



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL BALLARI-ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Exercising voting rights during elections is one of the important political activities of the people. Participation of women in this political activity is almost equal to men. Political participation is not just casting vote. It includes wide range of other activities- like membership of political party, electoral campaigning, attending party meetings, demonstrations, communication with leaders, holding party positions, contesting elections, membership in representative bodies, influencing decision making and other related activities. It also means participation in the exercise of power, the power to effectively influence decision-making processes and policies, to reverse the existing situation wherever they are disadvantageous and to bring about necessary social changes.

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INTRODUCTION

In the male dominated Indian society, the participation of women in democratic institutions is not up to the expected level. The women of the country should be involved in the decision making process to protect their interests while decisions are made. The importance of women's political participation for a viable democratic polity is being increasingly realized in all corners of the world. Women constitute nearly 50 percent of the total population in any country and if it has adopted a democratic system it cannot run successfully with just half of the population participating in it. Moreover, women as a group have problems, demands and aspirations, which cannot be aptly expressed by men. The problem issues of the people in any country such as education, employment, health and nutrition besides the country's foreign policy, relationships with other countries, issues of war and peace, science and technology, protection of the environment do need a women's angle because they will affect women too, in a particular manner.

Background of the study

The empowerment of women could be brought about only if it is based on granting them basic economic rights, educational rights and political rights. Thus, it is an imperative necessity to provide opportunity to women in the decision-making processes at all levels to make empowerment of women a meaningful reality.

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Women constitute an integral part of our society and raising the status and education of women has already been stressed in our constitution through Fundamental Rights and various Directive Principles of State Policy. They have been provided with the right to an adequate means of livelihood and equal pay with that of men for their work. Women workers have also been provided for health care and maternity relief. Even in the Fundamental Duties, stress has been laid on the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Many laws and judicial decisions have restored the dignity of women. To protect their rights, measures have been taken to give them share in the family property. For their emancipation from cruel practices, laws have been enacted. To empower women, reservation of one-third of seats through the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts, 1991, 1992 for them has been made in the Panchayats and Municipalities. There is a similar proposal for reservation of seats for them in Parliament and in the State Legislatures.

Statement of the problem

The political decision making in the rural areas is male dominated. The women in rural areas are given least importance in the decision making process. They are involving in the democratic process on the instructions given by the male members and do not take or make decisions on their own. The traditions, customs, blind beliefs still dominate the functioning of the rural society that restrict the women and they are made to confine to the four walls of the home. Without the effective political participation of the women there cannot be development because the women nearly constitute half of the population.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several significant research studies are reviewed as stated below:

- Norman D. Palmer (1976), Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience.
- Hem Lata Swarup, *et.al.*, (1997), Women's Political Engagement in India: Some Critical Issues.
- Kalpana Roy, (1999), Women in Indian Politics.
- Chattopadhyay, R. and Duflo, E., (2001), Women's Leadership and Policy Decisions: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment in India.
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- Maarten VenKlaveren Kia Tjdens (2012), Empowering Women in Work in Developing Countries.
- B.Ramaswamy (2013), Women's Movement in India.
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- Mona Lena Krook & Par Zetterberg (2015), Gender Quotas and Women's Representation: New Directions in Research.

Need for the study

Women constitute nearly half (50 %) of the population of our globe. It is also well known that ours is a male dominated society, but slowly a lot of changes are being witnessed due to lot of reforms in political, social and economic spheres. So, in this pretext it is important to know that to how far and to what extent the rural women who constitute about 80% of the women population of our country are aware and are actively participating in the decision making process which affect their lives. But, the available studies and research in this area are not up to the mark and only very few research scholars have focussed on this area in our country. So, in this study an attempt is made to analyse the extent of Political Participation Of Rural Women In Bellary Rural.

In our country about 80 per cent of the women live in rural areas. In this study it is focussed on discovering the major causes of exclusion of women in several spheres since ancient period and discuss the measures taken by the independent Indian government to include women especially in the political sphere and offer suggestions to overcome the hindrances of effective political participation of women in the study area.

Significance of the problem

The proposed study provides an understanding of how gender operates in rural areas of India in general and Karnataka in particular with respect to women's socio-economic and political mobility as mediated by dimensions such as age, education, socio-economic status and household dynamics. Through qualitative inquiry and a gender-based analysis, this study reveals the discrepancies between female and male perceptions concerning persistently low levels of female

political participation, and in turn informs future directives to national and state policy makers working towards encouraging women's active involvement in socio-economic and political spheres of our country.

By far, the bulk of evaluations of interventions aiming to improve women's political participation examine the introduction of quotas. The relative ease with which it is possible to measure progress has increased the popularity of quotas as a transformative mechanism. Further, much of the evaluation available, particularly on the impact of political quotas, is based on research in India. This is largely because of the design of its reservation (quota) system, which provides a natural experiment. There are also few rigorous evaluations of the impact of interventions, which have either directly or indirectly addressed women's political participation. While this study makes an effort to identify 'traditional' evaluations, including randomised controlled trials, it largely identifies interventions more commonly found in comparative and single case studies, lessons learned documents, and technical guidance documents.

Relevance of the study

In our country about 80% of the women live in rural areas. So, this study attempts to investigate the conceptual and material bases of women's historical exclusion from the formal arena of politics; analyze strategies adopted in our country to promote women's political awareness and participation in national, state and local arena; identify internal and external conditions and factors that facilitate or hinder the creation of an enabling environment for women's political empowerment; and finally draw policy recommendations for the national, state and local actors. The proposed study is relevant and practically applicable in our country because the development context of women's political participation at the community and national levels should be reviewed from time to time in order to make necessary policies by the Central, state and local Governments for an active involvement of women in political sphere and particularly their share in development processes and outcomes through decision making process in the political arena of our country.

Objectives of the study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To study the historical position of rural women in our country.
2. To highlight the present position of rural women in political, social, economic and cultural aspects in Karnataka with special reference to Bellary district.
3. To examine the causes responsible for low-level of participation of rural women in political sphere with special reference to the study area.
4. To analyse the extent of political awareness and participation of rural women in the study area.
5. To explore the constraints faced by the women in performing their role in the political sphere and to suggest appropriate measures to overcome them.

Ballari Rural population – Ballari Taluka, Karnataka State

Ballari Rural is located in Ballari District, Karnataka State, India. The total number of families residing in this village is 167. According to the Indian Constitution of India and the Panchyati Raj Act of Karnataka the village is being

administered by a President and is an elected representative of Ballari Taluka and indirectly elected to the post of President for a fixed term of five years by the directly elected representatives of the Village.¹

2011 Census Data of Ballari Rural **Table 1**

Sl.No:	Particulars	Male	Female	Total
1.	Total number of houses	----	----	167
2.	Population	356	340	696
3.	Child (0-6)	60	62	122
4.	Schedule Caste	164	128	292
5.	Schedule Tribe	54	52	106
6.	Literacy	56.08 %	40.65 %	48.61 %
7.	Total Workers	205	129	334
8.	Main Worker	203	000	334
9.	Marginal Worker	000	000	000

Source: Census of India 2011.²

As mentioned in the above Table 4.1 the total number of houses in the study area are 167. The total population is 696 and among them the male population is 356 and the female population is 340. The child population is 122 and among them 60 are male and 62 are female. The total Scheduled Caste population is 292 and among them 164 is male population and 128 are females. The Scheduled Tribe population is 106 and among them 54 are males and 52 are females. The total literacy rate of the village is 48.61 per cent and among them the male literacy is 56.08 per cent and 40.65 per cent is female literacy rate. The total working population in the study area is 334 and among them 205 are male workers and 129 are female workers. The main workers are 334 and among them 203 are male workers.³

Nature and scope of the study

The study is empirical in nature. The research design used for this study is of descriptive and analytical in nature particularly to assess the extent of political awareness and participation of rural women in the study area.

Scope of the study

The geographical area of the present study is limited to Bellary rural. Perhaps, to overcome the wide area of Bellary/Ballari rural, the random sampling tool was adopted in selecting the respondents. The important parameters that were taken into consideration with regard to the rural women are the socio-economic and political dimensions. The population of the study is one hundred. The caste factor analysis and its role in political participation of women in the study area is the main criteria of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Hundred rural women in the study area were interviewed for the collection of primary data by visiting each household and collecting information from the available women in the study area comprising different categories and also different communities to represent the whole scenario of the studied area. The methodology adopted for the study is the case study method and it is based on empirical investigation.

Data collection

The primary data required to complete the study was collected by using both the structured interview schedule and the secondary data was collected by referring various related

works, text books, journals, annual reports, census reports, government official records-both published and un-published.

The purpose of the questionnaire method in this study refers to a device for securing answers to a set of pre-determined questions by using a form of interview schedule and intends to the technique applied to a set of questions which are asked and filled in by the researcher in a face-to-face situation with a respondent.

Tools of analysis

The below mentioned research tools are used in the study to collect the required primary data source from the respondents in the study area.

List of the tools proposed to be used in the study area **Table 2**

Respondents	Survey tools	Sample
Rural women comprising different castes from the selected study area	1. Structured Interview schedule method	100 respondents
	2. Participatory observation method	
	3. Personal observation method	
Grand Total		= 100 respondents

Data Processing

The collected data is coded with the help of coding key into code sheets and the coded data is processed over computer to get bar graphs, pie graphs, percentage frequencies, tables, charts, counts and tabulation.

Statistical design of the study

The list of the villages and number of respondents in Bellary district has been selected for the study is presented below:

Coverage of sample respondents in the study area **Table 3**

Ballari District		
Ballari revenue sub-division		
Sl.No.	Name of the study area	No. of respondents (Age: 18-60 years and above)
1.	Ballari rural	100
		Total number of respondents = 100

Table 3 reveals that the total number of respondents in the study are 100 members.

Age wise distribution of respondents **Table 4**

N=50

Age group	% of respondents
Youth (18-30)	47
Middle age (31-60)	43
Senior Citizens (61 & Above)	10
Total	100

Source: Computed from the primary data

Table 4 reveals that the percentage of the respondents considered for the study based on age criteria i.e., Youth (18-30) 47 per cent, Middle age (31-60) 43 per cent, Senior Citizens (61 & Above) 10 per cent respectively.

Caste wise distribution of respondents **Table 5**

N=50

Caste	% of respondents
Upper caste	40
Other Backward communities	32
Scheduled Caste	15
Scheduled Tribes	13

Total	100
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Source: Computed from the primary data

Table 5 reveals that the percentage of the respondents considered for the study based on caste i.e., Upper caste 40 per cent, Other backward communities 32 per cent, Scheduled Caste 15 per cent, Scheduled Tribes 13 per cent respectively.

Findings of the study **Table 6**

Sl.No.	Name of the Study area	Political Participation Of rural women respondents
1.	Ballari Rural	38 %

Source: Computed from the primary data

The findings of the study reveal that only 38 per cent of the women have shown interest in the political environment in the study area and the rest 52 per cent of them are taking their political decisions based on the family instructions or a elderly male member of the family.

Issues identified in the study area

The issues that are identified in the study area for the low level of political participation of women are due to:

- Excessive male domination in political aspects of women.
- Traditions, customs, blind beliefs and so on are still being followed by rural population.
- Women education is not given so importance as compared to men.
- Women are considered as family respect and if anything happens to them such as ill treatment is considered as disrespectful to the entire family and so they are usually confined to the four walls of the home.
- Political parties are dominated by men so the family members are always in fear about the safety and security of their women and do not allow their women to freely participate in the group of the political parties.
- Political parties are struggling among themselves to grab high posts within the party and during such instances several unknown incidents happen such as fighting physically, abusing, disrespecting and so on and to avoid such instances the women are not sent to the meetings/campaigns/discussions of the political parties.
- Women from weaker sections are not given proper respect in the political parties and due to this the women belonging to the weaker sections hesitate to participate in the democratic process and in the political parties effectively.

Suggestions

To overcome the drawbacks the following suggestions have been recommended for an active participation of women in political arena of the study area:

- Traditions, customs, beliefs, that hinder the progress and development of women should be eradicated through education and generating awareness among women and men.
- Implementation of policies that benefit women.
- Adoption of feminine perspective to the process of planning, formulation and execution of rural development programmes.

- Electing women at all levels even to non reserved constituencies.
- Ensure and motivate for 100 per cent participation of women at the grassroots level.
- Dignity towards women by men should be encouraged.
- Acknowledging their socio-economic security by men in the society.
- Providing a platform to gain experience, overcome fear, building self-confidence and breaking the shackles of patriarchy and orthodoxy.
- Political awareness camps should be organized at all levels.
- Gender equality should be acknowledged in our society.
- Women should be respected when they are present at the meetings/camps/discussions of the political parties.
- Women in the political parties should be given preference to represent issues in their wards or constituency.
- Socio-Economic empowerment of the women should be monitored and due measures should be undertaken to uplift them with a holistic approach.

CONCLUSION

The representation of women in the political arena is low compared to the urban areas. Their participation is limited to the voting, participation in campaign for the sake of daily payment has been identified and they strictly take the instructions of the male members of the family. The women in the study area do not participate on their own and every decision of theirs is dominated by the family. Above this they are least bothered about the organization, structure, functioning of the democratic process in the study area. Their mere participation in politics is limited to casting vote and not enforce or represent their demands in return for voting any political party. It is mainly a caste event and not rational decision as expected by a modern democratic process. The women with high socio-economic status is also playing a key role in their political participation as compared to the women with low socio-economic status in the study area. Increasing women's political participation requires a long-term strategy for changing long-standing situation of keeping women out of politics and legislations are not enough to do so. While quota considers a temporary remedy and is not a sustainable strategy. However, it is recognized as one among ways to create radical measures to achieve the critical mass of women's representation needed to promote a new culture of balance representation of women in parliaments and political parties. The social and economic status of women has significant influences to their participation in politics and elected bodies, due to their higher chances to have wider access to fund for covering the high costs of election, so they have to developed socially and economically. Women are invariably performing without the same access to financial support for campaigning, and without the powerful network support of men who have been in charge of political arena till date. Though the participation of women in politics is, however, slightly increasing, it is not to the level of satisfaction. In fact, from the study it is revealed that women empowerment can be ensured through women participation at various stages of political

spheres. Political participation of women along with upliftment of levels of education should be improved on par with male counterparts for all round progress.

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