

Awareness among Elected Women Leaders in Haryana

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Abstract

: The role of women in political arena is a broader and complex term, expresses itself in various kind of overt and manifest political activities. It is not confined to the selection of decision makers only but also to affect their political behavior. Generally speaking the concept of political participation and awareness includes activities like voting, campaigning in elections, convincing other persons to vote in a particular way, attending public meeting, distributing party pump lets, joining an organization or a political party, contesting election, holding public office, taking interest in political activities, listen political debates or discussion, having knowledge regarding politics, taking decision freely in the official matters, attending meetings, performing duties regarding polling, booth and counting agent, participation in mass movements, strikes,

demonstration, strikes, protests, marches, presenting memorandums, discussion on political matters at home generally, political experience etc. The role of women in political activities here refers to the level of participation in politics in shape of voters, contestants, political activists or supporters, working as the member or chairman at the grass-root level and knowledge and interest in political activities.

Keywords: Grassroots, Women Participation, Political Awareness, Political Activities, 73rd Amendment Act, Panchayati Raj.

Introduction: To buttress this discussion, the dismal fact which blazes our eyes is that women participation reaches still lower in the process of decision making. There is no adequate female representation in the Parliament or the state assemblies. Women are not given tickets proportionately in

elections by the political parties. A number of women keep low in political organization. Though Indian women constitute half of the population, yet their number is quite negligible in representation. This is mainly due to lac of knowledge, awareness and low level of education. This paper seeks to deal with the awareness about political activities, training and laws related to politics of elected women representation in Haryana mainly in local politics. An attempt is made to assess the level of awareness of women leader at the grass-root level by analyzing the accessibility of information and knowledge of political activities and Acts etc.

A Review of Literature:-

Panda (2003) in his empirical study conducted in the tribal village in South Orissa revealed that eighty-five percent of the tribal women were almost illiterate. The research showed that as the monetary rewards for attendance were introduced there has been increase in the attendance of both male and female but he personally observed that the attendance of female has not changed the participation plan and

distribution of financial resources for work development. Women are not independent regarding taking decision about their family and functioning of Panchayats. Most of women representatives are escorted by their family member to the meeting place outside their villages. Men and women were deemed to be treated unequal in the overall social structure.

Sharma (2003), made an enquiry into the participation of women at level of village Panchayats of Babain and Ladwa block of Kurukshetra district in the state of Haryana. In her study she made an attempt to know and find outlook of the elected representative about their participation in village Panchayats. The respondents did not know the basics of the Panchayats Act and the power attributed to them under this Act. The main reason of this plight is illiteracy. Consequently, they did not participate in the process of decision-making. The respondents did not notice any change in their status or the social attitude towards them after getting elected.

The study by **Chaturvedi (2004)** pointed out that the level of awareness among women representatives concerning

the Panchayati Raj Act, the power, functions of the Panchayats, role of members of Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti that 72 women representatives were not at all aware about these issues, 2 were aware to some extent and one was found aware to large extent. Awareness about the Panchayats financial position among them is low. There was only one ward member and one Sarpanch showed awareness to a large extent. Most of the women representatives are not aware about the functioning of Panchayats. This is the main reason for women dependence on government officials and members of the family.

Singh (2005) conducted his study in two district of Haryana namely Jind and Kurukshetra. Two Zila Parishad, four Panchayat Samiti and sixteen village Panchayats have been encompassed the study. The entire women representative i.e. 92 has been asked to follow a schedule during the course of the study. The study shows that more than one-third respondents revealed that their husband's interfere in their decision making. Less than one-third of the respondents stated that elected male members support their decisions in

meetings. One-fifth of them stated that they have ability to resolve the quarrel in the meeting of Gram Sabha. One-third of the respondents stated that they have capacity of getting work done. Two-fifth of them said that they have the ability of conducting meetings as per the given schedule. The study shows that the elite women have a little say in the process of decision making in PRIs. However, education and awareness hamper the progress in this regard on the one hand, and the unfavorable social and cultural factors on the other side. Therefore, special efforts should be made for building the capacity of women by imparting training and by launching a campaign for creating awareness among them.

The study of **Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2012)** indicate that six states (Haryana, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh) now have a law of two-child norm for the members of Panchayat. Thirteen women member out of total in reserved category, two in general category were not aware at all. Among ward members, forty seven were not aware about the financial resources. There was only one Sarpanch and

one ward member in the reserved category that showed awareness to a large extent. The poor level of awareness among women in the Panchayati Raj institutions is the main reason for their dependence on family members and the Panchayati Raj institution officials.

Ashappa (2014) in his study entitled "Awareness of Women Panchayat Members on Panchayat Administration" a sample survey has been conducted regarding women members of Panchayats in Gulbarga District of Karnataka. He focused on the age and the educational aspects of the woman members and he also tried to search out the knowledge in administration. The study also examined the awareness of woman members on the social welfare schemes for rural development. It was observed that majority of the respondents were well known with their goals and objectives of Panchayats. But still the woman members must get aware on the various development schemes like social welfare schemes, rural development and employment guarantee.

Krishna (2014) in his study focused on the participation and awareness level of

women representatives with special reference to PRIs in East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. The study consists of 144 elected women representatives. He found that most of the women file their candidature due to pressure of their husbands and political parties. It was further found that all the women representatives are aware of the objectives of PRIs. It was found in the study that majority of the women were involved in the poverty Alleviation programmes. In the light of findings it was suggested that the govt. should provide special provisions to encourage the women representatives.

Objective of the Study:- To assess the level of knowledge and awareness among women leaders.

Limitations of the Study: The study mainly confined to the elected women representatives of the local government and political party's members (Party officials such as Constituency/Zila/Area president or Active member). Only women leader have been selected who are elected in the election of 2005 to 2010 for proposed study.

Research Methodology and Data

Collection: This study is a descriptive study of case analyses of women empowerment in politics in the state of Haryana. Only primary data have been used in the present study. The data were obtained through personal visits to the selected respondent. A well designed questionnaire was prepared for respondents. The questionnaire has multiple choice questions and the respondent is expected to choose any one of the given options so that his priority gets reflected in a crystal clear manner. The techniques such as average, percentage have been used for the study.

Sample Design:- A sample of 279 elected women representatives of local government institutions comprising municipal corporation/committee/council, Zila Parisad, Panchayat Samiti, and village Panchayat was collected from the member list of selected three districts namely Sonapat, Jhajjar, and Jind (93 women from each district) at different level of politics and another sample of 30 women as members or office bearers of different political parties also selected from the same districts (10 women from each district) in the state.

Table No. 1: Are you aware about the function, power and responsibility of the Local body member or of a party member?

Level of awareness	Member of Municipal Corporation/ Committee/ Council	Member of Zila Parisad	Member of Panchayat Samiti	Member of Village Panchayat	Political Party Member	Total/ Percentage
Fully aware	16 (53.33)	10 (41.67)	13 (28.89)	47 (26.11)	23 (76.67)	109 (35.27)
Aware to some extent	09 (30.00)	06 (25.00)	21 (46.67)	36 (20.00)	07 (23.33)	79 (25.57)
Not aware	03 (10.00)	5 (20.83)	7 (15.55)	81 (45.00)	-	96 (31.06)
Cannot say	02 (6.67)	3 (12.50)	4 (8.89)	16 (8.89)	-	25 (8.10)
Total	30 (100%)	24 (100%)	45 (100%)	180 (100%)	30 (100%)	309 (100%)

Source: Field Survey *Figures in brackets represent percentage

Table 1 clearly indicates that 35.27 per cent women representatives have a good knowledge of the functions, power and responsibilities as political party member or member of the local body and 25.57 percent respondents are aware to some extent in this regard. Whereas 39.16 percent are not aware and some of them have not expressed their opinion about it. This analysis clearly indicates that a considerable number of women representatives are not aware about their roles, responsibilities and power. It shows that the level of awareness among the respondents about their role and responsibilities is low. It may be due to many reasons-one, majority of them, they

are new entrants in politics, secondly, they have no keen interest in the politics, thirdly, a majority of them is illiterate or less educated, fourthly, majority of them do not view television programmes related to political issues, fifth, majority of the respondents do not discuss the political matters or roles and responsibilities of a member of political institutions with their family members and others. Further, it is found that the member of Urban Local Bodies, Zila Parisad and political parties have higher level of knowledge of their roles and responsibilities than their rural counterparts. They want to perform well for the betterment of political institutions.

Table No. 2: Do you have the knowledge about the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments Act?

Level of knowledge	Member of Municipal Corporation/ Committee/council	Member of Zila Parisad	Member of Panchayat Samiti	Member of Village Panchayat	Political Party Member	Total/ Percentage
Full Knowledge	06 (20.00)	5 (20.83)	07 (15.56)	32 (17.78)	14 (46.67)	64 (20.71)
Knowledge to a some Extent	12 (40.00)	11 (45.83)	13 (28.89)	53 (29.44)	08 (26.67)	97 (31.39)
No Knowledge	7 (23.33)	5 (20.84)	18 (40.00)	38 (21.11)	05 (16.66)	73 (23.62)
Can Not Say	05 (16.67)	03 (12.50)	07 (15.55)	57 (31.67)	03 (10.00)	75 (24.28)
Total	30	24	45	180	30	309

	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)
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Source: Field Survey *Figures in brackets represent percentage

As discussed earlier the 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments provide one-third seats to women at different levels in the local body institutions. Consequently, now women are participating in the local body institutions mainly due to reservation. Therefore, it is essential to know whether women representatives have knowledge of it or not. Hence, to judge the level of knowledge of the respondents regarding these constitutional amendments, information was collected from the respondents and presented in the above table no. 2. Table indicates that 20.71 per cent representatives think that they have full knowledge of it, 31.39 per cent answered that they know about it to some extent and remaining 47.90 per cent women leaders

responded that they have no knowledge or they cannot say anything about it. The leaders who are ignorant regarding the 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments, a majority of them are illiterate and less educated. Most of them are new or elected for the first time, considerable number of them does not attend the programmes related to the panchayati raj system, and they are not attached psychologically with politics and have less interest and willing power. It can be said that the knowledge and awareness of these acts of the respondents are of low level. It is an urgent need to make special arrangement for their training about panchayati raj system and their working according to the changing time to make them successful and effective

Table No. 3: Have you attended any training programmes related to Panchayati Raj/ Municipality Administration?

Response of the Respondents	Member of Municipal Corporation Committee/ Council	Member of Zila Parisad	Member of Panchayat Samiti	Member of Village Panchayat	Political Party Member	Total/ Percentage
Yes	21 (70.00)	17 (10.83)	29 (64.44)	131 (72.78)	07 (23.33)	205 (66.34)
No	03	05	07	27	19	61

	(10.00)	(20.84)	(15.56)	(15.00)	(63.33)	(19.74)
Occasionally	04 (13.33)	02 (8.33)	06 (13.33)	12 (6.67)	3 (10.00)	27 (8.74)
No comment	2 (6.67)	-	03 (6.67)	10 (5.55)	01 (3.34)	16 (5.18)
Total	30 (100%)	24 (100%)	45 (100%)	180 (100%)	30 (100%)	309 (100%)

Source: Field Survey *Figures in brackets represent percentage

Table 3 shows that 66.34 per cent women representatives have attended some training programmes related to Panchayati Raj or Municipal administration. Only 19.74 per cent representatives did not take part in any training programme. 13.92 per cent leaders took part occasionally or refused to comment on this question. This analysis indicates that majority of the women representatives attend the training

programmes and they think that these programmes are necessary for the successful functioning of the local body institutions. It may be because of their interest or legal compulsion. The success of local body institutions depends on this programme to a large extent. It will enhance the level of awareness and knowledge of women representatives in the state.

Table No. 4: Do you have knowledge about various programmes related to your area introduced by the government from time to time?

Response of the respondent	Member of Municipal Corporation/Committee Council	Member of Zila Parisad	Member of Panchayat Samiti	Member of Village Panchayat	Political Party Member	Total/ Percentage
Yes	21 (70.00)	17 (70.83)	12 (26.67)	49 (27.22)	23 (76.67)	122 (39.49)
No	01 (3.33)	02 (83.34)	19 (42.22)	113 (62.78)	-	135 (43.69)
Something	08 (26.67)	05 (20.83)	14 (31.11)	18 (10.00)	07 (23.33)	52 (16.82)
Total	30 (100%)	24 (100%)	45 (100%)	180 (100%)	30 (100%)	309 (100%)

Source: Field Survey *Figures in brackets represent percentage

The centre and state government both have introduced many programmes

and schemes for social, economic and infrastructural development such as Rajiv

Gandhi Awas Yojna(RGAY), Indira Gandhi Water Scheme, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna (IGMSY), Balik Samiridhi Yojna, Support to Training and Employment Programme(STEP), Rajeev Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG), Ujjawala, Kishori Shakti Yojna(KSY), Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS), Atal Pension Yojna, Pardhan Mantri Jeevan Surksha Bima Yojna, Pardhan Mantri Durghatna Bima Yojna etc. With a view to assess the sense of responsibility, a question regarding the knowledge about programmes and schemes introduced by the government from time to time was asked from the respondents and information was collected in this regard. This information is shown in table no. 4. It shows that 39.49 per cent women representative have knowledge about the programmes related to development in their

areas. But a large number of women representative 43.69 per cent still do not know about programmes launched for development, 16.82 per cent respondents have a little knowledge about these programmes and schemes. The member of urban local bodies, Zila Parishad and political parties are more aware of the programmes and schemes which are introduced by the government for social, economic and infrastructure development whereas the picture of the members of village Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti is dismal. It may be due to their poor socio-economic background. It indicates that women representatives are less aware of the fact that the burden of development in their locality is their responsibility. It shows their low level of awareness and knowledge and it affects their working efficiency.

Table No. 5: Which are the main sources of political information for you?

Source of information	Member of Municipal Corporation/Committee Council	Member of Zila Parisad	Member of Panchayat Samiti	Member of Village Panchayat	Political Party Member	Total/Percentage
New paper	15 (50.00)	9 (37.50)	10 (22.22)	31 (17.22)	11 (36.67)	76 (24.60)
Radio	1 (3.33)	1 (4.17)	3 (6.67)	09 (5.00)	-	14 (4.53)
Magazine	-	-	-	-	-	-

Family	05 (16.67)	07 (29.17)	25 (55.55)	104 (57.77)	-	141 (45.63)
T.V	9 (30.00)	07 (29.17)	7 (15.55)	36 (20.00)	19 (63.33)	78 (25.24)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	30 (100%)	24 (100%)	45 (100%)	180 (100%)	30 (100%)	309 (100%)

Source: Field Survey *Figures in brackets represent percentage

Table 5 highlights that 24.60 percent woman leaders read newspapers daily and get political information from it. 4.53 percent women leaders get political information by listening to radio. But a large number percent of women (45.63%) leaders depend on their family to get political information or information related to meetings. 25.24 percent women leader get political information by other sources such as peers, friends or near and dear ones. It means that the main source of political information for majority of the women representatives is their families. It is an urgent need that our women representative should be aware of all political information. It will make women politically stronger and the level of their political participation would surely increase. Education can play a key role in providing them important and necessary political information about the

activities of the local bodies and the political parties.

Conclusion:- In Haryana, although there are endless political claims relating to women empowerment, the ground reality differs sharply. The fact is that women do not enjoy freedom to speak in Panchayat; though they have been given 33% reservation. They are not allowed to attend the Panchayat meetings, not to speak of the knowledge of Panchayat meetings and the related agenda. They don't even have the opportunity to put signature on the government files. In most of the cases, her proxy signature is done by some male member of her family. Women, even if they are the Sarpanch, Chairman or the members of Panchayat, fail to exercise their constitutional rights and political skills. The whole planning and controlling of the Panchayat activities is managed by the male member of their families. It is because of the

male dominated nature of society in which we live and lac of knowledge.

The truth is that the participation of women in the political process at any level is closely related to their level of awareness. Therefore, it is essential to enquire into the general and the political awareness level of the respondents. The study focussed on the awareness level of the elected women representatives towards such important issues as various political activities, acts, planning and programmes, their functions, powers and responsibilities, their interest in political debates and discussions on television etc. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents are not aware of the functions, powers and responsibilities pertaining to the local body members. Only a handful of respondents can tell what their rights and what their responsibilities are as a member of the local bodies institutions. And these women are primarily those who are the members of either an urban local body or a political party. The women from rural background have little knowledge about the local body to which they relate. In short, they are not aware enough. Thus the study made an in-depth enquiry into the matter of

general awareness of women representatives, and arrived at the conclusion that their awareness level is far low than satisfactory.

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