



EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBES AS VILLAGERS' PANCHAYAT DELEGATES

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *There are issues with how the Panchayat Raj system implements plans and policies for tribal development.*

Aim of the study: *the main aim of the study is empowerment of scheduled tribes as villagers' panchayat delegates*

Material and method: *The research is mostly exploratory and has both quantitative and qualitative components.*

Conclusion: *In order to conduct the study, the researcher created an interview schedule with 158 ST ward members from the three districts of Adapur, Agrahar, and Kalmangi, where there is a sizable ST community, as respondents.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

When it comes to executing initiatives and policies for tribal development, the Panchayat Raj system has several flaws. Building capacity is essential for all elected officials, from local council members to members of the national parliament. In order to keep up with the current rate of growth, it is the most essential and important step in every sector. The tribal ward members and leaders may assist the STs in finding speedy solutions to their concerns. However, no initiatives are offered to them to enhance their ability. In this perspective, it is important to consider the degree of empowerment they attained in their capacity as local self-government representatives. The tribal ward members in village panchayats in Raichur are behind because of the tribal people's exclusion from mainstream society, their isolation due to geography, their way of life in tribal settlements, their customs, conventions, traditional tribal administration, conventional tribal structures, and the lack of acknowledgement from the general public. It is necessary to inform the ST village panchayat ward members of the powers and rights they statutorily invested in order to ensure protection and freedom from exploitation. Tribes continue to represent the poorest, most backward, and most vulnerable segment of Indian society. They are denied access to development strategies, programmes, and schemes, including the common subplan approach. In order to empower the scheduled tribes as underprivileged groups, the Local Self Government System in Raichur must be evaluated for its potential.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Singh, Vikram (2017) This essay makes an effort to examine the decentralisation process, its components, and its conceptual and theoretical understanding within governmental contexts. (i.e., evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions under 73rd Constitutional Amendment and extension through the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act). It is also predicated on the idea that local self-government in relation to the creation, powers, duties, and responsibilities of Panchayati Raj Institution has expanded as a result of legal frameworks of governance that transfer authority from top to bottom. As a result, it is shifted from central to local government in order to support larger ideals of pluralistic participatory democracy; yet, the statutory frameworks for governance offer a lot of room for improvements with regard to the distribution of forest resources and tribal development. Due to the inadequacies, which still exist, the Forest Rights Act's procedure for allocating forest resources and lands to Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Tradition Forest Dwellers (TFDs) has been undermined. The paper aims to examine the allocation of forest land to STs and TFDs as well as how these groups are connected to institutions of governance that have not been able to properly establish, address, or promote the well-being and sustainable livelihood. It also examines the unique features of the Forest Rights Act as a tool of the State and the function of non-governmental organisations in advancing common goals and norms that, via social capital, influence the standard of living for STs and other TFDs in society.

Billava, Narayan & Nayak, Nayanatara (2016) Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are seen as a solution to all rural development issues and are associated with the emancipation of the underprivileged, particularly women. In light of India's 73rd constitutional amendment and the decentralisation process, this paper presents a thematic review on the empowerment of women representatives in PRIs. It examines representatives' knowledge of panchayat functioning, their ability to make decisions for themselves, their involvement in community activities, changes in their socioeconomic conditions, and their political participation. Affirmative action seems to have had a significant impact on the involvement of women representatives and members from underrepresented groups throughout the years. According to a number of studies, women leaders are less likely to engage in corruption, are able to deliver more public goods of equivalent quality at reasonable prices, and take into account the preferences of women to enhance governance.

Bijoy, C R. (2012) With the adoption of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, local self-governance, which is understood as the devolution of powers and responsibilities of the government departments through the formation of Panchayat Raj institutions (PRIs) as a national framework of governance, began. Where panchayat laws already existed, the States made the necessary adjustments, and where they did not, they passed laws in line with the 73rd Amendment. Although not consistent or happening at the same rate, the transfer of authority to the PRIs happened gradually. The Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996, a distinct legislation, was passed by the Parliament to



exclude the Scheduled Areas from the 73rd Amendment's applicability. (PESA). Amendments to the subject legislation and the State Panchayat statutes allowed for the incorporation of PESA provisions. The results of PESA in the nine states with Scheduled Areas over the last 15 years have been abysmal and have fallen short of the predicted dramatic improvement in the Scheduled Areas' perceived governance deficiency and misgovernance. PESA was nevertheless praised as a significant shift in local self-governance that would bring about participatory democracy and real citizen empowerment. Lack of clarity, legal flaws, bureaucratic indifference, a lack of political will, opposition to change in the power structure, and a failure to recognise PESA's true long-term value were the reasons why it failed to deliver.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research is mostly exploratory and has both quantitative and qualitative components. Understanding the empowerment of the ST Village panchayat ward members in Raichur by including their socio-cultural-economic and political variables into the survey's design helps. The research was carried out primarily to ascertain the level of empowerment of the Raichur ST Village panchayat ward members. It also focuses on how the ST ward members perform and the challenges they encounter throughout the empowerment process. Members of the ST village panchayat are members of a marginalised group in society, therefore it stands to reason that they do not express their opinions openly and honestly. The majority of them are under the influence of established local leaders, party officials, and members of their families. In order to analyse the research topic, the researcher turned to the combination approach, including both the interview method and the case study. Ten individual case studies were developed for the research based on the goals and were based on the replies of the 158 elected ST village panchayat ward members in the state of Raichur, mostly from the districts of Agrahar, Adapur, and Kalmangi. Along with individual interviews, conversations were also done with the public, local party leaders, village panchayat presidents, and village panchayat officials. For accuracy in this investigation, a census was employed. To get reliable data, all 158 ST village panchayat members were individually questioned during a structured interview, and 10 case studies were created based on their applicability.

3.1 Census Method

A census is a comprehensive, official count of the people. All of the society's members are counted as part of the quantitative research approach that forms the basis of this study. The community is completely counted using the census technique, taking into account every organisational unit. Of course, it takes a lot of time and costs money. It is, nonetheless, trustworthy and precise. The likelihood of inaccuracy is nearly zero. It is most suited for a diverse population, like India, particularly the tribal people.



3.2 Limitations of the Study

The problem of ST village panchayat members' empowerment must be addressed from a broader perspective that encompasses the whole Raichur state. However, the study's focus is solely on three districts—Agrahar, Adapur, and Kalmangi—where the tribal population is much higher than in any other location. One notable weakness of the study is that it does not cover the whole of the state. The responses addressed who the village panchayat members were throughout the time period covered by the inquiry, which ran from 2010 to 2015. The important modifications that took place after 2015 were not at all considered. A significant portion of the tribal population is excluded from the study's scope since it only examines the empowerment level of ST village panchayat members. Another drawback is the lack of research on how the empowerment of ST ward members would affect tribal life in general.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Scheduled Tribes' Socio-Economic Situation as Represented by Village Panchayats

The socioeconomic standing of the ST ward members will be looked at right away. Empowerment is significantly influenced by socioeconomic level, which may have either a good or negative effect. As members of a socially disadvantaged group, they probably have a lower socioeconomic standing. To get entry, socioeconomic factors including caste, age, sex, marital status, education, and employment are taken into account. Members of the ST ward's sexual orientation significantly affect their social and economic standing, particularly in light of the persistent gender inequality in society. Whether this condition is egregiously prevalent among STs is a moot point. Age significantly influences the level of empowerment. Age has an impact on a person's physical and psychological make-up, life experience, attitude, and knowledge. Undoubtedly, younger people are more active than older people. The latter's experience and maturity, however, cannot be disregarded.

In general, society views a married individual as being mature, responsible, and attractive in his social interactions. In the case of married women, there is a strong possibility that their views and behaviours will be influenced by their husbands or family members. Marital status is intended to be a deciding element in how well a person performs the given position in the public domain, determining his or her empowerment. A person's socioeconomic standing is significantly influenced by their education. It encourages the development of leadership abilities. It aids in engaging in social interactions in a more imaginative and deliberate manner. Education helps people become more socially independent and more capable of assuming new roles and overcoming obstacles. Additionally, it increases a person's income, enabling them to become financially independent. The profession has a big part to play in the empowering process. The majority of the tribe members are reportedly just working part-time. Similar to sourcing, a large portion of the forest's producers are farmers, laborers, and people with conventional occupations. The majority of their time is spent in

their communities. So they are free to commit themselves to public service if they so desire. People who are better off financially are able to more effectively balance the social power. Empowerment depended critically on income. Their prospects of becoming empowered depend on their own income. This element eventually determines a person's overall standing in life. In order to determine how much their money has affected their empowerment, an examination of ST ward members' income is necessary.

Table 4.1 Sex-Wise Classification of Respondents

	No.ofRespondents			Total	%
	Adapur	Agrahar	Kalmangi		
Male	27	36	13	76	48.1
Female	23	45	14	82	51.9
Total	50	81	27	158	100

Out of the 158 elected ST members of village panchayats in the Raichur districts of Adapur, Agrahar, and Kalmangi, Table 4.1 shows that 76 (48.1%) of the respondents are men and 82 (51.9%) are women. In the Agrahar district, women have a greater chance than males to speak for the ST people in comparison to other areas. The graph demonstrates how ST reservation in village panchayats provides women with equal chances at the local level. It's a good development that there are more women on the ward than males. The fact that there is only a small percentage of difference in the number of male and female representatives in panchayats demonstrates that women and men participate in society on a nearly equal footing in terms of numbers, which empowers them.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents Based on Age

	No.ofRespondents				
	Adapur	Agrahar	Kalmangi	Total	%
21-30	2	4	5	11	7
31-40	16	43	14	73	46.2
41-50	19	25	6	50	31.6
51-60	10	7	2	19	12
61and above	3	2	0	5	3.2
Total	50	81	27	158	100

When examining the age breakdown of the scheduled tribe representatives of the village panchayat in Raichur, it was possible to see from table 4.2 that 73 (46.2%) of them fell within the 31–40 age range. It demonstrates that younger age groups are better represented than older ones. There are 50 (31.6%) ST ward members in the 41–50 age range. Additionally, it was discovered that the age groups of 21 to 30 and those over 60 were little represented. It was noted that the young people employed in this field are a benefit for administrative quality and effectiveness. Compared to the previous generation, they are more engaged and capable of bridging conventional social divides.

4.2 Empowerment of village panchayat representatives from scheduled tribes

4.2.1 Exposure of the Scheduled Tribe Representatives in the Media

Table 4.3 Newspaper reading habit of respondents

	District			Total	%
	Adapur	Agrahar	Kalmangi		
Never	16	24	16	56	35.4
Occasionally	18	32	6	56	35.4
Regular	16	25	5	46	29.2
Total	50	81	27	158	100

According to the research, reading newspapers and magazines gives members of the ST Gram Panchayat several opportunity to learn about local issues, get perspective on the outside world, and gauge societal trends. News is always available. They should be aware of the political events going on around them as public figures. Additionally, it makes it easier for them to communicate with people and raise awareness of concerns and local uprisings. Lack of news reading prevents self-empowerment, making all other avenues for growth ineffective. In a private interview, the respondents reveal a startling finding on newspaper consumption. The chart demonstrates that ST ward members in Adapur district 16 (32%), Agrahar district 24 (29.6%), and Kalmangi district 16 (59.3%) never get access to newspapers. Only 32 percent of ward members in Adapur, 18.5 percent in Agrahar, 30.9 percent, and Kalmangi, 18.5 percent, had adequate opportunity to read newspapers, compared to 36.5 percent in Adapur, 39.5 percent in Agrahar, and 22.2 percent in Kalmangi. The primary causes of people not reading the news include illiteracy, isolation from other people due to geography, language, and home responsibilities, which have a detrimental impact on people's empowerment.

Table 4.4 Viewing Patterns of Respondents for News Programs

	District			Total	%
	Adapur	Agrahar	Kalmangi		
Never	18	28	14	60	38
Occasionally	20	34	6	60	38
Regular	12	19	7	38	24
Total	50	81	27	158	100

The respondents' habit of viewing television is shown in Table 4.4. 38 of them regularly have access to the TV, 60 never watch it, and 60 sometimes watch news programmes. The ward members benefit from it since it keeps them informed about local happenings. TV news broadcasts assist ST ward members in keeping up with current events and are a crucial source of political education. They will be better able to express their thoughts and ideas on issues of general interest. Data analysis reveals that 36% of ST members in Adapur, 34.6% in Agrahar, and 51.9% in Kalmangi districts do not have access to televisions, and they never watch TV news programmes to learn about politics. According to the data above, 40.2%, 42.2%, and 22.2% of the ST ward members in Adapur, Agrahar, and Kalmangi, respectively, sometimes watch TV news programmes. ST ward members watch TV often and profit from the shows in Adapur (24%), Agrahar (23.4%), and Kalmangi (26%). Since most of them lack the resources to own a TV, they are mostly unaffected by the media. Additionally, their houses lack power. It is important to note in this context that their lack of access to contemporary audiovisual media keeps them from participating fully in modernity and intellectual empowerment.

5. CONCLUSION

In order to conduct the study, the researcher created an interview schedule with 158 ST ward members from the three districts of Adapur, Agrahar, and Kalmangi, where there is a sizable ST community, as respondents. Based on the standard of their level of empowerment, they discovered that they fit into any of the five groups that the ward members belonged to. Rejection, tokenism, compromise, struggle, and empowerment are the five categories. During the interview, most of them voiced dissatisfaction with their roles as ward members, and of course, everyone felt sympathy for the dreadful situation of the tribal people in Raichur. They are all examples of ward members who discovered they belonged to the group with little influence. The STs' economic and educational backwardness gives them a negative complex despite their pride in being forest dwellers who live in Mother Nature's bosom. The ST ward members wallow in self-pity because of their subsequent social disempowerment and



incapacity to contribute to their liberation. These persons come under the heading of "rejection." In fact, they decided to participate in the village panchayat election in 2010 by pressure from their family, a certain political party, or their community. It can also include the fact that the illiterates among them fall under the same heading. They were classified as belonging to the "rejection" group.

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