

Val II, Issue:VIII, Sept 2012

ISSN : 2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal



**Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal**



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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

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Political Participation Of Women In Rural Areas

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Abstract:

Women play a vital role in every walk of human society. Human society will be half without the active participation of women in any aspect. Societal development signifies the overall development of both men and women. Women's participation is inevitable in every steps in our society. Various determinants like family, religion, caste has been played a dominant role in women's active participation. Our society is still under the influence of traditional norms, beliefs and attitudes which have forbidden women in their participation in our social life. During the time of election women become a targetted section among the leaders, candidates and political parties. Women are motivated by them through different means so that they would win the election. Women are not easily allowed to issue tickets for election.

Women are used as an active campaigners during the time of election but they are not given chance to contest in the election. The national and state parties are very much reluctant to issue tickets for election to women. Moreover, women who won in the election are not given the heavy weight portfolios. So, the rights of women have been violated. Different types of obstacles have been faced by the female section of the society regarding participation in the electoral politics in Assam. Basically rural women are lack proper education and therefore they are remaining as a weaker section. Women have to busy with the household activities. They have to manage their family and prove themselves as an ideal wife. They have to respect the opinion of her husband, father in law and so on. So, in many a times, women have to remain as a doll of her family. Our societal norms, the institution of patriarchy is responsible for this situation of women. In the age of globalisation, women in rural areas are still exploited by our society itself.

Political participation is one of the key elements of democracy for its existence. In fact, the nature and success of a democracy largely depends upon the effective participation of all irrespective of sex, colour, caste, religion, race, language and so on. The term political participation means involvement of individuals in decision making process of a country. Voting, campaigning, and holding party office and other activities of individuals which influence the government directly or indirectly are called political participation.

Participation of women is part and parcel of democracy. The participation of women in the process of elections through the exercise of their voting rights lends effective legitimacy to the political system. The role of women in this field can be measured by the turnout of women voter and number of women candidate in each elections and the extent of women participation in electorate politics.

Participation of women is a unique concept. It signifies the factors, motive which help women to link with the decision making process. With particular reference to the participation of women, it indicates that there has been a limited application in rural areas. Rural women are coming out to enter in political

Please cite this Article as : Mukut Ch. Baruah , Political Participation Of Women In Rural Areas : Indian Streams Research Journal (Sept. ; 2012)



activities. Yet, it is not satisfactory. The rural politics of Assam is still under the domination of some factors which are inherited by our and society as well.

It has seen that the situation of a village during the of election campaign or before election, the party leaders and candidates always try to motivate the people, specially the women voters. They show their positive steps of helping the poor people. They also give assurance the rural women that if she or he will win the seat he or she will surely help the common people by hook or by crook. Interestingly, the leaders of a party or the candidate start to distribute some goods like blankets, sewing machine, BPL cards, free house and the like. Thus, the people of a rural area are motivated to cast their vote in favor of the special party or candidate. In this situation the condition of women is remarkable. Basically, rural women are needy so, they satisfied by the assurance of the party or the candidate of their areas. As a result their voting values become valueless. They may elect an unqualified person as their representative. It is due to the low economic status of women, lack of proper education and influence of the local leaders and so on.

One of the most serious factors which influence the women to choose their candidate is the traditional values and attitudes over women. "Patriarchy" is responsible for low participation of women. The dominant role of patriarch-father, husband is still prevailing in our society. Women have to obey the decisions and orders of the family male members. The concept of gender relation is rooted in our culture that decisions are less powerful, less reasonable than men. In this context the selection of right person in election has become problematic because the portion of people is still under control of other section (male).

Another significant obstacle for women's low in participation in electoral politics is the ignorance or lack of proper knowledge about politics. Basically, rural women are busy with their household activities like nurturing children, cooking, farming agricultural activities and so on. So, she doesn't have much time to busy with what is happening in the outside world. Therefore, she doesn't know who is the candidate, or from which party he or she has contested etc. Ultimately, she is compelled to cast her vote to the symbol or party which her family has already selected. In this case lack of proper education is responsible for her indifference.

Moreover, a common political culture is responsible for decision making of women in rural areas. For example, a family has been supporting to a specific party for five-ten years. So they don't want to change their support from that party. It is their tradition that they never change their decision. In this situation women have to obey that decision. They have to cast their vote as their family or society has determined. Women have to show the great support to their family first and society later.

It is wrong to say that all women of rural areas are illiterate or lack of proper knowledge about the present happenings of the society. Due to the expansion of education women of rural areas are now aware about their rights. Different types of pressure groups and political parties have helped rural women to come forward. By organizing self help groups or other organizations they are going to be empowered. Rural are become conscious but still they haven't been able to rescue themselves from the culprit of patriarchy more or less. For example, it has seen that if a female candidate win seat in her constituency or area she can't show an active leadership because, she is managed by the people behind her power. Ultimately, she becomes a puppet of her own position.

In a nutshell, it can be said that the rural politics of Assam is not properly favorable for women's active participation. The government must take effective steps to empower rural women. The constitutional laws must be implemented as soon as it is possible. To establish a genuine democracy women must have enjoyed their equal rights as men. Now, it is the time to fight for women's own legal rights so that they become equal decision maker as well as men.

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