

AWARENESS AMONG RURAL WOMEN ABOUT RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ OF HARYANA

Sunil Kumar¹, Subhash Chander² and Suresh Kumar³

Abstract - The Panchayati Raj system in India goes back to the Vedic times. It has been an integral part of a self-contained and self-sufficient rural administration. A Panchayati consisted of five or more public representatives, selected or elected by the people. **The present study was conducted in Fatehabad district of Haryana state which was selected purposively. Out of 6 blocks in Fatehabad district, two blocks, namely, Fatehabad and Ratia were selected randomly. It was concluded that the** regarding overall awareness among respondents reveals that 39.0% of the respondents had medium level of awareness whereas 33.5% of the respondents had low level of awareness. Remaining 27.5% of the respondents had high level of awareness regarding reservation for women in PRIs.

Key Words -- Panchayati Raj system, level of awareness, women reservation etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of Panchayati Raj is nothing new. It was the dream of Gandhi, the father of the nation, its need was stressed by Pandit Nehru, and it was repeatedly and forcefully advocated by Late Shri Jai Prakash Narayan. But, unfortunately, for various reasons, not much headway could be made for the realization of this ideal. Ever since Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi came to the helm of affairs in the country he repeatedly stressed the importance of Panchayati Raj. He formed his views on the subject by under-taking whirlwind tours of rural India to familiarize himself with the realities of rural life, by holding frequent workshops of District magistrates all over the country, and thus assessing their views and understanding their difficulties. The Panchayats will have the power and authority to draw of plans within the framework of guidelines and conditions to be laid draw by the state Government. These plans will constitute the basic inputs for the planning process of higher levels. This will ensure that the voice of the people, their needs, their aspirations, their priorities become the building blocks of the edifice of planning. The second major responsibility of the Panchayats will be the implementation of development schemes assigned to them by the state Governments. These schemes should cover the major economic concerns of rural India, commencing with agriculture and land improvement and going on to irrigation. They must comprise the diversification of the rural economy into animal husbandry,

¹ *Department of Sociology CCS. Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana, India*

² *Department of Sociology CCS. Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana, India*

³ *Department of Geography Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, India*

dairying, poultry and fisheries. They must incorporate industrial activity in rural India. They must look to the day-to-day concerns of rural India, housing, drinking water, fuel and fodder.

The panchayats will also have the major responsibility for the administration of poverty-alleviation programmes. They would have to look to the education and culture, to health and family welfare, and to women and child development. Social welfare programmes for the weaker and handicapped sections would be the responsibility of the Panchayats. It is also proposed to give to the Panchayats the responsibility for the public distribution system which is so crucial to the survival of the weakest and the poorest, as also to the general health of the rural economy. Keeping in view the presented study was undertaken to ascertain the level of awareness among rural women regarding reservation for women in PRI's.

The local self Government Act was enacted in 1889, under which the rule local administration was determined by a group of circles, each consisting certain number of villages. After independence, the process of decentralization continued to be in operation. (Singh 1996). Decentralization of power to the panchayats is seen as a means of empowering women and involving them in decision making process. Local governments being closer to the women can be more responsive to local needs and can make better use of resources. The democratic system in a country can be ensured only if there is mass participation in the governance. Therefore, the system of democratic decentralization popularly known as Panchayati Raj is considered as an instrument to ensure democracy and socio-economic transformation of rural women (Kumar 2006). The study was conducted to assess the awareness of rural women about reservation for women in Panchayati Raj with the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the level of awareness among the rural women regarding the reservation for women in Panchayati Raj.
2. To suggest suitable measures to improve the awareness among rural women regarding the women reservation in Panchayati Raj.

II. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present study was conducted in Fatehabad district of Haryana state which was selected purposively. Out of 6 blocks in Fatehabad district, two blocks, namely, Fatehabad and Ratia were selected randomly. The lists of all the villages falling in Fatehabad and Ratia blocks were obtained, from those lists two villages, namely Badopal and Dhanger were selected from Fatehabad block and other two villages, namely Hassanga and Raipur were selected from Ratia block by using random sampling technique. From each village; fifty respondents were selected randomly. Therefore 200 respondents constituted the sample for the study. The data were collected with the help of well structured pre-tested interview schedule and suitable statistical techniques were also used.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of awareness among the respondents regarding women reservation in PRIs

The respondents were classified into three categories viz. low, medium and high on the basis of awareness score obtained by using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation formula. The data regarding overall awareness among respondents reveals that 39.0% of the respondents had medium level of awareness whereas 33.5% of the respondents had low level of awareness.

Table 1 Distribution of the respondents according to their overall awareness regarding women reservation in PRIs (N=200)

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Low	67	33.5
Medium	78	39.0
High	55	27.5
Total	200	100

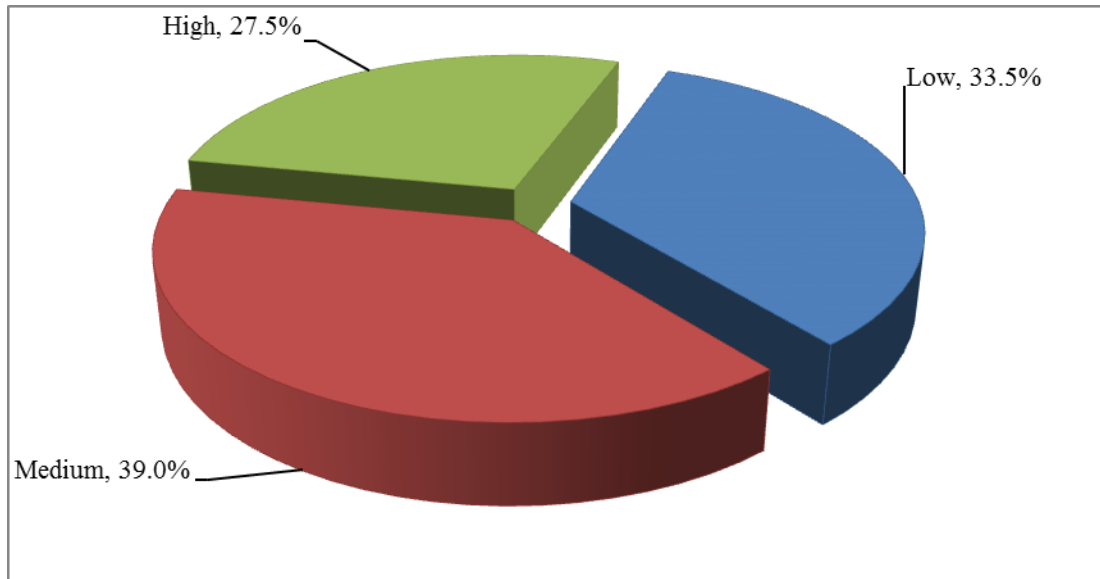


Fig. 1: Level of awareness among the respondents regarding women reservation in PRIs

Remaining 27.5% of the respondents had high level of awareness regarding reservation for women in PRIs. These findings indicate that one third of the women still had very poor awareness regarding reservation for women in PRIs. The reasons behind this may be the lack of education and various social and economic barriers prevailing in the rural society. Therefore, all these three variables may be highly responsible for these results. Rathi (1999) and Rathi *et. al* (2002) also concluded that the more than one third of respondents had low level of awareness regarding women reservation in PRIs.

Association between family occupation and the level of awareness of the respondents

The data presented in Table 2 clearly shows that majority of respondents (70.6%) belonged to labour class had low level of awareness about reservation for women in PRIs whereas 17.6% of respondents had medium and only 11.8% had high level of awareness. Among farming occupation, 42.5% of the respondents had medium level of awareness followed by low (18.4%) and high (39.1%) level of awareness about reservation for women in PRIs. The respondents who had their own business as a main family occupation among them, half of the respondents (50.6%) had medium level of awareness whereas, high level of awareness was found among 37.5% of the respondents and near about one ninth (12.5%) of them had low level of awareness about reservation for women in PRIs.

Table 2 Association between socio-economic variables and the level of awareness (N=200)

Family Occupation	Level of awareness			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Labour	48 (70.6)	12 (17.6)	8 (11.8)	68 (34.0)
Business	3 (12.5)	12 (50.0)	9 (37.5)	24 (12.0)
Cultivation	16 (18.4)	37 (42.5)	34 (39.1)	87 (43.5)
Service	--	17 (81.0)	4 (19.0)	21 (10.5)
$\chi^2 = 74.2^{**}$ C = 0.5				
Annual Income				
Low	51 (59.3)	23 (26.7)	12 (14.0)	86 (43.0)
Medium	10 (13.3)	44 (58.7)	21 (28.0)	75 (37.5)
High	6 (15.4)	11 (28.2)	22 (56.4)	39 (19.5)
$\chi^2 = 59.5^{**}$ C = 0.5				

Figure in the parenthesis denote percentage
 ** indicate highly significant at 1 percent level

The overwhelming majority (81.0%) of the respondents who were engaged in government or non government service had medium level of awareness whereas 19.0% of them had high level of awareness and none of them had low level of awareness about reservation for women in PRIs. The chi-square value indicates that the family occupation and the awareness of the respondents were found highly significantly associated.

It is observed that the majority of the respondents (59.3%) from low income group had low level of awareness whereas 26.7% of them had medium level of awareness and only 14.0% of the respondents had high level of awareness about reservation for women in PRIs. In case of respondents having medium range of income 58.7% of the respondents had medium level of awareness followed by the high (28.0%) and low (13.3%) However 56.4% of the respondents from high income group had high level of awareness followed by the medium (28.2%) and low (15.4%) level of awareness about reservation for women in PRIs. The chi-square value in table 2 clearly indicates that the annual income and the level of awareness of the respondents were found highly significantly associated.

Measures to improve the awareness among rural women regarding the women reservation in PRIs

1. It is clear from this study that mass-media was playing an important role in improving awareness in the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender equality and gender justice.
2. As social participation also playing an important role in improving awareness among rural women in present study. Hence, there is a need to popularize and encourage women's participation through increasing social participation which would help in generating awareness among rural masses about reservation for women in PRIs. There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of Panchyats at all the levels. This is needed to promote and enhance their leadership qualities and self-

confidence through training, mobilizing and guiding the rural women by government and non government organisation. It will help them to aware about their duties and rights.

3. It has been diagnosed through this study that psychological problems are disturbing aspects among women in rural society so there is a need to motivate women through different women empowerment programmes which may play an important role in improving rural women's awareness about women reservation in PRIs.
4. It has been also assessed in present study that political interest was also playing significant role in generating awareness among respondents. The panchayat and development officers/personnel should distribute some literature on the role and participation of rural women in different PRI's which would generate political awareness and interest among the rural women. Beside this they should be aware about ongoing socio-economic and political issues of the society.
5. The political background of respondents was also playing significant role in generating awareness among respondents regarding women reservation in PRIs. Political parties should ensure better women's participation in political activities in rural society which would help in improving awareness among rural women about reservation for women in PRIs.
6. The majority of scheduled caste women were mostly belonged to weaker sections of the society and among them only 13.6% of women had high level of awareness, so in this case it is important that some exposure should be given through some compulsory training to rural women. Such trainings should impart knowledge about constitutional rights, duties, power, functions and policy programmes of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
7. Analysis revealed that even among educated respondents the level of awareness about women reservation in PRIs is not so high so it is suggested that the curriculum for the students at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels should be modified to enhance the knowledge about Panchayati Raj System. There should be chapters on Panchayati Raj system and women empowerment in all the classes at the school level.
8. The study revealed that the respondents belonged to low socio-economic status had low level of awareness as compared to high socio-economic group so the efforts should be initiated by the government to improve the socio-economic status of the rural people.
9. To inculcate self confidence among rural women and to remove psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, hesitation, sleep disturbance and laziness various awareness generating programmes such as mock panchayats, puppetry, songs, exhibitions, informal group discussion, canvassing and counseling sessions should be introduced in rural areas through government as well as N.G.Os which would help in improving awareness level among rural women about reservation for women in PRIs.

IV. CONCLUSION

It was concluded that in concern of overall awareness it is found that 39.0% of the respondents had medium level of awareness while one-third of the respondents still had low level of awareness regarding reservation for women in PRIs. Remaining 27.5% of the respondents had high level of awareness regarding reservation for women in PRIs. It was also suggested that mass-media was playing an important role in improving awareness in the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender equality and gender justice.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rathi, T. (1999) Attitude of Rural Females towards the Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institution. M. Sc. Thesis, CCSHAU, Hisar (Haryana)
- [2] Rathi, T. Dahiya, S. and Singh, S.P. (2002). Factors affecting awareness of rural females about Panchayati Raj Institutions. *Haryana Agriculture University Research Journal*, **32**(1) 59-62.
- [3] Singh R. 1996. Panchayat Raj Manual : A Socio-Historical Cum Legal Perspective, *Anmol Publications*, New Delhi, pp.10-12.
- [4] Kumar G. 2006 . Local Democracy in India: Interpreting Decentralization, Sage publications, New Delhi.