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Tribal Political Integration in the Grassroots Level Governance: A Study from Scheduled and Partially Scheduled District of Odisha

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Abstract

Odisha is one of the most tribal populated state in India constituting 62 types of tribal groups. Schedule Tribe is an administrative term used for the purpose of "administering" certain specific constitutional privileges, protection and benefits for tribal people, historically considered disadvantaged and backward. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act gave statutory status to the Panchayat in the village areas. The Parliament extended the provisions of 73rd Amendment Act to the Scheduled Areas by passing Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 which gives autonomy to tribal communities to govern themselves through their own customary systems of self-government and also acknowledges their traditional rights over natural resources.

The present paper aims to discuss the integration and participation of tribal in Panchayat and Panchayat activities in the fifth scheduled area. The primary data was collected from Subdega, baneigarh Block of Sundargarh district and Jamankira Block Samablpur district. Anthropological methods like interviews, observation, and case study were used for the in-depth understanding of the participation of women in the study area.

The main observation of the study is that tribal are participating in the political activities but not aware about their rights. When it comes to elected members they are not aware of their role and responsibility at ground level and depend on the other officials of the panchayat. Development schemes, Education and specially Conversion plays major role to bring the tribal into a secular form or modern democratic form rather than practicing their traditional form of council.

Keywords: Tribal political participation, tribal integration, traditional political system, modern political system

Introduction

Panchayati Raj is not a recent political concept. It was present during the time from Rig Vedic Age (1200 B.C.), the self-governing village bodies, which had power both executive and judicial, but after interference of Britishers in village structure and making Jamindar for revenue collection destroyed the panchayati raj system. After India got Independence the government of India had been taken several steps to restore the Panchayati raj Institution in the village level. In 1959 on the date of Gandhi Jayanti 2nd October, the first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru formally launched the new system (Panchayati Raj Institution' in Rajasthan whereas after Introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) 1992, Panchayati Raj Institutions came in force permanently. This act was brought into force by a notification with effects from April 24, 1993 it has restored with a constitutional amendment act.

When it comes to the current scenario of the political system in the tribal areas or the scheduled area where the tribal population is more than 50 percent it can be seen the variation of the acceptance from the other nonscheduled area of India, The reason behind is the approach of Integration. the tribal and their culture are far away from the main stream so When India got independence the question was arise about

approaches should be taken for the tribal community and two major approaches was contradictory and famous during that time, that were Isolation Approach and the Assimilation approaches. The Isolation approach was supported by the Varrier Elwin who did depth study on Tribal and suggest that tribal should be isolated from the main stream and they should lead their life as living from immemorial. The approach was the Assimilation Approach, which emphasis on, the tribal are also the integral part of the country and they should enjoy the rights and impotence like another main stream communities are enjoying. After a huge debate a mid-way approach was adopted that is the Tribal Integration Approach, where tribal are not forced or not isolated they should know about their country and enjoy all the constitutional benefits what a common citizen is getting and also they have the choice to accept the mainstream with their own culture and tradition.

This Integration approach applicable in all the aspects of tribal and Political integration is one of them. Tribal have their own political organization which run by elderly of that community but after a long time tribal people are also integrating to the political field of the country. This study aim was to identify the level of political integration of tribal in the grassroots level governance.

Aim and Objectives

- To know the continuity and changes of the tribal traditional system in the study area
- Identify the level of integration of tribal towards the statutory panchayat system.
- Tribal participation in the grassroots governance specially women

Methodology

Two districts such as Sundargarh and Sambalpur from Odisha selected as the sample district and among Sundargarh 2 blocks Subdega and Baneigarh and from Sambalpur one block Jamankira selected and 2 panchayats from each block selected randomly as the sample Panchayat. Both Primary and secondary data were collected and Tools like interview, case studies, observation, group discussion are adopted to conduct present study.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj Institution in India

Pre Independence

Panchayati raj is not a recent phenomenon in the Indian society. It exists from the ancient time. The roots of the panchayati raj cannot be traced yet it's also mentioned in different ancient books of Indian society. Even though facing several attacks by different foreign ruler this institution stocks to the soli of the village life due to its self-governing feature. During British Period the panchayati raj institution was handle by the local rulers whose primary focus was to collect the taxes. The British administration was tried to decentralize the local government after the 1857 uprising due to the financial pressure. During this time the local bodies have the control over the infrastructure like roads and several public works.

The East India Company became the Diwan in Bengal in the year of 1765 during this time two decisions of the company disempowered and totally destroyed the Panchayati raj system. The first one was "They abolished the village land record office and created a new official called the Patwari to collect land revenue and keep the number of villages" and the decision was "the creation of the office of magistrate and the abolition of village police. Dorogah was carried out the function of Police and the magistrate replaced the police role in the village area. In the year of 1857 British administration tied to regain the panchayati raj lost powe but it could not possible.

The Lord Mayo's Resolution in 1870 boosted the development of the panchayati raj institution for decentralized of the power followed by this with lord Ripon's in 1882. Lord Ripon recognised the value of political education in the local government therefore his resolution was emphasized on the large majority of the elected non-official members in local bodies on his democratic framework. Due to oppose by the colonial administration this framework also became slower.

In 1907, The Royal Commission on Decentralization recognized the value of the panchayat at the village level and recommends constituting and developing a village panchayat to administer the local village affair. This commission was chaired by C.E.H. Hob house. However in 1919 the Montague-Chemsford reforms devolved the local-self-government as a provincial transferred subject, under the domain of Indian ministers in the provinces. This reform was also not get its democratic tag due to the financial limitations. However in 1925 eight provinces had passed panchayat acts and by 1926 six native states had also passed Panchayat laws. D.P. Mishra then ministers for local self-government under the Government of India Act of 1935 made a critical

assessment on the performance of the local self-government. He was of the view that "the working of our local bodies... in our province and perhaps in the whole country presents a tragic picture... 'Inefficiency' and 'local body' have become synonymous terms". He suggest three tier of the local self-government. The district plays role form popular ministries to formulate legislation to run the local institution for people and try to make fully people representative. But due to several adverse events of national freedom this was not achieved its proper place till independent.

Post-Independence

After india achieved independence, several plan and programme adopted for the development of Panchayati raj Institution. In 1952 Indian government launched a community development programme encompassing almost all the activities of rural development. But due to some reasons this programme became failed. To identify the reason behind the failure, government of India constituted a committee headed by Balwantrai Mehta. According to his name this committee was known as the Balwantrai Mehta committee. On the basis of the committee recommendations the Indian government initiates the three tier panchayati raj system in the rural area to ensure people participation. All states had passed the Panchayat act by 1959 and panchayat had reached all the part of the country by mid of 1960s. The three tier framework was comprising village panchayat at the base, Panchayat samitis at the middle and Zilla Parishad at the upper level. Ashok Mehta appointed on 1977. His committee bring new concept and thinking on the practicing of the Panchayati Raj. The major recommendations were, two-tier system of the panchayat, the district will be the primary administrative unit, reservation of SC ST and women, involvement of political parties in the Panchayati raj election etc.

After Introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) 1992 Panchayati Raj Institutions has been came in force permanently. This act was brought into force by a notification with effects from April 24, 1993. According to this act the Panchayati raj institutions was not applied to the scheduled areas of the country therefore a separate provision made for the scheduled area. Tribal are the majority group in term of the population in the scheduled area. They have their own customary law for the governance of the community. Orth and Ordeal are mostly used in decision-making. It has a very significant role in the tribal way of living. Tribal have their own traditional village council which is constituted by respected elderly from their own community.'

This is the reason govt has decided to establish another provision for the scheduled tribes in the fifth scheduled area fifth scheduled areas are those areas which are scheduled by the president of India where the tribal population is more than 50%. In this scheduled area government decided to implement another provision which is known as the Panchayat Extension to the scheduled area act (PESA) 1996. This act gives autonomy to the tribal for the decision-making for their own community.

Scheduled Area

According to the article 244(1) of the constitution of India, the 'Scheduled Areas' are defined as 'such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas or fifth scheduled area. At present, states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) and Odisha are declared as Scheduled Areas. The

specification of “Scheduled Areas” in relation to a State is by a notified order of the President, after consultation with the Governor of that State.

Scheduled Area in Odisha

There are 6 districts are comes under the scheduled area and 7 districts are comes under partially scheduled district. Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Koraput, Malkangiri Nabarangpur Rayagada, Kandhamal fully scheduled and Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Balasore, Ganjam comes under the partially scheduled district.

Tribal Political integration in the Study Area

To know about the political integration first we have to know about their own traditional political system and its existence and changes, whereas other side their level of awareness and participation of tribal in the grass roots level governance. Both the parameters are includes political activities such as Election, Campaigning Gram Sabha, Palli Sabha and other developmental schemes and beneficiaries.

Tribal Traditional Political System

As the above discussion tribal have their own community political organization and it was solve their own issues through their customary law. In the study area all the selected panchayat tribal traditional political system is not that active but we can't say that it is not function. Their level of function is very low. Due to several govt initiatives it also seen that they are attracting to the modern political system.

Structure and Function of the Traditional Political System in the Study Area

In all the 6 selected panchayat there are several tribes living and practicing their own customs and traditions. Tribes like Kissan, Khadia, Gonds, Oroan are the major tribes. Among them many tribal are converted to Christianity from generation.

Importance of Village Head

In all the selected panchayat has given importance to the village head and that head may not be belongs to each tribe living in that area. In the Subdega panchayat the villages head are belong to the Khadia tribe. That does not mean they are only the head of khadia tribe other caste and tribe also visit to them for their social issues.

Community Councils and the Samaj

Community assembly is another form of tribal traditional political system in the study area and that institution is combination of all the members of that particular community respective of their village and panchayat in all the villages and panchayat the members are living and if any kind of social issues happens related to their community the assembly decide and try to solve the issue.

People are following the Tribal System

Among the 600 respondent there are only 10% of the population are visiting to the tribal traditional system which is indicate only the village head for their issues, But rest of the 90% of the population taking help of the panchayat. This data is included all the issues face by the respondents whereas only social problems like marriage related issues, festival, rules related issue from the community etc are specially deal by the community level

Types of Issues Solve by Traditional Political System

According to N. Rao “the traditional institutions form an important aspect of the village self-governance system despite the presence of the Panchayats.” Among the 10 percent of respondents which is 60 people, 20 are visiting to the village head and also community member regarding marriage issues. And 25 percent are visiting for their normal fight to the village head and rest of the 15 people are visiting for seeking advice from the village head regarding their socio-economic problem.

Modern Political System

The Panchayati Raj Intuition is the modern political system in India where the three-tier system is applicable. The Garam panchayat is the lowest form of government, it also known as the grassroots level governance. This institution is the bridge among the people and the government. All the schemes and benefits distributed to the local people through the gram panchayat.

Let's discuss about the Awareness level of the respondent regarding political activities

Awareness

When it comes to the awareness regarding the election process the respondent of the study area the respondents are quite aware regarding the The name of the panchayat, Place of voting, Voting location which is approximately 82% but when it comes to the officials of the panchayat only 28% are aware. They are also aware about 58%the contestant due to village gossip, campaigning and social media etc.

Participation

Among all the respondent it's seen that varied of the participation in the different activities. When it comes to the getting the beneficiaries schemes most of them are aware and participating but when it comes to Gram sabha and palli sabha they are only attending for their grievance and redress. Among all the respondent 32% are not attending the gram sabha and 45 percent attending once and 22 percent attending in the third time.

Elected Representatives

Elected representatives are the members who can take the decision of the needful and necessary work should be done in the panchayat. So their awareness and participation is highly required or the actual development of the panchayat. It is found that among all the tribal word members that they are not that much aware about the govt schemes for the tribal. They are also innocent and agreeable. Due to several other engagements also is a breaker and obstacles of the elected representative. In women candidate case it seen that their level of interest is high but when it comes to the awareness and participation they are also facing certain issues such as social, geographical and economic barriers.

Among all the representatives of all the selected 6 panchayats 30 are selected as sample size, two Tribal male, two Tribal female word member and Sarapanch of the Panchayat. Among all the 24 word members 16 are aware regarding the reservation of women in panchayat whereas only 4 women could reply and rest of the women enter to politics through reservation of seat but still they are not aware, when it comes to the participation in gram sabha all are participating but when it comes to the active participation only 12 are actively engaged. Rest were can't explain about the agenda of the gram sabha also. Among women sarapanch its found that the

aspirations is there for the further election and to be a part of the PRI but when it comes to the activities they are highly depend on the officials of the panchayat.

Conclusion

From the present study it found that due to education and development schemes tribal are integrating towards the modern political system and their traditional political system is decreasing day by day. It only exists in the form of village head and samaj or tribal community council. It also found that another reason behind degrading the tribal traditional council is the conversion to the Christianity. Among the respondent less percent are following the traditional political system only normal issues and the major issues solve by the judiciary and police. When it comes to the tribal representatives they are enthusiastic but not that much aware regarding their role and responsibility. Mostly women representatives and they are depends on the other officials of the panchayat.

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