

A Case Study of the Identity Consciousness of Women Participation in the Rural Politics of Kamrup District in Assam

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Abstract

The status of the North-Eastern region as a multicultural polyglot reflects the region's diverse political perspectives. The diverse perspective of North East India has shaped Muslim women identity and awareness. The investigator focused the main purpose of peace is a vital part of our collective consciousness. The field of comparison ought to be vast enough to consider within its purview, all modes of behavior and other factors that shape the output of a political system. Moreover, the rising migration cases have also contributed to the creation of identity consciousness among the Muslim of Assam. The socio- political awareness among the ethnic groups encouraged preserving the ethnic identity in the heterogeneous Assamese society. At the same time, the diversity of interests represented by ethnic groups counters Assamese nationalism. However, Assamese nationalism has an ideological paradox in terms of electoral representation. Therefore, the most prevailing debates in Assam nowadays are the Hindu - Muslim and indigenous-non-indigenous debates. The study was primarily qualitative in nature, and a historical and analytical methodology was adopted while preparing the article. Collection of data has been made from various secondary sources such as articles published in books, journals and other published vernacular records. As a result, political professionalism and post behavioural social transformation influence the Muslim community's identity of women participation in the rural politics constructions.

Keywords: Identity, Consciousness, Women, Participation, Rural Politics, Community.

Introduction

The history of Indian women can be divided in to three periods i.e. Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The east India Company established its rule over India since 1757, which call modern period. During this period education of men was modernized and institutions were opened to promote this but nothing was done to promote women education. In 1858, the British government took upon itself the direct responsibility of the administration. But in spite of this, they did not pay any attention towards the education of women of this country. Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42).¹

Origin of the Problem

¹ The Constitution of India. National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 AD.

In India, woman who constitutes 48 percent of total population, normatively, have been given an exalted position in society. During ancient times they were treated at par with men even in political and philosophical spheres. However, down the centuries the position of women in society deteriorated and politically they were pushed to the background. It was only in the 20th century with the freedom movement under the charismatic leadership of Gandhiji that involvement of women was accepted as the natural course in India. In 1905 when the British partitioned the province of Bengal, women joined men in protesting this decision by boycotting foreign goods and buying swadeshi goods. Later, the Swadeshi, Non-cooperation, and civil disobedience movements drew them into the vertex of the freedom struggle and created a favorable atmosphere for women's participation in the freedom struggle. Thus Gandhiji brought huge numbers of women into action. He worked consciously to feminize the freedom movement. By picking on salt as a symbol of a country wide Satyagraha, he brought the movement into every home and kitchen. Annie Besant became the president of the congress as early as 1919. Sarojini Naidu was Gandhi's choice for president of the congress in 1925.

Thus, participation in politics and decision making is the best means for women's empowerment. Because women's equal participation in the decision making process, policy making, planning and administration is extremely important to ensuring their equality while participation in the developmental process as well as to ensure their status in the gender bias male dominated social settings. Briefly, the status of women is directly related to the decision making process and unless women are associated more closely with this process, the equality and justice to women can't be achieved.

Women should be given adequate legal education to make them capable of descending their own rights, then, their legislative dues. This is essential as without legal knowledge and activism all the formal constitutional arrangements made by the state become redundant. Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line, they should be given equal economic rights to achieve the goal of gender equality. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women. Therefore, a broad frame work and perspectives for empowerment of women exists at the policy level in India. However, the need of the hour is to translate these ideas into actual practice. To make reservation policy effect able, women need to be made conscious of their rights. As it is cited "Human right is a dynamic concept and this fact has significant implications for women." Women are really in need of being conscientized and conscious of their right which is not less than the right of their men. So they need not to be afraid of their men when their man is trying to let them denied of their rights. If human right is dynamic it should surely have strengthen the human of the past and of the present, too. Also it must imply necessarily the political right, economic right and any other rights to women. If women are denied of their human right in all works and aspects of their life what the UNO had declare would be in vain, 50% or more of the world population would be denied of their rights and 33% reservation also would be in vain. This needs to be imparted in the minds of women.

The Panchayat Raj is a South Asian political system mainly in India, Pakistan, and Nepal. "Panchayat" literally means assembly (Ayat) of five (Panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralized several administrative functions to the village level, empowering elected Gram Panchayats are not to be confused with the unelected Khap Panchayats (or caste Panchayats) found in some parts of India. Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which Gram Panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: Village, Block and District. The Panchayats

receive funds from three sources (i) local body grants, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission, (ii) funds for implementation of centrally-sponsored schemes, and (iii) funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions. The Rural Panchayat Act 1948: Under this system there were two tiers of Panchayats – Primary Panchayats at village level and Rural Panchayats at Mouza level. Assam Panchayat Act 1994: A three-tier system with Zilla Parishad has been introduced Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat and Zilla Parishad.

Structure of the Panchayati Raj System in Assam:

Gaon Panchayats:

- a). President directly elected by people.
- b). One Vice President – to be elected from among the members of Gaon Panchayat.
- c). Ten members – directly elected by people.

Anchalik Panchayats:

- a). President – to be elected by the elected members of the Anchalik Panchayats.
- b). Vice President - to be elected by the elected members of the Anchalik Panchayats.
- c). Members:-
 1. One member from each Gaon Panchayat area to be directly elected by people.
 2. President of the Gaon Panchayats falling within the jurisdiction of the Anchalik Panchayat.
 3. Members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly.

Zilla Parishad:

- a). President – elected from among the directly elected members of Zilla Parishad.
- b). Vice President - elected from among the directly elected members of Zilla Parishad.
- c). Members:-
 1. Members directly elected from the Zilla Parishad constituencies of the district.
 2. Presidents of the Anchalik Panchayats.
 3. Members of House of people & member of Legislative Assembly.

Role of Panchayats in Social Mobilization and Participation for Development:

Panchayati Raj system has provided avenues for facilitating people's participation at the grass-root level in the following ways:

- i). Gram Sabha will provide an open forum for discussion on various village level development activities thereby ensuring peoples participation.
- ii). Representation of weaker sections in the decision making process.
- iii). Empowering rural women through an induction of 1/3 reservation in the Panchayati Raj bodies.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, "Indian Independence must be at the bottom and every village ought to be a Republic with Panchayat, having powers." The Panchayat Raj system has a three-tier structure as:

- i) The Village Panchayat or Gram Panchayat: The village panchayat or the gram Panchayat functions at the Village level.
- ii) Panchayat Samiti: The panchayat samiti is the main executive body which operates at the Block level.
- iii) Zila Parishad: The Zila Parishad functions at the districts level and is responsible for making executing and coordinating the programmes of rural development.

Conclusion:

In India women representation is very low either in parliament or in state legislatures. Various efforts are made by reformers and national and International organisation for changing the direction of the current and attracting the attention of all concerned to enable women community to share the power structure and get aid of domestic fetters. The recent 73rd and 74th amendment to the constitution of India are really courageous and precise worth

efforts of the government of India to provide opportunities to women of all castes and communities to take part in the political and development affairs at local levels which is very foundation of the democratic structure of the country. In India, seats are reserved for women at the village level, 'Panchayats' and the city level "Municipal Co-operations". However, the bill to reserve 33% seats in the Parliament could not go through due to opposition from some of the political parties. Women in India now participate in all activities such as politics, education, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology etc. Through the Panchayati Raj Institutions, over a million women have actively entered political life in India. As per the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act, all local elected bodies reserved one-third of their seats for women. Although the percentage of women in various levels of political activity has risen considerably, women are still under-represented in governance and decision making positions. Women are still facing significant barriers to their full and equal participation in the structures and institutions which govern their lives. This study is women's political participation in the rural areas with special reference to Kamrup district is one of the districts of Assam. It is a rural based district.

In Kamrup district also the political participation of women is not high. But in spite of these amendments the women participation in politics is not satisfactory in Kamrup district. That is why; this study has been done to bring out the real cases behind the low participation of women in the field of politics with special reference to the Chaigaon constituency. Inter-disciplinary relevance of women's civil and political participation refers to women's ability to participate equally with men, at all levels and in all aspects of public and political participation is not now-a-days limited to purely political aspects. It extends to other areas, such as family life, cultural and social affairs and the economy. Despite these government efforts to the education, still women are lagging behind than men. Women of India generally remained unlettered and uneducated. As a result of ignorance, women become victims of man dominated society. So, it is clear that women's participation in Indian political life is entirely not satisfactory in India. Women participate to a much smaller degree than men. Controlling for other factors, women score, on average, 24 points lower than men on our 100- point scale of political participation. To hold Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years.

The socio-economic conditions of the women, living in the affluent societies, do not need much stress as they are nurtured in conducive environment and as a consequence are endowed with all possible potentialities of growing into a full human being. The women belonging to lowest strata of society are in dire need of help and should be in developing an awareness of the potential use of all available modern media and educating themselves so that they could successfully become the architects of future Assam. To provide reservation of seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women (not less than 33%). The objective of political participation of women is to empower and enable women, to overcome the obstacles which prevent them from participating on an equal footing with men, through a combination of education training, networking and lobbying. Political participation is the result of interaction between the various political, economic, socio-cultural, environmental and institutional factors. It covers all the aspects of human participation embracing political, social, economic cultural, moral participation of women. Women's political participation is a multi-dimensional process which improved the political, socio-, economic, socio-cultural status of women. But no programme is success without the participation of women. Thus, political participation in general and people's participation in decision making in particular are interrelated with other disciplines like economics, sociology, human resource development, public administration etc. To the find out the problems and perspectives women participation of Panchayati raj in rural area of Kamrup district in Assam as well as in others, many investigations have been made in reference to a particular area. According to the provisions

of this Act of 1994, Zilla Parishad at the district level, Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level and Gaon Panchayat at the village level were formed. Hence Kamrup district of Assam has also not far behind in implementing the 33 percent reservation for women at Panchayat level. In both the elections 2001 and 2007 held under Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1994, a large number of women from rural areas of Kamrup district came out successfully, got elected and entranced into the grass-root level decision making system. In the election 2018, out of one Zilla Parishad, 12 Anchalik Panchayat and 29 Gaon Panchayats a large number of 46 and 26 women got elected respectively. The decision making power is the soul of the democratic working of the local bodies. The study reveals that not all the women representatives but only the influential women can take share in the process of decision-making. Hence the women have to come forward to take active participation in the process.

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