

Social Status of Women Panchayat Members in Solapur District

Dr. S.C.ADVITOT

Head

Department of Geography

CBK'SB. SCI, R. V. COM. & R.J.Aarts College

Akkalkot-413216, Dist.-Solapur, Maharashtra

Introduction:

Women's political participation was hindered by a system of social relations in the male-dominated society, reflecting the orthodox male-centric mentality. Women's empowerment begins with their consciousness, perceptions about herself and her rights, her capabilities and her potentials, awareness of her gender and social forces that affect her.

The district was considered as an ideal institution for local development. Gram Panchayat at village level is in reality a functioning primary unit of Panchayat Raj.

Objective: The study analyzes the social status of women Panchayat members. **Methodology:**

The study is based on primary evidence collected from women members in all eleven talukas of the study area and attempt to analyze with the help of statistical and cartographic techniques.

Study Area:

Solapur district entirely lies in the Bhima-Sina-Man basins, just before the Bhima River leaves Maharashtra State to enter into Karnataka State. Bounded by 17⁰10' north and 18⁰32' north latitudes and 74⁰42' east and 76⁰15' east longitudes. It occupies the area of 14844.6 sq.kms, which is 4.82% of the total area of Maharashtra State and of which 338.8 sq.kms (2.28%) is urban and 14505.8 sq.kms (97.72%) is rural area. In 1971; the ratio was 933; which increased to 942 in 1981; again increased to 934 in 1991, 957 in 2001 and 952 is the sex ratio was reported in the year 2011. For the present study a survey was conducted during the months November, 2011 to June, 2012. The sample size of study was involved total 1111 women panchayat members covering a total of 1038 G.P. women members, 49 P.S. and 24 Z.P. women members representing various sections of the society covering all 11 talukas of district. They were selected through random sampling.

Discussion:

Geography as a subject is incredibly diverse. Gender geography is one of the emerging branches of Human geography. Gender geography covers various aspects of male, female relationship such as their attitude, economic, social and political status of women.

Geographers have emphasized the diversity of gender relations in different places as well as the specificities gender within micro processes of globalization or economic restructuring (Laurie et.al.1999). Women members social profile provides the background of the representatives.

Religious Affinity:

The influence of religion is well marked in our society.

Table No.1 Solapur District:

Religion wise distribution of women Panchayats members

Sr.No.	Religion wise distribution of women members	Percentage (%)

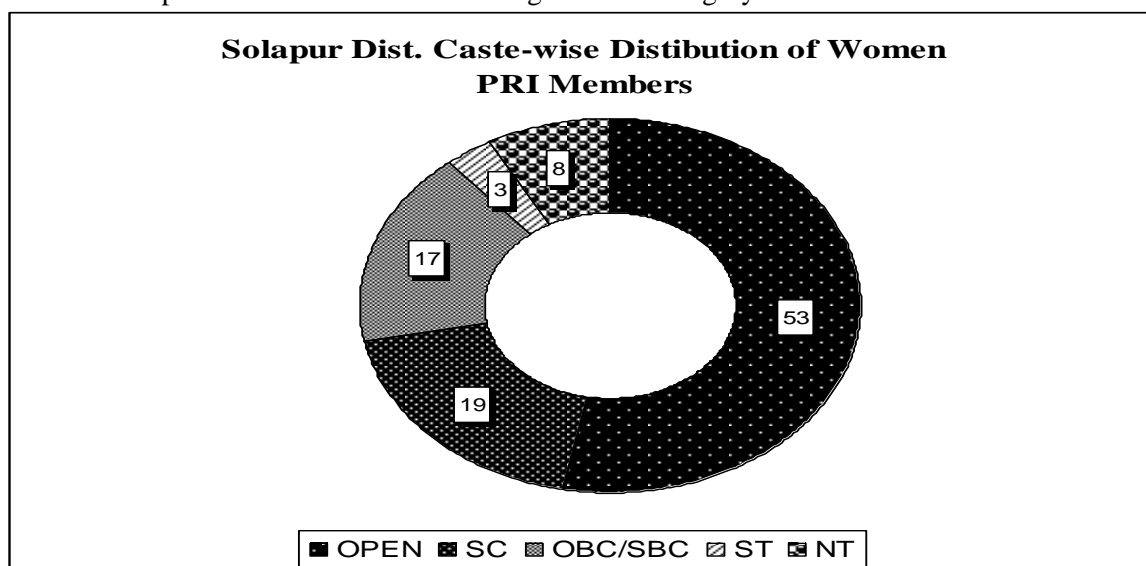
1	Hindu	95
2	Muslim	03
3	Buddhism	01
4	Jain	0.4
5	Christian	0.6

Source- Based on field work

Our country is multiversity system of religion. *Religion plays an important role at the village level.* Religion largely determines the functions the status, the available opportunities as well as the handicaps for an individual (Desai,1969;38). The distribution of religion highlights that 1054 (95 per cent) WPM belongs to Hindu religion followed by 03per cent were Muslims, and Buddhism, Christian and Jain were negligible in number.

Caste Composition:

Fig.1 indicates the parametric trends of the caste composition of the WPM under study. . It plays a vital role in determining the nature and the personality of the leadership of the rural society. Caste leaders are also, generally leaders of the social, economic, political and ideological life of the rural society. 53 per cent of WPM belongs to open caste category followed by SC 19 per cent. 17 per cent belongs to OBC and 08 per cent from NT and remaining from ST category .

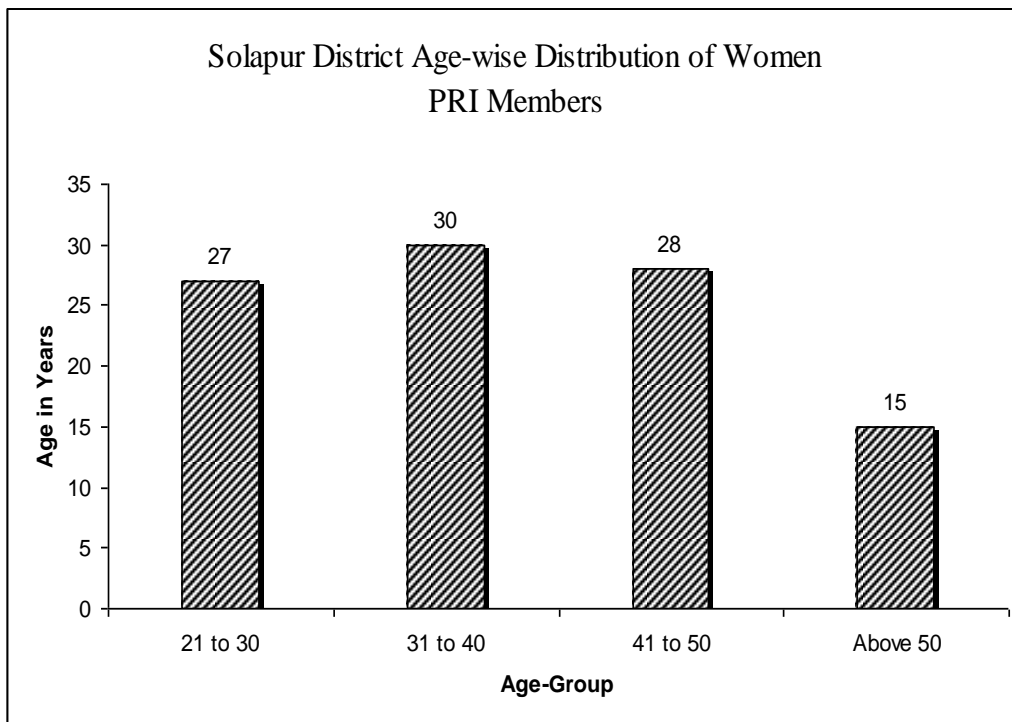


Martial Status:

Marriage is a universal institution, which admits men and women into family life. The data show that 96 per cent of the members are married. However, their percentage is marginally less in the case of GP. The share of unmarried women is only 2 per cent which is very negligible but at the same time it also shows the positive trend that women awareness about the development of women community. 2 per cent of widowed women members in total women community due to some unexpected incidents.

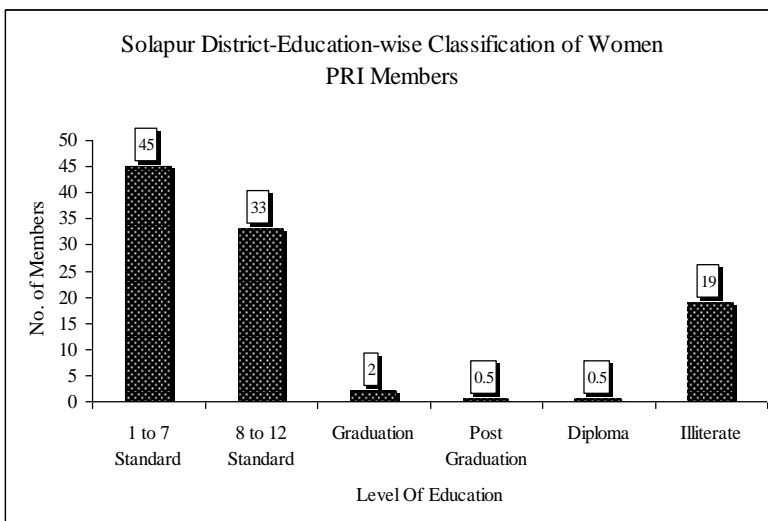
Age Distribution:

Overall the data shows that more than 58 percent of them are less than 40 years of age. The share of this group is higher at the PS than at the GP and ZP levels. This indicates that the younger generation is showing more interest in PRIs. As per fig. no 3.6 only 15 per cent women were elected above the age of 50 years. The study reveals that younger generation of the age group of 21 to 40 is 57 per cent followed by 28 per cent are from the age group of 41 to 50 years. It reveals that younger generation is taking more interest in politics.



Education Profile:

Education plays an important role in building opinions and shaping attitudes. Literate and educated people are a pre-requisite in a developing society. The level of education is also an indicator of the level of awareness among the Panchayat leaders. The development process is becoming more complicated and professional, requiring skill and knowledge to handle this task. Basic education would also help rural leaders to understand various programmes and policies relating to rural development. An analysis of educational status of the PRIs members is presented in fig.4 which reveals that the percentage share of illiterate and up to 07th standard is very high on the contrary it is very low at graduate and post graduate level. Therefore, Solapur district is far lacking in the development process as compare to Pune, Kolhapur and Sangli district.



Social Participation:

In today's world family prestige and status are judged according to that of senior male members because they play an important part in the occupational, religious and legal systems of society. They are the considered representatives of family. A Woman is allotted the prestige and status of her husband or father in law. However the study reveals that the traditional influence of the family is now gradually being offset by other forces at work in rural society. These forces have come into play with the setting up of democratic organizations such as that of Panchayat Raj. This study seeks to do this in the context of the socio-economic profile of these new "representatives" of rural women.

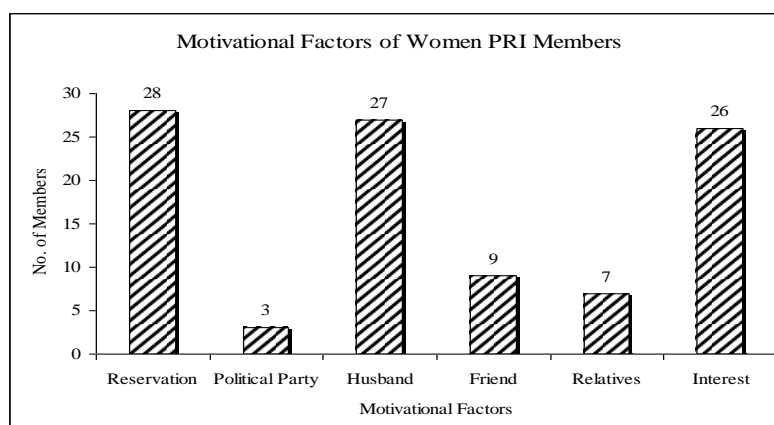
A Woman is allotted the prestige and status of her husband or father in law. However the study reveals that the traditional influence of the family is now gradually being offset by other forces at work in rural society. The study reveals that the majority of members (643) are involved in Self Help Group followed by Bhajani Mandal (459), religious group (385) and only (341) are belong to other social work.

Position Of Women Members In PRI:

The emerging women's leadership and the making of the Sarpanch-Pati was a pattern emerging among the young, new, development seeking men and women with constraints that hampered their work, but it was the women who were bigger loser at the present state owing to the guile of their men folk. The study highlights the position of women members in PRI system. 153 women were Sarpanch and 72 were deputy Sarpanch Only 03 women are Panchayat Samiti Sabapati and one women member is President of ZP. It is only because of reservation and on the contrary not a single case is found in the district where women are either Sarpanch or Sabhapti at PS/GP level at unreserved post.

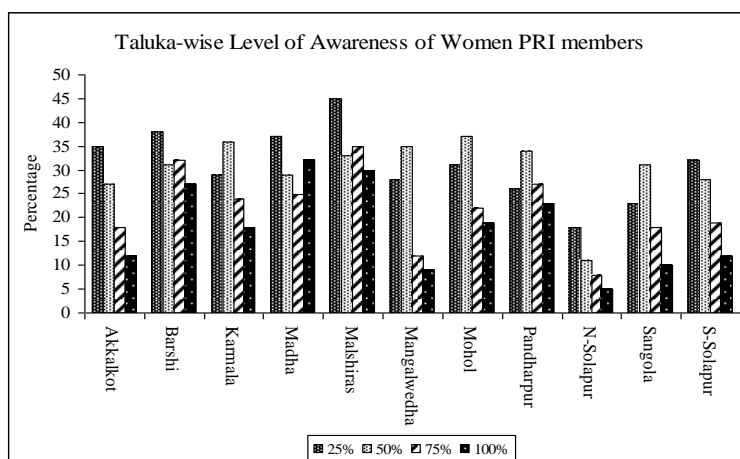
Period of Women Membership In PRI And Motivational Factors:

The level of participation could be understood from the reasons to get interested in politics in the first place. The maximum women members were marked that only because of reservation (28 per cent) they were entered into politics followed by the roll played by their counterpart i.e. husband was remarkable i.e. (27 per cent) they were strong supporter of their wives while the roll of political party is very negligible at GP level.



Level Of Awareness About The Functioning Of PRI:

The functions of PRI's is really understood by the PRI members, it is socking that only 197 women members were aware of the functioning of PRI's. more than 674 women members were not aware of the functioning of PRI. It is because of low level of literacy of women members.



Relationship Between Social And Economic Status:

It is generally said that the economic elite controls the levers of state power. In the rural context feudal interests dominate the scene. The economic status of the family has been studied through an investigation of the main sources of income, extent of family landholding and husband’s occupation.

Table No.2 Solapur District

Income wise distribution of women members in Panchayatraj systems of Solapur District

Sr.No.	Income wise distribution of women members (in Rs.)	Percentage (%)
1	Below 25000	21
2	26000 to 50000	23
3	51000 to 75000	28
4	Above 75000	28

Source: Based on field work,

Table 2 which deals with income distribution which reveals that 21 per cent of the elected members have an annual income of less than Rs.25000/- and 28 per cent were having more than Rs.75,000/- and remaining 51 per cent women members having annual income between Rs. 25000 to 75,000/-..It is observed that social status is measured with the level of income. The study highlights that the lower income group women members social status is not up to the standard.

Conclusion And Suggestion

Among various processes, women's participation in political institutions is viewed as highly empowering. A study reveals that there are total 1038 GP,11 PS & 01 ZP functioning in the district, out of which Malshiras tashil is having maximum numbers of women PRI’s and N. Solapur is having minimum number of women members. In the study region it is found that 45 per cent of women member belongs to Hindu religion. Caste is one of the important factor in our society.53 per cent of women members belongs to open category followed by 19 per cent for OBC and SBC, 17 per cent for SC caste remaining were negligible in number. The study highlights that only because of reservation policy the entry into PRI’S is possible for women.96 percent were married and only 2 per cent were unmarried and widows respectively. Age is one of the determining factory for entering into politics. It was observed that 58 per cent of women members age is between 31 to 50. It shows that to some extent they were relaxed from family responsibility of child care. The study reveals that younger generation were taken interest in politics.45 per cent women members were completed up to primary education, 33 per son were completed up to 08 to 12th slandered education. The economic status of the family has been studied through an investigation of the main sources of income. It is found that 21 per cent having less than Rs. 25,000/- annual income and 28 per cent women PRI members belongs to Rs. 75,000/-and above.

643 women PRI members were involved in self help group.Social status is also measured the position acquired in PRI system. 153 women were Sarpanch it is because of reservation policy The study shows that NCP (40) is one of the leading political party in the district The

maximum number(677) of women members were of the view that they would remain only for 05 years of period. The study also finds out the motivational factors for their entry into PRI. The maximum women members were marked that only because of reservation(28 per cent) they were entered into politics followed by the roll played by their counterpart i.e. husband was remarkable i.e.(27 per cent) they were strong supporter of their wives while the roll of political party is very negligible at GP level. More than 674 women members were not aware of the functioning of PRI. It is because of lack of education amongst the women members. 67 per cent of PRI members.

Suggestions:

It is observed in the field study that political awareness though differs village to village but there is a common issue that proper training and workshops is a must for their political awareness. The results of the study showed incremental gains women members have made in most participation areas resulting from training intervention but a long way is yet to be covered and especially with respect to free women. Besides, special efforts need to be directed towards increasing awareness about PRIs, enhancing skills to participate in deliberations and improving ability to undertake different types of panchayat work. Participation in panchayat discussions and decision-making also needs to be further improved and greater opportunities for internal and personal development need to be made available. Suggestive measures that are outlined below are expected to bridge the gaps still remain to be bridged.

1. A large proportion of women suffer from the lack of confidence, fear of being ridiculed by males and afraid of speaking in meetings in presence of village elders. This needs to be attended sooner than later in case goals of reservation are to be achieved. Conditions are, therefore, needed to be created so that women members feel encouraged to share their views, express themselves freely, views put up by them receive due attention and shoulder some responsibilities. For this purpose, a multi-pronged strategy needs to be pursued that involves awareness generation, association with ongoing development schemes, and a ailment of available opportunities allowing women to demonstrate their ability. Besides, their outside exposure at frequent intervals, especially to banking, health, educational and similar other institutions, would broaden their mental horizon as also build their confidence.

2. One of the factors underlying poor participation of women members is lack of information and awareness. It makes women dependent on others and also compels them to put signatures on registers as desired by male members. This limitation can be overcome if information about PRIs and relevant rules are translated into simple language and local dialects; proceedings recorded in the meetings are read out for the illiterates before asking them to put signatures. While, the ongoing literacy programmes should specifically cover illiterate women members of panchayats, the adult female literacy programme should be initiated in mission mode with active involvement of PRIs.

3. Recognizing economic independence as a key factor in empowerment of women and in ensuring them a say in the decision making process in family and society, programmes of employment generation, skill development, productivity increase and resources mobilization need to be vigorously pursued and all the concerned departments and agencies operating at different levels need to be actively involved in a coordinated way.

4. The entry of women in PRIs was prompted by several factors: some entered due to reservation provisions; others joined politics to serve the people; still others were pushed into politics by their husbands and family members and a few did so at their own volition. The conditions, therefore, need to be created in which women themselves feel able to make an independent decision whether or not to join politics.

5. The media is a very powerful source of awareness generation, dissemination of information and attitudinal change but its role in panchayati raj has so far been subdued. Nor PRI members have made much use of it. Some efforts are, therefore, needed to involve media in disseminating information about different schemes and their implementation, changes in the system, success stories, bottlenecks faced, discrimination experienced by women, STs, and the like. It should be made to act as a continuous channel of information needed by grassroots workers, the poor, and poorly educated so as to enable them to function more effectively. The media can, thus, play an enabling and empowering role for the grassroots functionaries and PRI members. Efforts may, therefore, be made to involve

media in this task. A separate column or channel focusing on panchayati raj and rural development can also be initiated.

REFERENCE:

01	Bishakha Datta	1998	And Who Will Make the Chapattis? A study of All Women Panchayats in Maharashtra
02	Sunita Dhaka And rajvir S. Dhaka	2005	Behind the Veil: Dalit Women in Panchayati Raj, Abhijit, Delhi
03	Pran Nevile	2000	Behind the Veil: Indian Women in the Raj, Nevile Books, New Delhi
04	S. Nagendra and Shilaja Nagendra	2006	Role of Women in Panchayati Raj, ABD Pub. Jaipur
05	S.R. Bakshi and Kitan Bala	2000	Social Status and Role of Women, New Delhi
06	Amal Mandal,	2004	Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions
07	Ashok Kumar	2004	Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions, Anmol Pub. NEW Delhi
08	Subhah Mehtani and Amarjit Sinha	2010	Social Geography, Commonwealth Pub. New Delhi
09	Devaki Jain	1996	Panchayat Raj: Women Changing Governance, www.onlinewomenpoliticc.org
10	Mathew, George	1994	"Women in Panchayati Raj: Beginning of a Silent Revolution", <i>Kurukshetra</i> , June
11	Bandopadhyay D and Mukherjee Amitava	2004	"New Issues in Panchayati Raj," Task Force on Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi
12	Arun, Rashmi	1996	"Role of Women in Panchayati Raj", <i>The Administrator</i> 12, April- June
13	<i>Socio-Economic Review & District Statistical Abstract of Solapur District (2011)</i>		
14	The gazetteer of Solapur District		
15	Statistical Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, Solapur		
16	Solapur District Census Handbook 1971. Census of India 2001.		

GP Gram Panchayat
 PS Panchayat Samiti
 Zp Zilla Parishad
 PRI Panchayati Raj Institute
 WPM Women Panchayat Member