

Rights: A Reality Check of Women's Political Rights in Bhitara Kakila Koiwotta Gaon

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Introduction

Men and women, both are the roots of human civilization. With the absence of anyone, human civilization is unimaginable. So, the importance of both man and woman are equally essential to the progress of human civilization. But since time immemorial, it is proven that a liner difference has been rooted between men and women. Women are treated as inferior to men since long. Historically in the field of politics, women have been fighting for their rights which led into revolution in many times. One of the root causes of such revolution is women wanting for political rights. It is not a new thought that women are only assign to the household works, child bearing and rearing. Many of the philosophers and scholars have subscribed this idea for which women are deprived of political rights. Even the father of politics, Aristotle also had administered the fact that women should be kept away from politics for which women has to fight for their political rights (Gogoi and Patir, 2014). In western countries fights for political rights started in the 19th century which continued till the mid of 20th century (ibid). For such kinds of movement in 1918, some women were given voting rights however in 1928 women in England got their voting rights (Gogoi et al., 2014).

This movement led the foundation of 'National Women Party'. With the effect of this party American women received their voting rights in 1920 through the 19th amendment of their constitution (Gogoi, et al., 2014). Although during 1917 and 1945 the movement prevailed in India as well it was not as much as it was in the west (Gohain, et al., 2014). However, in India with the enforcement of the constitution, both men and women got their political rights. Moreover, the United Nations in 20th December 1952 'The United Nation Convention on the Political Rights of Women' grants every woman the political rights (ibid).

Statement of the Problem: Although political rights have been given to women but the interference of men is hampering in the enjoyment of these rights. For which it is said that women are partially deprived of enjoying their political rights. Therefore, through this research paper the author makes an attempt to examine in what way women are enjoying their political rights and the obstacles faced by them while enjoying those.

Aims and Objective:

The aim of this paper is to study whether women in the selected area are able to enjoy political rights fully or not. This study basically looks into the issues related to voting rights, political freedom and decision making etc. capacity of women.

Methodology:

While preparing this research paper both primary and secondary sources are used. For primary data, the author has selected BhitaraKakilaKoiwotta Gaon which is under 30 No North-West Charigaon Gaon Panchayat of Jorhat district. This is village having Scheduled Caste population. For collecting data, 50 women were randomly selected from the voters' list of 2014 Lok Sabha election. An interview schedule was used to collect data from them. For secondary sources, various books are used which are relevant to the topic and also materials available on the internet are used.

Political Rights of Women:

In 1925 itself, MK Gandhi said that "As long as women of India do not take part in public life; there can be no salvation for the country" (Narayanan, 1999). Gandhi argued that without the active participation of the women, Swaraj in actual term can't be attain. But women participation is not satisfactory yet in India. The 16th Lok Sabha Election held in 2014, witnessed a record number of women contestants and women winners. Total 668 women candidates contested in that election and out of that, 62 women have been elected (General Election, 2014, p.8). Though this has increased marginally from the 15th Lok Sabha Election, it is yet not satisfactory. It indicates the status of political rights of women in India. When we look at the status of political rights of women in Assam or Jorhat, the same picture can be seen.

Jorhat is one of the developed districts of Assam. The Assam Human Development Report, 2014 ranked Jorhat in the second position (OKDISCD, 2016). The district is one of the politically conscious districts. Women of the district are also politically active and empowered.

Educational Qualification:

This study explores the educational qualification of women in the studied area, Bhitara Kokila Koiwotta Gaon, Jorhat. Among the total respondents, it is found that 40% of the respondents are educated up to primary level. 25% of total respondents are educated up to upper primary level. 10% have high school leaving

certificate, 15% have higher secondary and 10% have bachelor degree education. There are no master degree holders among the total respondents. It shows that women of this village are educated.

Freedom in Voting:

From the study in Bhitara Kokila Koiwortta Gaon, it is seen that out of 100% of the respondents 55% have got freedom in voting and 45% have no freedom in voting. The study found that 66.67% women are influenced by their husband while casting vote. 33.33% women said that while voting their member influences them. Moreover, in the field of voting 33.33% of respondents are fully influenced by their family while 66.67% respondents are partially influenced by family. Thus, it can be said that large number of women are not independent while casting vote. It is not just a challenge towards the political rights of women but also to the whole notion of democracy.

Rights in Contesting Elections: It is stated that participation of women in election is very limited in India. To improve women's participation in election and decision making, in 73rd amendment of the constitution, provision of reservations seats for women was made. As per this amendment, at least one third of the total number of seats should be reserved for women in the decentralised bodies (Kaur, 2018). But even after that women participation in election has and increased significantly.

The study unveils that only 30% women can exercise their right to contest election. On the other hand, 70% women cannot take decision in this context. It implies that a large number of women cannot contest without their guardians' permission.

Freedom in Making Decision:

From the study in the studied area, Bhitara Kokila Koiwortta Gaon, Jorhat, Assam, it is found that only 60% women have the freedom to take decision whereas 40% are not independent in taking decision. Women without having power to take decision are mostly depends on husband or on their family members. 75% women said that they fully depend on their husbands and 25% said that they partially rely on their husband. 66% women said that they fully depend on their family members and 33% said that they partially rely on their family members directly influence their political decisions. It means a large number of women are not enjoying their decision-making power.

Freedom of Giving Opinion:

The study reveals that 70% of women can give political opinion in their family. On the other hand, remaining 30% women can not give their political opinion. It indicates that women do not enjoy a position where she can put her political opinion on desk. As they can not place their political opinion in the family and have to follow the decisions of their family members and husband, it may say that they are not enjoying the political rights, the constitution of India has ensured to us.

Findings of the Study: The findings of the study are:

1. The respondents are backward in higher education. Only few women have earned graduation degree. The level of education may have relation with low political status of women.
2. It is seen that in voting some respondents have influence of their husband and family.
3. In contesting election, the influence of family is more than husband.
4. It is seen that most of the respondents have freedom in taking decision who are helped by both husband and family but the respondents who have no freedom in taking decision have direct influence of family.
5. In giving opinion most of the respondents are helped by both husband and family but devoid of full help.
6. The respondents who do not have the freedom of giving opinion are indirectly influenced by their family.

Conclusion:

Although it is inscribed in the constitution that both man and woman have equal rights but in reality, it is turning out to be vague. Women have always been restrained to enjoy their rights. It is seen that in the matter of enjoying political rights women are influence of both husband and family. Women are facing obstacles in enjoying the rights because of their illiteracy and unconsciousness about their rights. Being a responsible citizen, it is our duty to provide necessary help to the women to enjoy their rights and also make them concern about it. Moreover, in this patriarchal society we should try to being positive changes in the attitude of men towards women and pave new road so that women can fully enjoy their rights and we are totally optimistic.

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