

## **TRIBAL WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A STUDY OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this paper is to study problem and prospects of schedule Tribe Women in local governance with reference to Village- Kuchut, Dist. Burdwan district of West Bengal state. This paper is based on primary data; the data have been collected from interview schedule method. The study covers total 300 respondents as sample size across Village- Kuchut, Dist. Burdwan District of West Bengal State. Finally the study reveals that, it has opened many opportunities to them in terms of participation and to fight against negative impact of patriarchy. Though, schedule tribe women facing problems still she has so many opportunities to grow. So, here participatory democracy has great significance in the process of women empowerment.

**Keywords:** *Participatory democracy, PRIs, Tribal Women*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

True democracy is a system which in Abraham Lincoln's words is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. While most of the democracies have given a system which has government elected by all the sections of societies, it is debatable whether the government comprises of all the diverse sections and importantly whether the government works for all the people of the democracy. In this context, the problem of low participation of women is of special concern for democracies and without changing that true democracy can never be achieved. Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither inclusive nor democratic.

Including women, especially in local governments are an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies. Since women have different needs and perspectives on social and political issues, it is important to involve women in governments to incorporate all of the

societal viewpoints in policy and decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in household and community work and hence well aware of real issues faced by common people. This gives them insight and perspective which can be instrumental in sustainable overall development. The presence of women in local governments serves as an encouragement for other women to enter diverse professions and leads to breaking stereotypes of women's roles in society and public space. People had gained confidence in women as good public administrators and local government representatives after seeing women making a positive difference in other people's life.

The society acknowledges the sincerity and commitment of women to their duties and their resistance to criminalization of politics. The measurement of women political participation is essential to identify the need of policy intervention to improve the same. India had understood the need to record gender statistics on political participation since its independence. The process of capturing women participation at the local level is an evolving area and efforts are being done to improve the present infrastructure.

Local governments have no relevance if they are not responsive, transparent, participatory and accountable to the people and in the Indian context, the most deprived sections of society such as the dalits, tribals, and women. It is said that 'politics is about power', but democratic politics is and should be about bringing power down to the people or empowering them. Decentralization therefore may be defined as the empowerment of the local population through the empowerment of local governments, (LGs). The constitution defines Panchayats as "institutions of self-government" [Article 243 (d)] and requires the state legislature to create such institutions. Tremendous political opportunities emerge from the extension of participatory democracy through the institutions of village Panchayat, Gram sabha, and affirmative provisions for dalits, tribals, and women and so on. Real improvement in the self-esteem of the vulnerable sections of society can come only through a process of meaningful participation. The nature of the accountability arrangements is also expected to move downward to the people rather than to the bureaucratic superior officers. The efficient use of local resources through decentralized spatial planning mandated in the constitution is an important means to promote economic development. Enhancing the quality of public service delivery, be it primary school, primary health care, drinking water supply, sanitation and so on can be ensured only through citizen's involvement and participation. This is an important means to promote horizontal equity in a country known for its widespread disparities in the level of endowment and development. Within the context of rural governance structures, work was done on three main levels to increase confidence and participation of tribal people in local governance: a) democratic education for children, resulting in the "March for Citizen's Participation in the Electoral Process"; b) political awareness training for youth; and c) the formation of mass level organizations so that they may realize their collective strength and have confidence that collectively they can change the world. A significant move in this regard is the adoption policy to enlarge the base of political participation of women and Tribal women

in PRIs. Attention is drawn to the West Bengal Panchayat Raj policy Act of 1983. This Act is unarguably the first of its kind in the history of evolution of PRIs then formulated. This reservation was extended to the posts of presidents participation through increased political representation 25% of reservation to women was raised to 33% in a span of 10 years from 1983 to 1993 witnessed an important amendment to the constitution of India. The amendment namely 73rd Constitutional amendment provided for 33% reservation to women at all levels of PRIs covering the rural India. To see that women representatives perform as leaders of these organizations 33% of the posts of Member, President and Vice-President was earmarked for women representatives.

Here, the main objective of this paper is to study the participatory democracy, political participation of Tribal women and problems faced by the Tribal Women after entering into the politics. This paper is based on primary data and study conducted in Village- Kuchut, Dist. Burdwan District of West Bengal State.

**Influencing factors enter into politics by Tribal Women:** The information collected regarding entrance to politics by tribal women respondents with their own interest. They said different opinion regarding their interest in entering politics. The study reveals that majority of the respondents of 95% (286) entered politics with their own interest and only 5 % (14) respondents have entered politics without their own interest. The data clearly reveals that PRIs system has given the direct and active participation for Tribal women in local governance in study area.

**Problems pertaining to political participation of tribal women compare to other women:** At present women reservation policy provided opportunities to tribal women to enter politics as compare to other women. But sometime of problems of tribals different from general women; it may be cultural, religious, or social. We have collected information pertaining to problems of tribal women compare to general women.

## **II. LITERATURE SURVEY**

Post Gandhi, India experienced centralization of planning which resulted in higher inequality in political decision making at the various levels. While Government was deeply concerned of issues of gender equality, women were not always a part of such decision making. Although, India has seen women participating in politics as the longest serving Prime minister, as chief ministers of various states, members in national parliament and state legislative assemblies in large numbers, yet the occurrence of such events has not been commensurate to their population. In order to enable better women participation in active politics, authorities had been trying to put in reservation for women but have not been successful in true terms due to non-support from some of the regional parties. Back in history, one of the prominent member of freedom struggle, Sarojini Naidu rejected reservation for women, citing that women are not weak, timid, meek. She claimed that the demand for granting

preferential treatment to women is an admission on her part of her inferiority and there has been no need for such a thing in India as the women have always been by the side of men. The issue of women's reservation again came to limelight in 1973 with voices recommending reservation for women in at least one third of the seats and eventually statutory women's panchayats at the village level were recommended to take care of the neglect of women in rural development programs through 73rd & 74th constitutional amendments in 1993.

Keeping the above analysis, literature pertaining to the present topic has been reviewed and analysed here. A study conducted by Manikyamba, P(1989) entitled 'Women in Panchayat Raj Structures' is an examination of the working of PRIs in general, the role of women as beneficiaries and benefactors in the socio-economic and political process of development, assessing the role of women presiding officers of the PRIs. She was of the view that given the opportunity, talented and interested women can play very effective leadership role politics.

Sivanna, N (1990) in an empirical study dealing with the PRS under the Act of 1959 argues that, the involvement of women members in PRIs was not up to the expected mark. He observes that, although there are statutory provisions to ensure their representation, their socio-economic conditions are not conducive to their effective involvement.

Chandra Sekhara and Anand Inbanathan (1991)'s study of Women Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat Members in West Bengal revealed that the reservation of seats for women has given them an opportunity to take an active part in the political processes of the state and rural areas in particular.

Susheela Kaushik (1993): "Study of Women and Panchayati Raj"- The Author has given detailed information regarding women and Panchayati Raj. In the first part, she has presented women in the election process, and the problems and kind of support in terms of remedial measures to overcome etc. She has stated the formal and informal process of women in politics. In the second part she has analysed historical account of P.R.Is and positions of women and changes in women positions. She has observed that the 73rd Constitution Amendment had guaranteed representation of women in the elections at all the three tier structure of P.R.Is. It was also found that the states of the panchayats like Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala had witnessed good number of women turn out as voters as well as candidates not for the reserved constituencies but even for the general constituencies.

The book Panchayati raj in India (Rural local Self Government) written by B.S. Khanna (1994), is an extensive book which analyses the development of panchayati raj system. In the first part the author gives the general review of the development of panchayat raj system particularly in the national perspective like heritage, Self Government during the first decades, and community development programme, genesis of panchayati raj and growth of the panchayat raj and Ashok Mehta Committee

Recommendations, present position of PRIs and also conferment of Constitutional status, steps towards the implementation of panchayat raj system in India. In the second part the author reveals that panchayati raj in the various states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, West Bengal, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, the author has concentrated on West Bengal and he has made 2 case study also like Tumkur and D.K. In West Bengal rural environment, panchayatraj in first phase, main features, Mandal Panchayat Samiti, and also ZillaParishad, and system of work of the panchayatiraj and also reveals the dissolution of P.R. Bodies.

In the third part the author is giving the description of conclusion and some suggestions and he divided the states like First Category and Second category states and Third category states, while concluding he has given some suggestions which may be incorporated as measures in the future for achieving desirable improvements in panchayats.

SusheelaKaushika's(1995) study of PRI in action and the challenges to women's role focuses on specially the experience of women in election process, the hardship and obstacles they undergo and the kind of support in terms of remedial measures to overcome etc.

### **III. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this paper is to study problem and prospects of schedule Tribe Women in local governance with reference to Village- Kuchut, Dist. Burdwan district of West Bengal state. This paper is based on primary data, the data have been collected from interview schedule method. The study covers total 300 respondent as sample size across Village- Kuchut, Dist. Burdwan District of West Bengal State.

### **IV. INFLUENCING FACTORS ENTER INTO POLITICS**

The information collected regarding entrance to politics by tribal women respondents with their own interest. They said different opinion regarding their interest in entering politics. The study reveals that majority of the respondents of 95% (286) entered politics with their own interest and only 5%(14) respondents have entered politics without their own interest. The data clearly reveals that PRIs system has given the direct and active participation for Tribal women in local governance in study area.

### **V. PROBLEMS FACED IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

It would be appropriate to sum up that there are number of obstacles in the way of effective participation of women respondents of panchayat raj institutions. They may face all kind of obstacles in the field. For this purpose researcher has collected the information about the problems in active participation by the tribal women respondents in this paper. The data shows that, out of 300 interviewed respondents 43%(128) of the respondents have faced all type of problems like economic,

social, political, cultural, 15%(45) of the respondents have faced the problems in participation because troubles from upper caste people, 31%(94) of the respondents have faced problem of economic and other problem, 08%(24) of the respondents have faced problem in participating in panchayats due to social problem, 02%(07) of the respondents have faced problem by the influenced groups, 01%(02) of the respondents have faced problem of non-cooperation from male members. The table reveals that they have faced all kind of problems like economic, social, political and cultural. Basically study area is most backward and tribal's area in the state; hence respondents in the study area face many problems regarding the participation. In this context, it requires more concentration by the state to develop this region and provide the new economic opportunities for their development is concern.

## **VI. PROBLEMS FACED BY TRIBAL WOMEN IN POLITICS**

Tribal women have faced several problems with respect to the economic, social, political and cultural. Here tribal women were asked the questions in this regard and different opinions were collected by the respondents and are analyzed below

**Table No 1: Problems faced by tribal women in politics**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Problems</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Political, social, economic and educational	137	46
2	Social disabilities	24	8
3	All type of traditional problems	96	32
4	Illiteracy, ignorance, & other problems	43	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

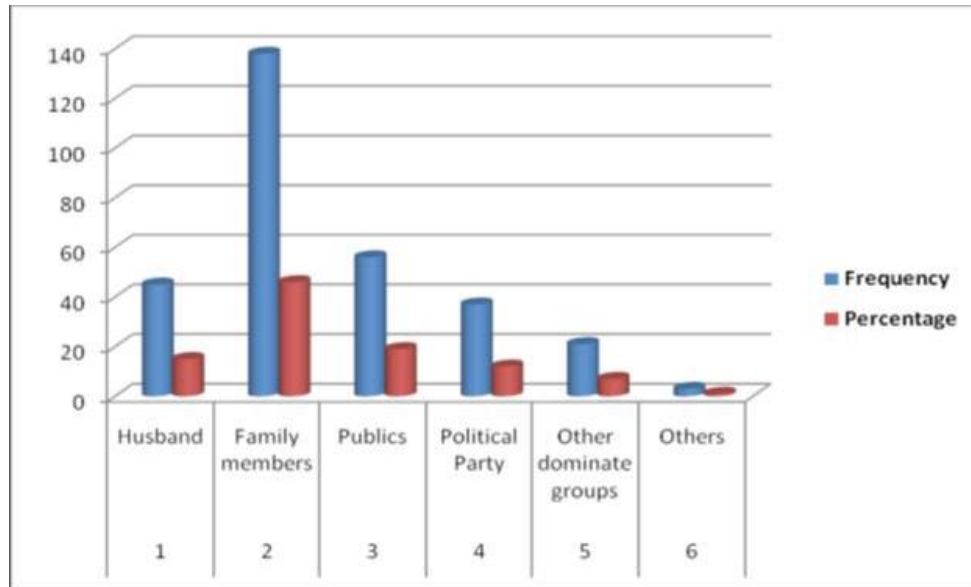
Above table No 1 shows that the Problems faced by tribal women in politics. Out of 300 respondents, 46% (137) respondents having political, social, economic and educational problem, 8%(24) respondents having problem of social disabilities, 32%(96) respondents having all type of traditional problem, and 14%(43) respondents having problem of illiteracy, ignorance and other problems. This data reveals that the majority of respondents are having problem of political, social, economic and educational problems in politics in the study area.

## **VII. PROBLEM IN DISCHARGING THE DUTIES**

The problems which are faced by elected tribal women while discharging the duties as shown in below explanation. The table No 2 shows the difficulties faced by the elected tribal women such as family members, husband, public, political party, other dominate groups and other people

**Table No 2: Problem in discharging the duties**

Sl. No.	Problems	F	Percentage
1	Husband	45	15
2	Family members	138	46
3	Publics	56	19
4	Political Party	37	12
5	Other dominate groups	21	07
6	By Others	03	01
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

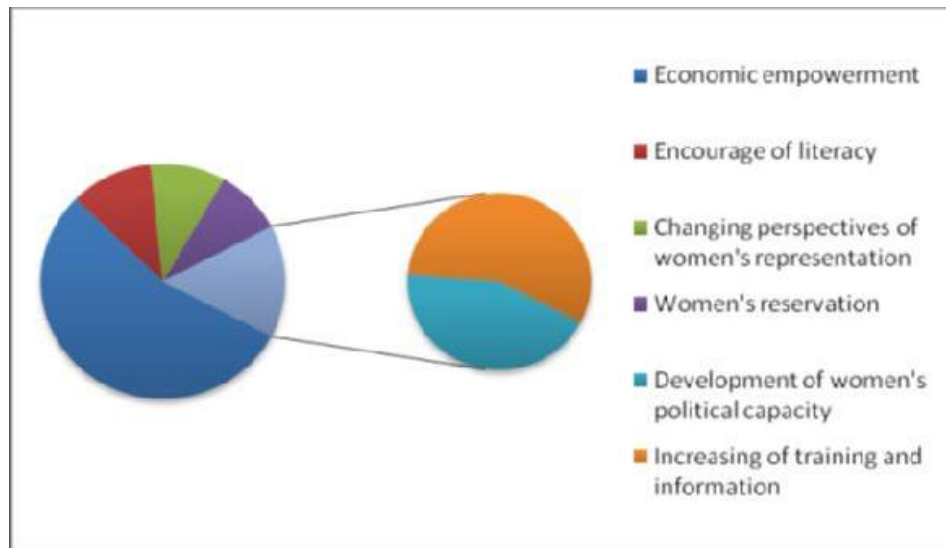


The above table No 2 shows the problems faced by the members in discharging their duties. Out of three hundred respondents, 15%(45) respondents have faced this type of problem by their husband, 46%(138) of respondents have problem in discharging the duties by family members, 19%(56) respondents have problem in discharging the duties by publics, 12%(37) respondents have problem in discharging the duties by political party, 7%(21) respondents have problem in discharging the duties by other dominant groups Hence, researcher tried to find out the motivating factors of tribal women representation in study area and 1%(3) respondents have discharging the duties by other factors. The paper reveals that respondents were agreed that the family members and their husband interfere in discharging the duties in day to day functioning of the PRI.

## **VIII. MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**



Participation of tribal women representation in politics is mainly motivated by several factors like educational opportunities, empowerment process, changing roles by the women, reservation policy and decentralization of power.



Here data and chart shows the motive factors of the women representation in political participation. 54.66%(164) respondents have motive factor like economic empowerment, 11%(33) respondents have motive factor of encourage in literacy, 10%(30) respondents have motive factor of changing perspectives of women's representation, 9%(27) respondents have motive factor of women reservation, 6.67%(20) respondents have motive of development of women political capacity and 8.67%(26) respondents have motive of increasing in training and information. The data reveals that economic empowerment is the main important motivating factor for tribal women representation in politics. And such other factors also influenced by the motive factors like education, reservation, information, training, enhance the capacity of women representation in politics.

**Women's Personal and Self Decision and Appreciation:** Here, paper observed that whether male members are appreciated the women respondents personal and self-decision. Different opinion has been collected and analyzed here. Data examined the women's personal and self-decision is appreciated by male members. Out of 300 respondents, 86%(259) respondents told that their personal and self-decision were appreciated by the male members and 14%(41) respondents told that there is no appreciation for personal and self-decision by male members. This data reveals that most of the respondents got appreciation by the male members but small portion of the respondents are not getting the appreciation by the male members.



## **IX. CONCLUSION**

Tribal women must get greater social and political exposure so that they can be dynamic in active politics. If they take active participation, they can contribute a lot to the all-round development of their regions. They must be provided with better education facilities and offered necessary training at all levels. Efforts must be made to bring about a thorough transformation in their attitude and mindset. Only then the process of Tribal women empowerment through political representation becomes meaningful and realistic. This is not impossible but requires committed and dedicated efforts. All these observations should not lead us to a negative conclusion about the very policy of reservation to Tribal women. It has opened many opportunities to them in terms of participation and to fight against negative impact of patriarchy. Though, schedule tribe women facing problems still she has so many opportunities to grow. So, here participatory democracy has great significance in the process of women empowerment.

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