

"WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PANCHAYATHRAJ-A CASE STUDY OF KASARGOD DISTRICT OF KERALA"

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Abstract: Women, being the integral part of every economy are primary factors for all round development and harmonious growth of a nation .In the present scenario women are to be considered as equal partners in progress with men. Empowerment of women is a multidimensional phenomenon and covers economic, political, social, cultural, personal, environmental and familial aspects. Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the process of upliftment and advancement of women. Women's role in decision making is one of the most important aspects that need to be considered on their empowerment. On the context of 50% reservation of women in LSGI, the paper tries to focus on the revolution started by the hands with bangles marking a sea change. It has been found that large numbers of women from traditional backgrounds emerges from the cloisters of their kitchen and knock on anonymous doors, walk through the streets and argue on public platforms when they contest the elections. The political participation of women is twofold. Women have always and almost everywhere been on the fringe of political and social power. The paper tries to focus on the experience of women, their representation and participation in political arena.

Key words: Development, Participation, Panchayath, Women empowerment

Introduction: Economic development of any country is very much dependent upon the availability of the resources and their utilization. Among the resources human resource is crucial, as it is the centre of all resource utilisation activities and human beings are responsible to generate the whole process of development. Quality of the human resources, actually determines the nature of growth and effectiveness of the people's participation in it and the share of economically active population would indicate the level of human resource utilization. Development of required type of manpower for the integrated development of the economy is an important aspect of human resource development. Gender inequalities, low level of health condition, nutritional deficiency, unemployment, illiteracy are the major problems in human resource utilization. Recently, in the knowledge based exchange economy, institutional and human resource aspects gained more scope. They provide suitable environment for the people participation in development. Moreover in the globalized competitive economy brings people to the mainstream of the economic activity would strengthen the competitive power. In this context people's participation and the way people participate in the development becomes more crucial. In the recent years , gender studies are more concerned with women participation in economic development. Women participation in governance and the entrepreneurial activities are much discussed in the development literature.

Development And People's Participation: The essence of development is nothing but people's participation. People are central to participatory development. Participation allows for more efficient

use of resources available for a programme. Most of the government projects reach only a small and generally the privileged section of people. Participation helps to bring more people within the direct influence of the development activity. It increases the number of people who can potentially benefit from development. Participatory development is based on the needs of the people as identified by them, their analysis of issue and their decisions. It also implies an implicit faith that people, irrespective of their level of poverty and oppression, can progressively transform their environment with the help of active participation. Participatory development demands that common and subaltern populace should move from being objects to being subjects of development projects and programmes.

Development is determined by the people. To highlight the prominence of people's participation, in the year 1990 UNDP published the first Human development Report. This created a new paradigm of development called Human development paradigm. This paradigm emphasizes that the real objective of the development is to increase people's development choices. The concept of human development is elaborated along the following lines " people must be at the centre of human development, development has to be woven around people, not people around the development. It has to be development of the people, by the people and for the people."

Women In Local Democracy: Women participation is seen in their involvement at grass root level governance. Though it is viewed mainly as political participation, it has economic significance owing to the fact that such local institutions are involved in many women participatory programmes. Therefore

women participation in such institutions not only reflects their sense of social responsibility and also the decision making and organisational capacity.

Political empowerment in the form of participation in decision making process at various levels of political activity is also very important in a democratic county. Since 1994, 33% seats have been reserved for women in the elections to urban and rural local bodies, i.e. municipal bodies and village panchayats. As a result of this about one million women at grass root level have received political power. At first it was noticed that those women who were elected could not act on their own but were mere puppets in the hands of their men folk. Secondly, male members of panchayats did not accept these women as equals, leave alone work under them if they happened to be the sarpanch. But gradually women have learnt to assert themselves, use their power for the good of the community and show achievements.

Statement Of The Research Problem: The focus of attention of government programmes for women have shifted from “women welfare” in 1950’s to “Women’s development” in 1970’s. in the 1980’s the focus has been on the women’s entitlements and women’s empowerment. Empowerment of women to be more meaningful the following aims need to be realised. The idea behind the study is to

- To change the ideology of male domination and women’s subordination.
- To enable women to gain access to have and control over resources.
- To enable women to transform the existing social institutions and structures such as Legal, political, economic and educational etc.

Objective of the study: The purpose of this research is to investigate the nature of rural women participation in development through Panchayath Raj Institution. The specific objective of the study are

1. To evaluate the socio-economic conditions of the rural women by reviewing literature and through empirical analysis.
2. To analyse the rural women empowerment schemes of the government focusing mainly on women participation.
3. To evaluate the role and nature of women participation in Panchayathraj Institution.

4. To probe into various aspects of women participation both in economic and institutional activities.

Hypothesis:

1. 73rd Constitutional amendment Act has brought women’s empowerment to the grassroot level.
2. The political participation of women is influenced by their age, religion, caste, education, and occupational status.
3. The political institution of Gram sabha acts as a valuable means for women empowerment and political participation.
4. Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has made the Panchayati Raj Institutions less corrupt and more transparent, accountable and responsive to the public.
5. Reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has enabled women population to participate actively in rural development and self- help groups.

Methodology: This study is based on a field level investigation done among women electorate and women representative in 8 Panchayath of Kasargod District of Kerala through Primary and Secondary data through descriptive and Analytical method.

The primary data have been collected from the 100 respondents by interview method through detailed questionnaire and secondary information through various Govt reports and statistics.

Scope And Limitations Of The Study: Accessing the contribution of women in development is a different task as development is of different dimension. In this study it is attempted to evaluate the contribution of rural women for development from entrepreneurial and organizational perspectives. These are the two important areas in which many agencies encourage women participation through various schemes. Women participation in development has many dimension and women involvement in the traditional activities, household activities are invisible and their contributions in such activities cannot be easily measured. So in this study all such contributions of rural women to development are not included. The scope of the study is to evaluate the rural women participation in institutional activities at the grass root level.

Table 1.1 Participation of women member in activities of Panchayath

Activities	Frequency of attendance		
	Regular (%)	Occasional (%)	Never (%)
Meetings	61.53	38.47	----
Demonstrations	53.84	30.77	15.39
Exhibitions	38.46	38.46	23.08
Study tour	30.77	53.84	15.39
Awareness camp	61.53	23.08	15.39
Training camp	61.53	23.08	15.39

*Source: Field Survey

It is clear from the table that nearly 61.0 per cent of women elected representatives attend the meeting regularly whereas 39.0 per cent of women attend the meeting occasionally. In demonstrations 54 per cent of women attend regularly whereas 34 per cent

occasionally participate and remaining 16 per cent never participate in it. Similarly in awareness camp and in training camp majority of women elected members take active participate in the programme which shows the interest of women in the political sphere.

Table 1.2 Exposure to mass media about women programme

Source of Media	Regular (%)	Occasional (%)	Never (%)
News paper	46.15	27.70	26.15
Radio	53.85	30.77	15.38
Television	38.46	23.08	38.46

*Source: Field Survey

The table shows that in the study area nearly 54.0 per cent of the respondent depend upon Radio to get the

information about Government programmes followed by newspaper and the television.

Table 1.3 Major problems in ward and whether they are solved

Problem	Problem solved (%)	Not attended (%)	Will be considered (%)
Drinking water	40.0	15.0	45.0
Roads and bridges	55.0	15.0	30.0
Sanitation	55.0	10.0	35.0
Housing	50.0	10.0	40.0

*Source: Field Survey

The table 1.3 expresses the major problems are related to the drinking water, lack of infrastructure facilities

like roads and bridges and sanitation and housing. Some of the problems have been solved to a certain extent where as other problems are being considered.

Table 1.4 motivating factors to contest election for women

Factors	Sample size	Percentage
Support from husband	70	70.0
Self-motivation	25	25.0
To better serve the society	5	5.0
Total	100	100

*Source: Field survey

It may be observed from table 1.4 that the support from the husband responsible for the women to

participate in the elections whereas others are self-motivated or contested in the election to serve better for the society.

Table 1.5 Age-wise participation of male-female ratio in Panchayath

Age	Male (No)	Percentage	Female (No)	Percentage
30-40	10	10.0	50	50.0
40-50	40	40.0	25	25.0
50-above	50	50.0	25	25.0
Total	100	100	100	100

*Source: Field survey

It may be observed from table 1.5 that while comparing the participation of male –female ratio from age wise the women prefer to participate in the

political sphere at the early age between 30-40 i.e 50.0 percentage it whereas only 25.0 percentage of women like to contest for election above 50 years of age.

Table 1.6 Reasons for absence from meetings

Reason	Respondent	Percentage
Domestic work	50	50.0
Illness in family	15	15.0
Taking care of children	25	25.0
Other problems	10	10.0
total	100	100

*Source: Field Survey

The table 1.6 expresses that nearly 50 percent of women elected representative gives domestic work is the main reason for remaining absent from the meetings, where as 15 per cent of the women sites illness in family being the reason, 25 per cent of the respondent says they have to take of their children and remaining 10 percent gives other reasons.

Table 1.7 Giving priorities in meetings of Panchayath

Parameter	Respondent	Percentage
Preparing plan	15	15
Preparing budget	20	20
Organising programmes	45	45
Mobilising resources	10	10
Identifying beneficiaries	10	10
Total	100	100

*Source: Field Survey

From the table 1.7 it is clear that women elected representative give high priority to organising the programmes in a proper way, followed by preparing the budget, preparing the plan, identifying the beneficiaries and mobilising the resources.

Major Findings:

1. Efforts were made to empower rural women through various schemes in the five year plans.
2. All these efforts enhanced rural women participation in development.
3. Rural women participation are seen in terms of their increasing role in Panchayath Raj Institution and entrepreneurial activities.

Conclusion: The main focus of any study on the role of women in development need to be comprehensive and in developing countries like India they need to be evaluated with different approaches in rural and urban context. Again in rural, nature of women participation in development needs to be analysed with region specific methods owing to diversified factors influence differently in the grass root. This research made begin to such an effort to study, the

women participation in Panchayath in Kasargod District of Kerala.

Traditional economic analysis neglected women participation in development due to their invisibility and non-quantifiable nature of their contributions. There is need to develop quantifiable techniques to measure the contribution of women to development more specifically in the grass root. Democratic decentralisation would encourage civil participation to effect development equity and social justice. In a diversified context there is a need to understand them with integrity. In the grass root level peoples participation in development is crucial and this is very much encouraged with socio-economic limitations by the local bodies in India.

Women's participation in development may have to be viewed both in terms of political participation and economic participation. Existing socio-economic background and the changing scenario in their education, employability and participation in governance empowers them and all these need to capture while analysing and diagnosing them.

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