



# POLITICAL STATUS OF DALITS IN UDUPI DISTRICT

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## Introduction

Udupi district had a population of 11,77,908 Males constituted 49% of the population and females 51% as per 2011 census. The average literacy rate was 83%, higher than the national average of 59.5%; male literacy was 86% and female literacy 81%. Eight percent of the population was under 6 years of age. Udupi, which previously had a Town Municipal Council now has a City Municipal Council which came into existence in 1995. Areas around Udupi, such as Manipal, Malpe and Santhekatte were merged to form the City Municipal Council. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in the district was 109301 in the year 2011.

Dalits are the leading discriminated group in India. Their discrimination is based on their birth into specific „untouchable“ group or caste, and also traditional “polluting” work. There are about 250 million Dalits in India. There is meager improvement in the economic condition of Dalits in the past 50 years that is not enough when compared to non-Dalit. Every fourth Indian is a Dalit. The effort to review and appraise the stage and size of political participation of Dalit become extremely much applicable as to the nature and implementation of the political system a whole. It is particularly more beneficial to political parties and political leaders to the natural qualities as honesty, affection and a sense of duty.

The mobilization of SCs in large numbers weakened the bondage of tradition and encouraged them to develop a perspective on the wider sociopolitical problems. Reservation in the local governance helped the Dalits to take active part in the local governance, but attempts have not made by any individuals/organizations to understand the level of participation and contributions made by the Dalit members in local governance, hence the present study. Objectives of the study are to study the participation of Dalits in local governance, to understand the level of participation, and contribution made by the Dalit members as members of local governance and to suggest suitable measure to strengthen the political participation among Dalit members in local governance. The present study has been carried out in Udupi district of Karnataka State, the data has been collected from Dalit local governance members, and descriptive research design has been adopted to conduct this study. Majority of the Dalit members were elected in reserve constituencies, majority of them were not fully aware about the different developmental programmes of Dalits in local governance and Dalit women members were actively involving in all activities of local governance.

The demand for taking governance and administration to the grass root level, providing transparency and the right to information concerning the affairs of the state is taking a global concern. The underlying idea behind democratic decentralization is to widen the area of democracy by granting both democracy and autonomy to the lower level. It seeks to vest in the institutions of local government large power through various measures so that they may be developed into “the tiny fountain heads of democracy” or a “multi form democracy”. As part of the strategy to decentralize, the community participation is visualized as a means of social transformation of culturally and economically diverse and hierarchical groups of people into a more democratic and egalitarian framework. Participation concept has acquired varied meanings over a period of time – at one end of the spectrum it could mean just a nominal membership in a group, and at the other end it could imply having an effective voice in the decision-making process. 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 (Mishra, Mishra, & Mishra, 2003). 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 (Salustowicz, 2008). 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 (Arora, 2011).

There is one million Dalit and women entered Panchayats after 73rd constitutional Amendment Act (Palanithurai, 2005). In Karnataka, Panchayatraj was enacted in the year of 1993. These were also supplemented by the Karnataka Panchayats (Reservation of Seats and Rotation of Reserved Seat) Rules, 1995. Reservation of seats by adopting a list of wards and Panchayats arranged in the descending arrange of the percent of women, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled tribes and affecting the cut off at an end where the number of reserve seats and offices is equal to the prescribed ratio. The periodicity of the rotation is also fixed under the rules. At present altogether 25 elected Dalit members for Zilla Panchayat in Udupi District.

### **Importance of the Study:**

From past decades it has been experienced that, caste has played an instrumental role in participation of Dalit politics and raising issues related to the more marginalized. In a highly hierarchical society, Dalit belonging to the lower castes have lesser access to public fore, which is compounded by their caste. This exclusion makes it difficult for these to represent and articulate the voices of their constituencies and their demands are often overlooked or subsumed by the dominant sections of the society.

### **Methodology of Study:**

The present study has been carried out in Udupi district of Karnataka State, the data has been collected from 107 Dalit local governance members with the assist of interview schedule, and descriptive research design has been

adopted to conduct this study. Data analysis was done with the help of electronic coding and tabulation. The tables are not used in the article for making this article short.

## Data Analysis

As per data Percent of elected Dalit Gender-wise distribution is assessed. Out of the total 107 members 39.3 were males and 60.7 were Females. The data shows that majority 60.7 percent of elected Dalit were females. Remaining 39.3 percent of respondents were male. It clearly shows that as per Panchayatraj Act the Government of Karnataka Declared 50 percent of reservation for women. The majority 40.2 percent of elected Dalit were between the age group of 30-35, and 27.1 percent of Dalit were belongs to the age group of 25 to 30, 26.2 percent of were belongs to 40-45 age group. 5.6 percent were below the age of 25 and rest of .9 percent of Dalit were belongs to 40-45 age group.

Education plays significant role in operate all administrative mechanism. The Indian constitution is not made any education qualification for contesting in any form general election. The data shows that 26.2 percent of elected Dalit were not have any educational qualification. 24.3 percent of Dalit were having only primary level of education qualification. 21.5 percent of Dalit were having Middle level of Education. 16.8 percent of elected Dalits were having Secondary Education level (SSLC). 6.5 percent of Dalit were having PUC level of education and only 4.7 percent of Dalit were having Degree and above level of education. It clearly indicates that majority of educated Dalit were not interested in participating in local governance.

The data shows that occupation of the Dalit Panchayat Members. Majority 29 percent of Dalit Panchayat Members was wage labourers. 28 percent of Dalit Panchayat Members were self-employed. 16.8 percent of Dalit Panchayat Members were self-employed. 16.8 percent of DPM were depending on agriculture. 15.9 percent of DPM were not doing any kind of employment and 10.3 percent of Dalit Panchayat members were depended on other kinds of occupation. Annual Income

The data shows that majority 72.9 percent of Dalit Panchayat members' annual income is 10000 to 20000. 19.6 percent of Dalit Panchayat members' annual income is 20000 to 30000. 4.7 percent of Dalit Panchayat member's. 1.9 percent of Dalit members' annual income is around 30000 to 40000. The data shows that 33.6 percent of Dalit leaders were motivated by their friends and followed by their caste leaders. 15.9 percent of Dalit members were motivated by relatives. 8.4 percent of members were motivated by party leaders. 4.7 members were motivated by family members and rest of 3.7 members was promoted by Panchayat officials. It is clearly indicates that the political party leaders does not directly promote any Dalit Panchayat members. And in opposite caste leaders were promoted their members to contest in election.

The data reveals that the political background of Dalit Panchayat members. Majority 59.8 percent of elected members were having background support of Karnataka Congress Party, at present ruling party in Karnataka. Followed by 19.6 percent of Dalit members were having background support of Bartiya Janata Party. 14.0 percent of Dalit members were having support of Janatadal (Secular). And remaining 6.5 percent of Dalit members were elected by contesting independently.

The data reveals that status of participating in Panchayat work of Dalit elected members. 31.8 percent of Dalit members were of poor participation. 30.8 percent of Dalit members were moderately participating in panchayat activity. 17.8 percent of Dalit members participation is good. 4.7 percent of Dalit participation is very good. And remaining 15.0 percent of Dalit were not actively participating in Panchayat activity.



The data shows that priority of Participation of Dalit members in Panchayat Work. Majority 39.3 percent of Dalit Panchayat members were concentrating on economic development of Dalit community. 19.6 percentage of Dalit members were concentrating on reaching welfare programmes such as MGNREGA, pension schemes, Housing schemes. 18.7 percent of Dalit were concentrating on school building development. 11.3 percent of Dalit elected members were concentrating on irrigation facilities for farmers. And remaining 1.9 percent of Dalit members were concentrating on link road development.

## Conclusion

Due to 73rd Amendment, over a million Dalit and women have coming forward for the first time to hold public office and to participate in public activities, making their presence in the power struggles once dominated by the upper caste. This has been the most effective formal step towards political empowerment of women. There are many instances where Dalit have been self-motivated to fight an election. In several instances, the Gram Sabha has persuaded Dalit and women with leadership potential to stand for elections.

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