



Political Consciousness Among The Scheduled Caste Women In The Nainital District Of Kumaun Region

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to know the extent of political consciousness of scheduled caste women of Almora district of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand state. Stratified random sampling was applied in order to select the gram panchayat. Out of eleven blocks in Almora district Hawalbagh block was selected for the study and a sample of 75 women were selected for the study. The political consciousness of the respondents has been assessed by asking them simple questions pertaining to their awareness about various political functionaries and political events at different levels (national and local). This study shows that the political awareness of the scheduled caste women is still in the darkness of traditional culture. They do turn up of in large numbers for voting but lag behind in other activities of political participation.

Introduction

The query on interest in politics could only give the subjective estimate of the respondents themselves about their levels of interest. It is likely that one respondent may consider himself to be extremely interested while the other having the same degree of awareness about politics might consider himself not so highly interested in politics itself. Questions on political information, knowledge and awareness provide concrete measure of the level of interest.

Objectives

The chief objective of this study was:

- (1) To examine the socio-economic status of the respondents belonging to scheduled castes.
- (2) To explore the political awareness of the scheduled caste women.

Methodology and Sample Coverage

The present study has been conducted in Almora district of Uttarakhand state. Data was collected through primary sources. Primary data which was the base of the study was collected by interview schedule. Stratified random sampling was applied in order to select the gram panchayats. There are eleven blocks in district Almora so I selected only one block, i.e., Hawalbagh block and a sample of 75 women was randomly drawn.

(I) Socio-Economic Profile

The socio-economic profile is vital to any study as it helps in building a comprehensive and complete picture of the respondents. Several socio-economic factors have been taken into account that gives a good idea about the background and the profile of the women under study. The individual profile is derived by looking at factors such as age, educational level, marital status and annual income of the respondents.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Age	Young age (18-30)	14	18.66
	Middle age (31-50)	52	69.33
	Aged and above	9	12.00
Education	Illiterate	32	42.66
	Below Matriculation	25	33.33
	Matriculation and above	12	16.00
	Graduation and above	6	8.00
Occupation	Housewife	26	34.66
	Government jobs	0	0
	Daily Labourer	17	22.66
	Agriculture	32	42.66
Marital Status	Married	43	57.33
	Unmarried	32	42.66

Source: Present survey

A perusal of the table reveals that out of total sample of 75 female respondents (18.66 per cent) belonged to young age group, 69.33 percent belonged to middle age group. Only 12.00 percent respondents were from the aged and above group. Majority of our female respondents were found to be illiterate (42.66 percent). Majority of the women respondents were engaged in agriculture for their livelihood (42.66 percent). As far the marital status was concerned 57.33 percent members were married while 42.66 percent females were unmarried.

Assessment of Political Awareness

(II) Assessment of Political Awareness

A minimum degree of interest in politics coupled with political information and political awareness is a necessary prerequisite for peoples participation in politics. To get a proper estimate of the level of political awareness of the female respondents they were asked few questions, the responses of the respondents are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Political Knowledge at the National Level and State Level

Political Knowledge at the National Level			
Test of Political Information	Hawalbagh block		
	Total respondents	Number	percentage
Name of India's President	75	21	28.00
Term of India's President	75	14	18.66
Do you elect the President	75	11	14.66
Name of India's Prime Minister	75	52	69.33
Term of India's Prime Minister	75	37	49.33
Do you elect the Prime Minister	75	26	34.66
How many houses are there in the Indian Parliament	75	12	16.00
Name the Houses of Parliament	75	15	20.00
Who is the father of our Nation	75	53	70.66
Which are the three colours of the Indian National Flag	75	42	56.00
Government is elected for how many years	75	43	57.33

Which political party has formed the government in India at present?	75	62	82.66
When was the State of Uttarakhand formed	75	14	18.66
Name the Governor of Uttarakhand	75	16	21.33
Term of the Governor	75	15	20.00
Name the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand	75	21	28.00
Term of the Chief minister	75	17	22.66
Do you elect the Chief Minister	75	19	25.33
Name the MP (Member of Parliament)of your area	75	34	45.33
To which party does he belong	75	34	45.33

One of the question asked of the respondents was to state the name of the President of India. A total number of 21 (28.00 per cent) respondents could name the President of India correctly. 54 respondents could not name the President correctly some gave the name of the earlier President and there were others who gave the name of the first President of India. When the respondents were asked to state the term of the President, of these 14 (18.66 per cent) respondents could give the correct term of the President while 61 respondents could not state the correct term of the President, 64 respondents stated that they elected the president which was incorrect while 11(14.66 per cent) respondents knew that the President is not elected by the people. When asked the name of the Prime Minister, only 52 (69.33 per cent) respondents out of 75 respondents each could correctly name the Prime Minister while 23respondents could also not mention the correct name of the Prime Minister. 37 (49.33 per cent) respondents could correctly state the term of the Prime Minister while 38 respondents could not correctly state the term of the Prime Minister. 26 (34.66 per cent) respondents stated that they elected the Prime Minister while 49 respondents stated that they do not elect the Prime Minister.

Out of 75 respondents 12 (16.00 per cent) could correctly say that there are two houses in the Indian Parliament, while 63 respondents could not give the right answer.

When asked to name the houses of the Indian Parliament 15 (20.00 per cent) respondents could correctly name Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, while 60 respondents could not correctly name the houses of the Indian Parliament.

To find out the whether the respondents knew the Father of the Nation a question “Who is the father of our Nation” was asked. It was a closed ended question with four alternatives (a) Mahatma

Gandhi (b) Jawahar Lal Nehru(c) Subhas Chandra Bose (c) Ambedkar. Out of 75 respondents 53 (70.66 per cent) respondents gave the right answer while 22 respondents gave the wrong answer.

42 (56.00 per cent) urban respondents could correctly specify the three colours (saffron, white and green) in the National flag of India while 33 respondents gave wrong response to this question.

43 (57.33 per cent) respondents could correctly state the term of the government, while 32 respondents were not very clear of the term of the government.

Another question to test the political knowledge of the respondents was “Which political party has formed the government in India at present”? It was a closed ended question with four alternatives (a) Congress (b) Bharatiya Janta Party (c) Bahujan Samaj Party (d) Other. Out of 75 respondents 62 (82.66 per cent) respondents gave the right answer while 13 respondents gave the wrong answer.

14 (18.66 per cent) respondents knew that the State of Uttarakhand was formed on 9th November 2000, while 61 respondents were not clear of the exact year.

21 (28.00 per cent) respondents could correctly name the Governor of Uttarakhand while 54 respondents could not name the Governor of Uttarakhand.17 (22.66 per cent) respondents could correctly specify the term of the Governor while 58 respondents could not mention the correct term of the Governor.

21 (28.00 per cent) rural could correctly name the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand while 54 respondents could not name the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. 17 (22.66 per cent) respondents could correctly specify the term of the Chief Minister while 58 respondents could not mention the correct term of the Chief Minister. 19 (25.33 per cent) respondents knew that the Chief Minister was elected by the people they knew that they vote for him, while 56 respondents were ignorant with this fact of electing the Chief Minister.

To the questions “who is the M.L.A (Member of Legislative Assembly) of your area, “Who is your M.P. (Member of Parliament)” and “which political party does he belong to.”Of these 34 (45.33 per cent) respondents could correctly name their M.L.A, 41 respondents could correctly name their M.P. 34 (45.33 per cent) respondents could correctly name the political party of their M.L.A while 41 could identify the correct political party of their M.P. (Member of Parliament) .The foregoing analysis of the questions has revealed the level of political consciousness of the respondents. Table 1.1 is an ample proof that as far as political information is concerned, scheduled caste women of Kumaun region do not fare remarkably well.

Conclusion

It was found from the analysis of the responses obtained during our survey study that the respondents who possessed higher social status were also found to possess higher level of political consciousness. Female scheduled caste respondents with higher income also displayed higher level of political consciousness, as higher income brings prosperity and more leisure time, and ample prosperity to enable the individuals to be more active in politics. On the other hand, respondents with lower income showed poorer level of political consciousness, as lower incomes brings mental tension which hold back the individual to take interest in any activity. Education offers to help increased sense of civic duty, political competence, interest and responsibility, thus people with higher education tend to be more aware of the impact of politics on their lives. In our survey study we found that graduate female respondents were more politically conscious than the illiterate respondents or females with lower level of education female respondents.

