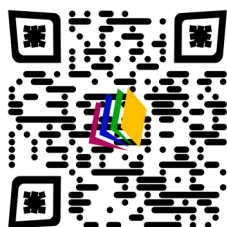




e-ISSN: 2582-502X

Asiatic Society for Social Science
Research. 2(1): June 2020, 163-170.

Research Article



www.asssr.in
(Peer Reviewed)

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Nityananda Barik

Assistant Prof. in Political Science,
DDCE, Fakir Mohan University,
Odisha

Email: ariknityananda@gmail.com

Received on 23.04.2020

Modified on 01.06.2020

Accepted on 26.06.2020

© Asiatic Society for Social Science
Research all right reserved.

Perception on Performance of Women Ward Members in Odisha: A Study

Dr. Nityananda Barik

Assistant Prof. in Political Science, DDCE, Fakir Mohan University, Odisha.

ABSTRACT:

Seventy Third Constitutional amendment empowered rural women through 33% reservation of seats in panchayati raj institutions. Accordingly, Odisha State conducted panchayat election in the year 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017. At the gram panchayat level women ward members were found on one third seat reservation basis. Their representation came from different castes, religion, education, age and profession. In the last gram panchayat election, more number of educated women ward members were elected. Generally, the ward members played their role performance in fulfilling the requirements of the people. But how far the people assessed the role performance of women ward members. In order to know their role performance, an attempt was taken to conduct a study and as such researcher asked questions to the people. The study reveals that women ward members were very much aware about the local problems and had taken steps to solve the local problem as well as the women related issues. The people of the panchayat were aware about the working of women ward members. The members kept good relations with the fellow ward members, Sarapanchas, Panchayat Samiti members and Zilla Parishad members. The women ward members focused on the suggestive measure for the development of the wards under gram panchayat.

KEY WORDS: Panchayatiraj, Grampanchayat, Ward Member, Reservation, Perception

Introduction

India is a democratic state which believes in representative form of government at the centre, state and grassroot level. Constitution of India under Article 40 made provision that “the state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of local self-governments”, So Government of India took efforts for rural development. In the year 1952 the Community Development Programme (CDP) was introduced by the Government of India. In its consequence, the Balwant Mehta Committee was constituted in order

to set the goal of Community Development Programme. The said committee investigated into the matter of rural development approach and political categorization of Panchayati Raj system. It recommended the need of Three Tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The committee also reflected in its report that the government should make appropriate legislative measures for implementation of Panchayati Raj System at the local self government in India. Odisha state introduced the three tier system of Panchayati Raj system after implementation at the other states like Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Thereafter, the government of India constituted another committee under the chairmanship of Ashok Meheta in the year 1977. It was reflected in the name of Ashok Meheta Committee which submitted its report on structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions and nature of local self government. The prime focus was on the formation of Two-Tier system of Panchayati Raj, namely, Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat at the district and village level respectively.

However, one suggestion was made by the Balwant Meheta Committee for inclusion of two women members. Similarly, Ashok Meheta Committee favoured inclusion of two women members securing the highest number of votes among the all women candidates in the election. It resulted that the inclusion of women candidate became very low in Panchayati Raj Institutions. But the inclusion of women in PRIs got momentum by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment in the year 1993. By this 73rd Constitutional amendment women got chance to involve with political process with one third reservations at the level of rural local self-government, namely at the Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat level. As

such, more women were found as political representatives at the urban bodies and panchayat raj institutions in India.

Odisha Context

The world-wide women's movement has given opportunities for greater political participation of women. It results the increase of women's involvement at the level of decision making, leadership capacity and political mobilization. It forced government to implement at the policy level for inclusion of women in political activities. The 73rd and 74th amendment gave a new light on the political empowerment of women at the grassroot level of democracy. Odisha state also implemented the one third reservation seat for women in local self government. The then chief minister, Sri Biju Pattnaik, took a great initiative in bringing the legislative support for suitable implementation of women's reservation seat at the rural and urban bodies. The achievement of Sir Biju Pattanik is still memorable in the minds of the people for his able and dynamic leadership in giving light to women empowerment in Odisha. Thereafter, Odisha witnessed many PRIs and Municipal elections after passing of 73rd and 74th amendment. The year 1997 saw Panchayat election with adopting one third reservation seats for the women. Thereafter, Odisha state conducted PRIs election in the year 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017. These elections fostered women to context as candidate and became peoples' representatives. At the Gram Panchayat level one third women became Ward Members in the election 2017. In order to know their role performance, the study has been made with focus on people's perception.

Respondents' profile

For the purpose of study, two blocks namely, Jagatsinghpur and Tirtol Block under Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha state have been taken as the study areas. The study was conducted through a structured questionnaire among the 120 respondents of the said blocks. The aim of the study was to collect data on the role and work performance of the women ward members of their locality. Besides that, personal interview and focus group discussion had been made to reach at a general conclusion. The profile of the respondents are placed herewith in table no. 1.

Table No. 1 (Respondent's Profile)

| Profile | Total Numbers | Category | Numbers of Response | % of the number |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Gender | 120 | Male | 80 Numbers | 66.67 p.c. |
| | | Female | 40 Numbers | 33.33 p.c. |
| Religion | 120 | Hindu | 102 Numbers | 85 p.c. |
| | | Muslim | 18 Numbers | 15 p.c. |
| | | Christian | 00 | NIL |
| Caste | 120 | General | 65 Numbers | 54.17 p.c. |
| | | OBC | 32 Numbers | 26.67 p.v. |
| | | SC | 23 Numbers | 19.16 p.c. |
| | | ST | 00 | Nil |
| Marital Status | 120 | Married | 82 Numbers | 68.33 p.c. |
| | | Unmarried | 32 Numbers | 26.6 p.c. |
| | | Widow | 06 Numbers | 5 p.c. |
| Age | 120 | 18yrs to 25 yrs | 12 Numbers | 10 p.c. |
| | | 26yrs to 35 yrs | 30 Numbers | 25 p.c. |
| | | 36yrs to 45yrs | 33 Numbers | 27.5 p.c. |
| | | 46yrs to 55 yrs | 25 Numbers | 20.83 p.c. |
| | | 56yrs and above | 20 Numbers | 16.67 p.c. |
| Qualifications | 120 | Literate | 24 Numbers | 20 p.c. |
| | | Below Matric | 44 Numbers | 36.67 p.c. |
| | | Matriculate | 26 Numbers | 21.67 p.c. |
| | | Intermediate | 10 Numbers | 8.33 p.c. |
| | | Graduate | 10 Numbers | 8.33 p.c. |
| Profession | 120 | Post-Graduate and above | 06 Numbers | 5 p.c. |
| | | Students | 10 Numbers | 8.33 p.c. |
| | | Unemployed | 27 Numbers | 22.5 p.c. |
| | | Labourer | 40 Numbers | 33.33 p.c. |
| | | Govt. Servant | 10 Numbers | 8.33 p.c. |
| | | Businessmen | 20 Numbers | 16.67 p.c. |
| | | Private Service | 05 Numbers | 4.17 p.c. |
| Self-employed | 08 Numbers | 6.67 p.c. | | |

Source : Field Study

Peoples' perception

Each gram panchayat is divided by a number of wards. A ward is represented by a ward member to the gram panchayat. Following the 73rd Constitutional amendment one third women ward members are represented to each gram panchayat. So the ward members are known to the people of

the concerned area. Under this circumstance, the researcher wanted to know the people's awareness on the women representatives (women ward members) of their locality. The people's responses are presented in the table no. 2.

Table No. 2 (Awareness of the people)

N-120

| Response - Yes | % of the number (Yes) | Response - No | % of the number (No) |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 98 numbers | 81.67 p.c. | 22 numbers | 18.33 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

Out of 120 respondents, 98 numbers that is 81.67 percent said that they were aware about the women ward members and 22 numbers that is 18.33 percent were not aware about their women ward members. Those who knew the women ward members, they were mostly educated, elderly persons and had some idea on current political situation. Those who did not know, they were from the backdrop of uneducated and unemployed and less knowledge on societal performance.

Then question was asked to those persons who knew the women ward members that "women members took adequate interest in Panchayat work". Of the total 98 respondents it was found that 90 p.c. respondents viewed that women ward members took much interest for the panchayat work. It seemed that the representatives were working for the development of panchayat work activities. Then, the next question was asked to the respondents on the nature and source of knowledge they gathered on the performance of women ward members. Again 90 p.c. of the respondents opined that women ward members attended the panchayat meetings, 85 p.c. said that they were taking major role in the meeting and initiate policy decisions in the meeting and 86 p.c. respondents said that

women ward members took interest to solve the local problems. Women ward members involved with development work of the panchayat.

Then the question raised on the sphere of activities of women ward members. The responses are presented in the table no. 3.

Table No. 3 (Activities of women ward members)

N-98

| Sl | Activities of women ward members | Response - Yes | % of the number |
|----|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Introducing policy | 84 Numbers | 85.71 p.c. |
| 2 | Participation in discussion | 84 Numbers | 85.71 p.c. |
| 3 | Local problem solution | 85 Numbers | 86.73 p.c. |
| 4 | Women problem solution | 84 Numbers | 85.71 p.c. |
| 5 | Constructive activities | 38 Numbers | 38.78 p.c. |
| 6 | Well contact with public | 52 Numbers | 53.04 p.c. |
| 7 | Assisting to needy people | 48 Numbers | 48.98 p.c. |
| 8 | Self Help Group formation | 36 Numbers | 36.73 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

It is reflected that 85.71 p.c. said in favour of introducing policy, participation in decision making, women relation problem solution, 86.73 p.c. viewed on local problem solution, 38.78 p.c. favoured on dealing with constructive activities, 53.04 p.c. said on well contact with public, 48.98 p.c. said on assisting to needy people, 36.73p.c. said in favour of formation of SHG at their locality. Majority of the respondents viewed that women ward members were involved with solving local problems. The representatives were involved with other activities like active participation in discussion, solving women problems, assisting to needy people, and making well public contact. It is well understood that women ward members were in touch with development works, solving local issues, assisting needy people, poor people and

discussing needful activities.

In normal case it is found in the society that women are being tortured by the male persons. Women can be able to understand the problem of women. So question was asked that “in what extent the women ward members solved the women issue of the locality”. Out of 120 sample respondents, 102 numbers (85%) responded “yes”. The researcher wanted to know the categories of women issues that were solved by the women representatives. Their replies are presented in table no. 4

Table No. 4 (Solving Women related issues)

N-102

| Sl | Issues on women | Response - Yes | % of the number |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Women literacy | 76 Numbers | 74.50 p.c. |
| 2 | Dowry demand & dowry death | 25 Numbers | 24.50 p.c. |
| 3 | Domestic violence | 68 Numbers | 66.66 p.c. |
| 4 | ICDS work | 70 Numbers | 68.62 p.c. |
| 5 | Employment | 58 Numbers | 56.86 p.c. |
| 6 | Women health issues | 46 Numbers | 45.09 p.c. |
| 7 | Financial assistance to widows | 80 Numbers | 78.43 p.c. |
| 8 | Others (SHG, loan) | 30 Numbers | 29.41 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

From the above table it is found that there were different problems of women. They are women literacy, dowry demand and dowry death, domestic violence, women employment, women health issues and financial assistance to widows. Out of 102 respondents, 80 nos that is 78.43. p.c. replied that women representatives were very much conscious about granting of widow pension, 76 nos that 74.50 p.c. viewed that they focused on women education, and 68 nos that is 66.66 p.c. said that women representatives played a significant role in solving the domestic violence issues in the society. Besides that they focused on other issues on women. It

clearly revealed that women ward members were conscious about the women’s issues and tried to solve the women issues with consultation with sarapanch and other senior ward members.

Then, the researcher wanted to know whether the people of the locality remained happy with the activities of the women ward members. In that connection question was asked “Are you satisfied with the activities of your ward member?” and “What is the degree of satisfaction with ward members?” The responses are presented in table no. 5.

Table No. 5 (People’s satisfaction on women ward members)

N-102

| Sl | Level of satisfaction | Response - Yes | % of the number |
|----|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Full | 32 Numbers | 31.37 p.c. |
| 2 | Partial | 58 Numbers | 56.87 p.c. |
| 3 | Average | 08 Numbers | 7.84 p.c. |
| 4 | Less | 04 Numbers | 3.92 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

From the above table it is understood that out of 120 nos of respondents , 102 nos opined that they were satisfied with the role performance of women ward members. Those who were satisfied, they have good knowledge, educated and well acquainted with society. The degree of satisfaction of 102 respondents reflects that 56.87 p.c. said about partial satisfied, 7384 p.c. said about satisfaction as average and 31.37 p.c. said about full satisfied. But 3.92 p.c. said about less as the degree of satisfaction. However, it is clearly understood that people are satisfied with the activities of

women ward members.

The gram panchayat members do keep relation with the members of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. They interact with other members in order to get feedback, support and cooperation in regard to the development perspectives. Hence, in this base, question was asked to the respondents “whether the women ward members do keep good contact with other members of the PRIs?” It is found that, out of 120 respondents, 104 nos that is 86.66 p.c. viewed that women ward members had good relations with members of the Panchayati Samiti, Sarapanch and fellow other ward members. They developed a good contact platform through which they shared the problems of the locality as well as tried to solve the local problems. Out of 120 respondents 70 nos that is 58.33 p.c. said that women ward members had very good relations with the government officials including the panchayat secretary, village level workers, ASHA workers and Anganwadi members. Where as 94 nos that is 78.33 p.c. said that the contact with the local people was very good by the women ward members. Even the ward members had kept continuous interaction with the village leaders and village members. As such, the above outcomes show that majority numbers of women ward members had contact with their fellow colleagues, officials, other political representatives of the locality.

The researcher gathered the knowledge that women ward members had good contact with public for solving local problems and other development related works. Then, question was asked on the “time spent for consultation with public so far as public relation is concerned”. The responses in this regard is presented in the table no. 6

Table No. 6 (Time spent for consultation with public)

N-94

| Sl | Time | Response - Yes | % of the number |
|----|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | All the time (Always) | 04 Numbers | 4.25 p.c. |
| 2 | Sometimes | 15 Numbers | 15.96 p.c. |
| 3 | Less time | 50 Numbers | 53.19 p.c. |
| 4 | Rare time | 10 Numbers | 10.64 p.c. |
| 5 | Very less time | 15 Numbers | 15.96 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

From the above table it was found that out of 120 respondents, 94 nos that is 78.33 p.c. viewed in positive way and rest 26 nos that is 21.67 p.c. viewed in negative way. Those who expressed positive way, their expressions have been categorized, namely, all the time, sometimes, less time, rare time and very less time. Majority of the people that is 50 nos (53.19 p.c.) out of 94 nos viewed that women ward members kept public relations in a less time. Because they remained busy with panchayat work so they got less time. 15 numbers (15.96 p.c.) said that the ward members kept contact in both some times and very less time, Again only 4 numbers (4.25 p.c.) said that ward members kept public relations in all the time (always). So, it is assumed that women ward members had public contact fully and partial form. It resulted in developing a dynamic administrative mechanism for solving the local problems.

Then the researcher wanted to know the issues which were discussed with the public by the women ward members. Generally, the discussions were made on the aspects of ration card, Indira Awas Yojan house, village disturbance, maintenance work, medical issues, old age and widow pension etc. In this aspect, question was

asked “on which of the above part women ward members did contact with the village people or with the public.” The responses in this regard is presented in table no. 7.

Table No. 7 (Issues discussed with the public)

N-94

| Sl | Issues | Response - Yes | % of the number |
|----|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Ration card issues | 72 Numbers | 76.59 p.c. |
| 2 | Indira Awas housing scheme | 60 Numbers | 63.82 p.c. |
| 3 | Work development in locality | 35 Numbers | 37.23 p.c. |
| 4 | Village disturbance issues | 68 Numbers | 72.34 p.c. |
| 5 | Assisting to poor and People | 58 Numbers | 61.70 p.c. |
| 6 | Maintenance work | 32 Numbers | 34.04 p.c. |
| 7 | Medial issues | 35 Numbers | 37.23 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

From the above table, it is reflected that 94 nos out of 120 nos of respondents viewed their opinion on these issues. Out of 94 nos, 72 nos that is 76.59 p.c. said on ration card issues, 60 nos that is 63.82 p.c. said on Indira Awas housing scheme, 68 nos that is 72.34 p.c. said on village disturbance issues, 58 nos that is 61.70 p.c. said on assisting to poor people, 32 nos that is 34.04 p.c. said on maintenance work and 35 nos that is 37.23 p.c. said on work development in locality and medial issues. However, the ward members kept remarkable public contact and discussed on different issues in a well manner.

The Indian society is patriarchal in nature where male persons take decisions rather than female. The male persons include father, grand-father, son, brother, son-in-law etc. The study intends to know the patriarchal influence over the women ward members. Directly it can be considered as the form of proxy system of representatives. In the society it is continuing either in visible or invisible way. The

researcher wanted to know whether the women ward members received the commands of the senior male persons of the family. To get the answer questions were asked to the respondents. These questions are mentioned in the table no. 8.

Table No. 8 (Male person’s interference)

N-120

| Sl | Questions | Response - No | % of the number |
|----|---|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Male members worked for the women ward members | 94 Numbers | 78.33 p.c. |
| 2 | Family members attended the panchayat or any other meetings on behalf of women ward members of his family | 108 Numbers | 90 p.c. |
| 3 | Male members accompany or to assist in the panchayat work on behalf of the women ward members | 94 Numbers | 78.33 p.c. |
| 4 | Male members of the family interact with the public in place of women ward members | 92 Numbers | 76.67 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

It is found from the above table that out of 120 total respondents, 94 nos (78.33 p.c.) said that no male members worked for the women ward members, 108 nos (90 p.c.) said that no family members attended the panchayat or any other meetings on behalf of women ward members of the his family, 94 nos (78.33 p.c.) said that no male members accompany or to assist in the panchayat work on behalf of the women ward members and 92 nos (76.67 p.c.) of the respondents said that no male members of the family interact with the public in place of women ward members. The above statistical data reveals that women ward members were working independently, and they did not support any proxy system. As such, it is found that women ward members were very much conscious about their duties and responsibilities.

It was clear that women ward members were

effective in their work without any assistance of male members or not entertaining and not encouraging proxy system. Thereafter, the researcher wanted to know people’s perception on the improvement of the work performance of women ward members. So the researcher put some suggestive ideas before the respondents in order to reach a conclusion. The detailed information is presented in table no. 9

Table No. 9 (Improvement of the work performance of women ward members)

N-120

| Sl | Suggestions | Response - Yes | % of the number |
|----|--|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Discouraging on proxy role | 80 Numbers | 66.66 p.c. |
| 2 | Educated ward members | 110 Numbers | 91.66 p.c. |
| 3 | Regular meeting attending | 75 Numbers | 62.05 p.c. |
| 4 | Conduct of meeting in villages in different periods | 65 Numbers | 54.16 p.c. |
| 5 | Maintaining transparency in duties | 110 Numbers | 91.66 p.c. |
| 6 | Awarding to best ward members | 105 Numbers | 87.05 p.c. |
| 7 | Non-intervention of political force | 96 Numbers | 80 p.c. |
| 8 | Increasing sound financial condition of Gram Panchayat | 104 Numbers | 86.66 p.c. |

Source: Field Work

From the above table it is found that out of 120 total respondents 80 nos that is 66.66 p.c. viewed on discouraging on proxy role, 110 nos that is 91.66 p.c. viewed on educated ward members and maintaining transparency in duties, 75 nos that is 62.05 p.c. said on regular meeting attending, 65 nos that is 54.16 p.c. said on conduct of meeting in villages in different periods, 105 nos that is 87.05 p.c. said on awarding to best ward members, 96 nos that is 80 p.c. said on non-intervention of political force, and 104 nos that is 86.66 p.c. said on increasing sound financial condition of Gram Panchayat. As such, it reflected that people’s

perceptions were so positive in the sphere that women ward members needed to be strengthened for the all-round development of locality.

Conclusion

The study was conducted on the work performance of the women ward members those who elected in the panchayat election. In order to reach in a conclusion on their work performance a random sample survey was made to the public and general people of the study area, The study revealed that the women ward members were very well acquainted with the public and at the another side the people of the concerned ward were aware about their women representatives to the gram panchayat as ward members. These women representatives involved with solving different local problems including women issues before the panchayat meetings. They took active participation in discussion, solving women problems, assisting to needy people, and making well public contact. They attended the panchayat meetings regularly and raised local issues, women related problems. They strongly focused on the ration card issue, widow and old age assistance, and violence against women. They could able to get success on keeping good relations and contact with their fellow ward members, Sarapancha, Panchayat Samiti members, and members of Zilla Parishad and local government officials. Thus, it makes clear that women ward member was effective in managing local administrations. But it is interesting to note that women ward members were not biased by the male persons of the family. Though indirectly proxy system was found, but it was not seen in an open manner. As such, the women ward members took their own decisions and they did not allow the male persons to attend any meeting nor to present any view in lieu of them. The women ward members

also focused on the suggestive measure for the development of the wards under gram panchayat. They raised different development approaches like fighting on violence against women, strengthening self -help group members, non- intervention of political force, working for the poor and deserved people. Thus, the women ward members were conscious on their role and responsibility towards wellbeing of the people of the ward and panchayat as whole.

References

- Ambedkar, S. N., and S. Nagendra. 2005. *Women Empowerment and Panchayati Raj*. Jeypur: ABD Publishers.
- Bandopadhyay, D., and Mukherjee Amitabha. 2006. *Empowering Women Panchayat Members*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Buch, Nirmala. 2005. "Women and Panchayats : Opportunities, Challenges and Support." In *Decentralization and Local Governance*, by L. C. Jain. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- . 2000. *Women's Experience in New Panchayats : The Emerging Leadership of Rural Women*. New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies.
- Kaushik, Susheela. 2001. *Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj in India, National Commission for Women*. New Delhi.
- Mishra, Rashmi. 1998. "Devolution of Power to Women in Panchayati Raj In Orissa: Challenges and Opportunities." *Kurukhetra*.
- Mishra, Sweta. 1997. "Women and 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act : A Critical Appraisal." *Social Action*.
- Mohanty, Bidyut. 1998. *Women and Political Empowerment*. New Delhi: Institute of Social Science.
- Narasimhan, Sakuntala. 1999. "Women's Role in Gram Sabha." *Kurukhetra*.
- State Election Commissioner*. n.d. (Orissa, Bhubaneswar).