

POLITICAL AWARENESS OF RURAL WOMEN IN BANGLADESH: A STUDY ON CHAR MADRAS UNION

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Abstract— In a democracy, women should enjoy equal rights of political participation and exercise their rights fully. By ensuring men and women empowerment holistically, effective democratic society could be established and political empowerment is the main pre requisite of women empowerment. After independence, the political culture of Bangladesh is gradually changing. Especially in the post1990s, after the re-introduce of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh, political participation at all levels of society has increased. Rural women in Bangladesh are advancing day by day in this field. Rural women need to increase political participation and political awareness. Rural women do not get much opportunity to participate in politics except on the day of voting. As a result, their lack of political awareness can be noticed. This research work will try to determine the determinants of political awareness of rural women. As a survey areas I have selected char Madras Union Charfassion, Bhola which is a typical Union in Bangladesh which represents most of the Union of Bangladesh. To know about the political awareness of the rural women a sample of 50 respondents were selected randomly from char Madras Union through multistage sampling technique. Mainly this study is qualitative but to make the study more explicit the quantitative method also used. And the interview was taken through open- ended and close-ended question. The findings of study have consistency with the set objectives.

Key words: Awareness, Political Awareness, Rural Women, Political Participation. Political Culture, Women Empowerment

1 Introduction

Political awareness of women can play the most important role in empowering women. Political awareness is the special feature of a society which gives meaningful expression of a political attitudes and interests of that society (Varshneya wma, 1988). The women who are the most aware are the most powerful in politics. So in order to empower women in the society, we need to focus on raising awareness. Therefore, women have to do everything necessary to empower them. If political awareness of women is considered as the key pillar of good governance and democracy, it is by no means important to ensure their participation in election. Despite the extensive sense of political participation, Women access to politics and role playing in decision making are still insignificant owing to various socio-cultural and ethnic forces, a diversity of religious faiths, obscure legal frameworks, and complex economic and political forces.

Political awareness provides the motive to understanding the political system, thereby creating political participation (A.K.Mukhopadyaya,1977). But women participation in election, political activities, party politics and elected women legislature remain insignificant. Being a member of United Nations Bangladesh will achieve all SDGs especially in reference to SDG-5: Gender Equality. Ensuring equal rights of women and creating space for their meaningful participation in every sector of development, therefore, is the key to achieve SDGs.

Women's society has risen in all the countries of the world. They are playing a new role. In fact, our expected development is not possible except for half of the population. This may disrupt our Vision 2021 and SDGs. For this reason, the political awareness of women has become one of the agendas of development and in a developing society like Bangladesh; development is not possible without the expected role of women in all areas of life. As a result, the nature of political awareness of rural women is gradually expanding. The increasing awareness of the current rural women in Bangladesh is getting stronger. It is imperative to study the political participation of women, to establish women's rights and awareness, to establish gender equality, to understand the nature of women's leadership, to empower women, to gain knowledge about women's rights and duties, to promote women's education, to provide social security. This study would attempt to explore/ identify the nature of women political awareness of rural women in Bangladesh polity. Besides it also attempts to find out the key determiners of political awareness of rural women of Bangladesh.

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2 Methodology of the Study

Data were collected from primary sources as part of the survey. Where primary data was not found, secondary data such as books, journals, newspaper reports, articles (Published and unpublished) has been studied as much as possible. Data was collected from Char madras Union. The data was collected by using multi stage survey design. Here the quality approach is emphasized in line with the research objectives. Initially, data was collected from 50 respondents through in-depth interviews. Respondents were selected randomly from Char madras Union , Charfassion, Bhola.

3 Result Analysis

3.1. Political participation of Women

Table No: 1

Question Pattern	Answer Pattern	Number of respondents	Percentage
Voting	Yes	46	92%
	No	4	8%
Party Activity	Yes	24	48%
	No	26	52%
Party Membership	Yes	21	42%
	No	29	48%
Contesting the election	Yes	15	30%
	No	35	70%
Political Communication	Yes	28	56%
	No	22	44%
Total			100%

[Source: Field survey]

It can be seen here that rural women are more interested in voting. In other words, 92% of women cast their votes and the remaining 8% refrain from voting due to old age or religion. The participation rate of rural women in active politics is high i.e. 48% and it is seen here that 42% women are involved in political parties. Of these, 15 women have participated in the local elections. In terms of political communication, 56% of women directly contact party leaders and workers to participate in party activities. In this case, it can be said that rural women are more interested in politics.

3.2. Factor Affecting women Political awareness

Table No: 2

Serial No.	Affecting factor	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Discussions	5	10%
2	Party Ideology	10	20%
3	Speech of party leader	5	10%
4	Media (Print & Electronic)	5	10%
5	Relatives	3	6%
6	Parents	8	15%
7	Husband	12	25%
8	Peer groups	2	4%
Total		50	100%

[Source: Field survey]

An analysis of Table-2 shows that rural women are talking about 10% women's group discussion for political awareness. On the other hand, 20% of women speak of political ideology. That is, they have been inspired by their childhood or family ideals. 10% of women are inspired by the leaders of existing political parties. It is noteworthy that the media plays a very important role for political awareness as it is very powerful. However, rural married women in Bangladesh are now inspired or influenced by their husbands. On the other hand, the family also plays an influential role in the political awareness of women.

3.3 Indicators of Political Awareness

Table No: 3

Question Pattern	Answer Pattern	Number of Response	Percentage
Participation in Party activity	Yes	12	24%
	No	38	76%
Spontaneous Political Activity	Yes	09	18%
	No	41	82%
Participation in the meeting of Local government	Yes	15	30%
	No	35	70%
Keeping track of Political Affair (Mass Media)	Yes	18	36%
	No	32	64%
Communication Of the Local leaders	Yes	21	42%
	No	29	58%
Influence Others about Particular political Ideology	Yes	31	62%
	No	19	38%
Expressing Political Opinion within family / community/ Publicly	Yes	28	56%
	No	22	44%
Posting about Political affairs in Social Media	Yes	23	46%
	No	27	54%
	Total	50	100%

[Source: Field survey]

An analysis of Table- 3 shows that 76 % of rural women do not participate in party activities and they do not participate in spontaneous political activities. The participation rate in spon-

aneous political activities is only 18%. On the other hand, only elected women from rural areas participate in local government meetings. This rate is only 30%. The participation rate of rural women in political affairs through the media is low. Only 42% of women maintain contact with local leaders. Again, it is noteworthy that they inspire other women in particular political ideologies. This rate is 62%. And rural women have a higher rate of expression to the family / community and the people here. They also now post and share political activities through social media like Facebook. However, from the above discussion it can be concluded that the political awareness of rural women is gradually increasing.

4. Findings

This study is basically investigating the nature of political awareness of rural women. Basically, the data collected from the field survey has been analyzed here. The study further attempts to highlight the determinants of political awareness of rural women. The data was collected and analyzed from the women of Char Madras Union. The political participation of rural women, the type of political awareness i.e. how they are becoming interested in politics or what determinants are working have been analyzed. The indicators of political consciousness also have been discussed here. That is, the role of rural women in voting, the type of political participation, and their activities in political parties and how they become aware of politics, the role of their family, media or relatives or the ideology of the political party are discussed. Finally, it is analyzed whether they spontaneously attended village meetings, attended local government meetings, interacted with local leaders, and posted or shared politics on various social media such as Facebook. So it can be said that the research objectives have been proved here.

5. Conclusion

After all, thus, we can conclude that rural women have acquired significant extent of political awareness and have started participating in political activities, though their extent of political participation is still low. We can't say that rural women still constitute an apolitical stratum and they do not seem to lag behind urban women.

6. Recommendation

For the betterment of state men, women, race, religion and caste all have to contribute. Since half of the population of our country is women, it is not possible to develop the country by excluding half of the population and achieving SDGs is not possible. A Conducive political environment should be created for the betterment of the country. In all cases, discrimination against women must be further reduced. Women's participation in the decision-making process needs to be increased for women's political awareness. In particular, rural women should increase their participation in politics, administration, and economy, household and even in all spheres. Political awareness will increase if rural women can make decisions about their political participation based on their own views. In this regards, all women's organizations, government organizations, NGOs and civil society in Bangladesh have to play an important role.

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