



WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN PANCHAYATS AND REVENUE MOBILISATION: THE FIELD REALITIES IN RURAL KARNATAKA

K. Basavarajeshwari, Research Scholar, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC),
Nagarabhavi Post, Bengaluru

Abstract: *It is imperative to see the issue of decentralised governments and gender equality, as it has its own importance in rural India. The decentralised governments are nearer to the lives and well-being of people and provide basic services to enable in developing an egalitarian society. In India with the introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, rural local self governments have gained importance among researchers and policy makers. The 73rd Amendment Act mandates the state governments to establish local self-governments in rural areas once in five years. This paper tries to look at women representation in panchayats and their role in mobilising revenue resources at panchayats. It would also be relevant here to look at the importance of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the globalisation era. Since globalisation has turned out to be disadvantageous for the marginal sections of the society.*

Keywords: *panchayat raj institutions, revenue mobilisation, women representation, gender discrimination, local governance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The 73rd Amendment Act of Indian Constitution in 1992 has brought in vast changes in rural governance as it established the three tier structure of local governance at the rural local level in 1992. One of the important developments through the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) is the effort that has been made to alleviate gender discrimination and promote women's empowerment in rural India. As such we can see that Amendment 73rd of Constitution has broadly specified about women and child development in Schedules I, II and III respectively. It may be noted that PRIs have paved the way for women's involvement in the development activities for the well being of the society, their participation in planning, making decisions and their representation as leads of their own people. Since then there has been an effective participation of women in decision making bodies. However, some studies have shown that gender discrimination is still rampant at the rural local level. Traditionally in India, women have been confined to play certain roles at the household



level only and women's role in socio-economic development was meagre. Furthermore, globalisation has turned out to be disadvantageous for the marginal sections of the society¹ as that excludes them from coming into the mainstream. However, the Constitutional and legal framework has been amended to empower women and to encourage their role in the socio economic development of the society. Keeping these in view, the paper tries critically looking at how far the local self-governments have succeeded in promoting gender equality in rural India and the outcome of women representation in panchayats with regard to revenue mobilisation.

This paper is presented in six sections. The first section will carry introductory information. The second section provides the conceptual framework and the third section gives an overview of the Constitutional and legal framework on gender equality as well as decentralisation. The fourth section brings out the importance of panchayat raj institutions in the globalisation era. The fifth section discusses the two issues of why a local self-government is important in ensuring gender equality at the rural local level and subsequently bestow with ground results based on field observations in rural Karnataka. The final section provides the concluding remarks.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the importance of women representation in the panchayats and
2. To analyse women representative's efforts in mobilising revenue sources of panchayats.

1.2 Methodology of the Study

Data analysis is based on both secondary and primary data. Secondary data is collected from the published sources for obtaining an overall picture. Primary data/information collected from four selected grama panchayats in two selected districts (namely, Ballari and Mandya districts were selected of which representing different geographical locations and different levels of socioeconomic development) of Karnataka. For primary data collection we have followed three sets of questionnaire schedule which have been classified first and foremost, grama panchayat official, then elected members of that GP jurisdiction. Finally, to collect household level data in each GP two villages are selected for the study. We have provided descriptive analyses in this study based on the primary and secondary information.

¹Marginal sections are poor, women and children.



Simple statistical tools such as percentage analysis and cross tabulations have used to analyse the data.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before we move on to discuss PRIs and gender equality it would be useful to understand the basic concepts. The term decentralization is described as the transfer of authority to make decisions, plan or manage functions from higher level to any organization or agency at the local level. Further, it has three pillars of decentralisation, political decentralisation, administrative decentralisation and fiscal decentralisation. Basically, decentralisation is the transfer of power. It devolves the authority to plan and political decision-making power to the local Governments level. It provides wider opportunities for local people and equal participation in local development process. This will in turn help in developing basic services and fulfilling the needs of the local region in a more effective manner.

Theoretically, the most prominent are the theories of gender roles and gender stratification. As to this, Kibbutz corroborates that gender equality depends on equal control over surplus resources and, conspicuously so, the theory that in modern society, gender equality depends on the full abolition of the gender segregation of all social roles, especially work roles, whether performed in the private sphere or in the public sphere, whether paid for or unpaid (Agassi, 1989).

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential, to engage in and contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the outcomes (Nath, 2009). More specifically, Gender equality means more than gender balance, that is, equal numbers of women and men on local councils or municipal utility boards are important but it is more important that the participating women should have the capability to actively contribute in the decision making processes of these local governing bodies (UNHSP, 2008). The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2008 in its manual also talks about this and it stresses the importance of individuals' capability to participate as equal citizens. In order to address this issue, most of the countries have committed to equal rights for women and girls through its ratification of international instruments and also provides Constitutional and legal provisions. Like most of other countries, India has also introduced Constitutional and legal



provisions for women empowerment. Further, we discuss this in detail in the following section.

3. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The panchayats have been the backbone of Indian Villages, however, until 1992, the Constitution did not discuss local governments, at all (Hemming, 1997). So for the first time in the history of India, PRIs got Constitutional status on 24th April 1993. The 73rd Act mandates the state governments to establish local governments (Panchayats) in rural areas once in five years. The same 73rd Act incorporated provisions empowering panchayats with powers, functions and finances.

The powers, authority and responsibilities of PRIs are laid down broadly in Article 243G of the 73rd Amendment Act. The details are as under.

243-G states that subject to the provisions of this Constitution the Legislature of a state may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provision for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to

- a) The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule; and
- b) Implementation of plans prepared for economic development and social justice.

Further, the Eleventh Schedule under Article 243G contains 29 subjects/functions to be left to the respective states discretion for devolution to PRIs. The financial powers /resources envisaged for local government are laid down in Articles 243H, 243 I and 280 CC.

Gender equality and local governance are interlinked one and the other. They are essential for socio-economic development and democratisation and hence will enable in developing a more egalitarian society. Further Government of India has important Constitutional and Legal provisions for women in India and ensures as:

“The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework



of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993".
(Government of India, 2013)

Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socioeconomic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of the law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard (Government of India, 2013). Details of this are as follows:

Constitutional Privileges

- (i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)*
- (ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))*
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))*
- (iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)*
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))*
- (vi) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)*



- (vii) *The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)*
- (viii) *Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))*
- (xii) *Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))*
- (viii) *Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))*
- (ix) *Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))(ibid)*

Legal Provisions

In India along with Constitutional provisions, legal provision has been given to empower and secure the interest of women.

“To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women,” (Government of India, 2013).

In January 1992, the Government of India set-up a National Commission for Women. This was a step taken to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc (*ibid*).

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure reservation for women in local self-government by amending one-third of the total seats for



women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas (Government of India, 2013).

The Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women (ibid).

4. RURAL LOCAL-SELF GOVERNMENTS AND GENDER EQUALITY: RELEVANCE IN THE GLOBALISATION ERA

In this section, we will critically examine the effects of globalisation and the importance of PRIs in helping to curb the ill effects that emerge from globalisation.

Globalisation has been disadvantageous to the weaker section of the people. To support this, a study by Dasgupta (2003), says globalisation is opening up the Indian Economy at a very high speed, without the required economic and social policies to provide the much-required safety net, women who have been involved with production in traditional ways, have to cope with numerous problems... Mainly in India majority of working women are in the rural and unorganised sectors. And socially majority of women are still tradition bound and are in a disadvantageous group. Further study also stated that government, NGOs and decision makers can prepare proper strategies to empower women and bring them into the mainstream developmental process. This can only be done through an understanding of the plight of women in the globalisation process (Dasgupta, 2003).

Mainly, in rural India, we find that gap in equal access to services like education and health is inadequate. For instance, equal access to higher education and skill development institutions will have good consequences in the form of on better opportunities for both wage employment and will also result in higher standard of living. Generally, firms require skilled workers there is a lack of skilled labour in rural India.

The ILO² says that worker training has to be provided to those among unemployed women, youths, workers trapped in the informal sector, and other “vulnerable groups” such as older workers, the long-term unemployed and workers with disabilities. “Nations facing rapid

² World Employment Report 1998-99: 7, World of Work, No. 27



globalization and competitive pressure need to invest in skills development and training in their workforce,” the report says. Further ILO³ also stated that:

“Among measures to increase competitiveness, growth and employment in a globalizing world economy, the critical role of a high-quality, educated and skilled workforce must gain more prominence”. (ILO, 1998)

Especially, rural women lag much behind when it comes to skill. Another study by Sanghi et al (2015) looked at decline trend of the female labour force in rural India provides us information that in India the labour force participation rate (LFPR) is around 40 percent. But if we see gender-wise it is only 22.5 per cent. Later, the gap in male-female labour force participation rate for rural females of the age group over 15 years shown is only 35.8 per cent, while for the rural male it is 81.3 percent (Sunita Sanghi, 2015) (ibid).

PRIs, on one hand, give an opportunity for women to participate and represent in local bodies and they have ample scope to develop themselves and effectively participate in decision making bodies. So it would be relevant here to look at the importance of PRIs in this globalisation era.

Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of a continuously declining female ratio in the population. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms and practice (National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001). Consequently, the women particularly those belonging to weaker sections including Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/ other backwards classes and minorities, in the rural areas especially, lack of access to education, health and productive resources. Therefore, they remain largely marginalised, poor and socially excluded (ibid). As a consequence, they have not been able to be part of the globalisation process. So in a way, they remain disadvantaged groups and cannot come into the mainstream.

Globalisation is understood, theorised and conceptualised in various ways. For the mainstream theorists of the west globalisation marked the triumph of capitalism and a market economy (Varkey, 2014). Globalisation term can be defined as the "process enabling financial and investment markets to operate internationally, largely as a result of deregulation and improved communications" (Jeffery, 2002). Due to privatisation and

³ World Employment Report 1998-99: 8, World of Work, No. 27



liberalisation, all countries in the world are moving in and out for trade and business with the world getting more and more integrated into the day. However Globalisation has diverse effects i.e., it can be seen as a positive, negative or even a marginal process. Though privatisation increases the country's GDP and increases foreign investment, it reduces the role of the Government and increases the role of the private institutions (market) which of course do not have any motivation to improve the welfare of the society. Supporting this World Employment Report (1998) stated that "The low-skilled unemployed have poor prospects to find a job even if the overall macroeconomic environment improves" (ILO, 1998).

Indian economy got introduced to globalisation with the liberalisation of trade and investment in the 1990s. Unlike other developing countries, India also has experienced several negative implications. Mainly, it impacted the rights and livelihood of disadvantaged particularly rural women (Sangita, 2014).

Thus, PRIs put in place a system to overcome these problems. It is not that this is an absolute solution, but these institutions are one amongst the best possibilities. This is nothing but the government is devolving its responsibilities to local institutions. That is the Central government transfers its powers to local institutions where weaker sections of the population can fulfil their priorities through effective participation in Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha. Democratic decentralisation enables the people to participate in country's governance. Mobilisation of people through elections (contesting, campaigning, and voting and so on) brings awareness among the rural people about their rights, and entitlements (ibid).

Further, it would be relevant here to specify what World Bank (1988), ascertains "wherever this decentralization is meaningful and genuine, the decentralized government has succeeded".

So now let us ascertain the role of PRIs in ensuring gender equality. Till now extant works of literature have mainly looked at the importance of PRIs on the grounds of allocative efficiency and effectiveness in the service delivery so in this paper we bring out the importance of PRIs in empowering weaker sections so as to ensure that all sections, participate in the decision making bodies.



Amongst the few studies that look at PRIs role in empowering women, (Plath-Randzio, 2010) specifies that *“local governments are closely linked with the empowerment of voiceless groups, such as the poor and women. So decentralised governments may enable women to participate in decision-making, but unless gender equity is an explicit objective...”* Another study by Leest (2012) points out that local and regional authorities represent the levels closest to the people, and are therefore best placed to directly address the persistence of inequality and to promote models of governance that strive for a truly egalitarian society. Yet another study (Sangita, 2014) articulates how democratic decentralisation makes participation easier and makes empowerment more feasible at the local level than at the national level, especially for minorities and vulnerable groups. This study also pointed out that decentralisation has opened a wider political space for disadvantaged to occupy leadership positions in PRIs. Furthermore, it mentioned that reservation enables the selection of disadvantaged groups to the higher level positions.

It has been argued that *“the presence of elected women in local governments and their active involvement has facilitated visibility of women in public space (Sakhi, 2006). The local governments are the most accessible and proximate governance institution and as such, they can adopt gender sensitive policies and programme. The elected women representatives should be able to respond creatively to women’s practical and strategic needs and also make the process of development, people oriented and transparent”* (ibid). Development efforts from a gender perspective are likely to come up against some deep-rooted inequalities in power and privilege between women and men, it is essential that gender politics are factored into the planning process. In this context, it points to the critical role that participation can play, in ensuring that goals, objectives and activities are tailored to the realities of those excluded from the development process (Kabeer, 1996). Hence, promoting gender equality and women empowerment has also been one of the Millennium Development Goals. With regard to this, it has been reported that to successfully achieve this by the target year of 2015, could only if panchayats at all the three levels are empowered to function as true units of self-government. Therefore, it is imperative to accelerate, widen and deepen the process of empowerment so that these ‘Institutions of self-government’ become ‘Principal authorities’ for planning and implementation (Gol, 2008-09).



4.1 PRIs Role in Gender Equality: Evidence from different states

It can be said that gender equality and local governance are entangled with one another. In this section, we mainly try to see, whether local governments are an effective tool to bring an egalitarian developed society in rural India.

Studies have seen that when panchayat raj institutions were introduced across the states in India, there was not much participation from weaker sections of the society (Subha, 1997).

The Constitution envisioned decentralised governments as local self-governance. However, giving of our policy, most of the fiscal powers and responsibilities to be earmarked on decentralised governments have been left at the discretion of respective state legislature. Thus, the powers and functions entrusted to PRIs vary from state to state. Whereas, without denying the fact that the PRIs of every state should not less than one-third of the total seats for membership as well as the office of chairpersons of each tier have to be reserved for women. This in a way paved the weaker sections of the society to effectively participate in decision-making bodies and motivated to take up development activities for the well-being of the society.

Though PRIs were established in almost all the states there was not much difference in women representatives in the panchayats. It was only the 73rd Constitutional Amendment including an essential feature of not less than one-third of the total seats for women at all levels.

It would be relevant here to look at the women representation in PRIs in major states of India. This information is presented for two different periods in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

Table 1: Share of Women Representatives in PRIs in Major States of India during 2008 and 2013

Major States	No. of PRIs (All three-tier panchayats)		Total No. of Elected Representatives		No. of Women Representatives		Share of Women Representatives to total elected representatives	
	2008	2013	2008	2013	2008	2013	2008	2013
Andhra Pradesh	22,945	22,769	224003	254487	74019	85154	33.04	33.46
Assam	2,431	2,418	25436	26844	9903	9903	38.93	36.89



Bihar	9,040	9,046	130091	136130	70400	68065	54.12	50.00
Gujarat	14,068	14,132	114187	118751	38068	39206	33.34	33.02
Haryana	6,325	6,226	69805	68152	25503	24876	36.53	36.50
Himachal Pradesh	3,330	3,332	24581	27832	9552	13947	38.86	50.11
Karnataka	5,833	5,837	96090	95307	41210	41577	42.89	43.62
Kerala	1,165	1,143	18482	19107	5614	9907	30.38	51.85
Madhya Pradesh	23,412	23,387	396516	393209	136196	198459	34.35	50.47
Maharashtra	28,277	28,321	229740	203203	76581	101466	33.33	49.93
Odisha	6,578	6,579	92454	100863	33630	0	36.37	0.00
Rajasthan	9,457	9,474	119975	109345	42434	54673	35.37	50.00
Tamil Nadu	13,031	12,940	116488	119399	39364	41790	33.79	35.00
Uttar Pradesh	52,890	52,865	771661	773980	299025	309511	38.75	39.99
West Bengal	3,713	3,590	58828	51423	21351	19762	36.29	38.43
Total (All Major States)	202495	202059	2488337	2498032	922850	1018296	37.09	40.76

Source: (1) Ministry of Panchayat Raj, Annual Report, 2007-08,

(2) Ministry of Panchayati Raj, website, Government of India

(<http://lgdirectory.gov.in/rptConsolidateforRuralLB.do>, accessed on 6 September, 2013).

Table 1 provides information on the share of women representatives in the three-tier local governments in major states of India. It is important to note from the above two Tables that the share of women representatives in some states is more than the one-third (reservation) norm. For instance, some states such as Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have provided 50 percent reservation for women. Later in the year 2011, other states such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan have also given 50 percent reservation for women in PRIs.

Table-1 reveals that in two states Bihar and Karnataka have shown very high progress in the share of women's representatives with 54.12 per cent and 42.89 per cent respectively in the year 2008. The women representation in other states such as Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, is above the overall states average. But this trend has changed in the year 2013 and during this period Bihar which did well in 2008, actually declined from 54.12 percent to 50.00 percent. The states such as Himachal Pradesh followed by Karnataka and



Uttar Pradesh, is above the average of the overall states during 2008 had increased their share of women representatives during 2013. The overall position in 2013 was that the average share of women representatives in panchayats to the total for all major states increased from 37.09 percent to 40.76 percent. The highest share of women representatives is observed in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh about (51.85, 50.47 and 50.11 percent respectively) followed by Bihar and Rajasthan. Though, the share of Bihar has declined in this period. But as far as states are concerned such as Andhra Pradesh and Odisha have not performed well with regard to this, despite 50 percent of reservation has been given for women in PRIs in these states.

The main reason for more than 50 percent women representation in different states is because of 50 percent of reservation for women in PRIs.

Apparently, it would be interesting to know that panchayats in states such as Kerala and Madhya Pradesh have also been performing well in mobilising own revenue and this shows the importance it has given to strengthen the panchayats. Also, it has been known that Karnataka is in the forefront to other states in establishing and empowering the PRIs, and also to demand and introduce the reservation policy for women in these institutions.

It is evident from the above Tables that, after the Constitutional legislation has given that one-third of seats to women in the political sphere; hence there are notable numbers of women elected representatives in the PRIs. This representation has helped the weaker sections of the society to improve their administrative skills and articulative capacity in rural local governance. For instance, women's association with PRIs has brought transformation in terms of empowerment, self-confidence, and political awareness (Sangita, 2014). Also, the same study pointed out that, the reservation has improved the perception levels of women and it has created an urge in them to participate in the governance. Studies have highlighted that the women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibility (ibid).

As for as the importance of PRIs in gender equality, there are studies, which have mentioned that PRIs can bring the difference in the lives of vulnerable sections of the society and can reflect upon their problems through making them to participate in the decision making bodies. In this regard, reservation plays a vital role in breaking the control



of dominant/elite sections in the local premises on decentralised governments and provides the greater opportunity for disadvantaged groups participate in it.

A study by Kenworthy (1999) has highlighted that the degree of political democracy in a country may also affect women's chances of winning electoral office. Paxton (1997) argues that the level of democracy should be positively related to women's political representation since democratic processes decrease the likelihood that artificial and arbitrary barriers can be imposed.

Largely decentralised governance may contribute to gender equality as noted by Plath-Randzio (2010) because it approaches women better: Women belong to the marginalised group of society. Actually, they are not only excluded from citizenship and rights, but their interests and concerns in public decisions and public services are not reflected in political decision-making. The lack of democracy in gender relations excludes them from participating in governance. This also hinders poverty reduction. Since participation and access to decision-making is easier for women at the local level... it is necessary to focus on the challenges of decentralisation for rural women.

Subha (1997) concisely specifies the importance of decentralised governments in gender equality for achieving egalitarian society in the context of Karnataka.

"Panchayat raj institutions are the most important channels for popular participation in the development process. As they deal with the day-to-day affairs of the rural masses, they should have close links with the people and continue to draw up ways and means to serve them. Decentralisation and wholesome people's participation for which these institutions have already laid the foundation will go a long way in bridging the existing class, caste and gender disparities. This is a promising start for a just and egalitarian society". (Subha (1997: 138))

However, there are many issues have been raised about the effectiveness in carrying out functions. As to this, Deshpande (2009) study pointed out that training of women representatives would improve their efficiency in delivering the services. In the same study, it also talked about their attitude towards work as active agents of social change. Also, it has been come out in the recent field survey undertaken by the researcher that, along with administrative training there is a need for training on fiscal issues.



5. WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYATS: A FEW OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

In this section, we see the women participation in the PRIs and this can be assessed at the number of women who involved themselves in creating gender awareness among the local people, then motivating rural people to have sanitation and effective participation in planning and decision-making of rural local bodies. In order to do so, there is a limitation on the availability of data on this.

As to this few studies have pointed out that, women participation in decision making bodies gives an idea about their activities and social interaction (Subha, 1997) and can ensure to achieve the goal of women empowerment at rural local level. A study of Palanithurai (2004) points out that the problems faced by women are expected to be sensitive about issues affecting women. Women's issues are expected to become central and receive the attention of all, especially policy makers.

But there are merits and demerits too in this. If we consider the other side of it, seldom it is said that women are not bold and determined they need others help. Women representatives of PRIs serve as proxy to husbands as President, Vice-president and also members. In accordance to this, it would be interesting to see are these women members are first term elected members or second term elected members. If it is former and also in the absence of training and political experience, then the first time got elected members might not know about their role and also what is ward sabha and panchayat meetings are. Therefore there is no harm in taking help as they need to know things, processes and take advice from the experienced members. In the case of latter, over period of time, these second timers should become independent and start exercising control over officials. If this has not resulted increasingly during their second term as members, then one has to know what reasons are obstructing them to become an empowered woman. And why have they not been able to carry out their functions effectively in the second term of their leadership is also a concern.

Having these questions in the backdrop, it would be relevant here to bring out the two instances from the field survey that has been undertaken recently by the researcher in the Ballari District. In the first instance, in a ward sabha meeting there was a discussion on local needs by the GP members and among local citizens. The male members were requesting for



construction of additional Barber shop, however, two female members directly rejected this and proposed for construction of community toilets for women and for cover of open drainage pit in the village which is harming young children. There are instances where children fell in and got injured.

In the other instance, men members suggested for an additional overhead tank nearer to their place and also replacement from electric streetlight to solar streetlight. Whereas women members suggested for periodical chlorination of open well and treatment of water and also construction of street light in an area where entire surrounding people especially old age people and young children are facing difficulty in crossing the road in darkness. These instances prove that women gave priority on urgent local felt needs rather have these suggestions taken into considered is secondary. If this is carried forward in a right spirit in all the local governance aspects, one day no doubt of having an egalitarian development of society in India.

If we look at the ground realities hardly we find the issues dealing with gender plan and preparing gender budget. Owing to gender budget at rural local level ensures gender consideration in general plans. Recently from the carried field survey by the researcher, it confirms this that these issues have not been taken up seriously. Like some Panchayats expressed that preparing general budget itself is a big task, so we hardly concern about that. After all, it is also true that at the grass root level rural local governance is the only platform for marginalised sections of the society and also it gives equal chances to competent and incompetent, literate and illiterate women members. Notwithstanding, this has given an opportunity for traditionally home centred women to the active participants of social change (Deshpande, 2009). However, democratic decentralisation is needed to achieve developed egalitarian society and for empowering the women in rural India.

5.1 Women Representation in Panchayats with Reference to Revenue Mobilisation

In this section we discuss mainly what measures a female elected member can take into consideration for improving revenue collection of panchayats. Generally one may say hardly any, but that is not the point. As such, we would like to see the total, the number of women representative showed interest and have knowledge on revenue sources than to men representatives. It would be worthwhile to look at far more meaningful by providing field insights that have been carried out in both Ballari and Mandya Districts.



The Table 3 and 4 provide information on the share of female and male representatives have knowledge with regard to revenue resources of the four GPs of both the districts in Karnataka. Furthermore we will see the awareness level of elected members as well as a citizen on income sources of GP.

Table 3: Awareness of Revenue Sources by the Elected Members of selected GPs in both Ballari and Mandya Districts of Karnataka

Gender	REVENUE SOURCES		
	No	Yes	Total
Male (No.)	4	19	23
% of Male Members	17.39	82.61	100
Female (No.)	4	11	15
% of Female Members	26.67	73.33	100
Total (No.)	8	30	38
% of Total	21.05	78.95	100

Gender	GRANTS		
	No	Yes	Total
Male (No.)	2	21	23
% of Male Members	8.7	91.3	100
Female (No.)	2	13	15
% of Female Members	13.33	86.67	100
Total (No.)	4	34	38
% of Total	10.53	89.47	100

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 0.4700$ Pr = 0.493

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 0.2073$ Pr = 0.649

Source: Primary Survey

It shows with 1 df $p > 0.05$ for revenue sources as well as for grants, since p value (0.49) is more than the significance level (0.05), we cannot reject the null hypothesis. Thus, that there is no relationship between gender and revenue mobilisation.

Table 3 provides information that gender and revenue mobilisation is not dependent. This is because, women representatives are not attending the training that have been arranged by the organisations to provide information about GP mainly on powers, finances and about existing schemes. These issues have come out from the field work that has been carried out by the researcher recently (from January 9th to March 15th, 2016). Firstly, few of women representatives are concerned about the place where these training programmes are held. Report on woman representative of GP that:

“Most of these training programmes will be conducted somewhere in other towns/places, in turn these places are far away from our places. So we might not feel like going and attending these training programmes as we have our own household works to do.”

Another reason is that only a few of women members are educated enough to understand the importance of revenue mobilisation. And most of them do not even know the quantum



of transfers they are receiving from the higher governments. At the same time, there was a concern by the citizen of GP jurisdiction about that there should be kept some benchmark with regard to educational attainments of women representatives; as some respondents said:

“...there should be kept SSLC as a minimum qualification for women members to contest election at the panchayat level. So then one can find developments at the panchayat level. Further people stated that due to all these reasons their preferences have not been reflected in the action plan prepared by the respective grama panchayats.”

Table 4: Awareness on Income Sources of Selected Grama Panchayats by the Citizen in both the Districts (Ballari and Mandya) of Karnataka

INCOME SOURCE			
Gender	No	Yes	Total
Male (No.)	45	68	113
% of Male Members	39.82	60.18	100
Female (No.)	62	26	88
% of Female Members	70.45	29.55	100
Total (No.)	107	94	201
% of Total	53.23	46.77	100

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 18.6459$ Pr = 0.000

GRANTS			
Gender	No	Yes	Total
Male (No.)	43	70	113
% of Male Members	38.05	61.95	100
Female (No.)	62	26	88
% of Female Members	70.45	29.55	100
Total (No.)	105	96	201
% of Total	52.24	47.76	100

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 20.8174$ Pr = 0.000

Here p value <0.05 since the p-value (0.001/0.003) is less than the significance level (0.05), so we reject the null hypothesis. Thus we conclude that there is a relationship between gender and income sources of GPs. Further, in Appendix 3 and 4 has shown household level information of two districts (Ballari and Mandya).

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study mainly looked at the importance of PRIs in gender equality and women representation in relation to revenue mobilisation based on the primary and secondary data/information. It has been argued that PRIs are an effective tool for empowering women and in bringing gender equality in rural India. It is worth here to mention that, the study on PRIs has looked at the political aspect of gender equality. In this study, the political equality is all about to ensure all sections of people, in other words mainly the weaker sections of



the society should effectively participate in the decision making bodies and local self-government's members should be accountable to the local people needs by providing effective services and ensuring an optimal revenue mobilisation of their own in grama panchayat.

Essentially, in the globalisation era, rising use of technology received paramount significance. But this turns out to be a bane for those who remained excluded from the adoption of new technologies. Per se, this paper tried to argue that PRIs plays a vital role in providing opportunities to these marginalised sections of the society. Also, enables them to stand against all ill factors that are emerging from the globalisation.

It is evident from the above analysis that, those of states (such as Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh) which have given 50 per cent reservation for women in PRIs have achieved the percentage of women representatives the 50 per cent and above. This shows a great achievement of panchayats in these states and similarly, the other states should follow that.

Furthermore, along with training on leadership, there must be training needed even on fiscal issues including budget management aspects and this should be made mandatory in rural local level. Also, training is required on existing local schemes specified for grama panchayat. The basic argument with regard to this is, it provides the knowledge to tackle problems related to such issues and enable them to be empowered women. Consequently, it won't be hard to make decisions when you have the knowledge of assigned powers and responsibilities. Another issue has come out from the study is that these training have to be given at least once and in their respective grama panchayats, further this will help most of the women members to participate in it.

Based on the overall discussion, we may say that there is an imperative of effective decentralised governments at the rural local level, in order to, make effective participation from the all sections of the society to work for a developed egalitarian society. One has to strengthen these decentralised governments to work for the upliftment of the marginalised sections of the society.



REFERENCES

1. Agassi, J. B. (1989). Theories of Gender Equality: Lessons from the Israeli Kibbutz. *Gender & Society*, 3 (2), 160-186.
2. Dasgupta, K. (2003). Globalisation and Indian Women: Problems, Possibilities and Information Needs - an Overview. *IFLA Women's Issues, public Libraries and Information Science Journals Sections* (pp. 1-9). World Library and Information Congress: 69th IFLA General Conference and Council.
3. Deshpande, S. V. (2009). Women Political Participation in Local Governance in Karnataka: Trend Analysis. (M. S. Subramanya, Ed.) *Southern Economist*, 48 (2), 9-12.
4. Gol. (2008-09). Retrieved February 6, 2015, from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation: http://mospi.nic.in/9cocso_paper_raj.pdf
5. Gol. (2013). *Women and Man in India, 2013, 15th Issue*. New Delhi: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
6. Hemming, N. M. (1997). India. In T. M. Teresa, *Fiscal Federalism in Theory and Practices* (pp. 527-539). Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.
7. ILO. (1998). *World Employment Report, 1998-99*. International Labour Office.
8. Jeffery, S. (2002). *What is Globalisation?* Retrieved January 16, 2014, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/oct/31/globalisation.simonjefferySimonJeffre>
9. Kabeer, S. R. (1996). *Institutions, Relations and Outcomes: Framework and Tools for Gender-Aware Planning*. Institute of Development Studies.
10. Kenworthy, M. a. (1999). Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A World wide Comparative Analysis. *Social Forces*, 78 (1), 235-268.
11. Leest, R. X. (2012). *Gender Equality and Local Governance*. Tirana: Austrian Development Cooperation.
12. Ministry, P. R. (2013). Retrieved September 6, 2013, from Gol: <http://lgedirectory.gov.in/rptConsolidateforRuralLB.do>
13. Mospi. (n.d.). *Important Constitutional And Legal Provisions For Women In India*. Retrieved May 04, 2016, from mospi.nic.in: http://mospi.nic.in/Mospi_New/upload/man_and_women/Constitutional%20&%20Legal%20Rights.pdf



14. Nath, K. (2009). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. In M. M. Misra, *Rural India: Achieving Millenium Development Goals and Grassroots Development* (pp. 168-169). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
15. NPEW. (2001, January 28). *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women*. Retrieved 2015, from <http://wcd.nic.in/empowerment.htm>
16. Palanithurai, G. (2004). *Empowerment of Women: Experience of the Elected Women Representatives in Grassroots Institutions*. Gandhigram: Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Panchayati Raj Studies.
17. Paxton, P. (1997). Women in National Legislatures: A Cross-National Analysis. *Social Science Research* , 26, 442-464.
18. Plath-Randzio. (2010). Gender and Decentralisation: An Introduction. *Local Power and Women's Rights-Gender Perspectives on Decentralisation Processes*. Bonn: Workshop of african and European Civil Society Organisations.
19. Rondinelli, D. A. (1981). Government decentralisation in comparative perspective; theory and practice in developing countries. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* , XLVII (20), 133-145.
20. Sakhi. (2006). *Be Empowered Be Equiped*. Trivandrum , Kerala, India: Sakhi Resource Centre for Women.
21. Sangita, S. N. (2014). Globalisation, Democratic Decentralisation and Inclusive Growth. In S. Varkey, *Globalisation, State and Governance* (pp. 74-92). New Delhi: New Century Publications.
22. Subha, K. (1997). *Karnataka Panchayat Elections 1995: Process, Issues and Membership Profile*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
23. Sunita Sanghi, A. S. (2015). Decline in Rural female Labour Force Participation in India: A Relook into the Causes. *The Journal for Decision Makers* , 40 (3), 255-268.
24. UNHSP. (2008). *Gender in Local Government: A Sourcebook for Trainers*. Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).
25. Varkey, S. (2014). *Globalisation, State and Governance*. New Delhi, India: Century Publications.
26. World Bank. (1988). *World Development Report*. New York: Oxford University Press.



APPENDICES

Table 1: Awareness of Revenue Sources of selected Panchayat Elected Members in four selected Grama Panchayat of Ballari and Mandya Districts

NAME OF THE GPs	Tax Sources		Non-Tax Sources		Grants	
	% of Female Member know	% of Male Member know	% of Female Member know	% of Male Member know	% of Female Member know	% of Male Member know
BALLARI DISTRICT						
Kuravatthi GP	16.67	16.67	16.67	50.00	16.67	83.33
Hagarnuru GP	28.57	71.43	0.00	42.86	14.29	71.43
MANDYA DISTRICT						
Kennalu GP	46.15	46.15	30.77	46.15	46.15	46.15
Jakkanahalli GP	50	50	33.33	33.33	41.67	41.67

Source: Primary survey

Table 2: Awareness on Revenue Sources of Citizen in four selected GPs of Ballari and Mandya Districts

NAME OF THE VILLAGES	Total No. of Citizen Responded	Tax Sources		Non-Tax Sources		Grants	
		% of Female Citizen know	% of Male Citizen know	% of Female Citizen know	% of Male Citizen know	% of Female Citizen know	% of Male Citizen know
BALLARI DISTRICT							
Kuravatti GP							
Kuravatti	25	36.00	24.00	0.00	24.00	8.00	28.00
Haravi	25	24.00	28.00	0.00	20.00	4.00	36.00
Hagarnuru GP							
Hagarnur	25	20.00	68.00	8.00	52.00	8.00	52.00
Hire Kolachi	25	4.00	60.00	0.00	56.00	4.00	60.00
MANDYA DISTRICT							
Kennalu GP							
Kennalu	25	32.00	56.00	0.00	40.00	28.00	56.00
Harlahalli	25	64.00	28.00	12.00	16.00	32.00	16.00
Jakkanahalli GP							
Jakkanahalli	25	52.00	32.00	24.00	20.00	36.00	20.00
Borapura	25	44.00	36.00	12.00	20.00	24.00	28.00

Source: Primary survey

Household level Results from both the Ballari and Mandya Districts

Table 3: Awareness level of Citizen in two selected GPs of Ballari District

Gender	Income Sources		
	No	Yes	Total
Male	30	41	71
% of male citizen	42.25	57.75	100
Female	24	6	30
% of female citizen	80	20	100
Total	54	47	101
% of Total	53.47	46.53	100

Pearson chi2(1) = 12.0771 Pr = 0.001

Gender	Grants		
	No	Yes	Total
Male	30	41	71
% of male citizen	42.25	57.75	100
Female	24	6	30
% of female citizen	80	20	100
Total	54	47	101
% of Total	53.47	46.53	100

Pearson chi2(1) = 12.0771 Pr = 0.001



Table 4: Awareness level of Citizen in two selected GPs of Mandya District

Gender	Income Sources		
	No	Yes	Total
Male	15	27	42
% of Male citizen	35.71	64.29	100
Female	38	20	58
% of Female citizen	65.52	34.48	100
Total	53	47	100
% of Total	53	47	100

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 8.6860$ Pr = 0.003

Gender	Grants		
	No	Yes	Total
Male	13	29	42
% of Male citizen	30.95	69.05	100
Female	38	20	58
% of Female citizen	65.52	34.48	100
Total	51	49	100
% of Total	51	49	100

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 11.6461$ Pr = 0.001