

**“AWARENESS OF MISING WOMEN TOWARDS
PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN JORHAT
DISTRICT OF ASSAM: A CASE STUDY”**

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ABSTRACT

Awareness and empowerment of women have been recognized globally in recent time. For progress and development of the society and the nation women must be conscious in all the aspects. For that they must be socio-economically independent, self-reliant, socio-politically aware and conscious. The government of India provides many long term and short term plans and schemes through Panchayat Raj Institutions to the rural people of our country. Due to these plans and schemes provided to the rural people by the government, the socio-economically backward section of the people of rural areas is benefited somehow than before. Missing community is one of the underdeveloped communities in Assam. The Mising community resides in the most flood affected zones of Assam which have pushed them towards more and more poverty and vulnerability. But women belongs to mising community is still in a poor position of awareness particularly in the socio-politically field without which a community or society would not be able to present itself as developed one. In this regard, the investigator tried to find out the state of awareness among the women of Mising community regarding the role of PRI's. Thus the investigator attempt to find out the state of awareness among the women of Mising Community by undertaking a case study of two villages under 93 no Jangeramukh Gaon Panchayat and 92 No Sharpai Gaon Panchayat.

Key words:

Panchayati Raj Institution, Assam Panchayati Act, Gaon Panchayat and Mising Community

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Introduction:

“To awake the people, it is women, who must be awaked, once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”- Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minster of India.

Awareness and empowerment of women have been recognized globally in recent time. For progress and development of the society and the nation women must be conscious and in the all aspects. For that they must be socio-economically independent, self-reliant, socio-politically aware and conscious. It can be said that a women becomes empowered when she is able to make decision for herself and for others, socially and politically. Panchayat Raj institution is a South Asian Political System mainly in India, Pakistan and Nepal. It is actually the oldest system of local government in the Indian sub continent. The word Panchayat literally means “assembly” (Ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. Traditionally this assembly settled disputes between individuals and villages. But modern India government has decentralized several administrative functions to the local level empowering elected gram Panchayats.

The term ‘panchayat raj’ is relatively new that was used during the British period and ‘Raj’ literally means governance or government. Mahatma Gandhi Advocated Panchayati Raj a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs as the foundation of India’s political system. He used Gram Swaraj i.e. village self governance. It was adopted by the state government duing the 1950’s and 1960’s as laws were passed to establish Panchayati Raj Institutions in various states. Panchayati Raj Institution as a constitutional body has been provided better facilities since 1992. The 73rd constitutional amendment Act 1992 marked a new era in the democratic set up of the country as it created Pachyati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as tries of self governance below the level of states in the federal set up. The passage of the 73rd constitution amendment act, 1992 marked a new era in the federal democratic set up of the country and Assam Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 incorporating almost all the features of the 73rd constitutional amendment act, 1992. The term of Panchayats in the state expired in October 1997. However, state government have put off the Panchayat elections several times citing different reasons such as the then ongoing Budget session 1998, subsequent monsoon rains and then law and other situation and subsequently Census operations. The state government decided to hold election in November 2000. However passing an order on a petition field in high court at Guahati, the Hon’ble high court directed the state government that before the notifications for elections were issued, the state government should dispose of the petition containing a plea for not holding Panchayat elections in missing autonomous council areas. The state government constituted a committee of five state minsters to submit a report in this regard. The union minister for rural development has written to the chief minister of Assam to hold Panchayat eletions in the state.

Need and Significance of the Study:

The government of India provides many long term and short term plans and schemes through Panchayat Raj Institutions to the rural people of our country such as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), JRY (Jawahar Rojgar Yojana), JGSY (Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana), ARWSP (Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme) AS (Annapoorna Scheme), DDAP (Desert Development Programme) EAS (Employment Assurance Scheme), EAP (Externally Aided Project), ITDP (Integrated Tribal Development Project), ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), IFC (Integrated Fisheries Project), IWDP (Integrated Wasteland Development Programme), NSAP (National Social Assistance Programme), PMGY (Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana), PCR (Protection of Civil Rights), POA (Prevention of Atrocities), RCRSP (Restricted centrally Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme), SGSY (Sarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana), SCP (Special Component Plan). The state government of Assam has also undertaken some beneficiary schemes for socio-economically backward sections of the state. Such scheme relating to health and family welfare such as ICDS, SHD, IMY, DWCR, RMK etc. along with centrally sponsored plans and schemes.

Due to these plans and schemes provided to the rural people by the government, the socio-economically backward section of the people of rural areas is benefited somehow than before. But majority of the women among missing community are not still aware regarding the same provided to them. Missing community is one of the underdeveloped communities in Assam. The Mising community resides in the most flood affected zones of Assam which have pushed them towards more and more poverty and vulnerability. Women belongs to mising community is still in a poor position of awareness particularly in the socio-politically field without which a community or society would not be able to present itself as developed one. In this context of Indian society the constitution provides enormous provisions for the Indian women. Article 19 and 16 (A) of the constitution intend to remove social and economic inequality to make equal opportunities available. Article 14, 15, 16, 21, 38, 39 and 46 of the constitution one envisaged to make the equality of the poor, disadvantaged and disabled citizens of the society meaningful. Besides, clause (3) of article 15, which permits special provision for women and children, has been widely resorted to and the courts have upheld the validity of special measures in legislation or executive orders favouring women.

Jorhat district of Assam is situated in the central region of the state surrounded by Sivasagar District in the east, Golaghat in the west, Lakhimpur and part of Sonitpur District in the north and Nagaland state in the South. The district comprises three sub-divisions Jorhat, Majuli, Titabar. In Majuli sub-division which was the biggest river island in the world, also known as Satriyacultural island, is now reduced to less than half of its total geographical area due to severe erosion problem occurring every year. The total population of island is 1,53,337 (2001 census). The Majuli sub-division has 45% ST (Plains) population among which 35% in Mising tribe. It

has 20 gaonpanchayat of which 11(eleven) are reserved for ST(P). But majority of inhabitant of Mising community are not still aware regarding the above-mentioned plans and policies or schemes of PRI's provided to them. In this regard, the investigator tried to find out the state of awareness among the women of Mising community regarding the role of PRI's. Thus the investigator attempt to find out the state of awareness among them by undertaking a case study of two villages under 93 no Jangeramukh Gaon Panchayat and 92 No Sharpai Gaon Panchayat.

Statement of the problem:-

The investigator stated the problem as - "AWARENESS OF MISING WOMEN TOWARDS PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN JORHAT DISTRICT OF ASSAM: A CASE STUDY"

Objective of the Study:

The objective of the study are-

1. To find out the level of awareness regarding the role of PRI's among the women of Mising Community.
2. To find out the causes behind lack of awareness among the women of Mising Community.
3. To suggest some remedial measures.

Delimitation of the Study:

The present study covers only two villages under 93 no Jengraimukh Gaon Panchayat and 92 No Sharpai Gaon Panchayat.

Method Adopted:

The study was done on the basis of descriptive survey method. Total 100 women were heterogeneously selected from the households as the sample from the two villages. The investigators personally visited the respondents and interviewing them with the help of a questionnaire and an interview schedule. In this study item wise analysis has been done to find out the percentage for better presentation of findings.

Analysis of Data:

Toanalyse the objective of the study the collected data were analysed and presented in a tabular form with the help of percentages.

Table: 1

Awareness among the women of Mising Community regarding PRI's activities

Role of PRI's	yes	No
Awareness generating programmes undertaken by Panchayats	5%	95%
Monetary assistance for poultry, piggery, diary firm etc.	27%	73%
Implementation of women welfare schemes	21%	79%
Provisions of facilities for maintenance of health and family welfare	32%	68%
Provision of facilities for SHG (loan, handloom facilities, seeds etc)	47%	53%
Training facilities for fresh water aquaculture	12%	88%
Provision of ICDS Schemes (Anganwadi)	81%	19%

The above table depicts the state of awareness among the women of Mising Community under study regarding PRI's activities for awakening socio-political awareness among them.

Only 5% women respondent viewed positively regarding awareness generating programmes undertaken by Panchayats under study, which is really a matter of serious to be thought. Only 27% women is aware about monetary assistance provide by PRI's to them for poultry, piggery, diary firm etc. that is discouraging. On the otherhand, 79% women under study answered negatively regarding implementations of women welfare schemes available for them through PRI's which is really disheartening. Only 32% respondents under study viewed positively in regards to provision of facilities for maintenance of health and family welfare, which is dissatisfactory. It was found that 47% women respondents responded that their SHG had able to got training for fresh water aquaculture provided to them through PRI's. And 12% women under study answered positively that they have able to got training for fresh water aquaculture provided to them by PRI's, which is very discouraging. After investigation it was found that 81% women under study have knowledge regarding provisions of ICDS schemes, which is quite encouraging and satisfactory.

Major Findings:

The major findings of the study are-

1. 5% women viewed positively regarding awareness generating programmes arranged by PRI's.
2. 27% women are aware about provisions of monetary assistance to them provided by PRI's.
3. 79% women are answered negatively regarding women welfare schemes.
4. 32% respondent women viewed positively in regards to provisions of facilities for maintenance of health and family welfare.
5. 47% women under study able to got facilities provided for SHG.
6. 12% respondent women have able to get training for fresh water aquaculture.
7. 81% women have knowledge about provision of ICD's schemes.

CAUSES OF LACK OF AWARENESS AMONG THE WOMEN OF MISING COMMUNITY REGARDING PLANS AND SCHEMES OF PRI'S:

After investigation, the investigators found out some causes behind lack of awareness among the women of Mising Community Regarding Plans and Schemes of PRI's. The causes are –

1. Illiteracy and ignorance among the women.
2. Lack of awareness generating programmes conducted by the members of the panchayat, NGOs, local elites etc.
3. Lack of proper inspection concerning implementation of plans and scheme by PRI's.
4. Ignorance of accountability of the elected representatives to their electorate.
5. Unwillingness to implement the plans and schemes of PRI's by the members.
6. Lack of knowledge about different plans and schemes of PRI's among the women of Mising Community and their indifferent nature towards the same.

REMEDIAL MEASURES:

In the light of the above discussion following remedial measures have to be undertaken to create awareness among the women of Mising community regarding different plans and schemes of PRI's.

1. A wider and systematic survey should be done in the rural areas of Jorhat District and covering whole areas of Assam to find out the causes of lack of proper implementation of plans and schemes of PRI's.
2. Penalty should be imposed to those members of the Panchayat who do not provide the facilities of government to the rural people and women under the concerned Panchayat.
3. Awareness programmes should be arranged frequently in the villages regarding different facilities, plans and schemes of PRI's by the members of the Panchayats, NGO's, educated elites etc.

Conclusion:

Role of PRI's have been considered as the real reflection in terms of village development in India. As a small unit of Local Self Government, Panchayat plays the major role for the development of each sector in the villages. Plans and schemes of PRI's undertaken for women in the villages is significant. In our sample villages, it is our top priority to measure the level of awareness of the women in the said community. Socio-political awareness is also considered as the primary base of development. High level of awareness provides swift development of a society. Regarding the level of awareness our paper tries to cover up those Plans and Schemes have been implemented by the PRI's only. With this expression after investigation regarding the said matter the investigator assume that the activities of PRI's are praiseworthy. But non-active participation from the part of the elected representative and elite class of the society is refractory, which is being considered as the major hindrance of the democratic society. At the time of

investigations some relevant questions have been raised by the respondents that reveal their ignorance regarding plans and schemes undertaken by the Panchayats. Hence, government should take proper step for better enjoyment of the facilities provided by the PRI's to the villagers. A general conclusion can be derived regarding the awareness of the respondents from the study. The respondents are not free from some short of intellectual shortcomings viz lack of illiteracy, modern and updated knowledge etc. Therefore, we should take adequate measures, particularly from the governmental side to eliminate those shortcomings in order to make higher meaningful as regards to its awareness programmes. Modern scientific knowledge of any kinds might be accelerated their awareness.

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