



Political awareness and political participation of schedule caste women-A study in Telangana State

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Abstract

Political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society show active interest and play a role in the selection of rulers. It includes voting, seeking information, discussing, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with the representatives, enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters and working in campaigns. It is clear that the term political participation draws our attention to political activities rather than attitude and behaviour of private citizen to those who are professionally involved in public affairs. The constitution of India has assured equal political rights of political participation irrespective of caste, class, religion, gender and place of birth. However, the scheduled caste communities are lagging behind in respect of political participation. There are multiple factors are present in our society which threatening them in politics, and one of the factor is caste. As compared to political awareness, participation seems to be less, but the fact remains that scheduled castes' women and the Indian women in general don't get much opportunity for political participation, except for voting on Election Day. Even the turn out during the elections in Telangana is quite low as compared to many other states.

Keywords: scheduled caste, political participation, political awareness, voting

Introduction

Political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society show active interest and play a role in the selection of rulers. It includes voting, seeking information, discussing, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with the representatives, enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters and working in campaigns. It is clear that the term political participation draws our attention to political activities rather than attitude and behaviour of private citizen to those who are professionally involved in public affairs. The constitution of India has assured equal political rights of political participation irrespective of caste, class, religion, gender and place of birth. However, the scheduled caste communities are lagging behind in respect of political participation. There are multiple factors are present in our society which threatening them in politics, and one of the factor is caste.

The political participation of SCs is responsible for their caste development, village development, keeping the transformation of social and economic life of rural areas as its goal of development. It says that the rural progress depends entirely upon the existence of an active organisation in villages, which can bring all the people including the weaker sections into common programmes with the help of administration.

Scheduled Caste

In Indian society virtually the higher echelons of power are dominated by the upper castes. Despite the prominence of a few Scheduled Castes who have gained high political positions in our country, the political status of Scheduled Castes has changed much less than what the individual successes show. Discrimination on the grounds of caste is morally, legally and democratically wrong. But caste equality can come about only when Scheduled Castes make use of the full array of political weapons available to them to achieve it, that is political activity is essential to the struggle for Scheduled Castes liberation.

Caste is the important social structure element of the Hindu society, this is decided by birth. At the same time it is the fine exhibition of diagram of high and low ranking of human beings, since its origin. "The word "Caste" itself has been derived from the Spanish and Portuguese word *casta*, which means "race, lineage, tribe or breed; it has a historical origin known as *jati* in Sanskrit." According to most of the prevalent beliefs, the history of the origin of the caste is the "Varna-theory" which account of the Varna system of social stratification of the Hindu society. Mahatma Gandhi in 1933 named Scheduled Caste people as Harijan meaning "Children of God" keeping in view "The man of Brahma" conception of upper caste. Unfortunately the meaning man of God has been interpreted wrongly as the term of result the term of abuse for the depressed classless; as a result Harijan was resented by Ambedkar and his followers. It was recommended to secretary of state in the same year of state for India by the Viceroy for use at an all India level preference to other term than current.

The term of Scheduled caste was also adopted by the British Government, in the government of India Act 1935, it is significant fact that the word Scheduled Castes first coined by Simmon commission and incorporated in the government of India Act 1935 section 279 during a celebrated temple entry campaign in 1933 Gandhi bestowed on the untouchable the new name of Harijan and Scheduled Caste.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the level of political participation of Scheduled Castes in the Parkal Assembly Constituency of Telangana State.
2. To highlights the political awareness of the Scheduled Castes in the Parkal Assembly Constituency of Telangana State.

Methodology of the Study

Depending on the nature of the study empirical technique has been used which consists of Purposive Sampling and two types of data, primary as well as secondary data.

Primary Sources

The primary data is based upon firsthand information from the respondents. For this purpose an interview questionnaire was prepared in beforehand and then approached to the respondents. The researcher has been selected 50 respondents purposively from the Parkal constituency of Telangana State.

Secondary Sources

Secondary data was collected from census reports, district census handbook, journals, books and other relevant reports.

Political Participation

Political participation plays a significant role in the survival of an ongoing democratic political system. Lack of political awareness and passivity of the general masses make the political system irresponsible and ultimately non-functioning. It is political consciousness and political awareness which brings the sense of interest articulation among the general masses. When the interest is articulated as a result of political consciousness, it leads to interest aggregation. When the interest is aggregated, the resultant is mass mobilization. When the masses are mobilized the outcome is effective participation of the masses in the affairs of the political system. In this framework the significance of political participation acquires a paramount importance.

The process of political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society show active interest and play a role in the selection of rulers. It includes voting, seeking information, discussing, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with the representatives, enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters and working in campaigns. It is clear that the term political participation draws our attention to political activities rather than attitude and behaviour of private citizen to those who are professionally involved in public affairs. There are many scholars who argue that caste politicization is never a one-sided affair. If the caste orientation implies politics, politics, in turn, leaves its effect upon caste solidarity and hierarchy. As each political party looks at the caste composition of each constituency before nominating candidates for the constituency though they were vocal in public gathering caste does not play any role in politics but reality is something else.

Again, man is a power seeking animal, almost always longing for power. If any individual holds power, he has a satisfaction that he is powerful. This longing for power mostly operates at the unconscious level and this sentiment leads an individual to be politically engaged. Man is the slave of his own ego or self-esteem. Sometimes they fulfill this desire, i.e. ego feelings through political participation. But the extent of influence of the psychological variables greatly depends upon the social atmosphere. The proper social environment inspires or encourages the people by which they can involve themselves politically.

In political participation, we do not confine ourselves to the act of voting alone, since there are other political activities which are important indicators of political participation. The participation covers a wide range of activities like participation in rallies, becoming members of different political parties or the other pressure groups, forming their own political party or raising issues of political importance through different mediums radio, television, newspapers etc. or participating in elections at all levels-voting, campaigning or contesting.

The political awareness and level of participation of Scheduled Castes in these activities in Telangana with special reference to Parkal Assembly Constituency has not yet been explored by any of the researchers. Therefore, considering the importance of these facts a systematic attempt has been made to understand and analyze the political participation of the Scheduled Castes in Telangana with special reference to Parkal Assembly Constituency.

Age composition of the respondents

The respondents were from various age groups and the table 1.1 shows that maximum number of respondents is from the age group 18-30 years consisting 32 percent. The maximum number of age group is followed by age group 30-40 years (40%), 40-50 years (28%) respectively. The table shows zero percent for the age group 50-60 years and above.

Table 1: Age wise distribution of the Respondents

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	18-30 years	16	32
2	30-40 years	20	40
3	40-50 years	14	28
4	50-60 years and above	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	10	20
2	I-V	24	48
3	VI - XII	16	32
4	Graduate and Above	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Above table shows that educational qualifications of the respondents of Parkal Constituency, out of 50 respondents the highest number 24 (48.00%) respondents are studied I to V, followed by the VI to XII with 16 (32.00%) respondents, 10(20.00%) respondents are from illiterate and whereas no Graduation and above was found for the selected period.

Table 3: Type of the Occupational Background of the Respondents

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Agriculture	24	48
2	Horticulture	10	20
3	Labour	12	24
4	Others	4	8
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

As shown in the table 1.3, maximum numbers of respondent are in the occupation like agriculture consisting 48%. Agriculture is followed by labor (24%), others (8%) and horticulture (20%) respectively. The occupation of the respondents who were in the other category included small scale business at the local level.

Table 4: Annual income of the Respondents

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below Rs.5,000	18	36
2	Below Rs.10,000	28	56
3	Below Rs. 25,000	0	0
4	Below Rs. 30,000 and above	4	8
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

As the table 1.4 shows that 56% respondents are in below Rs. 10,000 level of annual income which is followed by 36% in the level of below Rs. 5,000* and 8% in the level of below Rs. 30,000 and above respectively. No number of respondents is seen in the level of below Rs. 25,000. The table makes it clear that all the respondents were below the poverty line.

Table 5: Do you know the voting age of the electorates who has a right to vote

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	36	72
2	No	14	28
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The respondents were questioned to respond whether they knew that in our country that attained the age of 18 years has a right to vote. The table. 1.5 shows that 72% respondents said Yes and only 28% respondents said No.

Table 6: Do you cast your vote during election

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	50	100
2	No	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The respondents were asked to respond to the question whether they casted vote. The table 1.6 shows that 100% respondents said that they casted vote in the elections. It is definitely good for a democracy.

Table 7: How did you cast your vote in elections

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Person	15	30
2	Leadership	10	20
3	Party	25	50
4	Caste	0	0
5	Religion	0	0
6	Sex	0	0
7	Language	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The table 1.7 shows that 50% respondents casted their votes for respective party candidate, 30% responded that they casted their votes for the person of choice not on the basis of party line and 20% casted vote on the ground of leadership quality.

Table 8: What is the nature of your participation in political activities

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Election Meetings	0	0
2	Election Campaign	12	24
3	By Financial Aid	8	16
4	Making Speech	0	0
5	Nothing	30	60
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The respondents were asked about the nature of their participation in different political activities. Their responses have been showed in the table 1.8 where it is clear that 60% respondents said that they did nothing in this regard. 24% respondents participated in election campaigns and 16% respondents provided financial aids.

Table 9: Are you participating in different political activities

SI No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	45	90
2	No	5	10
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

In response to this question almost all the respondents said that they did not participate in any political activities. The table no 1.9 shows that 90% respondents responded Yes and only 10% responded No. It has been observed that the respondent actually did not want to expose their political affairs.

Conclusion

In the societies where women, especially women from lower strata of the society, take much interest in the political processes, a great difference can be made in the political system. Especially in the rural areas the democratic system is considered to be better because of the three tier panchayati raj system that provides more opportunities to directly participate in the election process. However, the political participation of the scheduled caste women is more in the urban areas because of more exposure and general awareness. Besides interest in politics, the participation of women in political activities like rallies, demonstrations, election campaigns, voting experience, presents a true picture of their real involvement in politics. India is a democratic country in which the participation of women is essential, because they cover the range of about 48.9% of the total population of the nation. In real sense our democracy can only prosper by increasing adequate political awareness and political

participation among them, since the pre and post-independence, we have been trying to bring them to participate in the national politics, but we could not achieve the fruitful results as yet. Since beginning every political party has been neglecting minorities and scheduled castes' women belonging to these classes. But Panchayati Raj Act-1992, has ascertained sufficient political consciousness, encouragement and motivation to the weaker sections of the society, especially, among the scheduled castes' women to participate in the local, state and central politics. So, to evaluate sociologically the researcher, has therefore, selected the problem related to political awareness and political participation among Scheduled castes' women in the state of Telangana. Though a large number of women respondents took part in the voting process, they took no active part in politics they prefer to engage themselves in other activities besides politics, which they consider a game of the rich. In addition to constitutional safeguards and several legislative measures to abolish untouchability practices, and to bring them at par with other sections of India Society by providing educational facilities and reservations, in political, educational, social, economic and occupational spheres, which constitutes the biggest core of welfare schemes for the scheduled castes, the frame-work of welfare measures for them is continuously being enlarge, to atone for the painful legacy of the past, who have for centuries suffered the worst kind of inhuman treatment, nowhere else found in the world. Thus in spite of all legal safeguard and welfare schemes for their socio-economic and political upliftment, the progress is said to be much below expectations.

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