IMPACT OF QUOTA SYSTEM ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Abstract:

There is a growing demand for increasing presence of women in political decision-making. It is argued that women need to be ‘empowered’ in the dominion of political decision making so as to make possible their ‘real’ empowerment.

Our constitution prescribes only a minimum level of reservation of one third for women in Panchayats, but States have the leeway to mandate more than that level. Bihar took the bold step of reserving 50% of the Panchayat seats for women. Currently, elected women representatives are in place in 54 percent of seats in Bihar’s panchayats. Bihar’s example was followed by Sikkim, which increased their reservations for women to 40% and held their elections under the new arrangement in January 2008. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand have passed laws increasing the reservations for women in Panchayats to 50 percent. These changes will apply to the next elections to Panchayats in these States. Bihar, Rajasthan Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have made 50% seats available for women. This has given political and social exposures to backward, dalit, poor and illiterate.

How do reservations affect the involvement of EWRs in Panchayat functioning and uptake of their roles? What is the impact of reservations on the Quality of participation of Elected Women’s Representatives and on the developmental outcomes of women panchayat leaders. Are the EWRs proxies for their male relatives or a rubber-stamp for the dominant male relative? Has this changed over time? A reasonably detailed picture of this is basic to the understanding of representation and participation.

By contesting and getting elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions, women have shattered the myth of their own passivity - that women are not willing to enter politics. For women, successful grassroots experience has meant a chance to form coherent voice, to be heard and to make a difference in their communities. However, women’s representation in the decision-making positions with monitoring power is still negligible. The present decision-making procedure do not allow a greater participation of women. The very absence of women at these levels thus leads to preservation and reinforcement of male-oriented decisions. The reservation in Panchayats has provided for the erosion of the traditional gender, caste, class roles and hierarchy but it has still to cover a long and difficult process. Women not only have to fight for their right to be more than proxy members but also to break the barriers of gender division of labour, illiteracy, low level of mobility, seclusion, lack of training and information, which still continue to exist without enough support from the power structure. Women’s low self-esteem at the household level and their new role in local politics where they are now expected to function as leaders creates a contradiction.
between women’s role at home and in local government. Some studies suggest that the participation of women could be better if they had functional education and training on the various intricacies involved in the political field.

Reservations per se do guarantee effective participation of women, but women who have come under reservation have come in with their social and economic disadvantages – mostly illiterate, with little productive assets, largely dependent on wage labour and into a rural society that has places for various castes and gender. These cannot be changed by a wave of the constitutional amendment wand.

In Indian society women are by and large not decision makers. Their 'decisions' in most cases have been influenced by the wishes and dictates of the male family members. They are guided by a patriarchal social system and, therefore, are discriminated against in terms of access to food and health care. Another important aspect which affects women’s empowerment is their economic independence. In sum, women have to cross many hurdles before becoming effective partners in the decision-making process.

Even after 73rd Constitutional amendment for reserving seats for women in panchayats, women find token representation in the political sphere and the public domain, though not exclusively a male preserve, is surely dominated by men. This proves that empowering women continues to be an elusive problem. There are two sides to the maleness of politics. At one level, there is the traditional patriarchal notion where politics is in the nature of a patron client relationship paralleling the father-son relationship. As a result of this, women are excluded from the material benefits that politics accrues and even if they inherit the political office, it is usually due to the absence of a male member. The other male aspect of politics is fraternalism seeing political experiences as expressing brotherhood of men. Unlike in Scandinavia countries to bring a feminine prospective in decision making process, there are two important requirements that have to be attempted. First, political parties and its affiliated organizations ought to re-invent themselves and become more sensitive and responsive to women. They should not use the quota law to appoint token women with little or no power; especially in bodies that do not have real decision making powers. Second, there is the need to re-orient the socialization process by making equality the cornerstone of both societal and political culture.

In fact, some studies suggest that gender as a phenomenon hardly ever appears in a pure form. It is almost always alloyed with caste, class and religious factors. In matters where there are clash between gender and caste or class, it is impossible to expect women to align themselves with other women, going against their caste or class allegiance.

There is little consensus on the appropriate way to develop governance structures that are responsive to the interests of the women. Further more, there are a huge number of Panchayats working in different circumstances, the extent of empowerment of women...
vary from region to region and Panchayats work under different legal frameworks – as States have the discretion to define the scope and ambit of Panchayati Raj – every spectrum of political behaviour, ranging from abject subordination of women to remarkable instances of social and political assertiveness can be seen in the functioning of Panchayats. Therefore, examples are merely anecdotes – true only in respect of the instance quoted - and have very little value in terms of deriving conclusions about Panchayati Raj. Finally, constitutionally mandated Panchayati Raj is still young to throw up time series analyses of any great value.

**In light of the aforesaid points the presentations will be on the following issues:**

1. "Impact of Political Reservations for Women on Household Welfare”.
2. Impact of Political Reservations on the Quality of effective participation of EWRs
3. Training and Capacity building for women empowerment
4. Voices from Panchayats : Some state led Experiences
5. From Representation to Participation to Inclusion: The discussion will be focussing on these important issues
   i. Provision of women component plans in PRI budgets.
   ii. Linkages with self- groups to be established in all levels of PRIs
   iii. Encouragement to political parties to put up women candidates.
   iv. The opportunity to women to serve a full term when they are elected to posts in the PR system.
   v. Separate quorum for women’s participation in Gram Sabhas.

**The One Day Workshop will address the Following Issues:**

**Session I:** “Can Political Reservations Empower Women and Affect Economic Outcomes? : Evidence from Rural India”

The research at NCAER (lead by Dr. Nagarajan) uses its unique household level panel data (the ARIS/REDS panel of households) set to examine how political reservations have improved governance. Specifically the research examines the impact on general welfare, welfare of women households, empowerment, and welfare of the girl child
Abstract:

While many studies explored impacts of political quotas for females on public goods provision, knowledge on immediate and longer term economic impacts of such interventions remains limited which is undesirable in view of the widespread adoption of such policies. We use nation-wide data from India on current outcomes and a village’s reservation status for the entire period for which reservations had been in place to assess recurrent and longer-term impacts of this policy. Beyond recurrent impacts on public good delivery, we find evidence on persistent effects of reservation on voicing of concerns to local authorities if there are problems, the amount of time females spend on domestic duties and in the labor market, as well as their bargaining power regarding reproductive choices and control of finances within the household.

Session II: Can Political Reservation affect the Quality of participation of EWRs?: A case study of Bihar

The research (lead by Dr. Nupur Tiwari) examines how political reservations affect the quality of participation by elected women representatives (EWRs). Using primary data from Bihar that combines household level information on satisfaction with public services along with assessments (using Focused group Discussions) of the quality of public facilities, the research compares objective measures of the quantity and quality of service deliver across male and female headed Panchayats.

Abstract:

Relative to non-Mukhiya villages, the Mukhiyas's village has been allocated more public goods whether it is male mukhiya or female mukhiyas. It seen that women policymakers provide goods whose quality and quantity match that of men. Despite this, villagers including women are less satisfied with the performance of female leaders than with the performance of male leaders. Reservation is not really empowering the community because the preferences of these elected women representatives are different from the preferences of majority. Mere reservation will not have any impact on good governance as long as these elected women representatives do not commit to a policy in advance. The EWRs have to recognize the primacy of societal good over individual and political goods.

Session III: Training and Capacity building for women’s empowerment

Given the existing social inequalities in India, it is imperative to help, particularly, the women to fight this disadvantage and enable them participate in the local government processes with confidence. The training and capacity building initiatives will not even out the terrain, but can equip the participants to better navigate through it and expand spaces for democracy and equality. Keeping in mind the fact that a majority of entrants to local government system continue to be first time entrants there is a strong need to recontextualise their skills, experience, equipping them with appropriate information and updating their knowledge base. Locating the local government system within the spirit of
the 73rd amendment, capacity building efforts are also required to be able to create a cadre of local leadership that is capable of transforming the conditions of inequality and injustice within which much of the country still lives.

**Session IV: Voices from the Panchayat**

Some Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) who challenged the age-old patriarchal system to establish the growing empowerment of women in society; who demanded more economic rights for elected women representatives in panchayat to enhance the pace of development; who spear-headed the election campaigns that reflect the growing assertion of women empowerment at the grass-roots level; who have emphasized the importance of development work in the villages and undertook work in the areas like agriculture, cattle rearing, cottage industry, drinking water, etc. have been invited as lead speakers in this session to put up their views from the fields.

**Session V: From Representation to Participation to Inclusion**

A Bill to amend Article 243D to provide 50% reservation for women in seats and also offices of Chairpersons in all 3 tiers of Panchayats was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 26.11.2009. Presently, out of approx 28.18 lacs elected representatives of Panchayats, 36.87% (around 10 lacs) are women. With the proposed Constitutional Amendment, the number of elected women representatives (EWRs) is expected to rise to more than 14 lacs. A number of steps have been identified in the “Road Map for the Panchayats(2011-17):An all India Perspective”, released by Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India on 24 April 2011. This session will discuss these issues which are necessary for the empowerment of women:

i. Provision of women component plans in PRI budgets.

ii. Linkages with self- groups to be established in all levels of PRIs

iii. Encouragement to political parties to put up women candidates.

iv. The opportunity to women to serve a full term when they are elected to posts in the PR system.

v. Separate quorum for women’s participation in Gram Sabhas.

**Dates of the Seminar: March 28, 2012**

**Venue:** Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi

**Coordinator:** Dr. Nupur Tiwari, Assistant Professor, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Indian Institute of Public Administration.

**RSVP:** 9958822607, 8010140387
Workshop On Impact of Quota System on Women’s Empowerment

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>9.30 -10.00 am</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>10.00- 11.00 am</td>
<td>Inaugural Session</td>
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<td>10.00- 11.00 am</td>
<td>Welcome and Introduction Dr. Nupur Tiwari</td>
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<td>10.00- 11.00 am</td>
<td>Inaugural Address Dr. Rakesh Hooja Director IIPA</td>
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<td>10.00- 11.00 am</td>
<td>Keynote Address Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar</td>
<td>Former Union Minister of Panchayati Raj, Govt of India</td>
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<td>10.00- 11.00 am</td>
<td>Vote of thanks Prof. Aasha Kapur Mehta</td>
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<td>11.00-11.15am</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
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<td>11.20-12.25am</td>
<td>Session I: &quot;Can Political Reservation Empower Women and Affect Economic Outcomes?: Evidences from Rural India&quot; (Chair: Prof. D.B Gupta, Former Director, Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi)</td>
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<td>11.20-12.25am</td>
<td>Presentation by Prof Hari Nagarajan</td>
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<td>Prof Dolly Arora Dr Preet Rustagi Dr Laveesh Bhandari Dr V.N Alok</td>
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<td>11.20-12.25am</td>
<td>Open Discussion</td>
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<td>12.30-13.30am</td>
<td>Session II: Reservations affecting Quality of participation of EWRs. A case study of Bihar (Chair: Prof. Madhu Kishwar, CSDS)</td>
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<td>12.30-13.30am</td>
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<td>Prof Bidyut Mohanty Prof Sushma Yadav Shri Manoj Rai Shri Joy Enamul</td>
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<td>13.30-14.00 am</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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SESSION III: Training and Capacity building for women’s empowerment
(Chair: Prof M.P Singh, Delhi University)

14.00-15.15pm PRESENTATION by Dr George Mathew

Lead Speakers
Prof A.N Sharma
Dr. Mahipal
Shri Manoj Rai
Shri Joy Elamon
Ms Dagmar Baer

Open Discussion

Remarks by the Chair

SESSION IV: Voices from the Panchayat
(Chair: Dr Mahipal, Jt. Director, Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi)

15.15-16.00pm Lead Speakers
Smt Savita Rathi
Smt Rekha Choudhary
Smt Bina Devi

Open Discussion

Remarks by the Chair

SESSION V: From Representation to Participation to Inclusion
(Chair: Prof. Ranjana Kumari, CSR, New Delhi)

16.00-17.15pm Lead Speakers
1. Provision of women component plans in PRI budgets: Prof Bidyut Mohanty
2. Linkages with self-groups to be established in all levels of PRIs: Prof. Dolly Arora
3. Encouragement to political parties to put up women candidates: Prof Preet Rustagi
4. Separate quorum for women’s participation in Gram Sabhas and sub-Gram Sabha forums: Prof. Sushma Yadav
5. The opportunity to women to serve a full term when they are elected to posts in the PR system: Shri Joy Elamon, Ms Veda Bhardwaj

Open Discussion

Remarks by the Chair

17.15-17.50pm An Overview of the Workshop and Valedictory address
Shri A.N.P. Sinha
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<td>17.50-18.05pm</td>
<td>High Tea</td>
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**Vote of Thanks**

Shri Saket Bihari