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Dalit women empowerment in local governance: with special reference to Panchayati raj institutions in Karnataka

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Abstract

There are about 250 million Dalits in India. There is inadequate improvement in the economic condition and lack of political awareness of Dalits in the past 70 years. Which is not enough when compared to non-Dalit? Dalit population has enlarged to 25 per cent of India's total population. Reservation in the local governance helped the Dalits to take active part in the local governance particularly in gram Panchayats, but attempts have not made by any individuals/organizations to understand the level of participation and contributions made by the Dalit members in local governance, hence the present study the involvement of Dalits in local governance, to identify with the level of participation, and contribution made by the Dalit members as members of local governance and to suggest suitable measure to strengthen the political participation among Dalit members in local governance.

Keywords: Dalit representatives, gram panchayat, Panchayati raj institution, reservation, organizations

Introduction

Rural development plays a vital role in national development in the mounting countries, including India. The developing countries have initiated development programmes which have led to the creation of a number of institutions in rural areas. In India, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), which commenced functioning in the year 1949, have been ever more perceived as institutions of importance and regarded as an instrument of participatory democracy for national development. Democratic decentralization for development through Panchayati Raj has drawn the attention of policy makers, programme implementing authorities, researchers, programme planners, sociologists and other professional workers.

The Panchayati raj institutions and Dalits

The scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) have been the victims of social and physical discriminations since long. After independence efforts have been made to extend benefits of development to them not by merely putting them at the receiving end but by making them partner in the development process. In the field of Panchayati Raj also challenge was made in the past to ensure their involvement either through cooption or through the direct election. But due to variety of reasons the society did not ensure the valuable presence and participation of SC/ ST population in the functioning of gram Panchayats. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) [6] strongly observed that of course there has been practice of cooption/nomination of SC/ST members but they have been used by the leading factions for their own vested interests. It is a fact that at the village level panchayat they were found in the less number but at the block and district level panchayat their presence was only notional. Hence, under the new Panchayati raj scheme special effort was made to increase their number at all three level not through cooption as it was done in the past but through the direct election.

Objectives and data sources

This paper, an attempt has been made specific objectives.

1. To examine the nature of participation of Dalits members in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka.

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2. To examine the extent to which the provision of reservation in Panchayats has been translated into meaningful participation.

The paper mainly based on the secondary data, collected from Karnataka State Election commission, Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj institution.

Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka

In 1956 when Karnataka came into being the state had inherited different local self-government laws. The Karnataka Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act, 1959, was only an at-tempt at uniform legislation, with no effort having been made to confer real powers and resources to the PRIs. A committee was recommended, with Kondaji Basappa as its chairman, to recommend a suitable structure for the state. The committee submitted its report in 1963 and a bill was introduced in 1964 to establish a three-tier structure of local self-government. Ramakrishna Hedge, who was then the minister for rural de-elopement, headed the select committee which recommended enhanced powers to the PRIs. In Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act 1993, is a severe blow to the ideal of transforming Panchayats into units of self-governments and invigorating them, as visualized in the 73rd Constitutional Amendments Act of 1992. Those who wanted to throw out the much acclaimed

Karnataka-ka model of decentralization (Enshrined in its 1983 act), have done it lock, stock and barrel and with a vengeance, notwithstanding the promises given on the floor of the Legislative Council by the government that suitable amends will be made in the course of time. What the state has got ultimately in the name of Panchayati raj is form without content.

According to the 1983 Act (GOK, 2007) [3], in Karnataka total gram Panchayats constitute 176 taluks and the latter constitute 30 districts. The districts form 4 administrative divisions. Only the gram Panchayats are the created administrative units for political participation and empowerment in rural areas. (SEC, GOK, 2005) [3].

Analysis and Discussion

It is worthwhile to mention that in the state acts provision for reservation of seats for SC and ST are mandatory. The PR Acts in several states provide for statutory representations for SC and ST members in proportion to their share in the population. A desirable feature of the Karnataka Act is the prescription of a minimum of 15 per cent seats for SC and 3 per cent seats for ST. It is because of the reservation facility alone that at all the three levels of the PRI there are large number of dalit and tribal representatives which was practically impossible be-fore the 73rd constitutional amendments.

Table 1: Elected Members of Gram Panchayat in Karnataka (2015), (District-wise)

Districts	SC	ST	BC-A	BC-B	General	total
Bangalore Urban	525	110	419	101	1214	2369
Bangalore Rural	432	135	231	56	904	1758
Bagalkote	595	285	569	146	1642	3237
Belagaum	1045	860	1693	436	4293	8327
Bellary	873	822	226	47	1710	3678
Bidar	839	528	212	35	1557	3171
Bijapur	869	217	665	172	1987	3910
Chamarajanagar	569	275	209	47	1046	2146
Chikkaballapur	680	358	155	23	1232	2448
Chikkamagalore	521	217	240	39	1064	2081
Chitradurga	146	680	234	50	1555	3365
Dakshina Kannada	316	277	783	197	1824	3397
Davanagere	781	500	305	59	1551	3196
Dharwad	186	160	443	116	1020	1925
Gadag	310	147	295	78	865	1695
Gulbarga	1174	256	504	128	2111	4183
Hassan	734	248	558	133	1800	3473
Haveri	457	332	524	136	1528	2967
Kodagu	174	175	194	46	627	1216
Kolar	874	236	222	45	1410	2787
Koppal	521	386	321	81	1348	2657
Mandya	566	228	828	209	1985	3816
Mysore	999	721	550	136	2326	4732
Raichur	736	812	210	48	1553	3359
Ramanagara	388	128	336	94	1006	1952
Shimoga	588	282	437	86	1464	2857
Tumkur	1112	544	764	202	2734	5356
Udupi	186	197	582	145	1288	2398
Uttar Kannada	305	241	590	127	1456	2719
Yadgir	596	320	207	49	1118	2290
Karnataka	18797	10687	13496	3267	74218	93465
	(20.11)	(11.4)	(14.4)	(3.5)	(51)	(100)

Source: GOK, Karnataka election commission, 2018

Note: Figures in the parentheses refer to percentage

Table 1 revealed that scheduled caste representatives in gram panchayats in year 2015 have 20.11 per cent. In during

the same period Scheduled tribes, Backward Class A, Backward Class B and general category representatives in gram

panchayats have 11.4, 14.4, 3.5 and 51 per cent respectively in Karnataka. Gulbarga district has highest contribute (1174)

representatives and Chitradurga district has lowest comprise (146) of scheduled caste gram panchayat members in 2015.

Table 2: Elected Members of Gram Panchayat in Karnataka (2005), (District-wise)

Sl.No	Name of District	Total No. of GPs	Total	SC	ST	BCA	BCB	General
1	Bangalore (u)	110	2426	557	120	650	158	941
2	Bangalore (R)	228	3808	835	266	1031	239	1437
3	Chitradurga	185	3223	761	629	849	188	796
4	Davanagere	230	3267	722	487	851	229	978
5	Kolar	307	4960	1387	555	1341	310	1367
6	Shimoga	260	2804	556	276	693	240	1039
7	Tumkur	321	5362	1066	522	1464	330	1980
8	Chikkamagalur	226	2405	538	241	602	193	831
9	Dakshina Kannada	203	3275	297	233	868	220	1657
10	Udupi	146	2398	183	174	629	165	1247
11	Hassan	258	3711	716	266	984	252	1493
12	Kodagu	98	1250	168	149	323	97	513
13	Mandya	232	3835	543	235	1042	241	1774
14	Mysore	235	4300	905	620	1167	253	1355
15	Chamarajanagar	120	2061	523	250	563	123	602
16	Belgaum	485	8475	1022	814	2229	585	3825
17	Bijapur	199	3626	721	207	980	223	1495
18	Bagalkote	161	2961	495	243	802	184	1237
19	Dharwad	127	1863	159	148	481	136	939
20	Gadag	106	1624	266	139	429	112	678
21	Haveri	208	2963	404	330	773	219	1237
22	Uttar Kannada	206	2622	269	217	669	206	1261
23	Bellary	189	3405	697	740	907	214	847
24	Bidar	175	2972	660	434	803	192	883
25	Gulbarga	337	5926	1479	516	1608	359	1964
26	Raichur	164	3276	650	725	868	202	831
27	Koppal	134	2604	418	344	710	158	974
	Total	5650	91402	16997 (18.6)	9880 (10.8)	24316 (26.6)	6028 (6.6)	34181 (37)

Karnataka has consisted of 5,650 gram panchayats and 91,402 representatives have elected in 2005 gram panchayats election. During the year 2014-15 gram panchayat election has elected 93,465 members; it was drastic change over the 10 years. Table 2 revealed that scheduled caste representatives in gram panchayats in year 2005 have 18.6 per cent. In during the same period Scheduled tribes, Backward Class A, Back-ward Class B and general category representatives in gram panchayats have 10.8, 26.6, 6.6 and 37 per cent respectively in Karnataka. Gulbarga district has highest contribute (1479) representatives and Dharwad district has lowest comprise (159) of scheduled caste gram panchayat members in 2015.

Conclusion

Due to 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution, over a million of Dalit's men and women have coming forward for the first time to hold public office and to participate in public activities, making their presence in the power struggles once dominated by the upper caste. This has been the most effective formal step towards political empowerment of Dalits. There are many instances where Dalit have been self-motivated to fight an election. In several instances, the Gram Sabha has persuaded Dalit representatives with leadership potential to stand for elections. In Karnataka Dalit representatives have elected 19 per cent in 2005 it has increased rapidly to 20 per cent in 2015 in gram panchayat elections. It indicates that among the Dalit people to awareness of political power and enjoys them in Karnataka local governance.

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