

Lund University

Lund University Master of International Development and Management

May, 2011

Title of the paper:

PROCESS OF ACTIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF DALIT
WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

AN EXEMPLARY OF INCLUSIVE GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

Author: Sagar Zende

Supervisor: Axel Fredholm

Abstract

Conducted in Marathwada region of Maharashtra state, this study focused on process of active political participation and empowerment of Dalit women at local self government. Three questions guided the study, 1) what factors facilitate and/or restrain political participation of Dalit women at grassroots level? 2) What indicators show active political participation and empowerment of Dalit women? 3) What intervention strategies can be used for effective political participation of Dalit women? In-depth unstructured interview method was used for collecting qualitative data. The measure findings, factors facilitating political participation ranged from individual (Dalit woman herself) to the support systems like family, community, civil society, Dalit ideology, state machinery and legal mechanism. The restraining factors included individual status, political manoeuvring, corruption and proxy political representation, failure of the state machineries, ineffective training and failure of legal tool. The indicators of active political participation and empowerment showed their interrelatedness as active political participation means independent decision making and independence of decisions comes through empowerment. Intervention strategies for the state and civil society were further proposed on the grounds of the restraining factors emerged through the study. These strategies are also meant to direct facilitating factors to be more effective.

Keywords

[Dalit women, Political participation, Empowerment, India, Marathwada, Panchayat Raj]

Word count: 14,901

Glossary

Dalit vasti	:	Dalit locality
District Collector:		Administrative head of a district with quasi- judicial power
District Panchayat:		Highest panchayat tier in each state, with jurisdiction over all panchayat within a district
Dominant caste/s:		Those castes, irrespective of any religious affiliation, which are socially, politically and economically dominant from the perspective of Dalits. In most cases, everyone who is not Dalit in a village or town is dominant vis-a-vis Dalits.
Gram sabha:		Formal assembly of all citizens in village
Panchayat Raj Ministry:		A branch of the Government of India looking after the ongoing process of decentralisation and local governance in the State
Panchayat Raj:		Formal local self-governance system in India
Panchayat:		Community based management of local affairs which traditionally meant a council of 5 persons.
Reservations:		Quotas for Dalits allowing for increased representation in education, government jobs and political bodies
Sarpanch:		Elected president of a village panchayat
Tahsiladar:		Revenue office of block level
Talathi :		Revenue officer at village level
Village panchayat:		Council of formally elected representatives of a village or group of village

List of Acronyms

BDO: Block Development Officer

BPL: Below Poverty Line

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CHR: Campaign for Human Rights

MLA: Member of Legislative Assembly

MP: Member of Parliament

NCSCST: National Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OBC: Other Backward Class

PCR Act: Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955

PoA Act: Prevention of Atrocities (SC/ST) Act 1989

SC: Scheduled Caste, official term used for Dalit communities

SHG: Self-Help Group

ST: Scheduled Tribe, official term used for Tribal

ZP: Zilla Parishad (District Administrative office)

Table of Content

1 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF DALIT WOMEN	8
1.1 Dalit Woman: Dalit within Dalits.....	9
1.2 Rationale.....	10
1.3 Research Questions.....	10
1.4 Structure of the thesis.....	11
2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY	13
2.1 Political Participation Theory.....	13
2.2 Empowerment Theory.....	14
2.3 Relating Political Participation and Empowerment	16
2.4 Methodology.....	17
2.4.1 Sampling	17
2.4.2 Data collection.....	18
2.4.3 Area of Study	19
2.4.4 In-depth unstructured interviews.....	19
2.4.5 Interview with expertise/Key informants.....	20
2.4.6 Analysis and transcription of the interviews.....	20
2.4.7 Ethical consideration.....	20
2.4.8 Limitation of the Study.....	20
2.5 Conceptual Map of the overall study structure.....	22
3 PANCHAYAT RAJ IN INDIA	23
3.1 Balwant Rai Mehta Committee.....	23
3.2 Ashok Mehta committee.....	24
3.3 73rd Amendment and women’s entry in panchayat raj.....	25
3.4 Panchayat Raj in Maharashtra.....	25
3.5 73rd Constitutional Amendment provisions (Selected from Singhal, 2004:83-84).....	25
4 FACTORS FACILITATING & RESTRAINING ACTIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF DALIT WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT RAJ.....	27
4.1 Introduction.....	28
4.2 Factors Facilitating Active Political Participation of Dalit Women in Panchayat Raj.....	28
4.3 Factors Restraining	33

5 INDICATORS OF ACTIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & EMPOWERMENT.....	41
5.1 Indicators of active political participation.....	42
5.2 Indicators of Empowerment.....	44
6 INTERVENTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF DALIT WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT.....	47
7 CONCLUSION	52
REFERENCES	55
ANNEX: 1. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RESEARCHED.....	57
ANNEX: 2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS.....	58
ANNEX: 3. PROFILE OF RESEARCHED & KEY INFORMANTS.....	59
ANNEX: 4. MAPS OF MAHARASHTRA STATE & BEED DISTRICT	61

Foreword

There are many people whose support has been very valuable for this paper. First of all I would like to thank my supervisor Axel Fredholm who has been encouraging and supportive throughout the process. My sincere thanks are due to Agnes Andersson and Sanna Händén-Svensson for their coordinating role in the thesis and throughout the LUMID course. I also thank all my LUMID teachers and course mates whose inputs have been very significant.

In India during my field work, people at CHR and SPMM became a family. I owe my sincere gratitude to everybody in CHR and SPMM. All the CHR activists, community workers accompanied me have been very helpful. I am grateful to all the Dalit women who I have interacted with; their struggle for social justice is truly inspiring. I thank all the key informants and experts for devoting their valuable time for this study. Finally I thank my family and friends for their love and encouragement.

1 Political participation of Dalit women

Political participation of Dalits¹ meant a revolutionary idea in the colonised India during the 1920s. The idea came into being with the constant efforts of Dalit movement led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar², who became first Dalit figure to be politically active and who framed the constitution of India, with this concrete step Indian democracy came into being formally. Even though Dr. Ambedkar fought effortlessly to get equal rights for women, the caste society with its patriarchal traditions was not in favour of granting equal status to women. Dalit women were even further degraded because of their caste identity. As a result it took about 46 years after Indian independence for an Act on the political participation of women to pass. In 1992 the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment Act granted reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) as per their population proportion and 33 percent for women to participate in local politics. With this, women along with marginalised communities got the right to formally participate in the political processes at the local level.

After 19 years of the implementation of the Act it can be seen that the strengthening of grassroots democracy proves to be an effective mechanism to ensure citizens rights to formally involved in the decision making processes. One can argue about the effectiveness of the implementation and the results of the Act however having an Act in place itself is a hopeful thing.

In the caste ridden Indian society, villages are the basic units of exploitation. Therefore power to the grassroots could also mean power to the dominant castes of the village, which ensure the ‘so called’ order i.e. the caste hierarchy in the village. On the other hand the reservation provided by the 73rd and 74th Amendment for the marginalised sections proves to be a hopeful measure to make the village a democratic setting.

¹ Dalit literally means ‘broken to pieces’ or ‘downtrodden’ and it is the term now used to refer to those traditionally known as ‘outcastes’ or ‘untouchables’. This Marathi word is seen as a source of identity and pride and is, above all, the expression of a unified movement towards equality. http://www.hrfdl.org.in/defineing_dalit.html Further explained in details

² Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as *Babasaheb*, was one of the foremost leaders of modern India—in comparative terms, he was Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X rolled into one. He was a jurist, political leader, draughtsman of the Indian Constitution and a Buddhist revivalist. Born into an ‘untouchable’ family in 1891, armed with degrees from New York and London, Ambedkar dedicated his life to fighting caste discrimination legitimised by the Hindu religion.

In this paper I aim to explore the factors facilitating or restraining participation of Dalit women in rural panchayat raj. In the process I want to identify the indicators of empowerment of Dalit women through the process of political participation. After having spelt out the indicators I further endeavor to suggest intervention strategies for effective participation of Dalit women in panchayat raj. Through these lines enquires I focus on the Dalit women's political participation as a source for strengthening the grassroots democracy. Marathwada³ region of the State of Maharashtra serves as a case study for this paper.

1.1 Dalit Woman: Dalit within Dalits

Dalit women number almost half of India's 160 million Dalits, comprise about 16% of India's total female population, and 8% of the total population (Stephen, 2009: 1). There is a lack of perspective on the specific problems faced by Dalit women in the areas of education, employment, their social engagement and participation in public sphere. Stephen emphasises that the "experiences of suffering, exclusion and thrice-removedness i.e. isolation by virtue of gender, caste, and class" of Dalit women seldom get recognised (Stephen, 2009: 1).

A study by Oliver D'souza shows that fifty-one percent of Dalit women in rural areas and fifty-six percent of Dalit women in urban areas live below the poverty line (D'souza, 2009: 65). Dalit women are employed in an unorganised sector mostly. In rural India they work as landless labourers or bonded labourers, in the farms of the upper caste members of the village. Low education, poverty and the descent based work enumerated under their caste identity leads Dalit into degrading work, such as, manual scavenging and manually cleaning dry latrines. These inhuman practices destroy the dignity of a human being but Dalit women are further discriminated and are often victims of these lowly livelihood.

Caste induced rapes and sexual abuse of Dalit women by upper castes are very frequent. The 'Devadasi' system which has religious sanctity is a sexual slavery imposed on Dalit women. Even though it is banned, every year young Dalit girls are ritualized into prostitution in temples and after 'dedication' to the goddess the girls eventually end up in brothels (D'souza, 2009: 66).

The everyday discrimination of Dalit women is further marked by mental, emotional and physical violence. If they challenge these inequalities, this often results in beating up, rape, naked parading

³ The reasons for choosing Marathwada region are explained in the Methodology chapter. Marathwada region has a vibrant legacy of Dalit movement.

and tonsuring (ibid). The national crime record bureau report 2007 show the increase of rape against Dalit women by 10.8% since 2006. One of the possible reasons of increased crimes against Dalit women could be speculated as Dalit women's assertion in public life as well as assertion in reporting the cases. Having seen the magnitude of the problems specifically faced by Dalit women it is very important to study the experiences of Dalit women entering into public sphere.

1.2 Rationale

Following the magnitude of problem faced by Dalit women explained in the previous section, I will talk about rationale for choosing this topic for my research. My interest in the issue of Dalit women comes from many sources. First of all being a Dalit, I can identify that the specific issues of Dalit women are neglected by both, the Indian women's movement at large and the Dalit movement. Dalit women face multiple burdens of discrimination and stigma. The study of their experiences in public sphere through political participation will bring forward this specificity of Dalit women's experience.

Secondly, experience of working with civil society organisations on gender justice and rights of Dalit women during my under-graduate studies as a part of the field work, internship with Campaign for Human Rights (CHR⁴) drew my attention to Dalit women's issues more prominently. During the process I met Dalit women activists from rural Maharashtra who work at the grass-roots. I saw the constant problems they faced, as they worked for caste and gender justice thereby challenged the systemic oppression. I therefore wanted to document the experiences of Dalit women who enter the public sphere for the first time through formal means of political participation. In summary, the need to study Dalit women's experiences of political participation arises from my own understanding and experiences that should develop further. With this premise I form research questions of my study.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions for the study:

⁴ CHR reaches out to around one million people in the state of Maharashtra and has established network with 18 states in India. It works primarily on Dalit human rights and gender justice. CHR started its work primarily intervening in atrocities cases of individuals and community.

1. What factors facilitate and/or restrain political participation of Dalit women at grassroots level?
2. What are the indicators of active political participation and empowerment of Dalit women?
3. What are the intervention strategies for effective participation of Dalit women in panchayat raj?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This paper has seven chapters. Introduction chapter of the paper gives a general overview of Dalit women's issues and their political participation followed by rationale and research questions of the paper.

The second chapter deals with the conceptual framework and methodology. The theories explained in this chapter are Political participation and Empowerment. In the methodology I have explained the process of data collection. I have based my study on the field work in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. I have conducted interviews of Dalit women involved in grassroots politics.

The third chapter 'Panchayat Raj System in India' gives historical overview of Panchayat Raj system in India and the debates around it. Further this chapter enumerates provisions under 73rd constitutional amendment which are instrumental in giving rights of political participation to the marginalised.

The fourth chapter deals with analysis, here I discuss the first of my research questions i.e. factors facilitating and restraining the effective political participation of Dalit women. Various levels of the factors are developed and explained in this analysis, this starts from individual level to the societal and structural level.

Fifth chapter discusses the second research question i.e. the indicators of active political participation and empowerment. It shows correlation between the two and moves further to explain impact of active political participation on the empowerment of women ranging from Individual level to community level.

Chapter six discusses the final research question i.e. it puts forth the intervention strategies for effective political participation of Dalit women in panchayat.

The last chapter winds up the research by summarizing the main arguments on the basis of three research questions. It highlights the major findings and the theoretical discussion. The paper ends by proposing scope for further research.

Having explained the premise of the study, the specific interest in conducting the research, the research questions and the overall structure of the paper, the next chapter elucidates the conceptual framework and methodology.

2 Conceptual framework and Methodology

This chapter explains the conceptual framework employed for the study. Political participation and Empowerment are the key concepts and theories for the study which are explained here. The chapter further charts out methodology I employed for the research.

2.1 Political Participation Theory

From a socio-psychological standpoint, Warr and Wall define participation with the terms like ‘involvement’, and ‘influence’ (Chell, 1985: 1, cited from Singla, 2007: 63). A working definition put together by Oakley and Marsden (Singla, 2007: 62) lay down following features of participation: voluntary efforts, sensitization, response, and involvement in decision-making processes, programme implementation, sharing benefits and evaluation, assessment of need, initiative and control. Participation is very important aspect in the social life. It relates to the involvement of people of diverse backgrounds pursuing a particular or common objective, though people may have different reasons to participate (Singla, 2007:63).

The motive of women to contest a local-body election could be to gain respect, status, popularity, satisfaction, or the opportunity to solve the issues affecting the village. There can also be monetary expectations, the scope for breaking away from traditional roles, or even the possibility to get away from the household work. These reasons could be categorized into three types: existence, relatedness, and growth as explained by Alderfer (Robbins, 2002: 161, Singla 2007: 65). The ‘existence’ needs could be categorised as psychological as well as material. ‘Relatedness’ could be connected to the interpersonal issues, such as esteem and belongingness. ‘Growth’ denotes one’s personal development (ibid). The motives of political participation of Dalit women go a step further because of the intersectional identity they possess. Along with the individual-centric motives listed above, motives shared by Dalit women relate to their identity and social assertion, claiming human rights, capturing public sphere, political inclusion to advocate community interest, acquiring power, dealing with cultural oppression and intervening in social problems. This could be explained through the theory of political participation.

Faulks (1999: 143-145) in political sociology, refers to Tocqueville (1945), who argued that citizens willingness to fully participate in the governance is essential for a thriving civil society. This participation is an expression of citizenship, which is crucial to engendering a shared

political culture. Faulks defines political participation as “the active engagement by individuals and groups with the governmental processes that affect their lives. This consist involvement in decision-making and acts of opposition. He categorizes active engagement into two ways, conventional and unconventional. Conventional political participation means, voting, standing for election and campaigning. The unconventional political participation entail two forms, legitimate, i.e. to raise concerns of citizens by signing petitions, attending peaceful demonstrations, or illegal violent protest and refusal to pay taxes.

Faulks gives analysis of three theories of political participation, democratic elitists, rational choice theory and the third is participatory theories of democracy. Democratic elitists and rational choice theory are instrumentalist theories of participation and so they limit the notion of political participation. Elitist theorist sees political participation only as a mean to maintain political authority. Rational choice theory takes minimalists approach and sees political participation as a tool to further people’s own political interest. He argues that participatory theories of democracy are the most relevant for political participation as it sees political involvement as developmental and “political participation means to achieve more important ends” (Faulks, 1999:145). The participatory theories of democracy involve the active civil society and informed citizenry for inclusive democratisation and effective governance. In this paper I have chosen to focus on the participatory theories of democracy approach as functioning local self government strengthens the grassroots democracy and therefore it is one of the main components in enhancing participatory democracy.

Dalit women come from a marginalised segment of Indian society; their identity and history of movement for emancipation encourage them to participate in politics. Not only because it is a rational choice to participate but also for wider achievements through aforementioned motives. Dalit women I studied are ‘legitimate unconventional participants’ who participate to influence government decisions directly or indirectly to fulfil their aforementioned motives.

2.2 Empowerment Theory

Activists of the Black Panther Movement in the US first used the term “empowerment” in the 1960s for political mobilization (Aithal, n.d.1)⁵. Empowerment entered the development lexicon

⁵ (http://www.skk.uit.no/WW99/papers/Aithal_Vathsala.pdf)

some three decades ago and has been widely used since then. Power could be attained through several different sources. The dominant castes in India have legitimised their monopoly over power, and thus Dalit women are rendered powerless. This powerlessness may not be observed by the dominant caste male members and at times also by Dalit women, due to their socialisation in patriarchal biases. Kabeer's argument suggests, earlier analyses of empowerment focused on powerlessness, portraying Dalit women powerless comes from these earlier work. She moves beyond and emphasise there is no absolute absence of power as 'those who appear to have little power are still able to resist, subvert and transform situation in their lives' (Kabeer, 2003:224). In this sense Dalit women even though termed powerless in fact have potentials and possibilities to resist, to subvert and to even transform their lives.

According to Kabeer the concept of empowerment should be understood through the term 'power'. She writes that "one way of thinking about power is in terms of the ability to make choices" (Kabeer, 2006:14). She further states "to be disempowered means to be denied choice", and empowerment would therefore mean, "the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability" (ibid). For Kabeer empowerment entails change (ibid). This process of change in my research is assessed through documenting the experiences of Dalit women's political participation and impact of it on their development.

Kabeer emphasizes that the concept of Empowerment can be explored through three interrelated dimensions, agency, resources, and achievements. Agency relates to the processes of making choices and putting them into effect. It is central concept of empowerment as it relates to the ability to make choices (Kabeer, 2006: 14). The resources "are the medium through which agency is exercised" (ibid) and achievements mean the outcome of agency. Kabeer bases her analysis of empowerment on these three dimensions. She stresses that agency in the context of empowerment does not only relate to making choices actively but also challenging the power relations in the process. Therefore Kabeer terms agency as 'transformative agency' through which the process of empowerment takes place by challenging the power relations.

In my research it is very important to study the empowerment process with the perspective of transformative agency. In order to assess the empowerment of Dalit women participating in grassroots politics I need to look not only at their decision making ability but also how and of

what levels of power are they able to challenge while making decisions. The factors that enable an individual to challenge power relations could be self-confidence, awareness of self image of women and it relates to them being educated. The societal structures play crucial role in women's nurturing, and keeping them ignorant, thereby naturalising and routinizing the marginalisation. Therefore empowerment of these marginalised groups especially women through democratic means will lead not only to their individual empowerment but also the community.

2.3 Relating Political Participation and Empowerment

Kabeer in her article talks about the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), on gender equality and women's empowerment, she explores the concept of women's empowerment and highlights ways in which the indicators associated with this goal on education, employment, and political participation can contribute to women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2006: 13). Kabeer claims that political participation is one of the essential "resources" to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Political participation of Dalit women gives them opportunity to enhance their decision making ability and in the process they learn to challenge the power relations as they become aware of their political rights. This process is the process of empowerment.

The following definition by Singh and Titi (1995 n.d in Aithal, V.) identify the elements/necessary conditions for empowerment amongst the others. Both the necessary conditions hint onto political participation.

- Participation to decision-making processes by all people, in particular women and Youth
- Local self-reliance, autonomy in the decision-making processes of communities at village level, and direct participatory democracy in the larger process if representative governance.

An indicator developed by The Human Development Report 1995 (UNDP) Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) measures political participation and decision-making power, economic participation and command over resources (HDI, 1995:73). Here also political participation becomes an indicator to measure empowerment. Thus political participation and empowerment both become interrelated and 'means and end' for each other.

2.4 Methodology

This section on methodology brings out the processes through which data is collected, collated, analyzed and interpreted. This is aimed at increasing the reliability of the study for the further validation as research is performed in order to be used. I employ case study design for this research. My research design and methods take epistemological and ontological stance, inspired by interpretivism and constructionism. It therefore believes that as a social researcher I should apply a strategy that respects difference between human beings and object of natural sciences. This means I should focus on the subjective meaning of the social actions (Bryman, 2008:15-19). The “social phenomena and their meanings continually being accomplished by social actors, it implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interactions but that they are in constant state of revision” (Bryman,2008:15-19). Therefore each interpreter’s understanding of this world gives it its meaning.

The study primarily adopts a qualitative approach as it helps to understand the subject of study through the experiences of the Dalit women. After thinking considerably, I decided that the method should be suitable to the research questions I intend to address. As the research questions focus on Dalit women’s experiences the best method was to record their experiences through in-depth interviews. I intentionally kept the interviews unstructured as it being qualitative in nature, provides greater breadth. In-depth unstructured interviews allow researcher to explore a theme without being restricted to a series of questions.

2.4.1 Sampling

The purposive (non-probability) sampling was utilized based on focus of my study to document and assess the experiences of Dalit women’s political participation in rural panchayat. Selection of Dalit women involved in grassroots politics was intentional and directed. CHR and Savitribai Phule Mahila Mandal (SPMM)⁶ activists helped me identify data⁷.

The sample was based on following interconnecting criteria.

- Study focused on the third tier of the panchayat raj institution i.e. village panchayat.
- Newly elected SC women President at village level.

⁶ SavitriBai Phule Mahila Mandal- a civil society organization(Sister organization of CHR) works on the issue of gender justice and women’s empowerment through self help group

⁷ Eighteen Dalit women in total were identified from three blocks of Beed district out of ten blocks and one block of Latur district. I selected ten out of eighteen Dalit women based on sampling objectivity and representation of differences within Dalit women. In addition, their diverse experiences of political participation were considered.

- SC women who had been Ex-Presidents.
- SC women serving more than one term as a president.
- SC woman who tried but did not succeed in accessing post in panchayat.
- Cases where No-confidence motion was exercised on the SC women presidents.
- Cases where abuse, beating up and atrocity inflicted.
- Success-stories of active participation.

Finally, ten Dalit women were selected; nine from Beed District and one from Latur district of Marathwada region⁸. Though the sample was purposive, I balanced the proportion within SCs by having equal number of women from Mahar and Mang castes (Major SCs in Maharashtra). Interviewees with wide range of age in this study were included.

2.4.2 Data collection

I have collaborated with SPMM (Beed District, Marathwada region, Maharashtra) during my job as a program manager in 2008-09 and during my internship I have done a field work in SPMM. I identified potential to be researched from the selected blocks of Beed District after consultation with Manisha Tokle (The founding secretary of SPMM) and Ashok Tangade (National secretary of CHR). They provided me contacts of the field activists⁹ of CHR who handled these blocks. Manisha, Ashok and field activists gave me enriched information based on their field work experiences. Their guidance and discussions after interviews have been important during my research process. Their interpretations of the cases gave me crystallized views on the research concern.

CHR field activists from respective blocks accompanied me for every interview. They worked as field informants. Their good rapport with women, understanding of the region and interpretations of cultural meanings made my task easier. My own background being a Dalit was helpful in establishing rapport, getting support from women and in gaining their trust.

⁸ Profiles of the interviewees are given in the Annex 3

⁹ Names of the field activists are: Ashatai, Sitatai, Mahadev Khandagale, Dhule bhau. They work with CHR since last 10 years in the area of protection of civil and political rights of Dalits in Marathwada region of Maharashtra.

2.4.3 Area of Study

Marathwada region of the Maharashtra state was identified based on its characteristics. First, Marathwada region is one of the most backward, feudal and atrocity prone regions of the Maharashtra state. Second is the vibrant history of Dalit movement and violence against Dalits in the region. Lastly and importantly, the right based work of Human rights organizations such as CHR, SPMM for the Dalits and women's rights. CHR has been working on the issue of Dalit rights in Marathwada for past 18 years. As CHR and SPMM's work was initiated from the Beed district of Marathwada region, I focused on Beed district¹⁰.

2.4.4 In-depth unstructured interviews

Interviews were recorded on the digital voice recorder. Sommer and Sommer describe the characteristics of in-depth unstructured interviews. "In an *unstructured* interview the main goals are to explore all the alternatives in order to pick up information, to define areas of importance that might not have been thought ahead of time, and to allow the respondent to take the lead to a greater extent. (Sommer, B. Sommer, R. 1997:108). As the study focuses on the experiences of Dalit women it was important to document everything women said and this allowed them to take the lead of interview. Even though I guided and directed the interviews I most of the time focused on their sharing without interrupting them.

Sommer further adds about the way unstructured interview is conducted. The researcher has a general topic in mind also specific questions on the topic but with no predetermined order or specified wording to the questions. An unstructured interview has scope for improvisation if researcher desires (*Ibid*).

This is true in case of my research, after every interview, the questions got sharper. I maintained notes during and after every interview that helped me in data analysis and to narrow down the specificity of study. The documentation of women's experiences was backed by notes. Suggestions from the field workers were incorporated in the notes after every interview.

¹⁰ According to the first hand investigation and identification of cases, I selected the following blocks in Beed and Latur district. Beed, Keij, Ambajogai, Majalgaon blocks of Beed district and Nilanga block of Latur district. A special case of No-confidence motion that went to Supreme Court of India with the help of CHR was based in Latur district, thus I included Latur district for this exceptional case.

2.4.5 Interview with expertise/Key informants

I consulted my ideas and paper with the experts. I interviewed key informants to gather their experiences from the field, like civil society activists and researcher working on the Dalit issues¹¹. For this purpose, I visited the organizations of respective key informants. CHR and SPMM activists were interviewed during my fieldwork in Beed.

2.4.6 Analysis and transcription of the interviews

The study is based on qualitative analysis. The important parts of the interview i.e. answers related to the research questions were transcribed. The quotes used in this paper are literal translations. The concepts used in the analysis emerged from the interviews and they were codified during the analysis. Along with the interviews and personal insights, the analysis is based on the theoretical framework and secondary literature.

2.4.7 Ethical consideration

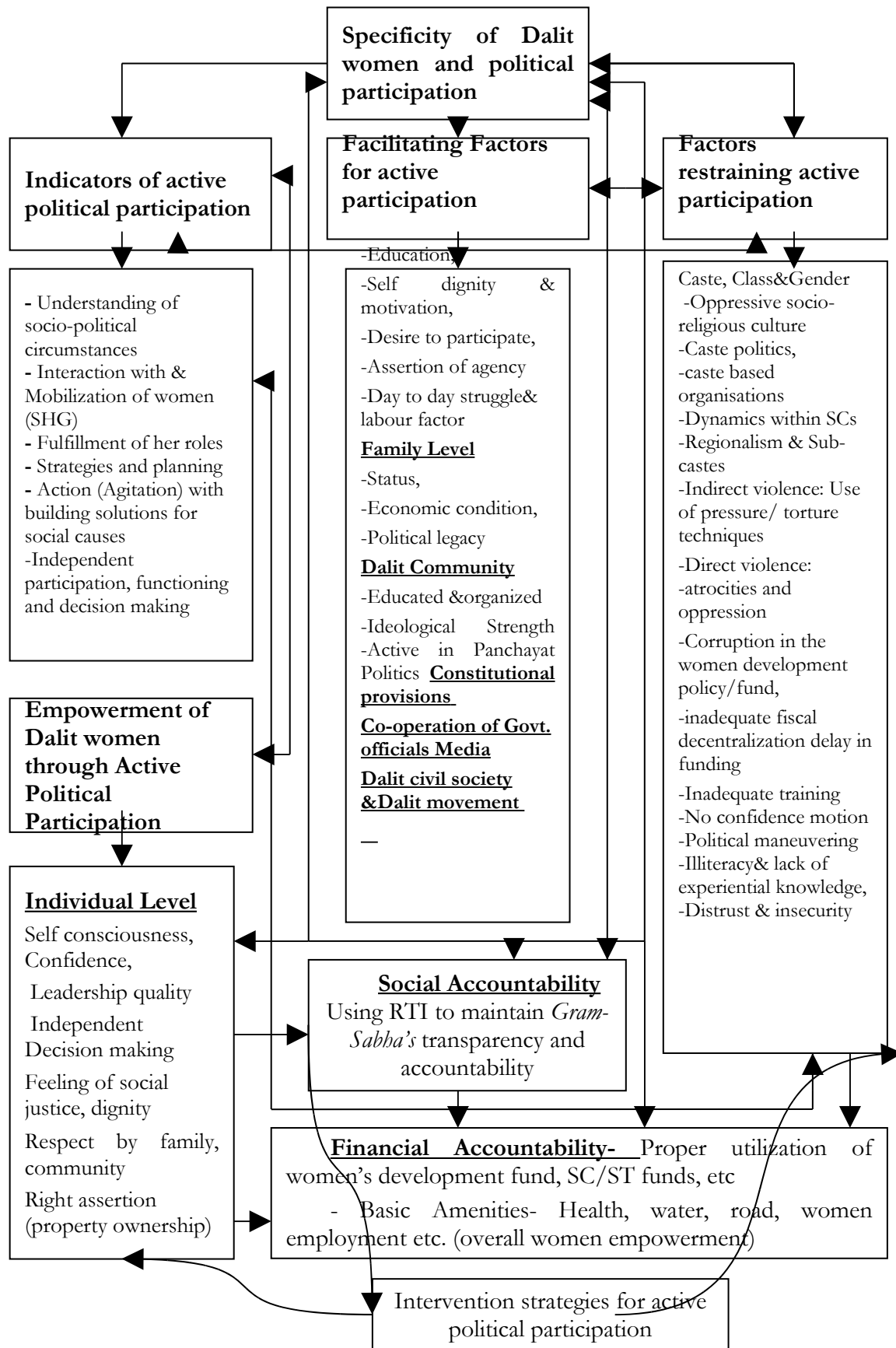
Interviewees were fully informed about the purpose of my study before conducting the interviews. I assured them that the interviews would be used only for my study purpose. I asked for their permission for using the recorder. The informed consent is necessary as talking about the village politics involves risk. I also asked them if they wanted me to keep anonymity. Most of them were fine about using their real names thus the names of the interviewees in the study are not changed. Where interviewees asked to maintain confidentiality, the name change is indicated in the bracket.

2.4.8 Limitation of the Study

The study is conducted in the specific context i.e. where the Dalit organisations and Dalit movements are very vibrant. Marathwada region has a strong legacy of Dalit movement and civil society organisation like CHR and SPMM which make experiences of Dalit women very specific. Findings of the same study conducted in Western Maharashtra, Northern Maharashtra or out of Maharashtra state could be very different. Even though this study is very unique and informative about the political processes in the lives of Dalit women in Marathwada region, this study cannot be generalised beyond this particular context.

¹¹ List of key informants is attached in Annex

Conceptual Map 1: Overall study structure



Source: Evolved from data

2.5 Conceptual Map of the overall study structure

Conceptual map above draws an overall picture of the study and explains concepts in the research and lines of enquiry. The study looks at Political participation of Dalit women at local self government under the Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. This study explores and analyses the experiences of Dalit women participating in village panchayat.

The study looks at the restraining and facilitating factors for active political participation of Dalit women in rural panchayat raj. It examines the impact of political participation on the empowerment of Dalit women. This is done by documenting the indicators of active political participation and indicators showing the empowerment. The indicators are developed from the qualitative data collected. As the conceptual map shows, the indicators enhance the active political participation that further leads to Dalit woman's empowerment and increased accountability both at social and fiscal level. The factors restraining Dalit women's active participation further lead to the development of intervention strategies protecting their rights. The effective implementation of these strategies will result in active participation and overall empowerment of Dalit women.

In the previous chapter I have elucidated the conceptual framework, the methodology and the overall structure of the study. The upcoming chapter will talk about the panchayat raj in India and emergence of 73rd Amendment Act.

3 Panchayat Raj in India

In most parts of India the panchayat system traditionally was based on the 'caste panchayat'¹² monitored by the dominant caste male members. Women and the lower caste didn't have place to voice their grievances nor could they take part in decision making in the caste panchayat.

During British rule in India, in 19th century the local self government (decentralised government) was introduced first in town and later in villages. In year 1869, the British institutionalised these local bodies into quasi-official committees, but inadequate financial resources and provincial governments' oppositions made them fragile and ineffective (Mathew, 1995:2). There were attempts to revive Local governments by few British viceroys such as Lord Ripon. He led the foundation of modern local government through his resolution in 1882 (ibid). There were several legislations passed thereafter to democratise the local institutions.

3.1 Balwant Rai Mehta Committee

The initiation of community development programme in 1952 established institutionalised Panchayat Raj. Objectives of community development programme were to promote self-help and self-reliance amongst rural people and to generate direct process of integrated social, economical and cultural change through transformation in social and economical life of village (Mathew, 1995:8). Recommendations by the Balwant Rai Mehta committee in 1959 observed lack of people's participation and suggested a set of institutional arrangements. The three-tier system was thus introduced to organise and manage the rural development activities and to make participation meaningful and effective.

The committee on the status of women in the year 1974 strongly recommended the establishment of statutory women's panchayat at village level. This initiative aimed at removal of the cultural and social inhibitions and ensure initiative of women's participation through the exclusively women's bodies. Recommendations were proposed for the transitional measures to break the traditional attitudes in rural society. It was envisioned to be an integral part of panchayat raj system to claim autonomy and resources of their own for management and administration of welfare and development programmes for women and children.

¹² Traditional Council of 5 upper caste male member who enjoy high status and power in a village

3.2 Ashok Mehta committee

Ashok Mehta committee was set up again to revive the panchayat raj in the 1977 during the Janata Government¹³ at the centre. It recommended the creation of two-tier systems, Zila Parishad at district level and Mandal Panchayat for cluster of villages (Mathew, 1995:9). It was evident from the official documents that between 1957 when Balwant Mehta Committee report was released and the constitution of Ashok Mehta committee in 1957 the proportion of women in panchayat raj was very low (Santha 1995, in Singla, P.2007:42).

Both the Balwant Rai Mehta committee and the Ashok Mehta committee gave less emphasis on women's participation. The former provided for the co-option of two women members in the constitution of panchayat, one from general category and one from SC/ST. Only two women were co-opted/nominated (Selected unanimously) for their reserved seats alongside the male members in the group of 15 to 19 members. Besides gaining a symbolic space, women couldn't exercise participatory rights. They were still largely under-represented. The co-opted few, participated as they were relatives of the rural elites thus biased selection was symbolic. They were kept out of the day to day functioning of the panchayat raj.

Co-option or nomination of women was not democratic, and served as a drawback. Dalit women, if they got elected would mostly be the employees of the dominant caste members and their economic dependency would hinder their potential to be assertive. It still meant protecting the interests of the dominant political and social groups as if women were not capable of running the village government and they were treated as temporary members in local politics. The later phase of reviving decentralised government arrived with 73rd Constitutional amendment.

¹³ Janata Government: Formed to oppose the state emergency (1975–1977) **Janata Party** was an alliance of Indian political parties.

3.3 73rd Amendment and women's entry in panchayat raj

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act enacted on 24th of April 1992 provided an opportunity for involving women, SCs and STs in mainstream political, social and economic decision making process. The 73rd Amendment provided 33 percent reservation for women. Article 243 D of the constitution provided reservation for SCs and STs in all tiers and levels of panchayat in proportion to their population in the region. Following the provisions of 73rd Amendment state Governments amended their State Panchayat Raj Act.

3.4 Panchayat Raj in Maharashtra

State of Maharashtra was founded on 1st May 1960. The three tier panchayat set-up is functioning in the state on the basis of following two state enactments passed in 1958 and 1961 respectively. Namely, the Mumbai village panchayat Act, 1958 and The Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Act, 1961 (Singhal, C.2004:83).

Panchayat raj set up was functioning in Maharashtra as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment of the constitution for over a period of 30 years prior to the 73rd Constitution Amendment. The mandatory changes by 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1994 were of minor in nature for Maharashtra state. These were incorporated in the existing system by Amendments in state legislation in April, 1994 (*ibid*). The Amendment Act followed the mandatory provisions of 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

3.5 73rd Constitutional Amendment provisions (Selected from Singhal, 2004:83-84)

- a) Panchayats will be institutions of self-Government.
- b) Gram Sabha: Mandatory village meetings.
- c) There are fixed term of 5 years for the three tier of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- d) State election and finance commission is formulated.
- e) The reservation for SC, ST and women were already existed the following are the specific provision stipulated for the reservation for the members and chair persons in the PRIs.
 - i. Reservation to SCs, STs as per their proportion of population one third of these seats shall be reserved for the women belonging to these groups.

- ii. One third of the total number of seats (including the number of seats reserved belonging to SCs, STs and backward classes) to be filled in by direct election shall be reserved for the women
- iii. 27 percent seats shall be reserved for the backward classes; one-third shall be reserved for women in this category
- iv. The reserved seats in PRIs will be allotted rotation.

These provisions make ground for my study as Dalit women have entered the politics largely because of the reservation provided by 73rd amendment.

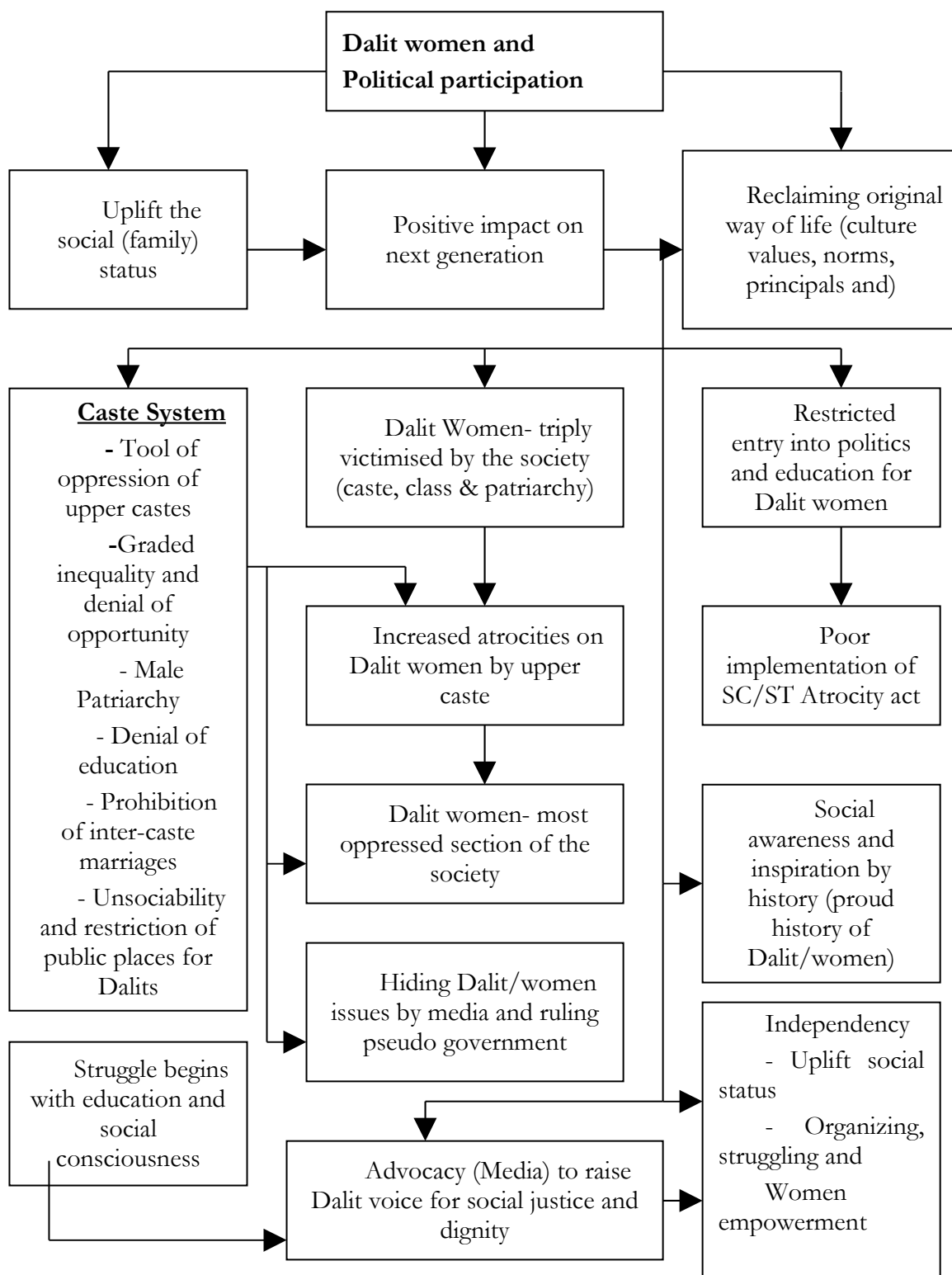
Below are the Innovative features of Panchayati Raj system in Maharashtra (Singhal, 2004:83-84)

- i. Member of Legislative Assembly and Member of Parliament don't have any representation in Zilla Parishad
- ii. District collector has no role to play in the working of Zilla Parishad
- iii. The term of tenure of ZP chairperson and chairman of various committees is two and half year from March 2000
- iv. There is provision to replace chairperson with two- third majority from March 2000

The provisions by the 73rd Amendment Act enactment are a major step towards women's empowerment. Effective implementation of these provisions would fulfil the goal of inclusive democracy. There are quantitative studies to evaluate effectiveness of Act. These studies focused women or SCs, STs. Dalit women were either studied as a category in women or in SCs, STs. There are very few studies done exclusively on Dalit women's experiences. This qualitative study therefore is a stepping stone for further exploration for developmental research.

4 Factors Facilitating & Restraining Active Political Participation of Dalit Women in Panchayat Raj

Conceptual Map 2: Facilitating & Restraining Factors



4.1 Introduction

The conceptual map above charts out following chapter. It talks about the factors facilitating and factors restraining the active political participation of Dalit women in panchayat. These range from Individual level to societal, cultural level. Below are the factors facilitating women's active participation in panchayat. These factors evolved from field data.

4.2 Factors Facilitating Active Political Participation of Dalit Women in Panchayat Raj

a) Individual Level

i) Motive to participate:

“Women get the benefit of the participation, not only in material sense but also confidence i.e. psychological level. Material gain is also very important because with this, people get to know that the woman has succeeded. When she gets success her confidence gets boosted and she gets experience how to win. With this experience she develops psyche of winner. Ideas, strategies, experience is very important wealth than anything else. ‘Women want to win the world’ therefore they want to access their known rights and further they want to claim the rights” (Panchal, 71)

As explained in the political participation theory, chapter 3, the motives for women to participate in local body election could be to benefit something like status, monetary benefits or for larger good of society. Dalit women's specificity motivates them to participate in politics for claiming their rights. In this process material benefits, status and success encourage them to be independent and creative in decision making.

ii) Education:

“I have studied till 10th grade and that is why I dint let them make me a mere puppet. Because of my education I was more confident. What was the use of me getting elected if they would rule and make me a namesake president? I said this wouldn't work with me, Babasaheb (Dr. Ambedkar) has given us this path, and he has strengthened us to live like a Tiger and not like a scapegoat.” (Lata Jogdand, 40)

Education has been a foremost priority in Dalit communities in Maharashtra due to the legacy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar i.e. 'Educate, Organise and Agitate'. Educated Dalit women assert themselves through many ways, asking question against the repressive structures. All

interviewees responded enthusiastically about their education. Even if it is primary school education they feel proud that they can read and write. This is a positive factor that enables them to participate actively in panchayat. They question about budget to the panchayat secretary. They commute alone to the town and to the Block Development Office.

Bharati Shirsat, a young active president has maintained a file of her documents since her assuming the panchayat office. The documents contain all the government resolutions, decisions passed under her presidency, the complaints she has made against the illegal alcohol shops, the schemes she has implemented and also her news clippings and pictures.

i) Willingness to participate and assert her agency

Bharati Shirsat has worked as an announcer on state broadcasting Radio; her husband is a freelance journalist and runs a weekly magazine. In the beginning she was skeptical of joining politics. She was asked by her father- in-law and husband to stand for election.

“Politics is like lottery, you have to master the skills of poker-face to sustain there. But when I gave it a thought, I said why not know what it really is. And it’s been two years I have seen many things and learned a lot in the process, for a Dalit middle-class to take up such a job is very hard.” (Bharati Shirsat, 27)

Bharati closed down an illegal alcohol shop in the village. She exposed corruption in the Public Distribution System (PDS)¹⁴ in the village shop owned by an upper caste for 25 years.

Most of Women I met came into panchayat politics because there was reservation, their husbands asked them to or villagers approached them. They gradually developed willingness to participate and even some of them took charge of decision making in the process.

b) Family

Family and Family members play a very significant role for woman’s active participation or they can even restrain her participation by pressurizing her.

“I was encouraged to study even after my marriage, I am learning basic computer now. My husband got me a book ‘Panchayat Adhinyam Kayada’ (Panchayat Act)’ when I got elected.”(Shila Sarawade, 26)

¹⁴ Public Distribution System: Subsidies Food Grain distribution by Government

Dalit women expressed that their family status in the village had enabled them to participate in the village politics. In some cases there was acceptance for the family by the village when a family member is government employee. Also it was seen, if the family member had been politically active or had legacy of politics in the family this helped in women's active political participation.

Lata Jogdand's husband is working in state transportation. She has been a President for last two years. She says villagers suggested her name because her husband has a good reputation,

"First one year went fine but when I asked vice-president regarding the budget for school-mid-day meal, he changed his attitude towards me. Since then there would be small clashes in the panchayat I would not sign the documents that I thought weren't proper. This made them even angry and they beat me up one evening." (Lata Jogdand, 40)

Above mentioned cases show varied factors of family that work as a facilitating factor. Along with family there are even other factors that affect political participation that we see from Lata Jogdand's case. Family reputation doesn't save her from humiliation as woman and as a Dalit. (Case is further elaborated in other relevant points)

c) Dalit Community

i) Majority/Strong and active Dalit community

When I asked Shila Sarwade about caste-conflicts in village she noted the strength and militancy of Dalit community.

She says, "Since we are in majority I got elected even when my ward was reserved for O.B.C. our community is very active in the village, we organize Dr.Ambedkar Birth Anniversary with a lot of enthusiasm. The procession is taken from the village to Dalit vasti and we never had any troubles from the dominant castes." (Shila Sarwade, 26)

Atrocities and subjugation takes place where Dalit are minority. On the socio-cultural grounds, Dalit culture is sidelined and their existence is rejected. At political ground being minority makes them further vulnerable. Nonetheless in those villages where they are in majority, there is less scope for their subjugation, also Dalit community is increasingly getting educated that

strengthens them further. Therefore most of the time strong Dalit community becomes facilitating factor for Dalit women's political participation.

ii) Encouragement from the community

Shivananda, *"I have support from my community. I remember the day I became President the whole Dalit vasti was celebrating. They knew I will fulfill their expectations."* (Shivananda Waghmare, 35)

There has been monopoly of dominant caste people over the political system. Political decisions at village panchayat influence the life of people in the village. Long standing monopoly has always deprived Dalits out of the benefit of development. There is inbuilt sense of victimization amongst the deprived group. Therefore Dalit take reservation as an opportunity to break this dominance by participating in decision making through political reservation and active participation. Dalits from the community and other likeminded people support and encourage Dalit women to make use of her political positions that also determines the life of the people in the community.

d) Constitutional provisions

Reservation ensured by 73rd Amendment is a foremost facilitating factor as it is a legal protection for the marginalized. The Act provides opportunity and a space for Dalit women to participate. Out of 10 women I interviewed 9 participated in panchayat raj when their constituency was reserved for SCs. Gaya Awhad was unanimously voted by her village as a President.

e) Cooperation from Government officials/ Bureaucrats

"We all women panchayat member went to the panchayat Samiti with pots in our hands to protest. We dint have a water tank in our village; the river was very far, even after several applications the funds for water tank weren't getting released. After this march to the panchayat Samiti, I hardly had any problem to meet the B.D.O. he became very supportive." (Gaya Awhad, 49)

Due to the rigid bureaucratic structure, there is general apathy about the Government officials amongst people. Support from bureaucrats in Panchayat would be a facilitating factor for Dalit women's participation. Manisha Tokle says officials cannot neglect Dalit women who are active

as the consequences of negligence would be harsh on them. This fear from the legal protection can also work for the bureaucrats to be attentive of Dalit women's issues.

f) Strength developed by Dalit civil society organizations

To Facilitate and protect Dalit women's development, civil society organizations have important stake. CHR and SPMM are Dalit civil society organizations in Marathwada region. SPMM followed steps of CHR and started mobilizing Dalit women through Self Help Groups and Gender sensitization training to women and Dalit men. Strategies employed by SPMM emerge as facilitating factor for Dalit women's participation. CHR and SPMM involve stakeholders like Panchayat secretary to guide and train Dalit woman about budgetary issues. They work as pressure group for government to act in the benefit of Dalit women.

g) Ideological strength gained by the Dalit movement

The ideological strength gained by Dalit movement and embracement of Buddhism becomes a facilitating factor and encourages women to stand for their rights. Involvement in the movement also has spread the awareness amongst Dalit population about education, industrialization, urbanization, respecting and believing the constitutional way for getting justice against exploitation. People believe in and assert their rights through ballot. Most of the women I spoke would talk proudly about Dr. Ambedkar's efforts to uplift Dalit and marginalized masses. They sing songs of the glorious past of the struggle. Women often told me their families have renounced Hinduism and superstitious practices that enslave them. Lata Jogdand says her family follows Buddha's path and Ambedkar's message of 'Educate, Unite, and Agitate'.

These were the factors that emerged as facilitating factors in the process of active participation and empowerment of Dalit women I interviewed. These facilitating factors start from Individual's agency and self, then broaden to family, community, village, the administration, government machinery, Constitutional provision, Dalit civil society and media to the Ideology gained from the socio-cultural struggle by the Dalits. Having explained the facilitating factors, I will now talk about the factors restraining Dalit women's active political participation.

4.3 Factors Restraining

a) Individual level

i) Illiteracy/ lack of knowledge or experiential knowledge

“I was asked to put a thumb impression on a form. I am illiterate; I can’t handle everything as skillfully as my husband does it. He participates or I, it is the same” (Gaya Patole, approximately 45)

Ex-president of the Mhasapur-Jawale village never visited her panchayat. When I asked villagers’ the name of president; they would take a man’s name. I was puzzled and asked “wasn’t it a woman president in this village”. They would casually say “yes but her Malak¹⁵ (husaband) handles the panchayat so you should meet him”.

My meeting with president Sushila was very difficult as she did not speak anything for first 15 minutes. Then told she didn’t feel the need of going and participating in Panchayat as she was never interested in becoming a president.

“My husband took care of the work in Panchayat. There was a reservation for Dalit women and my husband filled my name in. I haven’t even once visited the gram-panchayat I don’t feel I should be doing it either as my husband does it all. There isn’t a difference if he does it or I. He is educated what will I illiterate say in the panchayat. (Sushila, 30-35)

Both cases of Sushila and Gaya show lack of education makes one submissive, non-participating. They become carrier of caste- based oppression as well as patriarchy. They allow themselves to become dummy’s as they think low of their own potentials. Lack of education leads to low self esteem. Women actually start believing that they are good for nothing.

ii) Proxy political participation

73rd Amendment provided the reservation to include women, SCs and STs in local politics. However a limitation of the Amendment is that there is no clause to protect the right of compulsory participation of the candidate that gets elected. The marginalized section for which the reservation is ensured has to play a dummy in most of the occasion. In some cases women

¹⁵ Malak Literally means owner in Marathi. It is commonly used in rural Maharashtra to address husband

become fully proxies. My interviews also revealed that some of the interviewees were not allowed to take decisions on fiscal matters even if they were participating in meetings and questioning. They were partial proxies. This is one of the challenging factors that restrain Dalit women's active political participation.

b) Family

i) Family pressure

All the researched women told me that they didn't have any trouble from family and that their family has been very supportive.

Lata Jogdand says,

"My husband allowed me to go to Nasik (Neighboring district) for the meeting of a political party. He never stops me to go for such events." (Lata Jogdand, 40)

To me being brought up in an Indian society where patriarchy and caste are naturalized in its day to day life. Rural India is even more caste-ridden and patriarchal. I could only interpret it through my own observations that the patriarchy is accepted and not seen as a problem. Same but to lesser extent could be said for caste-based oppression.

c) Community

i) Distrust and Insecurity

Non-support from community due to distrust in Dalit women is a factor that doesn't allow Dalit women to take decisions independently.

Shila Sarwade shares an incidence of how she felt distrusted,

"I always have troubles with getting a resolution passed from the members. This time it was about the community hall for the village from the Member of Parliament (M.P) fund. I insisted that community hall should be near Dalit vasti, as Dalits would be the ones who will utilize it more. Dominant castes members who can afford often book halls for wedding or other events. But I was opposed as always. We decided a common place, in the middle of the village but vice president wanted a third place to build the community hall one close to his house. We invited the M.P from our region to inaugurate the place. We all members came together but at the last moment the place of community hall was changed to the one which vice president wanted. I pointed out this to the M.P, over this he just said that 'these are my people and I am here for them, this fund I have released should be utilized for their welfare.' I was shocked to hear such words. The hall eventually got built on the place vice-president wanted. But people from our community got angry with me because I attended this event." (Shila Sarwade, 26)

Shila tried to influence the decision of members regarding the place of community hall. She was sidelined even by an influential political personality who she thought would help her. She faces troubles in the panchayat due to constant oppositions of few members. This time even people from her own community didn't trust her. It can clearly be seen from Shila's example that the pressure and challenge of asserting is a restraining factor. She told me she was at least expecting trust from "our people".

d) Political Interference/Village politics

It is proposed by 73rd Amendment that Panchayat governing would be free from interference of M.P and M.L.A's¹⁶. On the contrary panchayat has never been free from factional and party politics (Mathew, 1994:65). The village party politics creates constant tensions amongst the villagers. Women would often say "*they don't belong to our party that is why, there is problem.*" Political interference doesn't allow its members to function independently. The party politics is so deep that there is high degree of corruption during the elections in village constituency by the political party elites to bag the votes. In next restraining factor 'political maneuvering', Sitatai Bansod shares her experience.

e) Political Maneuvering by political elite

Sita Bansod in the year 2006 decided to stand for Nagar Parishad elections (the second tier). She applied for her candidature. The organization where her husband works as a teacher is founded by a Member of Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.) Ashok¹⁷ from Beed District. Being an activist Sitatai is a potential candidate who might have divided a large proportion of votes causing a setback to political candidate that Ashok had nominated.

"He asked my husband to take my candidature back. I after consulting people at CHR took my application back. The situation would have been uncomfortable for my husband, if I wouldn't have taken the candidature back. As it is also about loyalty, I then decided to go for next elections." (Sitatai Bansod, 38)

From the example above, it is clear that the interference and maneuvering of the politicians is very much prevalent. It is in fact every citizen's right to participate in democracy and politics.

¹⁶ See the chapter 3 panchayat raj in India, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in Maharashtra innovative features.

¹⁷ Name changed on Sitatai's request

However few people to only ensure their power play such games by holding masses back with power of money and burden of dependency.

f) Non co-operation by government officials

“No, the officials are not supportive. There is scope for construction of roads and drainage system, also electricity implantation. Roads are not very good in shape; there is always mud and water getting filled during the rains. We don’t even have a community temple for the Dalit community but the Zilla Parishad is lead by opposite party that pressurizes the officials to not to sanction the funds. They see it’s an application from the lady- president of Bawane-Girwali and the application remains pending. In these two years I only managed to build a common community hall.”(Lata Jogdand, 45)

As pillars of democracy the elected representatives and executives in the bureaucracy should work together for the welfare of the people. Most of the time though due to lack of co-operation and other wasted interest of government official hinders this healthy connection. The example above shows how development work of the village and specially Dalit *vasti* is stagnated because of purposeful lack of political will and non-cooperation of officials as a result.

g) Inadequate training and capacity building measures from the State

For effective implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment training and capacity building of the representatives is very important, especially women who are entering in politics for the first time without any past experiences. Inadequate Training comes up as a restraining factor. Most of the women I interviewed said they are not given any training. A few said that the trainings are not well organized and monitored. Annie Namala¹⁸ gives her insights on the inadequate training programmes by the state which mostly are only orientations. They need to be inclusive of practical mechanism that should prepare Dalit women to assert and make utmost use of their positions.

h) Inadequate fiscal decentralization and delay in funding

Satyabhama Kuchekar says, “I have given the whole responsibility of financial matters to the upper caste Deshmukh. When the scheme funds are sanctioned they come in installments. We have to take up the task when the budget is sanctioned, after this we get first installment. The tasks undertaken should not stop due to lack of money. In the case of lack of funds you have to put in money from your own pocket until the next installment comes. Sometimes there are delays in the fund allocations. We cannot afford putting in money from our pockets. But Deshmukh have a lot of land that they can put it for mortgage. I don’t mind if they take a little money from the funds as at least the tasks get fulfilled.” (Satyabhama Kuchekar, 42)

¹⁸ Researcher and trainer, Centre for Programming Inclusion and Equity

There were several occasions in almost all the interviews where interviewees gave me examples of lack of economic freedom at local level, insufficient or lack of allocation of funds, delayed release of or misappropriation of funds in panchayat. Many projects don't get approved especially the ones that benefit the Dalits. The monthly stipend that president are entitled to get is seldom regular. Not all of the interviewees actually knew how much the stipend really is. The decentralization at administrative level is at least getting implemented but the fiscal decentralization is still a challenge and constrain for poor Dalit to participate actively.

i) Corruption

“A Dalit lady-president before me was given Rs. 10000 (Aprox.200USD) to leave her post, they even asked me to take Rs.200, 000 (Aprox.4000 USD) to leave the post, I said I will leave the post this evening if you sign a paper which states you are giving me five acres of land. They didn't ask me ever since, we have to talk their language to teach them what we are capable of” (Nilutai Kamble,45)

Corruption is endemic in Indian bureaucracy. In allocation of funds, distribution of resources and implementation of schemes there is corruption from top to bottom. In this sense not even the local governments are spare out of it. Dalit and women due to poverty and the constant pressure are succumbed to sign the applications for funds allocation but the dominant caste people utilize it for their personal benefits. Socially women have to be moral, ethical; it is assumed that women cannot be corrupt. Corruption in the system restrains women from actively participating.

j) No-Confidence Motion Clause¹⁹

“With the excuse that she is ignorant she is reported for ‘No confidence motion’ this isn't a right way to ensure inclusive politics. There shouldn't be action/allegations on the basis of her lack of knowledge or information, as information can be acquired through different means like training. She shouldn't be removed from the post unless she commits serious crimes against humanity like murder”-(Ms. Panchal, 71)

¹⁹ The Motion of No Confidence as per the Mumbai Gram Panchayat Act, 1958 states no confidence is moved not less than one-fifth of the total number of the members, who are entitled to sit and vote at any meeting of the panchayat against the president or vice-president after giving a notice to the Tahsildar (ibid). The act doesn't provide for withdrawal of the notice. Within seven days after the date of receipt of the notice by Tahsildar, s/he should convene a special meeting of the Gram panchayat for considering the motion at the gram panchayat office at a time to be appointed by her/him. The president or vice-president against whom the motion of No-confidence is moved, shall have a right to speak and take part in the proceedings at the meeting, including right to vote (ibid).The Indian parliament Rule 198(1) of the Rules of procedures and conduct of business in parliament detailed the reason for no confidence, primarily failing of the government on a subject considered to be a major issue.

The provision of no-confidence motions is very frequently used by the dominant castes panchayat members against the Dalits and women. In panchayat raj almost all the state Acts give the provision of no confidence under the 73rd Amendment Act, with differences in majority required and *modus operandi* of carrying it out (Jare & Kumar 2001). This legal tool is often used against SCs, STs and women. In my study there are 3 cases where no confidence is exercised. The tool that is made to ensure the effective functioning of the government is used for constraining the active political participation of Dalit women.

k) Caste politics in villages

“Village Politics is caste-based and patriarchal. If this male politics feels threatened due to woman’s political participation it takes a form of retaliation to subjugate women which causes Atrocities and denial of rights even in legal forms such as no-confidence motion”
(Manisha Tokle, 39)

Village is a basic unit of oppression. Castes co-exist in villages but they each maintain their own identity and take pride in doing so. Castes have become the interest groups and relate with the political and economical affairs of the society at large in present era. As there are different interest groups so are different political parties. Each party for gaining and sustaining their power has its rules of game lead down. This village politics for years is been dominated by men, upper caste men in particular. Political positions and power has been significant part of their identity and issue of existence. They want to hold the political and economical power in their hands forever. However the reservation challenges their monopoly over the power and is broken down. This is why they harass Dalit women thereby shaming the community. Hence Dalit women entering in the power game becomes a victim of political rivalry.

When Lata Jogdand filed a complaint against vice- president for beating her up under the Atrocity Act, the dominant village members demonstrated in front of panchayat Samiti to stop Prevention of Atrocity (PoA) Act. Dalits are denied of basic human rights and dominant caste people find ways to ensure denial of rights for Dalits. This is because it is ingrained in the psyche of the people.

l) Prejudices against Dalit women

There are specific prejudices for women which are related to high standards of morality. These standards are invariably defined by the patriarchal bias thus her right to freedom is constrained. Her outspoken nature, activeness will be taken as she being characterless and immoral.

Further an active Dalit woman faces both caste-based and patriarchal abuses, in family, at work and in society. She if commits 'mistake' is abused by saying her low morale is due to her low caste status. She has to be under control always and if this doesn't happen, strategy is to discourage her morale by abusing her on her caste-basis and doubting her character.

m) Indirect violence : Use of pressure/ torture techniques

"Why do you always favor the decisions for Dalit vasti, you can apply for these developmental schemes for Dalits but you will face troubles in future I remind you." (Shila Sarwade quotes the threatening by Vice president)

Vice- President in Shila Sarwade's constituency threatened her by reminding her to be watchful of her actions. This was because she proposed a community temple for Dalit vasti in new budget.

Blocking panchayat resolution passed by Dalit women members and president are ways to restraint the developmental work. Dalit development needs are not very often part of the panchayat agenda.

n) Direct violence: atrocities and oppression

Lata Jogdand was beaten up by the vice-president of her panchayat. She says,

"There was no specific reason for this action but a series of small incidences where I was only handling my work as a president. They (vice president and his brother) would interfere with every work I took up. They were the one in the beginning approached my husband to ask for me to become president, but when they saw I was not being controlled by them they started abusing me. I in return became even stricter with my actions, I would discard the proposals that I found were faulty. Thus one evening they came home and beat me up" (Lata Jogdand,40)

Case of Nilutai Kamble is of similar nature but here her assertiveness is very remarkable. She says in a jolly gesture

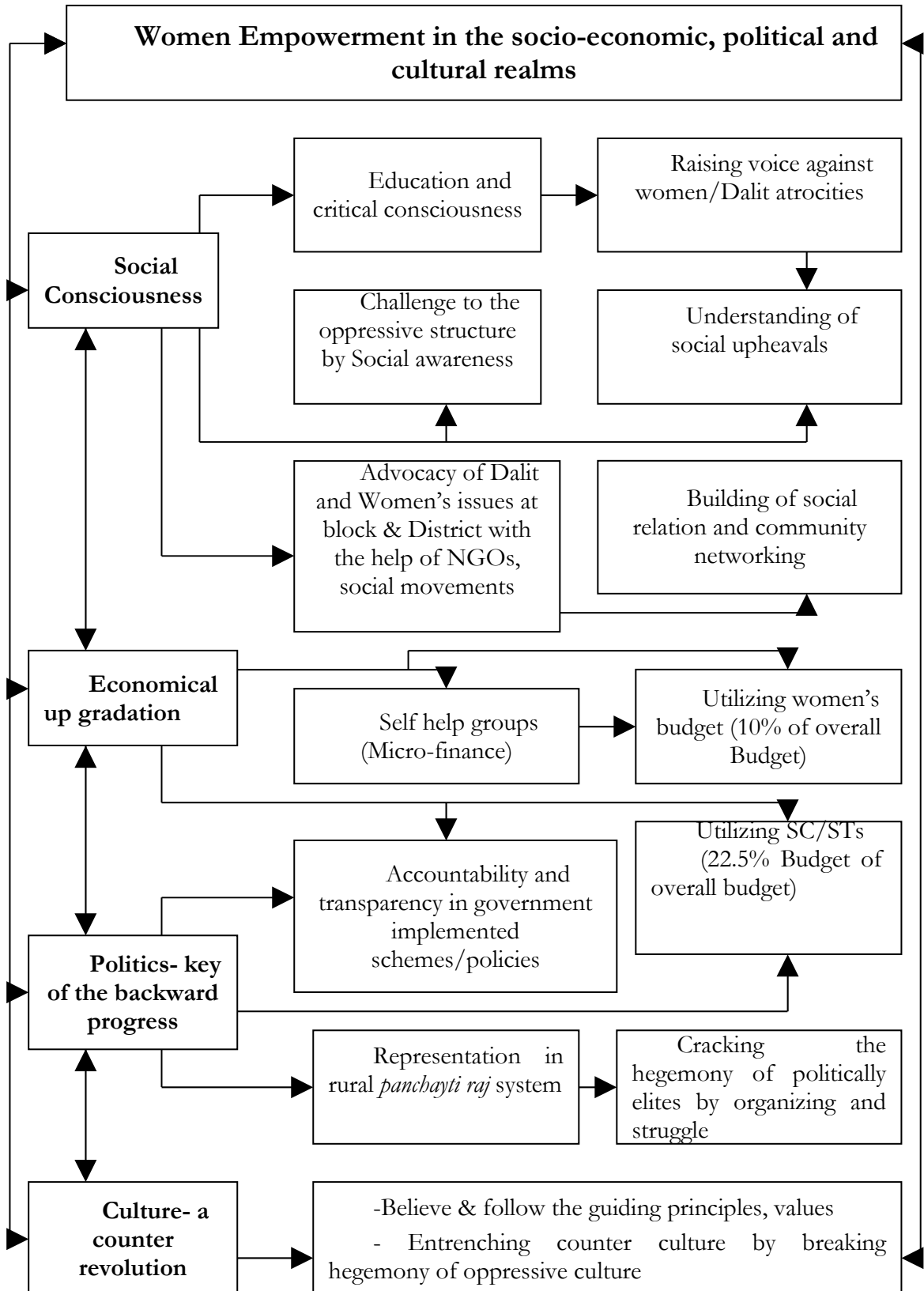
“I am a hard nut to crack, I troubled them too. They reported ‘No confidence’ against me four times, every time I took it as a challenge, and every time I won. I would ask the court to send a messenger to panchayat and hold a meeting to tease them with my victory. They beat me the second time I did it, but I didn’t stop there, I filed atrocity against them. I performed my tasks...” (Nilutai Kamble,45)

Both the cases I explain talk of the interplay of direct, cultural and structural violence to constrain the assertion and to break the morale of Dalit women.

These come out as restraining factors for Dalit women’s political participation. The restraining factors start out with Individual illiteracy, lack of experiential knowledge, proxy political participation, and move on to various levels like family pressure, poor economic condition of family, Dalit community, distrust and insecurity, village level politics, interference of political parties and political maneuvering of political elites, failures on the government’s part i.e. inadequate training programme, lack of fiscal decentralisation, no cooperation from government officials, corruption, legal failure i.e. no confidence motion clause in the end the caste based patriarchal structure and Intersectional oppression that leads to indirect and direct violence and atrocities. Having explained the facilitating factors and vast number of restraining factors, it can be seen although 73rd Amendment Act has facilitated the political participation the act needs evaluation and revision.

5 Indicators of Active Political Participation & Empowerment

Conceptual Map 3: Indicators & Impact of Active political participation and Empowerment



This chapter brings out the indicators of active political participation and empowerment. It shows correlation between the two and moves further to explain impact of active political participation on the empowerment of women ranging from Individual level to community level.

5.1 Indicators of active political participation

a) Individual level

Annie Namala Annie thinks, the consciousness that “I want to perform” is a key. It is important to explore women’s agency they exercise in various ways in dealing day to day experiences of caste-based patriarchal challenges.

“These are the steps how a woman gradually actively participates, she starts talking, brings her ideas in action, Shares, If her ideas, opinions are not accepted she mobilises supporters inside and outside the Panchayat. She starts raising issues on various levels in family, community, in panchayat through gram sabha, at BDO, Zilla Parishad. Then gradually creates stake on the decisions taken in the Gram-Sabha, ultimately independently taking decisions.” (Annie Namala, 49)

The following are indicators developed after the discussions with social activists from civil society organizations and experts.

i) Presence in event organized at Village level: Flag Hoisting as her right as a first citizen of Village

Gayatai Awad proudly shares her experience of hoisting flag for the first time 17 years ago. She says

“The village where I worked as a bonded laborer and the people who gave me water from distance are now standing in line with me. I am the first citizen of this village, hoisting flag in front of these villagers and police made me proud.”(Gayatai Awad, 49)

ii) Takes along/ involves other women from community, Village through Self Help Group

Nilutai Kamble runs two Self help groups under D.R.D.A. (District Rural Development Authority) list²⁰. She has been to Delhi, Panchyat Raj Ministry meet of women panchayat presidents and members. She actively mobilizes women for the procession organized by CHR.

²⁰ Below Poverty List

iii) Fulfillment of her responsibilities, Implementation of tasks and work done in the village during her Tenure

Majority women researched have implemented schemes under rural development, mid-day meal scheme, Indira housing Scheme, Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Scheme for elderly, Shravan-Bal Scheme for elderly with no body to take care. They have taken up tasks like construction and repair of road, construction of community hall. Under the Dalit *vasti* development schemes, community temples for Dalits are built in villages. Shivananda built a water tank under water conservation scheme by offering her own land. She allocated grazing land for Dalit below poverty line. She gave contract of construction of road to Dalit *vasti* members. Bharati Shirsat is constructing a school on the grazing land, a panchayat property. She has implemented Maharashtra state Employment Guarantee Scheme. Shila Sarwade has allocated nineteen houses in total to the villagers who are below poverty line, under Indira Gandhi Housing Scheme. Out of these nineteen 7 are for Dalits. At Individual level the above mentioned would be the indicators that Dalit women are participating actively.

b) Positive/Negative opinions from the community and village

“When opponent criticize her acts saying, she wants it all in her own way then you know that she works against the established norms and asserts her own decisions. But when she is praised for being very co-operative that surely means she doesn’t have her say in decisions of the panchayat”. (Manisha Tokle, 39, SPMM)

It is important to see the opinions of the community and village about a Dalit woman Panchayat president.

c) Media Attention: Newspaper articles about her progress

Media reports also indicate the active participation of Dalit women presidents. Bharati Shirsat for instance won award to be a young active woman representative. This is in a news article. Her fast against the corruption in public distribution system of the village and procession to close down the alcohol shop are documented. Shivananda raised the issue of corruption in distribution of wages of the Dalit construction workers; this too is in the news. Shivnanda won a case of No-Confidence is highlighted too. The notification of No-Confidence motion of Lata Jogdand is reported in local news paper. Nilu Kamble’s winning the case of No-Confidence for the fourth time in Supreme Court got praises in the news.

5.2 Indicators of Empowerment

Manisha Tokle says

“Qualities of politically empowered women are leadership, decision-making, confidence, realization of rights and potentials, which should be asserted at all level- family, community and politics” (Manisha Tokle, 39)

Advocate Eknath Awhad sees Empowerment and political Participation both as inter-related.

“When one is empowered active political participation happens. In this sense it’s a Political empowerment as an Independent decision making. If a woman is empowered she takes charge of political decisions in her panchayat. But most of the time even when woman is participating she has to ask for husbands’ permission. She proudly says her husband allows her to go for meetings, this shows she is not independent” (Eknath Awad, 54)

The indicators of empowerment that came up from the discussions are as follows:

When as an Individual a Dalit woman participates independently, functions independently, takes the decisions at panchayat level independently shows she is moving towards empowerment. She doesn’t get succumb to pressures. As a representative of Dalit community she supports and stands for Dalit rights. As a woman she takes up issues of women in panchayat that is social accountability. She is vigilant about the budget allocation that is financial accountability. She takes up issues of village development in larger forums, like she talks to the B.D.O, C.E.O and so on. Asserts and advocates solutions for the issues at stake for the village, community and marginalized groups at various levels like Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Parishad. In a nutshell she fulfills her roles and responsibilities i.e. participate actively.

Below are examples of Dalit women indicated potentials to be empowered.

Eknath Awhad shares story of Suman Karkale a Dalit panchayat president

“In her first panchayat Sabha, she sat on the chair of president and other members sat on the ground, she called out for women panchayat members to come up and join her to sit on the chair.”
He says *“This sensitivity about gender is sign of empowerment. Empowered woman becomes aware of her own rights and rights of other women.” (Eknath Awad, 54)*

Gayatai Awhad shares her experience in the Z.P Meetings. During the first two meetings she observed that mineral water bottles were given to each male member whereas women members

were to share water from one bottle being less in number. She after second time stood up and insisted that each woman member should get a water bottle as

“Even women get equally thirsty as men do.”

Shila Sarwade tells about the union formed by the presidents of Ambejogai Block of which she is part too. It was a meeting of formation of the committees. She remembers how for a long time male members were fighting about who should be getting which committee. There were three women presidents, she says there should be more but their husbands had come for the meeting instead of them. After some time of watching the arguments she stood up and said,

“Shouldn’t we be allocated committees too? We are part of the union, aren’t we?” (Shila Sarwade, 26)

She says as a result all three of them were put on some or the other committees. She says here too their caste-affiliations overpowered as even when she was the first one to ask for committees, she was made a secretary of committee on women and child welfare whereas a non-active upper caste Maratha lady was made the president of the same committee.

From the examples above and my field observations I could develop following indicators of Dalit women’s empowerment through the process of political participation.

1. An empowered Dalit woman will assert her rights, responsibilities and duties as a President in a panchayat.
2. She will oppose others who stop her from actively participating and using her democratic and legal rights. This way she will exercise her power and fulfill her role and responsibilities.
3. For exercising her rights she will create conducive environment not only for her but for other women from the community and village as well.

4. For completion of her responsibilities she will take others support, generate, mobilize and sustain the resources (Human, Knowledge and Ideological). Make use of legal support. This will enable her to be further effective and independent.

After explaining the indicators it is clear that active political participation leads to empowerment thus is both necessary pre-condition and leading factor for women's over all development. Active political participation and empowerment are one and the same. Active political participation means independent decision making and independence of decisions comes through empowerment. With this I conclude the chapter.

6 Interventions for effective political participation of Dalit women in panchayat

This chapter puts forth intervention strategies for effective political participation of Dalit women in panchayat.

A) Training and capacity building

“Dalit women should complete her tenure. She doesn’t enter politics ‘knowing all about it’. Thus there should be proper training to her, in each phase, ongoing training to upgrade her knowledge, skills and leadership qualities”-(Ms. Panchal, 71)

When asked about the role of training and capacity building of Dalit women Annie gives her insights about the inadequate training programmes by the state which mostly are only orientations. They need to be inclusive of practical mechanism that should prepare Dalit women to assert and make utmost use of their positions.

Effective training and capacity building is one of the significant intervention realised from this study, the civil society organisations, informant interviewed and the literature consulted.

- Development of the supportive mechanism to ensure the sustained political participation of Dalit women
- Government should provide panchayat training for all panchayat representatives in general. Along with this special training for Dalits, right from the start of their term of office. This is needed in order to specifically capacitate them on the following

Panchayat administration and their roles and responsibilities, knowledge of their legal rights, about government development schemes and procedures involved to access them, budget planning, accounts, and taxation matters, management and local development planning skills, participatory planning techniques, computer training and how to overcome obstacles through their participation. All trainings should include gender and caste perspective. As well as legal sanctions which apply to those who block Dalit women’s political participation. To facilitate their participation training should be conducted nearby Dalit women’s residence.

- Joint training programme at village level: panchayat secretary and panchayat member's joint training should be organized to make better understanding and functioning amongst the stake holders, for better and effective functioning.
- Train all officials concerned with panchayat raj, including election officers, rural extension officers and particularly local government officials dealing with the panchayats, to understand and respond to issues of gender, caste and class disabilities.
- Conduct training programme for police and local, district court to make them aware about the discrimination and the violence on the basis of caste and gender.
- Ongoing trainings for Dalits and women representatives for realizing their Constitutional rights and duties. Along with this focus on public speaking, managerial skills etc
- The self defence training should be provided to Dalit and non-Dalit women representatives.
- Organizing ongoing exposure programme for panchayat members to successful model, where panchayat raj is been successfully implemented.
- Encourage villagers especially Dalits to conduct social audit exercise timely at village level, to democratize and to maintain transparency at panchayat level.

B) Mechanism and structures for effective implementations:

“The constitution of India is one of the best though lack of mechanisms to implement the law makes it ineffective. Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2005, but till 2008 there were not a single case registered in Beed District, this is because there is no proper implementing machinery. SPMM filed first case. Thus awareness and implementing mechanism are very significant” (Manisha Tokle, 39)

C) At the level of Gram Sabha:

- There should be mandatory quorums for the participation of SC, ST women, men and women in general in gram Sabha.
- Panchayat presidents must organize a gram Sabha. One designated government official should be appointed to be present during the whole meetings in the panchayat to monitor effectiveness as accountability and development planning mechanism and to support the Dalit and women.

D) Role and functions

- Funds should be adequately allocated at the local level so that the panchayats and elected representatives can function effectively for the development of the village.
- Sustain and strengthen interaction between the three panchayat tiers and between the panchayat and government departments in charge of rural development schemes by conducting ongoing meetings to ensure better coordination and more demand-generated development activities
- Facilitate a mandatory process of village, block, district level panchayat preparing a Scheduled Caste development plan with a clear gender focus, which should become a charter to work towards economic development of Dalit women and men in the panchayats (as per the recommendation of NCSCST²¹)
- Development plan prepared by panchayat members that can lay down development strategies from village to state.
- Government/ District administration should allocate more funds and schemes to reserved panchayat, implementations of and Dalit and women panchayat members' signature is mandatory to pass the funds.
- A free help line be administered that provides information about the administration, and a consultancy centres in order to seek immediate advice and information.

E) Policy level changes

“The act and the deterrence of the act both things are very important for the effective change in the society.” (Paul Diwakar, 49)

- Pressure on Dalit women representatives should be strictly punished within defined time frame. Provisions in POA Act should be recognised by 73rd amendment. Exercising pressure on Dalit women should be recognised as major obstacle in democratization and Dalit women's right to political participation. It should be put under the cognizable offence.

²¹ National commission for SC, ST

- Dowry victims, rape victim don't need a witness to prove the offense. The onus of responsibility to prove the guilt lies with the accused. Thus should be the case with Dalit women participating in politics and facing harassment.
- Simple forms of complaints mechanism should be introduced for Dalit women. When and if the attempts are made to take down a Dalit woman from her post. Panchayat raj administration should be held responsible to give the reasons. Every time a woman is notified for the No-confidence motion, concerned panchayat raj officials should be held responsible.
- Immediate response mechanism should be developed to address the complaints of Dalit and women.
- Government should involve Dalit civil society in the training of Dalit and non-Dalit panchayat members, for raising consciousness within them.
- There should be child and adult literacy programme along with Constitutional rights, duties and increase sensitivity towards the marginalized communities.

F) Sensitization/ Campaign at larger level (mass action)

“There should be attitudinal changes in the psyche of the society, then only there will be security for the Dalit, especially Dalit women, and peace can prevail in the society” (Kumud Pavade, 71)

- Publicize the reservation of panchayat seats, nomination and other election related procedures through the mass media to ensure that women, especially, Dalit women, are able to access this information.
- Through news paper, T.V. document and highlight success stories of the villages where Dalit members and other members successfully carried out development of village.
- At national and state level, highlight and campaign to realize rights of Dalit women and men and to annihilate the prejudices about the Dalit community.
- Ensure the universalisation of all level of education amongst Dalit women. Training of political functioning is important as well as development of critical consciousness in women, Dalit women about their oppression and way out.

- There should be a long term attitudinal change strategies to develop the mind sets of the people. Government should implement the strategies to realise Dalits as most vulnerable section of society and Dalit women the weakest amongst the weaker, this reality should be realised by all the social groups and society large.

7 Conclusion

Stronghold of caste system at village level puts Dalit women on a disadvantageous position at multiple levels. However 73rd Amendment served as an opportunity to assert their civil and political rights by entering into grassroots politics. This paper examined the processes of the political participation and empowerment through the research questions and measure findings. The findings are categorised in three analysis chapters. The chapters discussed, facilitating and restraining Factors, Indicators of Empowerment and Participation and the Intervention Strategies for Effective Political Participation of Dalit Women in Panchayat.

The research questions and measure findings are discussed as follows:

What are the factors facilitating or restraining political participation of Dalit women at grassroots level (Panchayat level)?

The facilitating factors emerged through the study range from Individual (Dalit woman herself) to the support systems like family, community, civil society, Dalit ideology, state machinery and legal mechanism.

In the factors restraining the caste based patriarchal structure and psyche induced by this structure emerged as major factors. Followed by caste based village politics, caste based fundamentalist organizations in village, direct and indirect oppressive mechanisms like torture, pressure and direct violence, atrocities.

Further, restraining factors related to Individual status, family background and community were explained. The study showed that political manoeuvring and interference are more specific to the panchayat level constrains faced by Dalit women. Failure on the part of State machineries, inadequacy in fiscal decentralization and ineffective training, corruption and proxy political representation, failure of legal tool such as no-confidence motion clause are the factors that challenge the implementation policy i.e. decentralized local government for inclusive grassroots democracy.

What are the indicators of active political participation and empowerment of Dalit women?

Indicators of active political participation emerged through the study are, her fulfilment of responsibilities, implementation of tasks and work done in the village. Other specific indicators

that came as findings are, active involvement in the event and meetings, opinions from villagers and community and highlights in media of the work done by Dalit women.

Indicators for Empowerment in panchayat politics are that Dalit woman participates, functions and takes the decisions independently at Panchayat level. As a representative of Dalit community she supports and stands for Dalit rights. As a woman she takes up issues of women in panchayat, this indicates her social accountability. She is vigilant about the budget allocation shows her financial accountability. She takes up issues of village development in larger forums, like she talks to the B.D.O and C.E.O.

The findings show that empowered Dalit woman indicates assertion and advocates solutions for the issues at stake for the village, community and marginalized groups at various levels like Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Parishad. She creates conducive environment for herself and for other women in the community and village. She takes others support, generate, mobilize and sustain the resources (Human, Knowledge and Ideological). She makes use of legal support. In a nutshell she fulfils her roles and responsibility by participating actively.

Indicators of empowerment and political participation showed that participation and empowerment are interconnected and that they harmonize each other. Participation and empowerment are both necessary for development in general and specifically for the Development of Dalit women.

What are the intervention strategies for effective participation of Dalit women in panchayat raj?

Lastly, I proposed the Intervention strategies on the grounds of the restraining factors emerged through the study. These strategies also direct facilitating factors to be more effective. The important intervention strategies for effective political participation of Dalit women in panchayat level are proposed to the state and civil society. They are Training and capacity building, Policy level changes and mechanism and structures for effective implementations and at mass level sensitization and awareness campaign.

Coming to the theories I employed for this paper, my finding show that Dalit women's motivation for participation was not merely material but their identity as Dalit women motivated them to participate to claim their rights. Therefore the definition of participation can be revised and factors such as social assertion, claiming human rights, capturing public sphere, political

inclusion to advocate community interest, acquiring power, dealing with cultural oppression and intervening in social problems can be added as motives for participation. Theory of empowerment and concept of transformative agency could be seen from Dalit women's experiences, the interconnectedness of agency, resources and achievements could be verified and the indicators of empowerment in this study reaffirm the same.

To conclude, from the study it emerged that it is not sufficient to only pass the Acts although the Act in itself is a step towards empowerment of Dalits. To bring in sustainable and developmental change in all the spectrums the overall culture that respects and promotes the rights is very important. We can't see the political rights of Dalit women in isolation as there is structural subjugation of women at all levels that should be targeted and addressed. Along with policy interventions, organization of people, capacity building of the victims and marginalized, mass movement for the changing the structure and mindset is required. To foresee this change in the lives of Dalit women who are entering in the public sphere gradually, effective implementation of constitutional provisions such as 73rd Amendment is crucial. My findings from the study of Dalit women's experiences political participation enforce this aspect very strongly.

This research attempted to study a very important aspects of Dalit rights however it is not exhaustive and therefore there is a scope for further research. More visible findings could be achieved through the comparative study of Dalit women vis-à-vis non-Dalit men and women, also comparative study of Dalit women's political participation in different regions and states would give varied findings.

References

- *Ambedkar, B., (1989) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Vol.1, Education of Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, India.1*
- *Bryman, Alan (2008). Social research methods. Oxford University press: Oxford.*
- *D'souza O.,(2009) The truth about Dalits, Caste system and Untouchability, Dusky River Publication.*
- *Faulks, K. (1999) Political sociology: a critical introduction Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh*
- *Gosh, B., (2000) Panchayat Raj Evolution of the concept, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi.*
- *Jare, R. and Kumar, S., (2001) Motion of No Confidence Against Sarpanchs in Tuljapur Taluka, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Rural Campus, Tuljapur.*
- *Kabeer N (2003) Reversed realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thoughts, Verso, New York.*
- *Mankar, V.(2007), How to succeed in Ambedkarism, Thinking Bahujan Society, Nagpur, India.*
- *Mathew,G.(1995) Status of Panchayati Raj in the states of India 1994, concept publishing company*
- *Singhal, C.(2004), Functions and finances on Panchayati Raj Institutions in Maharashtra in Ganapathy P. (ed) Dynamics of new Panchayati raj system in India, Volume 3, concept publishing company, New Delhi*
- *Singla, P. (2007) Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj: Nature and Effectiveness, Rawat Publications, JaiPur*
- *Sommer, B. and Sommer, R.: (1997), A Practical Guide to Behavioural Research Tools and Technique, Oxford University press, New York*

Online sources

- *Aithal, V. (n.d.) Empowerment and Global Action of Women -Theory and Practice http://www.skk.uit.no/WW99/papers/Aithal_Vathsala.pdf (last accessed 9th April 2011)*
- *Kabeer N., (2006) Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third MillenniumDevelopment Goal Author(s): Naila KabeerSource: Gender and*

- Development, Vol. 13, No. 1, Millennium Development Goals (Mar., 2005),pp. 13-24*
<http://www.jstor.org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/stable/pdfplus/20053132.pdf?acceptTC=true> (last accessed 15th April, 2011)
- *National Crime Records Bureau* <http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2007/cii-2007/CHAP7.pdf> (last accessed 18th April, 2011)
 - *Stephen C.,(2009) Feminism And Dalit Women In India*
<http://www.countercurrents.org/stephen161109.htm> (last accessed 02 March 2011)
 - *UNDP (1995) Human Development Report 1995, Gender and Human Development*
Chapter 3: Measuring gender inequalities
http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1995_en_chap3.pdf (last accessed 01st April, 2011)

Annex: 1. Interview Guide for Researched

Interview Guide:

Profile of researched

-Name:	-Age:
-Educational qualification:	- caste:
-Village:	-Taluka:
-District:	-Position held:
- Tenure:	

Guideline:

- *Their experience of filing the candidature*
- *Reasons for their decision to stand for the election- (Influenced by, Motivated by)*
- *Who all encouraged her to contest the election? Why?*
- *What were the hurdles in front of her in the process of contesting the election? Why?*
- *The facilitating factors they identify from their experiences leading to the active political participation.*
- *The restraining factors they identify from their experiences leading them to not participate actively/ symbolic participation*
- *Has the Political participation impacted on Dalit women's empowerment*
- *What according to you is empowerment*
- *Measures they would like to suggest for ensuring active political participation of Dalit women in Panchayat.*

Annex: 2. Interview Guide for Key Informants

Interview Guide:

Profile of Key informant

- Name of the key informants: -Age
- Sex -Educational qualification:
- Designation/position: -
- Since how many years s/he has been working on the Dalit issues:

Questions:

- *What work have you been involved in terms of Dalit rights (If, Specifically Dalit women's rights)?*
- *Have you seen changes in terms of Dalit women participating more after the introduction of 73rd amendment' in Rural India?*
- *What do you see as your own criteria/Indicators to assess 1) Active participation of Dalit women 2) Their empowerment through the participation?*
- *As a Support system to ensure active participation of Dalit women in Panchayat what strategies do you/Would you employ?*
- *What are the attributing factors do you see/observed/Experienced for the empowerment of Dalit women in Panchayat?*
- *What are the restraining factors do you see/observed/Experienced for the empowerment of Dalit women in Panchayat?*
- *What recommendations would you provide to ensure active participation and empowerment through 73rd amendment?*

Annex: 3. Profile of Researched & Key Informants

i) Profile of researched

<i>Sr . No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Village and Block</i>	<i>Dis trict</i>	<i>Position held/ remarks</i>	<i>Tenure/remarks</i>
1.	<i>Ms. Gayatai Eknath Awhad</i>	<i>49 years</i>	<i>Mang</i>	<i>never did formal schooling; self learned Dalit movement and well read literature Anna Bhau Sathe</i>	<i>Dukadega -on Majlgaon</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Zilla parishad (District level of Panchayat raj) member at present</i>	<i>15 years since she was a Panchayat president unanimously voted. Hers was the first all elected women representative constituency in the region.</i>
2.	<i>Ms. Bharati Avinash Shirasat</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Mahar</i>	<i>M.A. Sociology</i>	<i>Pimperner Beed</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>First Dalit Woman since 1959 to become a Dalit Sarpanch</i>	
3.	<i>Ms. Sushila Uttamrao patole</i>	<i>She doesn't know</i>	<i>Mang</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Mhasapur jawala, Beed</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Panchayat president 2002</i>	
4.	<i>Ms. Lata Siddharth Jogdand</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>Mahar, baramashe (sub-caste)</i>	<i>10th grade (Secondary School Certificate</i>	<i>Apet Girawali Ambejoga i</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Serving second tenure as a Panchayat president</i>	
5.	<i>Ms. Satyabham a Deelip Kuchekar</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>Mang</i>	<i>10th (Secondary School Certificate), Alternative Medical Science Diploma</i>	<i>Apegaon, Ambejoga i</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Newly elected</i>	
6.	<i>Ms. Shivanada Harishchandra Waghmare</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Mahar</i>	<i>H.S.C(Higher Secondary Certificate)</i>	<i>Nandadi, Mamdapur</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Served as a Panchayat president for ten year (1997-2002, 2002-2007)</i>	<i>No-confidence motion exercised year 2002, Won the case</i>
7.	<i>Ms. Shila Ramesh Sarwade</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Mang</i>	<i>B.A Hindi, Computer application basic diploma</i>	<i>Morewadi , Ambejoga i</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Newly elected panchayat president 2007, April appointed</i>	
8.	<i>Ms. Chhaya Vyankat Hazare</i>	<i>30-35 not sure of her age</i>	<i>Mahar</i>	<i>7th</i>	<i>Kej</i>	<i>Beed</i>	<i>Newly elected panchayat president 2007</i>	

9.	Ms. Sitatai Bansod	38	Mahar (Bawane) Vidharbha	M.A, Political Science, B.A in Buddhism and Pali language, Got married after 12th (higher secondary) pursued education further on. Intends to study law ahead	Kej	Bee d	Denied a Panchayat Samiti (Block level) election candidature during the first attempt in the year 2006,	Lost Village panchayat election 2007
10.	Ms. Nilutai Shankar Kamble	45	mang	4 th grade (primary schooling)	Rathoda Nilanga	Latur	Served as a Panchayat president since 2002 Faced discrimination, use of abusive language and physical violence	'No confidence motion' exercised Nilu won the cases. The appeal went to four courts from district till the Supreme Court and every time she won the case. She visited Delhi all by herself to

ii) Profile of the Key Informants

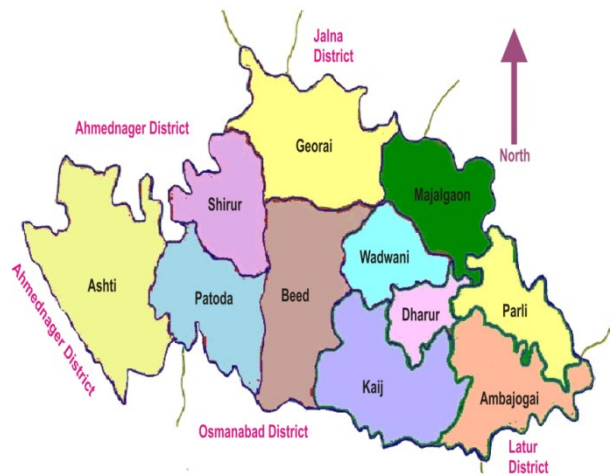
Sr. no	Name	age	Sex	Dalit/ Non-Dalit	Education	Issues working on/ expertise and Organization affiliated	Experience in the area of Dalit rights(years)
1.	Mr. Paul Diwakar	49	M	Dalit	MSW	International advocacy (National campaign on Dalit Human rights)	24
02	Mr. SDJM Prasad	39	M	Dalit	Ph D.	Civil and Political rights (National campaign on Dalit Human rights)	15
03	Mr. Eknath Awad	54	M	Dalit	MSW	Vibrant activism, Dalit human rights (campaign for Human rights)	39
04	Mr. Ashok Tangade	44	M	Dalit	BA	Dalit human rights (campaign for Human rights)	20
05	Ms. Vimal Thorat	55	F	Dalit	Ph D	Dalit women's rights (National campaign on Dalit Human rights)	25-30
06	Ms. Annie Namala	49	F	Dalit	MSW	Researcher, trainer (Centre for Programming Inclusion and Equity)	24
07	Manisha Tokale	39	F	Non-Dalit	BA	Dalit women's rights (SPMM)	18
08	Mr. Anand Kumar	40	M	Dalit	Not asked	Social justice funding (Christian Aid)	14
09	Ms. Pavade	71	F	Dalit	Ph D	Dalit feminist	More than 40 years
10	Ms. Panchal	71	F	Dalit	Ph D	Dalit feminist	More than 40 years
11	Mr. Vivek Kumar	45	M	Dalit	Ph D	Academician	18

Annex: 4. Maps of Maharashtra State & Beed District

Map of Maharashtra State and Beed District, India



http://www.ourcityrocks.com/Map%20Image/maharashtra_map.jpg



<http://india.gov.in/outerwin.php?id=http://beed.nic.in/>