory because in reality, in the Indian political structure, their participation was almost negligible. This is evident from the analysis that women representatives in Parliament and various State Legislatures since 1947 onwards and the same situation at local level also.

In order to increase women political participation, the government of India has taken various steps. Many policies and programme have been created by centre and state governments to improve the women participation in the decision making process. Government has passed 73rd and 74th amendments for increasing women participation in decision making process. There is a provision for reservation of seats for the women of various categories in rural and urban local bodies. Many state governments have also increased the quota up to 50 percent.

The Punjab Government has also increased women reservation in the local bodies. There are 50% seats reserved for the women of various categories in the local bodies of Punjab. The elections held in 2018 of rural local bodies, women got 50 percent of seats. But the active participation is still issue of concern. There is also huge difference regarding political participation of women of various categories. In order to analyse, women political participation and to find the difference of political participation between upper caste and Dalit women, The study of Bathinda Rural Assembly constituency has taken into consideration. The sample of 300 women respondents has been selected for this study. Out of total sample 300, 150 women belonged to upper caste and 150 belonged to Dalit caste. There are 50 women who elected as representatives and 100 women are not elected as member they are participating in politics through voting only in each category.

Major Research Findings

Major findings and observations are based on the objective of the study in Bathinda Rural Assembly constituency is as following:

1. Political participation is a fundamental factor for the individual development and empowerment. Political participation not only limited to using the right to vote. It also deals with people's participation in all the other political activities. There are various theories of participation such as classical democratic theory, elite democratic theory, Representative democracy theory and Rational choice theory. According to various such theories people participation in politics varies from country to country. Along with this Sex, Caste, religion, age, economic conditions and education are various factors that influence the people participation in the political field.
2. Bathinda Rural Assembly constituency is important from all of the other constituencies of this district because the scheduled caste population is higher in this constituency as compared to other constituencies. To analyse the socio-economic profile of this constituency, It is revealed that female population is lower (45%) than the men population (55%) and literacy rate among females is also low as compared to male in this constituency. Most people live in rural areas and only 15 % of people live in urban areas in this constituency. The vocational profile of individuals shows that most persons are engaged in agricultural works. It is also analysed that most women are depend on male members of their family for their economic needs. The overall data shows that women are not much empowered in this constituency.
3. While the socio-economic profile of women is analysed it revealed that most of the women from both the categories belong to the age group of 36-45, second largest group is 18-35. The number of elder people is low, there is only 7 % of women whose age is above 60. It is also seen that very few women are elected as members from older age group in both the categories. It is observed that old age people are not taking much interest in politics. The people of middle age are more active than old age people. As per the educational level of the respondents are concerned, it is found that most of women in the constituency are uneducated or studied up to matriculation. In higher education their condition is not very strong.

Few percent of women have attained higher education up to graduation and post graduation. It is examined from above data that most of women who are uneducated belong to elder age group, but young age women are more educated. Marital status of respondents has revealed that most of women from upper caste and Dalit categories are married and there are very few unmarried women who are elected as members. Married women brought into politics by the male members of their family. They are participating in politics with the permission of their family or because of reservation. It is revealed that unmarried women are not allowed to participate in politics by their parents. When the family types of women are revealed it is found that most women belong to the joint families who have participated in political affairs and only 45% of respondents belong to nuclear families from both of the categories. It is found that in joint families women got more chances to participate in politics.

The occupation-wise analysis of respondents indicated that most of women from upper caste are house wives and most of women from Dalit category belong to labourers' class. It is also revealed from the study that a very few women from both the categories are self-employed, engaged in jobs and working in the agricultural sector in this constituency. Political background of respondents shows that most of the elected women from both the categories belonged to families which have already been involved in politics. Among non-elected women only 26 % of women from both the categories have political background. 56% women said that no one of their family member is involved in politics. From this study it is can concluded that who participated in politics are often having political family background.

4. People participation in political activities depends upon the knowledge about political reality. The awareness level of people about politics can be measures from various activities. The people interest in politics shows their awareness regarding political issues. While analysing women interest in politics it is found that most of women from both the categories are taking keen interest in politics. There are also some women (32 %) who have revealed that they are not interested in politics. Because they are busy in their household duties and responsibilities. Awareness of respondents about the name of Indian Prime Minister, Chief Minister of Punjab and their Members of legislative Assembly it is revealed that

most of women are having accurate knowledge about the name of their P.M.(98%) and C.M.(93%) from both the categories. It is also seen that 88% of women from both categories have correct knowledge about the name of their M.L.A's. Some women are not having correct knowledge about the name of their representatives at national, State and Local level. The overall study shows that women respondents having more awareness regarding the name of their P.M as compared to the name of their C.M. and M.L.A's The awareness level of people depends upon the listening to the news. In order to examine the respondent's interest in politics it is found that most women are interested in listening news. It shows that 57% of women are interested in listening to local news. 16% are interested in regional and 18% are interested in listening to national level news. There are also 2% of women from Dalit category who have not interested in listening news. It is examined from the study that women are most interested in listening local level news as compared to national, regional and international level news. While analysing the women response regarding the affect of media on their political participation. It is found that 31% of women considered that the media has a reasonable extent on their political participation. 28% of women have replied that media has largely influenced their participation level. Awareness regarding the welfare schemes launched by the government shows that 73% of women are having knowledge about these schemes and 65 % of women said that many women take benefit from these programmes or schemes. 28 % of women said that they do not knowledge regarding the welfare programmes launched by the different governments. Some schemes have not been implemented in the proper way and people are completely ignorant about it.

While examining the perceptions of men towards women participation in politics, most women in this constituency have told that men do not like women participation in politics. They said that women have come into politics only because seats are reserved for women otherwise men are not in the favour of women participation in politics. Males' perception towards women shows that they do not have ability to take decisions in political matters. Women perceptions towards other women's political participation revealed that 56% women said that other women have not liked their participation in politics. They feel jealous and create negative perceptions towards them. 44 % of women from both the

categories answered that other women give them full support when a woman is elected as representative of the people.

Women participation in major political activity is confined mainly right to vote shows that they are casting their votes in every Lok Sabha, State Legislature and Local Bodies elections. The study shows that the majority of women from both of the categories confidently said that they are casting their votes with their own wish, their families have not influenced them regarding right to vote. They are free to cast their votes with their own choice. Few percent of them have replied that their family has influenced them for their voting right. They are bound to cast their vote according to the wishes of their family. Opinion regarding women's equal rights in society majority of women respondents told that they get equal rights in the society. They do not face any discrimination based on gender. According to law, all the women get equal social, economic and political rights as men. 11% of women respondents from this constituency said that women do not get equal rights as men. Males are getting more opportunities to participate in the decision making process especially in the political field. They explained that all the political power is vested in the hands of men. It is observed from this study that Dalit women are more in numbers who feel discrimination towards them as compared to the women of upper caste. Women political participation is examined through the various activities. While women participation in election campaign is analysed it is found that 54 % of women from both the categories have not participated in the election campaign. 46 % of women respondents have revealed that they have taken part in the election campaign. It is analysed that most women have not participated in election campaign especially in rural areas. Another electoral activity that is requesting voters to vote in their favour it is revealed that the majority of women have answered that they have not requested the voters to cast votes in their favour. 42 % of women said that they have requested voters for votes. The women who have not contested the election also have taken part in these activities for their relatives and friends. Women participation in collecting funds has revealed that 90 % of women have not participated in this activity. Only 10% of women respondents said that they have collected funds before election to send money in election. When women participation is examined in election meetings, it is found that 78 % of women have not participated in preparation

election meetings and have not attended the meetings. They have replied that only males are participating in these meetings. Some of them (22 %) said that they have prepared and attended meetings in which mostly females are present. Women participation in poster and banners making shows that majority of women from both the categories have not involved much in this activity. Only 13 % of respondents said that they have made the posters and banners for their candidates and their party. Women participation in door to door campaign has revealed that 57 % of respondents have participated in this activity. 43 % of women have not visited people for votes. When the women participation in political rallies analysed it is found that 80% of women have not participated in political rallies organised by various political parties. It is also revealed that there is a majority of men in political rallies organised by various political parties. There are only 20% of respondents from both of the categories who have participated in political rallies.

5. Through reservation policy many women have come into politics but their active participation is an issue of concern especially in rural areas. Participation in voting is an important political activity. Majority of the people have participated in politics through casting their votes and with this act they feel as a part of the political system. Women Participation regarding voting compared between upper caste and Dalits, It is examined that women of both of the categories have equally participated. Women participation in another activities have analysed it is revealed that in the act of election campaign, Dalit women(elected and non elected) participated more as compared to the women from upper caste. In another activity request to the voters elected women of upper caste involved with large number as compared to the elected women from Dalit caste. Among non elected respondents Dalit (26%) women participation is more as compared to the women of upper caste (13%). Women participation in collecting the funds for election it is found that elected women of upper caste (26%) is large in number who has arranged funds for election as compared to the women of Dalit caste (22%). But among non elected women, Dalit women (11%) participation is more as compared to the women of upper caste which is only 1%. Participating in election meeting has revealed that most women from both categories have not participated in this activity. Regarding women participation in poster and banners making Dalit

women participation is higher as compared to the women of Dalit category. Women participation in the activity of door to door campaign Dalit women participation is more as compared to the women of upper caste. Women participation is analysed in attending political rallies. It is examined that elected upper caste women participation is high as compared to the women Dalit caste. But in non elected respondents Dalit caste women are more in number who have answered that they have attended the political rallies than the women of upper caste. When the overall participation of women in electoral activities is compared it revealed that elected women of upper participated more in all the political activities as compared to the women of Dalit caste. But among non elected women, the participation of Dalit women is more regarding some activities as compared to the women of upper caste. It is analysed from the study that there is not seen huge difference regarding participation of women between both categories in electoral activities.

There are 100 elected women, 50 from each of the categories are selected as samples. They are elected members of rural local bodies: Zila Parisad, Panchayat Simiti, Gram Panchayat. They do not only participate in voting. They also play an important role in the process of decision making. So, it is necessary to compare their participation.

The study has revealed that the majority of women from both of the categories favoured the reservations of seats for women. They have expressed their views that they have come into politics only because the seats are reserved for women in these local bodies, otherwise they do not think to elect as members of these representative bodies. All the women members said that they have received many complaints from the people. It is analysed that the majority of women (48 %) has attempted to solve the problems of people by themselves. Out of these women 54 % of women belong to upper caste and 42 % belong to Dalit caste. 26 % of women from upper caste and 22 % of women from Dalit caste said that they send to the people to concerned authority. 4 % of women answered that they have assigned to the authority to redress the grievances of the people. But there are 16 % of women from upper caste and 32 % of women from Dalit caste have revealed that their husbands other male members have solved the complaints of the people. From this study, it is examined that most of women from upper caste are trying to

solve the problems of people as compared to the women of Dalit category. Thus while regarding the participation of women respondents in decision making process, it is analysed 70% of women from upper caste and 46 % of women from Dalit category said that they have always participated in decision making process. When comparison is made between upper caste and Dalit caste women it is seen that upper caste women participation in decision making process is higher as compared to the Dalit women. Opinion of the respondents regarding the improvement of the status of women after independence, it is revealed that 74 % of women from upper caste and 56 % of women from Dalit caste said that there is a great change in the position of women after independence. Women have gotten equal rights as men in the society. Their participation in every activity is increased. There are 36 % of women from upper caste and 44 % of women from Dalit category who have believed that the position of women society is improving after India got freedom. But it is still not reached a satisfactory stage. Various types of discrimination is still prevailing against women in society even these days. When the response of the women from both of the categories is compared, it is observed that the women of upper caste have felt sense of improvement in the status of women as compared to the women of Dalit category.

When the views of respondents regarding women equal rights in society are compared it is examined that almost all the women from the upper caste have believed that women get equal rights in the society. They have given the opinion that there is no gender discrimination in society. They are enjoying all the freedom and rights as men. But in Dalit category many women have felt that they have not considered equal in their society because they are facing various types of discrimination. From study, it is examined that the women of upper caste are enjoying more rights as compared to the women of Dalit caste. While reveal overall participation of upper caste and Dalit women it is found that among elected women the participation of upper caste women is higher in all the political activities as compared to the women of Dalit caste.

Brief Findings of the Study

Some brief findings of the study is as following:

- It is found from the study that the education level of Dalit category women is low as compared to the women of upper caste.
- The women of Dalit category belong to lower income groups as compared to the women of upper caste. It is also reveal that most of women from Dalit category engaged in labour work.
- It is examined from the study that most women belong to joint families. This shows that women get more opportunities to participate in politics in joint families.
- It is found from the study that most women are having knowledge about local level politics.
- To analyse women's interest in politics it is examined that most women are taking interest in politics. But due to lack of opportunities and resources they cannot fulfil their interests.
- It is also revealed that young age women are taking more interest in politics as compared to the women of old age.
- Awareness level of women shows that most women are aware about basic political realities. But they are not fully aware about the functions, duties and powers of rural local institutions.
- It is examined from the study that women from both categories always are using their right to vote. They are casting their votes in every election.
- Women participation in electoral activities examined that many women are participating in these activities. But their participation is lower as compared to the male participation in these activities.
- It is revealed from the study that most women enter into politics only through reservation.
- It found from the study that most women elected as members in rural local institutions because seats are reserved for women. But their active participation is still a question of concern. Male members are dominating their working in these institutions.

- While compared the participation of women between upper caste and Dalit women it is examined that women from both categories equally participating in voting.
- As well as women awareness level is examined it is revealed that women from upper caste are more aware as compared to the women of Dalit category. It is because there is lack of resources among Dalit women.
- When the women participation in electoral activities is compared it is examined that most of women of both the categories participated equally. But among elected women upper caste women are participated more as compared to the women of Dalit caste.
- Women participation in decision making activities revealed that upper caste women are more empowered as compared to the women of Dalit caste.
- It is also found that some women of Dalit category notice a discrimination towards them on the basis of their caste.

Some Observations of the Study:

- It is observed that most women depend on their family for their economic needs and their economic dependency also affect their participation in the political field.
- It seems that women come to politics only through reservation. But their active participation in these local bodies is not reached at satisfactory level.
- It is observed that most people who belong to rural areas, having conservative mindset and orthodox ideology towards women.
- It is observed that women are not fully aware about their rights and responsibly as representatives of the people.
- It is also observed that the education level among women of both categories is gradually improving with passage of time.
- It is examined that men are dominating in rural societies up to present scenario. Women are always working under the control of their men and they are not getting full freedom to take their decisions.

Testing of Research Questions:

1. This study has revealed that there is a difference between the social, economic and political background of women of upper and lower caste. Most women from the upper caste are educated and come from families whose economic condition is quite strong. There is lack of access to income-earning assets and regular employments facilities among Dalit women. Among upper caste women most of women are housewives and not a single woman engaged in labour work. It is also revealed that majority of Dalit women belong to lower income groups (below, 50,000) and most of women from upper caste belong to higher income groups(above 1,00,000). Upper caste women participation is higher than the women of Dalit category. This shows that social-economic conditions of respondents affect their political participation. The first question of research has fully proved in this work.
2. It is analysed that most of women from Dalit category are uneducated and less qualified as compared to the women of upper caste. They studied only up-to matriculation level and in higher education very few percent of women from Dalit category are involved. This is due to conservative mindset of Dalit people towards women education. While comparing the knowledge of upper caste and Dalit women regarding the names of their Prime Minister, Chief Minister and M.L. A.'s it is examined that the women of upper caste are more aware and having full knowledge about the names of their P.M and C.M. as compare women of Dalit category. Thus, while knowledge about the M.L.A's the women of Dalit category are more aware as compared to the women from upper caste. Assessing the awareness about the welfare programmes, Dalit women are more enlightened regarding these schemes and programmes as compared to upper caste women.
3. Women participation in voting compared it is examined that women of both the categories have equally participated. All the women have their own identification card and cast their votes in every election of Lok Sabha, State Legislature and local bodies. Thus, when the influence of family member on women voting behaviour is analysed, it is found that of women of Dalit category are casting their votes according to the wishes of their family members. When the overall participation of women in electoral activities is

compared it revealed that elected women of upper caste are participating more in electoral activities as compared to the women of Dalit caste. But among non elected women the participation of Dalit women is more in some activities as compared to the women of upper caste. It also seen from the study that there is not seen huge difference regarding participation of women from both of the categories in electoral activities. Upper caste women have participated in the meetings of these institutions and solved the problems of the people themselves. They have not felt any discrimination towards them. But the women from Dalit category have revealed they are discriminated by the upper caste members and the male members of their own community. Thus, the third question is partially proved there is difference regarding the participation of women. The upper caste women have more participated in decision making activities than the women of Dalit category. When the women participation in other political activities compared this it is reflected that there is not big difference regarding the political participation of upper caste and Dalit women. Even in some activities Dalit women participation more than upper caste women.

Suggestions

In the light of the foregoing analyses of data collected, inferences, implied propositions, the following observations and suggestions for more effective participation of women in rural local bodies. Thus enable them to acquire the benefits of development including the human resource development aspect are given below in brief:

- There is a need to improve the social status of women. Generally, women are considered inferior to male members of the family. Since ancient times, women are often considered as subordinate to men in the society and they have not taken part in decision-making process. This attitude towards women needs to be changed to make them as equal to men. Men must share women's workload at home, recognise women's achievement, and appreciate their participation both at private sphere and public sphere.
- Political parties should take initiatives in promising benefits to women. They should not overlook the fact that women constitute fifty percent of the

population unless and until they should not completely involve into politics the democratic aspirations of the people will not be fulfilled. Thus, the political parties should emphasis on recurring candidates which must be beyond caste, religion, colour and sex. The women wing should look for capable and potential women for elections. Political parties also mentioned in manifestoes, removing gender discrimination, reserving 30 percent of jobs for women, granting them equal rights. Thus, enable them to fully participate in the development process.

- Economic status is a very important factor in the functioning of every organisation. If one is economically strong then he or she could think about other activities. But the economic condition of women is not sound in India especially in rural areas. So, for their economic needs they are dependent on the male members of their families. That's way they are always working under the influence of the male members in their family. So, it needed to increase more employment opportunities for women so that they can become economically independent and able to play active role in decision making process.
- Education plays a prominent role in fostering social participation. Education helps the women to develop a sense of motivation and help them to recognise their worth. It is observed from this study that most of women respondents are uneducated or merely studied upto matric. It is also seen that women of Dalit category are less educated as compared to the women of upper category. Education creates awareness among the people and it also affects their participation. So, to increase women participation in politics. Thus, there utter need to create more educational opportunities for women for basic as well as higher education.
- Women should be mobilised. The complexity of functions of local governments needs skill, knowledge and aptitude. This can be acquired only through systematic training. The governments should conduct training programmes for women. Many women especially in rural areas are unaware about issues, debates and reforms concerning the society in general and women in particular. So, it is need to create awareness among women. Women must be aware about their legal rights and duties.

- There is urgent need to boost the morale of the women. Low morale generates depressing situations. In such situations, women do not get confidence. Thus, a positive attitude must be developed among women by enlightening them about their creative potential for their overall development.
- Many policies and programmes have been launched by Indian and various states governments for women development. Although, many women are getting benefits from these programmes. But these programmes are not having properly implemented in many areas and women are not knowledge about these welfare schemes. So, therefore proper implementation of such programmes so that each and every women should get benefit from these programmes.

The India is moving towards journey of strong and prosperous nation. So, women should have sense of spirit and self confidence and also will acquainted with their own worth. Unless and until, the women should not be having this self growth ideology then the holistic growth of women cannot expected in the society. Women should recognise their role in society and must participate in political, social and economic spheres of her life. Thus, in politics their role is not confined only up to voting in fact they should play active role in decision making process. Although, government has reserved seats for women in urban and rural local bodies yet their overall participation is big issue of concern.

There is immense difference between the participation of various categories women. Although, Women from upper caste and Dalit caste are participating in political activities yet the difference is seemed regarding the political participation between the women of both category. While discussing about the participation of non elected women, it found that there is not huge difference between the Dalit and upper caste women participation in politics. Even in some activities Dalit category women participated more as compared to upper caste women. But while analysing their role in decision making process wide difference has been analysed between the women of both categories. Dalit women are facing from gender discrimination issues. There is need that collaboratively government and society should take stringent actions for the growth of women. This will encourage the participation level of women in politics equally.