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Participation of women in local body elections: A study of 2014 MPTC elections in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The democracy will become a real democracy only when women were given equal opportunity to participate in political affairs of the country at all levels. But for several centuries the participation of women in politics is minimal due to prevailing socio-economic conditions prevailing all over the world. There is a lot of gap between women population and their representation at village, Mandal/block, district, state and national levels. Even today most of the women were confined only in casting vote in elections. They are not showing any interest to contest in elections. No serious efforts appear to have been made to mobilize women as a political pressure group by any political party. Caste, personality and families of candidate appear to be more important to voters than party ideology or affiliations. Factors like education, religion, class and tradition also seem to affect women's participation. In this paper an attempt is made to analyze the participation of women in the middle tier Panchayat Raj institutions in the last elections in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Members, territorial constituencies, president, vice president, reservation

Introduction

The Andhra Pradesh Government with the intention of taking the democratic decentralization to the door steps of the people and reducing the distance between the government and people, introduced the Revenue Mandal System. In the footsteps of this new change, the Government of Andhra Pradesh with a view to restructuring the Panchayat Raj set up in the state, brought in a new legislation called the Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishads, Zilla Praja Parishads and Zilla Abhivrudhi Sameesksha Mandals Act 1986. This Act came into force with effect from January 15, 1987. In pursuance of the provisions of the new Act, 1104 Mandal Praja Parishads and 22 Zilla Praja Parishads were constituted with effect from the same date.

The purpose of the legislation was to ensure both administrative convenience and technical feasibility. The major change brought in was, the abolition of 330 middle tier, Panchayat Samithis and their substitution by 1092 (which later increased to 1104) Mandal Praja Parishads, sought at the rate of 3 to 4 Mandal Parishads for the Panchayat Samithis. Each of the Mandal Parishad now has an area covering about two dozen villages having a population range from 35,000 to 50,000. Thus the Andhra Pradesh model of Mandal Praja Parishad was developed as an alternative to the Community Development Block. In the initial stages of the Community Development, a block had a population of about 50,000 people which later grew to the size of one lakh. Therefore, the Mandal set up, to some extent, goes back to the concept of block set up when it was first introduced.

Fourth Ordinary Elections in Andhra Pradesh

The State Election Commission issued Notification No.222/SEC-B1/2014-2, dated 29.03.2014 for conduct of MPTC/ZPTC elections in two phases on 06.04.2014 and 11.04.2014. Under Section 214 of Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, there is a ban on campaigning including display or propagation of any election matter capable of influencing the voter in the electronic media during the period of forty-eight hours prior to the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in the polling areas concerned.

Nomination Process

The Prakasam district was divided into 790 Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies. Among these 790 territorial constituencies, in 2014 elections were held in 784 constituencies. The elections in the remaining 6

constituencies were not held due to legal problems. Table 1 furnishes the details of nominations filed, nominations valid and final contesting candidates from these territorial constituencies in 4th Ordinary Elections in 2014.

Table 1: Political Party wise - Total No. of nominations filed (Cumulative) for MPTC Membership in Prakasam District

Party	Nominations Filed	Valid Nominations	Final Contesting Candidates
No of MPTCS	790	-	-
BSP	17	16	11
BJP	26	25	12
CPI	40	40	23
CPM	75	71	28
INC	123	119	60
YSRCP	1446	1342	755
TDP	2353	2300	747
Lok Satta	3	3	2
Other Registered Parties	1	1	0
Independents	717	688	393
No Nominations/Court Pending etc	6	-	-
Total Nominations Filed	4801	4605	2031

Source: Election Report, Fourth Ordinary Elections to Mandal Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads -2014, State Election Commission, Andhra Pradesh.

It can be found from table 1 that for 784 MPTC seats 4801 candidates filed nominations. On an average 6.12 candidates were filed for each MPTC seat in the district. Among the total nominations filed nearly 49 percent were filed by TDP party supporters. The YSRCP supporters' nominations constitute 30.12 percent of total nominations filed for MPTC elections in 2014. The nominations filed by Independent candidates constitute 14.93 percent of total nominations. The nominations filed by other party candidates are negligible. Among the total nomination papers 95.92 percent were declared as valid nominations. On an average there are 5.87 candidates for each MPTC seat as per the count of valid

nominations. At last 2031 candidates remained in fray for 784 MPTC seats in the district. On an average there are 2.59 candidates for each MPTC seat in the district. The YSRCP contested for 755 seats (96.30 percent) out of 784, for which elections were held. On the other hand the TDP candidates were in fray in 747 (95.28 percent) out of 784 seats.

Caste Wise and Gender Wise Reservations

Table 2 gives the details of caste wise and sex wise seats reserved in Prakasam district in 4th Ordinary Elections in 2014.

Table 2: Caste Wise and Gender Wise Composition of Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency Members in Prakasam District as per Fourth Ordinary Elections-2014

S. No	Category	Number	Women %
1	Backward Class (General)	91	
2	Backward Class (Women)	86	48.59
3	Scheduled Caste (General)	86	
4	Scheduled Caste (Women)	107	55.44
5	Scheduled Tribe (General)	7	
6	Scheduled Tribe (Women)	24	77.42
7	Un-reserved (General)	203	
8	Un-reserved (Women)	180	47.00
	Total	784	
	Women	397	50.64

Source: Election Report, Fourth Ordinary Elections to Mandal Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads -2014, State Election Commission, Andhra Pradesh.

It is evident from table 2 that there are 784 Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (MPTC) members in Prakasam district as per the data available for 2014 Mandal Parishad elections. Among the total members 397 members constituting 50.64 percent were women. The caste wise women MPTCs analysis reveals that among Scheduled Tribes a preponderant majority i.e. 77.42 percent were women. Among the Scheduled Caste MPTCs 55.44 percent were women. Around 48.59 percent of Backward Class MPTCs were women. In the unreserved category 48.85 percent were also women.

On the whole 24.62 percent of MPTCs elected in 2014 elections belongs to Scheduled Castes. In the total seats 22.56 percent of seats were reserved for Backward Classes in the district. Among the total MPTCs 3.95 percent hail from Scheduled Tribe community. The remaining 48.85 percent were unreserved.

Party Wise Performance

The performance of various political parties in 2014 Ordinary election in Prakasam district is given in table 3.

Table 3: Party Wise Seats Sharing by Women in 2014 Ordinary Elections in Prakasam District

S. No	Party	Total seats Won	Women
1	YSRCP	405	204
2	TDP	344	176
3	BSP	1	0
4	Independents	34	17
Total		784	397

Source: Election Report, Fourth Ordinary Elections to Mandal Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads -2014, State Election Commission, Andhra Pradesh.

It can be inferred from table 3 that the Yuva Jana Sramika Rhythu Party (YSRCP) won more than half of the seats for which elections were held in April 2014. The party bagged 405 seats constituting 51.66 percent of total seats. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) bagged 344 seats constituting 43.88 percent of total MPTC seats in the district. The share of the seats bagged by independent candidates stood at 4.34 percent of total seats. From the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) one candidate declared elected. All other national and regional parties failed to open their account in the Prakasam district.

With regard to women share, from two major political parties as well as among independents half and more than half were women. Among the elected MPTCs from Telugu Desam Party 51.16 percent were women candidates. From YSRCP party 204 women constituting 50.37 percent of its elected MPTCs were also women. With regard to Independent candidates exactly half of the MPTCs were women.

Mandal Parishad Presidents

The State Election Commission directed the concerned Authorities concerned to authorize a Gazetted Officer of the Government for every Mandal Praja Parishad to conduct election of Member (Co-opted), President and Vice-President of Mandal Praja Parishad in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Andhra Pradesh Conduct of Election of Member (Co-opted), President and Vice-President of Mandal Praja Parishad and Members (Co-opted), Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of Zilla Praja Parishad Rules, 2006, and specifies the schedule for the elections to the said offices in the Annexure appended to this order. As per the schedule the election of President and Vice-President of MPP were held 4th July 2014 all over the state. The Election of President and Vice-President of Mandal Praja Parishad were preceded by the election of the co-opted members. Table 4 gives the details of party wise President and Vice-President of Mandal Praja Parishad in Prakasam district.

Table 4: Mandal Parishad Presidents and Vice Presidents in Prakasam District in 2014 Elections

S. No	Party	No of MPP Seats Won	No. of Vice MPP Seats Won
1	YSRCP	25	22
2	TDP	29	29
3	Independent	2	3
4	Postponed	0	2
Total		56	56

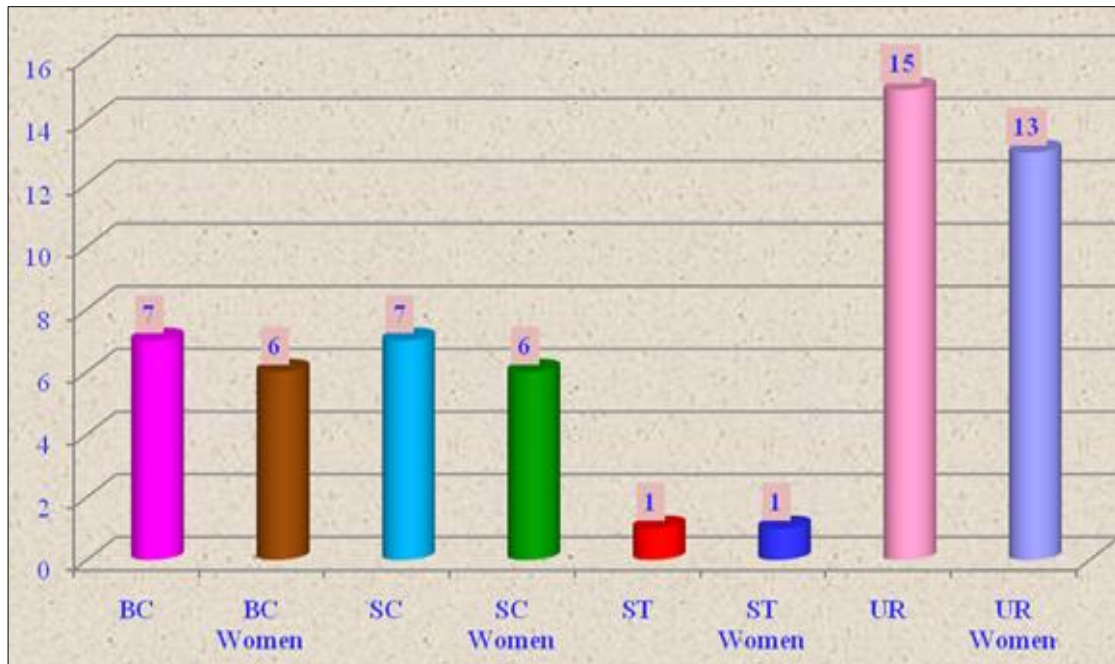
Source: Election Report, Fourth Ordinary Elections to Mandal Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads -2014, State Election Commission, Andhra Pradesh.

Table 4 shows that the Telugu Desam Party by winning in 43.88 percent of seats, managed to bag 29 MPP seats in the district. As the Telugu Desam Party emerged victorious in State Legislative elections in May 2014, it attracted the attention of several opposition party and independent MPTCs to bag as many MPP seats as possible. The YSRCP party by winning 51.66 percent of MPTC seats is able to bag only 25 Mandal Parishad President seats. The remaining 2 seats have gone in favour of Independent candidates. With regard to Vice Mandal Parishad President, the Telugu

Desam Party won in all 29 Mandals in which its candidate is elected as MPP. The tally of the YSRCP further reduced to 22 Vice MPP seats. Among Vice MPPs 3 Independents were elected. In 2 Mandals the Vice MPP elections were postponed due to lack of quorum.

Caste Wise and Gender Wise MPPs

Figure 1 clearly depicts the caste wise and gender wise Mandal Parishad President (MPP) seats reserved in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.



Source: Election Report, Fourth Ordinary Elections to Mandal Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads -2014, State Election Commission, Andhra Pradesh.

Fig 1: Caste Wise and Gender Wise MPPs Elected in 4th Ordinary Elections in Prakasam District

It is evident from figure 1 that the share of women MPPs in 3 out of 4 social categories is less than 50 percent. Among the Scheduled Tribes only half of the MPP seats were reserved for women. Among Scheduled castes and Backward Classes the share of women in total MPPs of respective social category stood at 46.15 percent. The share of women MPPs among unreserved seats stood at 46.43 percent. In all 50 percent of MPP seats were open for all social categories. Equal percent i.e. 23.21 percent of MPP seats were reserved for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes. The remaining 3.57 percent were reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

Conclusion

The study makes it clear that more than half of elected Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency members in the district were women. The caste wise women representation reveals that among Scheduled Tribes more than three-fourth is women. In case of Scheduled Castes and Backward class the women have fair representation. If the same trends continue the women will become politically enlightened.

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