



IMPACT OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL & BUSINESS ASSETS DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN: A STUDY AMONG THE RURAL WOMEN'S OF TIRUVANNAMALAI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution of India were made by the government to strengthen the position of women and to create a local-level legal foundation for direct democracy for women in both rural and urban areas. The representation for women in local bodies through reservation policies amendment in Constitution of India has stimulated the political participation of women in rural areas. However, when it's comes to the argument of whether the women reservation in Panchayati Raj helps or benefits to the life and livelihood development of women as a group? The answer is hypothetical because the studies related to the impact of women representatives of Panchayati Raj in the life and livelihood development of women was very less. Therefore, to fill the gap in existing literature, the present study was conducted among the rural women of Tiruvannamalai district to assess the impact of elected women representatives in the physical and financial & business development of the women in rural areas. The findings revealed that during the last five years because of the women representation in their village Panjayati Raj, the Physical Asset of the rural women were increased or developed moderately (55.8%) and Highly (23.4%) and the Financial and Business Asset of the rural women were increased or developed moderately (60.4%) and Highly (18.7%).

Keyword: Women Representatives, Panchayati Raj, Social and Natural Asset



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INTRODUCTION

India is a country crossed seven decades of independence, still plaguing with the huge development difference in rural-urban and rich-poor. As a developing nation, country's 68.84 per cent of the population lives in villages and there are 6,40,867 villages in India. According to 2011 census, the literacy rate of rural women population is 58.8 per cent (Census, 2011). United Nations "2007 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects" estimated that India would continue to have the largest rural population in the world until 2050. There are several problems and challenges which are creating difficulties in the lives of Indians, like increasing

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poverty, rising crimes, corruption, criminalization of politics and so on. Nevertheless, the problems and challenges faces by women especially rural women are predominant.

Rural women in India are less literate than rural men because of the negative perception of the family towards educating the girl child. Rural women are dynamic and productive workers in India's national economy. Still, there is statistical bias in under estimating the role of rural women in development. Even though women work for longer hours than men and contribute substantially to family income but they are not perceived as productive workers (Pankajam and Lalitha, 2005). Equal pay for equal work is one of the foundations of the gender equality movement all over the world. With regard to India, the Labour Bureau data clearly indicates that there has been a huge disparity in terms of salaries for men and women for equivalent work. Even more in rural areas the wage disparities was further high when compare to urban parts of the country. The data indicate that daily wage disparities have continued constant since 1999, though they did rise in the early 2000s. Since 2013, the discrimination in wages paid to women tends to be higher in physically exhaustive works, but lower in the case of work such as sowing and harvesting. Outside the agricultural sphere, it appears that gender stereotypes predominant, if one considers unskilled non-agricultural work (Jayaram, 2003).

To develop the status of the women in all aspects especially in political aspect and to make a legal foundation for direct democracy at the local-level, both in rural and urban areas the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution of India was made by the government.

Main Features 73rd and 74th Amendment

A three-tier *panchayat* system shall be constituted in every state, comprising *panchayats* at the village, intermediate and district levels. However, states with populations not exceeding 20 lakhs could dispense with the intermediate level and have a two-tier system.

- The *panchayats* will enjoy a five-year term; if dissolved earlier, fresh elections will be completed within six months of the date of dissolution.
- The *gram sabha*(village assembly) will consist of all persons registered on the electoral rolls.
- In the directly elected seats of members in all *panchayats*, there will be reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), in proportion to their total population in a *panchayat* area, and one-third of these seats will be reserved for women belonging to these groups. Of the seats to be filled by direct election in every *panchayat*, there will be not less than one-third reservation of seats in *panchayats* for women, including the seats reserved for SC/ST women.
- The offices of Chairpersons in the *panchayats* at all levels will be reserved for the SC/STs and women as the State legislature may decide, provided that not less than one-third of the Chairpersons' positions shall be reserved for women. Likewise, there will be reservation in the offices of Chairpersons in *panchayats* at all levels for members of the SCs and STs, in proportion to their population in the state.
- The Governor of the State will appoint a State Finance Commission to review the financial position of the *panchayats* and make recommendations regarding the principles which should govern the distribution of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees between the State Government and the *panchayats*.

Source: Report on Women in Panchayats, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, 2008

These amendments in the constitution of India widen the way to the marginalized people into the political process by giving reservation of seats in Panchayati Raj for women and for the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). It is envisaged that by approving one-third of the seats in local government body level for women will reflect the voices of women and the issues that they tackle.

Ample of research studies have been done in the field of reservation of women in local bodies and its importance in development of women. However, the studies regarding the impact of the women representatives in the physical and financial & business assets of the rural women have yet to be studied. Hence, the present research is an initial step and attempt towards studying the impact of the women representatives in the physical and financial & business assets of the rural women. This study also tried to shed light on the effectiveness of women representation in Panchayati Raj.

Against this background the present research was conducted on following objectives:

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the socio economic and demographic profile of the rural women from the villages reserved and lead by the elected women representatives of Panjayati Raj.
2. To assess the impact of elected women representatives of Panjayati Raj in physical and financial & business assets development of the rural women.

3. METHODOLOGY

The impact assessment on women representatives' participation in the development of physical and financial & business assets of rural women will provide information about how the women representation in Panjayati Raj helps the rural women on their development in physical and financial & business assets. The assessment was recorded whether the development in Asset values is attributable to the women representation in Panjayati Raj. The assessment was also helps to understand the impact results to relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the women representation in Panjayati Raj. The present research is explanatory in nature as it aims to study the possible impact of Reservation of seats in electoral representation for Women in physical and financial & business assets of the rural women. For the present study World bank's User guide on Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (2003)" was used to study the possible impact and was used as a sourcebook for livelihood strategies which introduces the concept of — Assets.

The concept of — Asset was adopted as variables for the present research. The main measurement categories are: physical and financial & business assets with detailed indicators for impact assessments was used as sub-variables for the present study are as follows:

<p><u>a) Physical Asset</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity • Water well, Overhead water tank • Street lights • Road facility • Transportation • Building for school, toilet and primary health centre • Computer / Internet and other latest technological development 	<p><u>b) Financial and Business Asset</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income • Property (land, housing, jewel etc) • Savings • Spending • Income and Expenditure planning skill • Investment • Self-help group credit/loan • Senior citizen and widow pension • Knowledge on Financial aids
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For the present study, Tiruvannamalai district was selected as study area. Tiruvannamalai District is one of the backward districts in Tamil Nadu came into existence on 30th September 1989 as an outcome of the divergence of North Argot District. Geographically this district lies between 12.00 and 12.49 of North latitude and 78.38 to 79.45 East longitudes. The boundary districts of Tiruvannamalai are Vellore District (North and West) Dharmapuri District (Southwest), Villupuram District (South) and Kancheepuram District (East). According to the District Census Handbook of Tiruvannamalai district (2011), Tiruvannamalai and Cheyyar is the two Revenue Divisions of Tiruvannamalai district. Tiruvannamalai district consists of 7 Taluks, 4 Municipalities, 10 Town Panchayats, 8 Census Towns and 18 Community Development Blocks. The total number of Revenue Villages in the district is 1095. Of these, 1039 villages are inhabited. Thandrapet taluk was newly created from Chengam taluk as per G.O. (MS) NO.636, (Revenue (RA1 (1)) dated 31.10.2007. The following table gives number of taluks with number of towns and Community Development Blocks with number of villages in Tiruvannamalai district:

Sl. No.	Name of Taluk	Towns	Sl. No.	Name of CD Blocks	No. of Villages	Inhabited Villages
1	Arani	7	1	Tiruvannamalai	86	86
2	Cheyyar	3	2	Keelapennathur	62	62
3	Vandavasi	3	3	Thurinjapuram	60	60
4	Polur	3	4	Polur	54	54
5	Chengam	2	5	Kalaspakkam	49	49
6	Thandrapet	0	6	Chetpet	61	59
7	Tiruvannamalai	4	7	Chengam	58	58
			8	Pudupalayam	41	41
			9	Thandrapet	62	62
			10	Jawadhu Hills	38	38
			11	Cheyyar	66	66
			12	Anakkavur	61	60
			13	Vembakkam	89	89
			14	Vandavasi	70	69
			15	Thellar	68	68
			16	Peranamallur	66	66
			17	Arani	25	25
			18	West Arani	23	23
				Not under any CD Block	56	4
Total		22	Total		1095	1039

The sample of the present research was collected from the population of rural women of Tiruvannamalai district village panchayats. In Tiruvannamalai district a total of 830 village panchayats are in function, among that 288 (34.7%) village panchayats were reserved for women and functioned successfully by the elected women representatives in the last five years (2011–2016) (Election Commission of India, 2011). Given that, the block wise average no. of village led by general women representatives' are 11 and Scheduled Caste (SC) women representatives are 4. Therefore for the present research 30% of the block wise average no. of village was selected for household interviews from each block follows:

Blocks	Total women villages	No. of elected representative		No. of Villages was selected for household interview	Villages was selected for household interview	
		General Women	Women (SC)		General Women	Women (SC)
Anakkavur	14	5	0	4	1	0
Arani	10	3	0	3	1	0
Arani(West)	11	2	0	3	1	0
Kalaspakkam	10	4	0	3	1	0
Keelapennathur	11	4	0	3	1	0
Chengam	10	5	0	3	1	0
Cheyyar	13	5	0	4	1	0
Chetpet	15	1	0	4	1	0
Thandrapet	10	4	2	3	1	2
Thiruvannamalai	15	6	1	4	2	1
Thurinjapuram	12	4	0	3	1	0
Thellar	15	6	0	4	2	0
Pudupalayam	9	4	0	3	1	0
Peranamallur	14	4	0	4	1	0
Polur	11	2	0	3	1	0
Vandavasi	14	6	0	4	2	0
Vembakkam	16	6	0	4	2	0

JawadhuHills	0	0	4	0	0	3
Net Total	210	71	7	59	21	06
Grand Total	288			86		

Source: Election Commission of India, 2011

The villages were selected randomly from each block and the households of the selected villages are the unit for sampling, to study the physical and financial & business assets of the women. The sampling method that was adopted to choose the sample is Stratified Random Sampling method though the interviews among the households will randomly select with composition of four wealth stratifications (Well-off, Average, poor and very poor). With regard to sample size, 10 percentages of the total households from each village was selected as sample size and totally 2802 samples were collected from 28093 households of 86 villages. An interview schedule was constructed and used to collect data from the respondents of the study. The role of women representatives were measured using 19 items, and respondents were asked to reply using a five-point scale ranging from “No Change at all = 0, A Little (About 25% of Change or Impact) = 1, Medium (About 50% of Change or Impact) = 5, High (About 75% of Change or Impact) = 3 and Fulfilled (100% of Change or Impact) = 4”.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Socio-economic and demographic profile of the respondents

1. Quiet highest numbers of respondents were belongs to Arani block (344 respondents); Thandrampattu block (308 respondents) and Arani West block (272 respondents).
2. Lowest numbers of respondents were belongs to Jawadhu Hills/Jamunamarathur block (44 respondents) and Vembakkam block (88 respondents)
3. More than twenty per cent of the respondents whose age was 35–44 years responded that there is a moderate change/impact are there in the entire livelihood because of the women reservation in Panjayati Raj.
4. In the present study majority of the respondents (85.2%) are married and only 4 per cent of the respondents are un-married. Of the total married population, it was found that almost 50 per cent of them were responded that there is a moderate change/impact is there in the all four livelihood assets because of the women reservation in Panjayati Raj.
5. It can be inferred from the results of the present study that more than thirty per cent of the respondents who were illiterate and completed only primary school have

responded that there is a moderate change/impact is there in the all four livelihood assets because of the women reservation in Panjayati Raj.

6. Forty per cent of the respondents who are from scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and among them 22.9 per cent of the respondents have responded that there is a moderate change/impact is there in the all four livelihood assets because of the women reservation in Panjayati Raj.

Followings are results related to impact of women representatives in physical and financial & business assets of rural women:

c) Physical Asset

- **Electricity**

More than 66 per cent of the respondents responded high and fulfilled change/impact in improvement of electricity facility

- **Water well, Overhead water tank**

Notably 55.9 per cent of the respondents responded for a little and medium change/impact in water facilities likes water overhead tanks and taps of their villages.

- **Street lights**

27.1 per cent of the respondents recorded their response for high change and impact and 24.8 per cent of the respondents mentioned fulfilled change and impact in the electric street light facilities that ensure safety in the night time.

- **Road facility**

It was found that majority (50.1%) of the respondents stated medium and a high improvement with regard to the road facility of their villages.

- **Transportation**

It can be seen results of the present research that a large percentage (54%) of the respondents responded that there is only a little and medium improvement was happened in the transport facilities of their villages.

- **Building for school, toilet and primary health centre**

With regard to improvement in classroom and toilet facilities which aid in the educational facilities of the respondents, the results revealed that more than 40 per cent of the respondents responded for high and fulfilled improvement was happened because of the women representation in their village Panchayati raj.

- **Computer / Internet and other latest technological development**

The results revealed that majority (58%) of the respondents responded that no change at all in the technological development during the women representation in the last tenure Panchayati raj.

d) Financial and Business Asset

- **Income**

It was found from the present study that majority 64.5 per cent of the respondents responded for no change at all and a little change/impact in their income generation.

- **Property (land, housing, jewel etc)**

Almost eighty per cent of the respondents were responded no change at all and a little change/impact in the purchase of new property like land, house, jewels etc.

- **Savings**

Majority 73.7 per cent of the respondents responded for no change at all and a little change/impact in savings from the income of the rural women.

- **Spending**

65.2 per cent of the respondents recorded their response that no change at all and little improvement in the freedom of spends the money that they have earned.

- **Income and Expenditure planning skill**

Large percentage (67.5%) of the respondents stated that no change at all and little change or impact in the improvement in their ability to plan your income and expenditure.

- **Investment**

Majority 79.8 per cent of the respondents responded for no change at all and a little change/impact in starting new business

- **Self-help group credit/loan**

Notably 25 per cent of the respondents recorded their response for high change and impact and 15.8 per cent of the respondents mentioned fulfilled change and impact in availing loans through Self-Help Groups

- **Senior citizen and widow pension**

It can be seen that a large percentage (56.9%) of the respondents responded that there is no change at all and a little change or impact only, happened during the women representation in the last tenure of Panchayati raj in availing senior citizen pension and widow pension

- **Knowledge on Financial aids**

71.7 per cent of the respondents responded for no change at all and a little change/impact in improvement of knowledge about enhancing finance like Industrial training and financial aids support to start new business.

Overall results of the women representation in their village Panjayati Raj and its impact on physical and financial & business assets of rural women:

1. During the last five years because of the women representation in their village Panjayati Raj, the Physical Asset of the rural women were increased or developed moderately (55.8%) and Highly (23.4%).
2. During the last five years because of the women representation in their village Panjayati Raj, Financial and Business Asset of the rural women were increased or developed moderately (60.4%) and Highly (18.7%).

The successful participation of the women representatives in their villages demonstrates that the reservation for women can be increased in larger will highly benefits the rural women for their all side of livelihood development. Good and supportive government representative attitude has helped very much towards positive change/impact on the physical and financial & business assets of the rural women. The women representation in Panchayati Raj has been successful in institutionalizing local rules and regulations pertaining to physical and financial and business assets management and development.

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