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THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF WOMEN PANCHAYAT MEMBERS IN GULBARGA DISTRICT: A SAMPLE SURVEY

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Abstract:

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provided opportunities to women to participate in politics at different levels of panchayats. As such, women are equally participating in root level politics. The main aim of such political participation is gender equality and caste equality. Hence, information on social aspects of women panchayat members was collected through interview schedule from total 120 women panchayat members in Gulbarga district. The study revealed that majority of the respondents is of middle age group and have middle income. Surprisingly, even though women are playing a significant role in village and towns as panchayat members, still majority of them have not got equal status in their families.

INTRODUCTION

The concept and philosophy of village panchayats were reinterpreted and redefined in the context of a modern state committed to democracy, social welfare and social development. As per the objective, principles of the Constitution (Article 40), the state is expected to take steps to organize village Panchayats and attribute to them the function of serving as units of self-government. Besides the directive, the phenomenal increase in the planned developmental activities after independence also brought home the need for the village panchayat as an integral part of decentralized administration (Mehta, 1975).

Panchayati Raj in India owes its origins to the Community development Programme initiated in 1952. The Panchayati Raj Institutions were established in India with a lot of excitement and euphoria in 1959 based on the recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. Earlier, the rural socio-political life was upper caste male dominated and women were mere voiceless spectators in Panchayats. After enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act the decentralization of power and the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are not only empowering the people at the grassroots but also enhancing the democratic functioning, as true institutions of people. The Amendment gave opportunity to the scheduled castes, scheduled castes, other backward castes and women to participate in Panchayat administration at different levels.

The constitutional mandate making one-third of the seats in the Panchayat reserved for women has brought drastic changes in the male dominated decision making traditional bodies. The rise of women leadership in male dominated politics at the grass root level is a significant development in post independent India, It is noteworthy that there are more than 1 million elected women Panchayat members in the country which is 42 per cent of the total elected Panchayat members (Parsa, 2006).

The panchayat system in Karnataka consists of three-tier, that is Gram Panchayats at village level, Taluka Panchayats at Taluka level and Zilla Panchayat at district level of administration. The following table shows the caste-wise distribution of Gram Panchayat Members in Gulbarga district.

**Table No. 1. Caste-wise Distribution of Members of Gram Panchayat
as on 2011-12**

Taluk	Total			Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe			Other Backward Caste		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Afzalpur	236	176	412	41	29	70	02	22	24	87	51	138
Aland	377	296	673	93	69	162	02	40	42	134	91	225
Chincholi	292	219	511	102	76	178	02	26	28	102	62	164
Chittapur	355	281	636	97	77	174	01	35	36	126	83	209
Gulbarga	367	279	646	119	78	197	02	36	38	128	82	210
Jewargi	313	246	559	60	52	112	08	35	43	115	72	187
Sedam	253	174	426	70	47	117	02	23	25	93	51	144
Total	2193	1671	3864	582	428	1010	19	217	236	785	492	1277

Similarly, the caste-wise distribution of Taluka Panchayat members as on 2011-12 is shown in the following table.

**Table No. 2. Caste-wise distribution of Taluka Panchayat Members
in 2011-12**

Taluk	Total			Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe			Other Backward Caste		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Afzalpur	07	10	17	1	2	3	--	1	1	2	2	4
Aland	12	15	27	03	04	07	01	01	02	02	02	04
Chincholi	09	12	21	03	04	07	--	01	01	01	01	02
Chittapur	11	14	25	03	04	07	--	01	01	01	01	02
Gulbarga	12	14	26	04	04	08	--	01	01	02	02	04
Jewargi	10	12	22	02	02	04	--	01	01	03	03	06
Sedam	07	10	17	02	03	05	--	01	01	01	01	02
Total	68	87	155	18	23	41	--	07	07	13	14	27

The caste-wise distribution of Zilla Panchayat Members in Gulbarga district as on 2011-12 is shown in the following table.

**Table No. 3. Caste-wise Distribution of Zilla Panchayat Members
as on 2011-12**

Taluk	Total			Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe			Other Backward Caste		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Afzalpur	04	01	05	01	--	01	--	--	--	01	--	01
Aland	02	05	07	01	01	02	--	--	--	--	02	02
Chincholi	03	03	06	01	01	02	--	--	--	--	01	01
Chittapur	03	04	07	01	01	02	01	--	01	01	--	01
Gulbarga	03	04	07	01	01	02	--	--	--	01	01	02
Jewargi	02	04	06	--	01	01	--	--	--	--	01	01
Sedam	03	02	05	--	01	01	--	--	--	01	--	01
Total	20	23	43	05	06	11	01	--	01	04	05	09

The present study is made to explore the social profile of the women panchayat members in Gulbarga district. The particulars of the study are discussed as under.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study is made:

1. To know the statistics of participation of women in panchayats at different levels in Gulbarga district;
2. To study the social aspects such as age, income, marital status, caste, etc of the women panchayat members; and
3. To see whether the women panchayat members have got equal status in their family.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS:

The author visited the Zilla Panchayat Office to collect the statistical data related to the women panchayat members in Gulbarga district. After collecting the details about the women panchayat members, a survey was made using interview schedule and the interview schedule consists of questions related to social aspects such as age, education, income, marital status, caste, etc. A sample survey of total 120 women panchayat members is made and the collected primary data is analyzed and discussed as under.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

1. Age-wise distribution of Respondents:

As discussed already, about 120 women panchayat members are selected to conduct the present study, the age of the respondents plays an important role in knowing their aims and aspirations towards betterment of their areas. It is generalized that the younger members can concentrate on the modern facilities such as road, telecommunication, conveyance, women's education and employment and such other facilities, but the older people may concentrate on the other aspects such as drinking water, sanitation etc. The age-wise distribution of the respondents covered under the study is shown as under.

Table No. 4. Age-wise distribution of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 Years	--	--
26 to 35 Years	07	5.83
36 to 45 Years	38	31.67
46 to 55 Years	40	33.33
Above 55 Years	35	29.16
Total	120	100

Of the total 120 (100%) respondents, 40 (33.33%) are between the age group of 46 to 55 years followed by, 38 (31.67%) are from 26 to 35 years, about 35 (29.16%) are of above 55 years of age and the remaining 07 (5.83%) are of between 26 to 35 years. The age of the respondents shows that majority of the respondents are of above 45 years and it proves that the experience shows major role in the management of panchayats.

2. Education:

The educational qualifications have great impact on the level of understanding and knowledge of the respondents. As such education plays an important role in deciding the aims and aspirations of the panchayat members in development of rural areas. The collected data on the education of the respondents is shown in the following table.

Table No. 5. Education of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	30	25.00
Primary/ Secondary	35	29.16
Under-Graduate	41	34.16
Graduate	14	11.67
PG/ Research	--	--
Total	120	100

It is surprising to note from the above table that none of the women panchayat members have completed post-graduate or research degrees. Specifically, 41 (34.16%) have completed their under-graduation followed by, 35 (29.16%) have completed primary or secondary education, about 30 (25.00%) are illiterates and the remaining 14 (11.67%) have completed their graduation. It was generalized that majority of the women panchayat members have completed under-graduation or completed only primary or secondary education.

3. Religion of the Respondents:

The religion is an impacting factor for the respondents in their social and religious activities. It also impacts as a means of representation of the masses in their rural areas. As such information was collected from the respondents on the religion of the respondents and presented in the following table.

Table No. 6. Religion of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	85	70.83
Muslims	17	14.17
Christians	--	--
Buddhist/ Jain	18	15.00
Others	--	--
Total	120	100

It is observed from the above table that majority of the respondents that is 85 (70.83%) are from Hindu religion followed by, 18 (15.00%) are from Buddhist or Jains and the remaining 17 (14.17%) are from Muslim religion. It is interesting to note that none of the respondents are Christians.

4. Caste of the Respondents:

In order to promote the social justice and gender justice, now state and central governments have already passed several legislations to provide caste and gender representation in the local bodies such as Municipalities or panchayats. As such to know about the caste-wise representation the information was collected from the respondents and presented in the following table.

Table No. 7. Caste of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	41	34.17
Scheduled Tribe	13	10.83
Other Backward Classes	34	28.33
Others/ General	32	26.66
Total	120	100

The above table made it clear that the caste-wise distribution of the respondents shows that of the total 120 respondents, 41 (34.17%) are from Scheduled Caste, followed by, 34 (28.33%) are from Other Backward Classes, about 32 (26.66%) are from Others or General classes and the remaining 13 (10.83%) are from Scheduled Tribe. It is observed that compared to other classes, the representation of the scheduled tribe is less in women panchayat members.

5. Average Monthly Income:

Income determines the economic power of any family. It also considered as standard of living factor of a family. As such the information on the average monthly income of the respondents was collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 8. Average Monthly Income

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs. 2000	04	3.33
Rs. 2001 to Rs. 3500	11	9.17
Rs. 3501 to Rs. 5000	33	27.50
Rs. 5001 to Rs. 7500	56	46.67
Rs. 7501 to Rs. 10000	09	7.50
Above Rs. 10000	07	5.83
Total	120	100

The income of the respondents shows that a major portion that is 56 (46.67%) are between monthly income of Rs. 5001 to Rs. 7500 followed by, 33 (27.50%) are between income level of Rs. 3501 to Rs. 5000, about 11 (9.17%) are between the income group of Rs. 2001 to Rs. 3500, about 07 (5.83%) have monthly income above Rs. 10000 and the remaining only 04 (3.33%) have income below Rs. 2000. It was observed that majority of the respondents are from economically middle class families.

6. Occupation:

Occupation like income plays an important role in the economic status of the respondents. The occupations of rural people mainly includes the own agriculture, agricultural labour, industrial labour, business, self-employment, informal sector employment, etc. The collected information on the occupation of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 9. Occupation

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture (Own)	46	38.33
Agricultural Labour	19	15.83
Industrial Labour	24	20.00
Business/ Self-employment	18	15.00
Informal Sector	13	10.83
Others	--	--
Total	120	100

It is observed from the above table that majority that is 46 (38.33%) are engaged in their own agriculture, followed by 24 (20.00%) are industrial labourers, about 19 (15.83%) are agricultural labourers, about 18 (15.00%) are engaged in business or self-employment and the remaining 13 (10.83%) are working in informal sector. The rural areas are predominantly covered by farmers or agricultural community and as such there are many women managing panchayats from agricultural families.

7. Marital Status:

Marital status is most important as the women in the society has to play dual role that is to look after her family as well as their occupation and if they have entered politics, then that also become additional responsibility to them. As such the information on the marital status of the respondents is collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 10. Marital Status

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried/ Single	--	--
Married/ Living with Husband	106	88.33
Widows	12	10.00
Divorcee/ Separated	02	1.67
Total	120	100

The above table made it clear that an overwhelming majority of the respondents that is 106 (88.33%) are married and living with their husbands followed by 12 (10.00%) are widows and the remaining only 02 (1.67%) are divorcees or separated women. Among the women panchayat members, the women who are married and living with their husbands are getting major portion in the gram panchayats compared to the single women.

8. Satisfaction in Social Life:

Overall satisfaction in life is essential for every human being. As such the information on the satisfaction in social life of the women panchayat members covered under the study was collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 11. Satisfaction in Social Life

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Satisfied	67	55.83
Satisfied to Greater extent	53	44.16
Not Satisfied	--	--
Total	120	100

It is disclosed from the above table that 67 (55.83%) are fully satisfied, whereas the remaining 53 (44.16%) are satisfied to a greater extent in their social life.

9. Husband respect Equally in Family:

As discussed already, even though educated, employed or hold good position like panchayat member, the women have lower or secondary status in their families. As such it was asked to the respondents that whether they are getting equal respect from their husbands and the collected responses are shown as under.

Table No. 12. Husband respect Equally in Family

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	69	57.50
No	51	42.50
Total	120	100

It was observed from the above table that majority that is 69 (57.50%) of the respondents have expressed that their husbands are giving the respect to them equally, whereas the remaining 51 (42.50%) have not agreed to the same.

CONCLUSION:

The social profile of the women panchayat members revealed that majority of the women panchayat members are of middle age and low educated. Monthly income of women panchayat members shows that majority of these respondents are of middle income group and agriculture and allied occupations are family occupations of these respondents. It is surprising to note that even though women are functioning as panchayat members, nearly half of them have not got equal status in their families.

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