



Political Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Study of Katurachuan Gram Panchayat, Odisha.

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ABSTRACT:

Democracy needs the participation of all the sections of society. It gives everybody an equal share. However, the presence of discrimination in any form is a major hindrance to the successful working of democracy. From time immemorial, discrimination persists in society in many ways. India achieved Independence in the last seventy-five years, but women still do not have a legitimate share in social and political sectors. Male dominance is visible in all fields, including politics. It is observed that in the decision-making process, policy formulation, and management of local and national political issues women do not participate on equal feet with their male counterparts. Due to many reasons, women were excluded from politics. In recent times women's political participation has increased in all political fields including Panchayati Raj Institutions. With the enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992, Panchayati Raj Institutions have emerged as a highly effective means of achieving good governance. It also provides opportunities to the weaker sections of society through eradicating poverty, uplifting the standards of living of people, and a great deal of political participation. The 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 is a significant milestone as it constitutionally mandates the inclusion of marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women in Panchayati Raj Institutions through the reservation of seats. This paper tries to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the tribal people in their path of growth and the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in providing political justice to Tribal women and development to a larger tribal community.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Political Participation, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Rural Development.

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1. Introduction

In the 2011 Census, it was reported that women make up 48.5% of India's total population. However, despite their significant presence, women have been subjected to discrimination due to prevailing gender biases in social attitudes and behaviors. This discrimination has led to the unequal treatment of women, resulting in limited opportunities and status disparities in various aspects of life, including social, economic, and political domains. Their contributions to development programs have been overlooked. Women have a limited role in development programs. They are not actively participating in many areas of development. Women's political participation is extremely limited. So they continue to be sidelined in politics and development issues.

It is a fact that maximum utilization of man and material brings development. Women make up of about 50% of their population and share a huge human resource that cannot be ignored in development planning. So the inclusion of women in each and every field would be a major step towards the inclusive growth of every nation. When a woman is given scope to manage family, society, and political affairs freely the concept of nation-building becomes easier and richer. So, our society should pay respect to the famine point of view to achieve the overall development of our nation.

According to the United Nations Women's Report on Facts and Figures on Women's Leadership, achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2023 can be realized by ensuring equal participation and leadership of women in the political and public spheres. However, the UN Women's Organization points out that data indicates women are inadequately represented at all decision-making levels globally, and the goal of achieving gender parity in political leadership remains distant.

(Source:<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>)

The United Nations Women's Organization Provides Crucial Information in the Following Key Areas: -

As of 1st January 2023, in 17 Nations Women serve as heads of state while in 19 countries women serve as heads of government. The current rate of progress on women's representation is so slow that gender parity could not be achieved before 2063 as we can see that in the year 1995 women's representation in Parliament globally was 11% and now in 2023 it is only 26.5%.

United Nations data reveals that across 136 countries, approximately 3 million women, constituting 34% of local body members, have been elected. Only two nations have achieved the goal of having 50% women representatives. As of January 2022, Central and Southern Asia had a representation of 41% of women in decision-making positions. The primary objectives set forth by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are: i) Achieving a balanced participation of women in politics and ii) Promoting power-sharing between men and women in decision-making. UN Women's research on Panchayats (Local councils) in India underscores the significance of women's leadership in the decision-making process, which significantly enhances women's active participation. Notably, councils led by women have been found to have 62% more drinking water projects compared to those led by men.

1.1 Goal or Purpose of this Paper

The primary goal of this paper is to reevaluate the concept of women's political empowerment, focusing on India as a whole and Odisha specifically. It addresses a significant societal concern related to gender bias and discrimination. Political empowerment, in this context, pertains to

the development and improvement of individuals' capacity to engage in the political arena. This involves enabling people to effectively address everyday political matters, comprehend the intricacies of the political system, and express their own opinions and voices in the daily life of the nation. Moreover, some of the other benefits are to build themselves a civic sense, community participation, and active participation in elections such as casting vote, contesting for posts, holding public offices, and many more. Given this context, it is proposed that the primary objective of this paper is to (re) conceptualize women's empowerment in India as an ongoing and evolving process with two key objectives:

1- Eliminating gender-based discrimination across all facts of India Society, including its institutions and structures.

2- Promoting women's involvement in policymaking and decision-making across a wide range of activities

In both private and public spheres.

This redefinition takes into account the intricate interplay among various factors, including the dynamics of knowledge, gender politics, and the nuanced aspects of desire and deficiency, within the context of mind, matter, and politics.

1.2 Scope of the Paper

The scope encompasses an examination of women's political empowerment. This helps with policy formulation that can be best in the direction of gender equality, equality, equal right to vote, holding public office, and above all changing gender stereotypes life and promoting of image of women in society. Political empowerment helps women to access to education and training, eradicating poverty and violence. Besides that, major aspects of political empowerment are the role of leadership representation, capacity building through skill training, and advocacy for women's issues that would address the unique needs of women. Through political empowerment, more involved in to politics by which their opinions and voices are respected.

1.3 Objectives: -

The objectives of this research paper are:

1- To examine the challenges and hurdles encountered by women in political participation.

2- To assess initiatives and strategies to enhance knowledge and capacity among women to participate in

Politics.

3- To find out measures to promote a more gender-equitable and just political system.

4- To study the cultural and historical factors that influenced the political participation of women.

5- To bring out the structural, legal, and institutional obstacles that women face in politics.

6- To know the level of political interest is there among Scheduled Tribes Women.

1.4 Research Questions:

1- What inspires women to participate in politics?

2- What type of problems do women encounter while they serve in political office?

3- How are women's political experiences different from men?

4- What impact does women's political involvement have on the formulation of policies?

5- How do we enhance the representation of women in politics?

2. Research Methodology

The current research relies on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary study is from different tribes using tools like personal interviews, discussions, and the collection of first-hand data collected through the use of the questionnaire. The researcher has collected data from various sources, including literature, books, Journals, annual reports, and other researcher's work.

Empowerment of Women in Indian Politics

The Political empowerment of women is denoted as the engagement of women in political affairs. In other words, political empowerment requires a certain precondition of having power, knowledge, and awareness, the ability to exercise power, and official authority. It is a way of increasing people's political decision-making process by providing information, tools, and techniques they require to keep their elected representatives accountable. Political empowerment may take many forms such as voting, contests, volunteering, running for office, and advocating for change which is essential for a healthy and successful democracy. Political empowerment is a complex and ongoing process. It requires the involvement of all to create a just and equitable society.

In recent times, there has been a consistent increase in the involvement of women in Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies, and Local and Urban Self-Governments. It is a matter of fact that India currently ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of women's representation though Women have occupied the position of President, Prime Minister, Chief Minister, and Legislators in the Parliament as well as State Legislative Assemblies. In the year 1952 the representation of women in the Parliament was 4.8% whereas in the year 2019, it is only 14.3% which is not satisfactory as we are always talking about equal participation. The percentage of political participation is lower than the Global average of 25%. The latest (August 2023) data shows that 10.5% of women members are in Lok Sabha and 11.8% are in Rajya Sabha which comprises the Parliament of India.

'Table No- 1' Odisha an Overview: -

Sl. No.	Subject or Items	Total
1	Area	155707Sq. Km
2	Districts	30
3	Blocks	314
4	Tahasils	317
5	Total Zilla Parishad	30
6	Total Panchayat Samiti	314
7	Total Gram Panchayat	6801
8	Total revenue villages	51349
9	Total population	419,74,218
10	Scheduled Caste population	17.13%
11	Scheduled Tribe Population	22.85%
12	Rural Population	83%
13	Male Literacy	81.59%
14	Female Literacy	64.01%
15	Rural Sex Ratio	989/1000
16	Density	270 Per Sq. Km.

(Source: - Census Report of India 2011)

‘Table No- 2’

The following Table shows the political participation of women in the Odisha Legislative Assembly

From 1952 (1st Assembly) to 2019 (16th Assembly)

Assembly	Year	Total Seats	Women	STs	SCs
1 st	1952-1957	140	3	-	-
2 nd	1957-1961	140	5	-	-
3 rd	1961-1967	140	5	-	-
4 th	1967-19671	140	5	-	-
5 th	1971-1973	140	1	-	-
6 th	1974-1977	147	4	-	-
7 th	1977-1980	147	7	-	-
8 th	1980-1985	147	5	4	-
9 th	1985-1990	147	9	5	-
10 th	1990-1995	147	9	-	-
11 th	1995-2000	147	10	2	2
12 th	2000-2004	147	14	3	3
13 th	2004-2009	147	12	4	2
14 th	2009-2014	147	7	2	3
15 th	2014-2019	147	12	1	4
16 th	2019-	147	18	3	4

Source www.odishaassembly.nic.in

Panchayati Raj Institutions and Reservation of Seats in Odisha:

The constitutional provisions for the reservation of seats for Panchayati raj Institutions are as under:

- i) Article 243D (3) Panchayati Raj Institutions must allocate seats for scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in accordance with their population in the state at every level.
- ii) Article 243D (4) The 73rd Amendment act mandates the reservation of one-third of all seats in each panchayat for women.
- iii) Article 243D (6) provides that the state legislature may provision for the reservation of seats in any panchayat or offices of the chairpersons in the panchayats at every level in favour of a backward class of citizens.

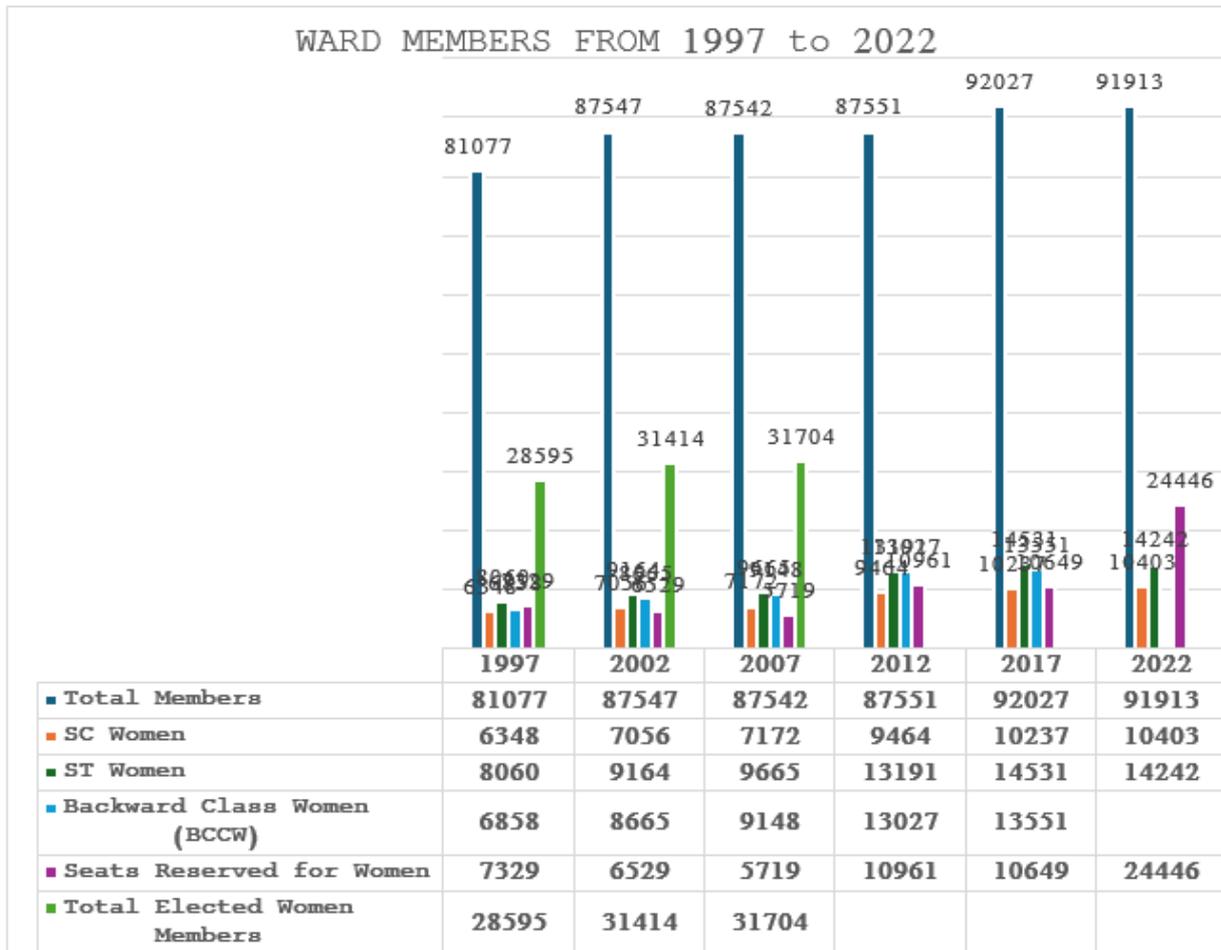
Reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes is 22.5%, Scheduled Castes is 16.25%, and OBC/SCBC is 11.25% in Odisha Panchayati Raj Institutions.

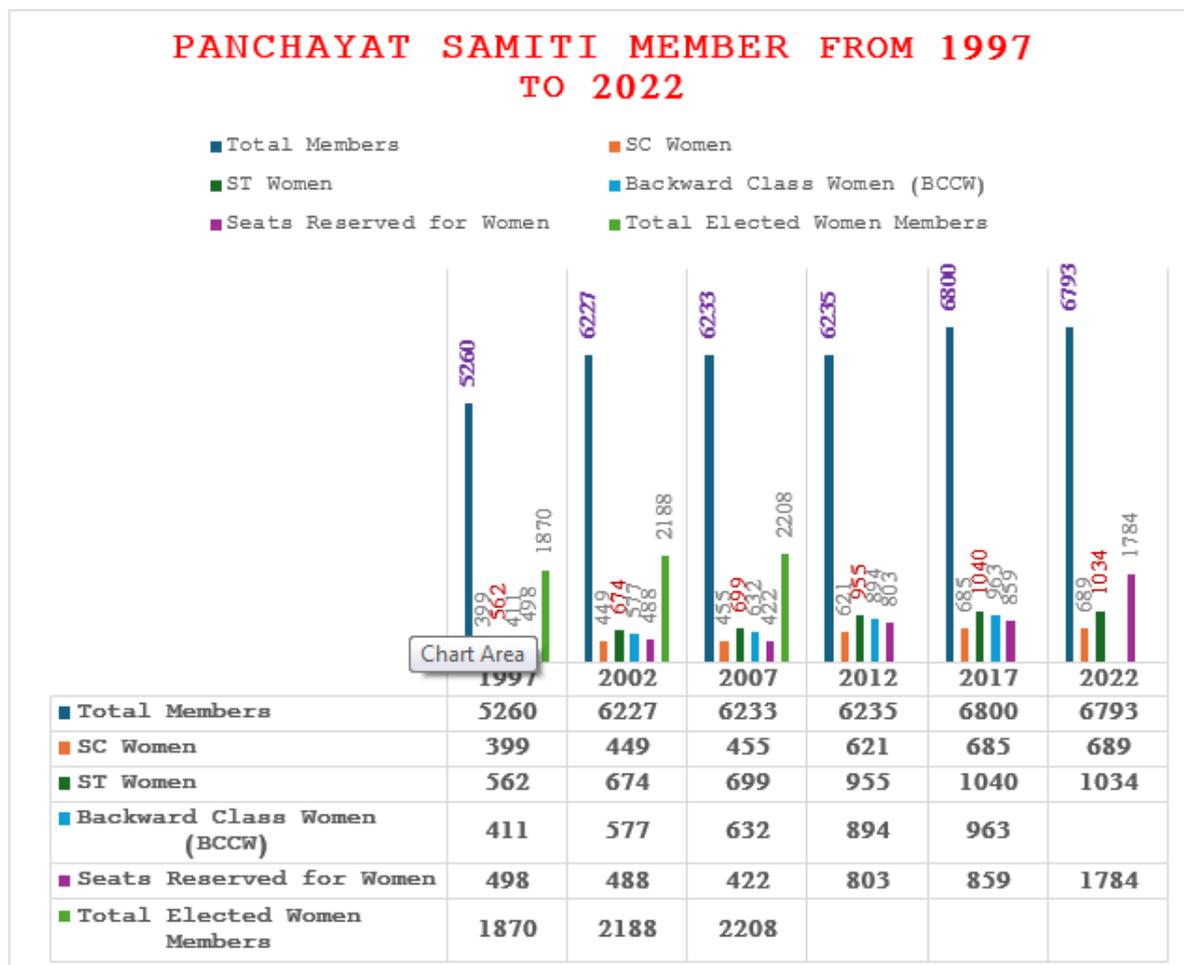
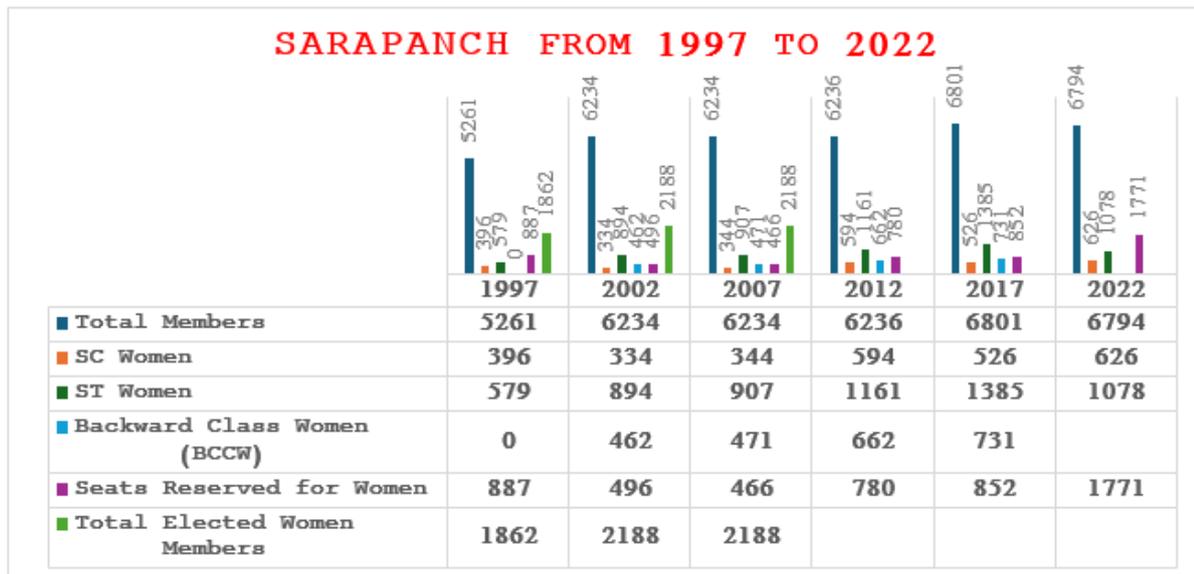
The Odisha Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2011, has made the following provisions that

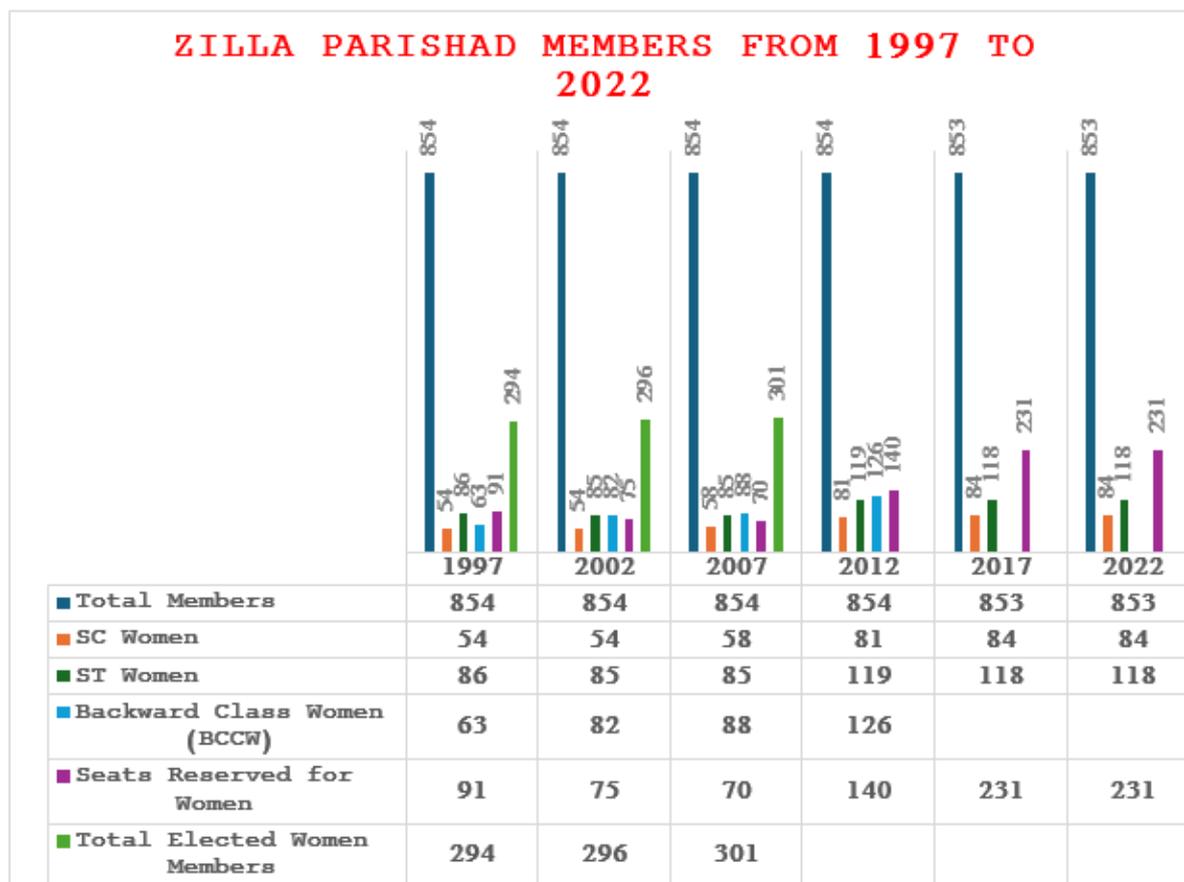
- a) Rotation of 27% of the total seats for backward classes.
- b) Rotation of reserved seats after every three consecutive terms.
- c) Reservation of chairperson's posts in proportion to the reservation of seats for SCs, STs, and Women.

The following Table shows the political participation of women through the reservation of seats in the Odisha Panchayati Raj Institutions as per the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 and PESA Act 1996.

General Panchayat Election, Odisha in the year **1997**







Source <http://sec.odisha.gov.in/election-result/>

Scheduled Tribes of Odisha A Brief Profile:

Odisha formerly Orissa is a federal unit of India and situated in the eastern part of the country. In respect to area and population, Odisha stands in the 8th largest and the 11th largest respectively in all over India. After Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra Odisha is the third largest Scheduled Tribes population.

Scheduled Tribes of Odisha a Brief Statement:

- 1. Rich and diversified Tribal Population:** Odisha's Scheduled Tribes stand in a special position among the Indian States due to their rich and diversified tribal population, which includes 62 unique tribes and 74 dialects.
- 2. Geographical Distribution:** The bulk of Odisha's scheduled Tribes live in mountainous and wooded areas, and their lives are inextricably linked to these natural settings.
- 3. Unstructured Economy:** The unstructured form of their economy reflects a simpler and more traditional way of living.
- 4. Social Structure and Lifestyle:** The social structure is clear and uncompleted, with a modest lifestyle that has preserved the tribes' distinct cultural identity.
- 5. Historical Difficulties:** Despite experiencing social, political, educational, and economic obstacles as a result of geo-historical causes, Odisha's Scheduled Tribes have retained their distinct identity within their social and cultural milieu.
- 6. Post-Independence progress:** These tribes' socioeconomic progress has accelerated significantly in the post-independence era.

7. **Population Quantification:** According to the 2011 Census, the tribal population of Odisha is 9590756 accounting for 22.85% of the state's total population and 9.20% of the national tribal population.
8. **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):** Thirteen tribal groups have been classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, highlighting the need for special attention and support. The scheduled area comprises 119 out of 314 Blocks in 12 districts, along with a portion of Suruda Tahasil in the Ganjan District. This region accounts for nearly 44.70% of the state's total geographical area. Within the Scheduled Area, 68.09% of the state's tribal population resides. However, they face educational challenges, with a literacy rate of only 52.24%, significantly lower than Odisha's overall literacy rate of 72.87%. When broken down by gender, Tribal women have a literacy rate of 41.2%, while tribal men have a slightly higher rate of 63.70%.

Odisha has 30 districts, and 7 of these districts, namely Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Koraput, Nawarangapur, Rayagada, Sundargarh, and Kandhamals, along with certain Tahsils and Blocks, fall under the Scheduled Area due to their substantial presence of tribal population. The Block and Tahsils covered under the Scheduled Areas include R. Udayagiri Tahasil, Gumma & Rayagada Blocks in Gajapati district, Soroda Tahasil in Ganjam district (excluding Galabadi and Gochha Panchayats), Kuchinda Tahasil in Sambalpur district, Telkoi, Keonjhar, Champua and Barbil Tahsils in Keonjhar district, as well as Blocks like Th. Rampur and Lanjigarh in Kalahandi district and Nilagiri block in Balasore district.

Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat:

Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat is constituted in the year 1953 having 1755 hectares of Geographical area. Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat has three revenue villages, namely Kirasasan, Kuturachuan, and Satkama. It has 13 Wards, and the total population is 3819. The Panchayat is primarily dominated by the 1548 Scheduled Tribes Population. The Literacy rate among them is 64.92% as per the 2011 Census Report. It is situated in the western part of Kuchinda Block of Sambalpur District in Odisha. Kuchinda Block is a tribal Block out of 314 Blocks. In Odisha, there are 6798 Gram Panchayat. The people of this area mainly depend on agricultural labourer for their earnings. The total agricultural labourers are 970 persons out of which 495 persons are male and 444 are female.

'Table No- 3': The number of voters cast their votes in the General Panchayati Raj Election in 2022

In Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat, Odisha.

Name of the Village	Electors Total	Electors Male	Electors Female	Voter Male	Voter Female	Voter Total	Percentages
Kirasasan	1003	481	522	386	409	795	79.26
Kuturachuan	604	315	292	276	258	534	87.97
Satakama	1535	743	792	627	662	1289	84.16

Source: Gram Panchayat Office record (primary data)

2. Literature Review

Vijay, C. (2021). In the research article, Political Participation of Women in Indian Political Scenario mentions that In the 1980s, there was a renewed focus on women's political involvement, and the approach to women's development shifted from a solely developmental

perspective to one that emphasized women's active participation in decision-making, particularly in political activities at all levels. This shift naturally resulted in the empowerment of women in the political sphere. The author has emphasized the education of minority women and the safety and security of minority community representatives from the violence of upper castes.

Panda, K., Sahoo M., (2019), In their literary work on "Political Participation of Women in Gram Panchayat of Odisha-A Study", the Journal of Management found that women are not participating in panchayat administrations so much as the male are participating because of lack of reformation and insufficient right to them. Some other issues are to be considered. New thinking and approaches are highly needed to improve the political participation of women.

Rai, Anjali, (2018). In his literary writing "Participation of Scheduled Caste Women in Politics Case Study of Rural and Urban Women of Nainital District of Kumaun Region". The author says that the study revealed that women especially lower strata are taking an interest in politics. The three-tier Panchayati Raj institutions offer direct participation opportunities in elections. Nevertheless, training and education are key instruments for empowering women in politics.

Patnaik, P., (2005) in the paper "Affirmative Action and Representation of weaker sections; Participation and Accountability in Orissa's Panchayats" finds out that actual power is being exercised by the weaker section through political empowerment. The more political participation increases through numeric strength the better the democracy will be successful.

Swain, J., (1994) in her work titled "Emerging Women Leadership in Panchayati Raj A study in Balipatana Block of Khurda district in Odisha" expressed that women are getting opportunities to be leaders in their own development. The different rules and regulations help women to come out from their stenotype work pattern to take part in political activities at each level.

Shabnam. (20 in the article, American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS) ISSN: 2663-7177 the author stresses that special attention and consideration is required for the promotion of women's participation in politics. Confidence building and financial viability can help women enter into politics. Political participation will change their mindset and towards social stigma.

From the Literature review, it is found that there are many challenges in the path of achieving the goal of women's political participation.

The Tables below show that there is a substantial percentage of participation of voters in the Panchayati Raj elections.

'Table No- 4': General Panchayat Election, Odisha 1997

PRI Elected MembersPRI Elected Members	Total Members	Scheduled Caste Women	Scheduled Tribe Women	Backward Class Women (BCCW)	Reserved for Women (RW)	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	81077	6348	8060	6858	7329	28595
Sarapanch	5261	396	579	0	887	1862
Panchayat Samiti Member	5260	399	562	411	498	1870
Zilla Parishad Members	854	54	86	63	91	294
Total	92452	7197	9287	7332	8805	32621

Source: <https://sec.odisha.gov.in/panchayati-raj-result/>

‘Table No- 5’: General Panchayat Election, Odisha 2002

PRI Elected Members	Total Members	Scheduled Caste Women	Scheduled Tribe Women	Backward Class Women (BCCW)	Reserved for Women (RW)	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	87547	7056	9164	8665	6529	31414
Sarapanch	6234	334	894	462	496	2188
Panchayat Samiti Member	6227	449	674	577	488	2188
Zilla Parishad Members	854	54	85	82	75	296
Total	100862	7895	10817	9786	7588	36086

Source: <https://sec.odisha.gov.in/panchayati-raj-result/>

‘Table No- 6’: General Panchayat Election, Odisha 2007

PRI Elected Members	Total Members	Scheduled Caste Women	Scheduled Tribe Women	Backward Class Women (BCCW)	Reserved for Women (RW)	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	87542	7172	9665	9148	5719	31704
Sarapanch	6234	344	907	471	466	2188
Panchayat Samiti Member	6233	455	699	632	422	2208
Zilla Parishad Members	854	58	85	88	70	301
Total	100863	8029	11356	10339	6677	36401

Source: <https://sec.odisha.gov.in/panchayati-raj-result/>

‘Table No- 7’: General Panchayat Election, Odisha 2012

PRI Elected Members	Total Members	Scheduled Caste Women	Scheduled Tribe Women	Backward Class Women (BCCW)	Reserved for Women (RW)	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	87551	9464	13191	13027	10961	46643
Sarapanch	6236	594	1161	662	780	3197
Panchayat Samiti Member	6235	621	955	894	803	3273

Zilla Parishad Members	854	81	119	126	140	466
Total	100876	10760	15426	14709	12684	53579

Source: <https://sec.odisha.gov.in/panchayati-raj-result/>

‘Table No- 8’: General Panchayat Election, Odisha 2017

PRI Elected Members	Total Members	Scheduled Caste Women	Scheduled Tribe Women	Backward Class Women (BCCW)	Reserved for Women (RW)	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	92027	10237	14531	13551	10649	48968
Sarapanch	6801	526	1385	731	852	3494
Panchayat Samiti Member	6800	685	1040	963	859	3547
Zilla Parishad Members	853	84	118		231	433
Total	106481	11532	17074	15245	12591	56442

Source: <https://sec.odisha.gov.in/panchayati-raj-result/>

‘Table No- 9’: General Panchayat Election, Odisha 2022

PRI Elected Members	Total Members	Scheduled Caste Women	Scheduled Tribe Women	Backward Class Women (BCCW)	Reserved for Women (RW)	Total Elected Women Members
Ward Member	91913	10403	14242		24446	49091
Sarapanch	6794	626	1078		1771	3494
Panchayat Samiti Member	6793	689	1034		1784	3547
Zilla Parishad Members	853	84	118		231	433
Total	106353	11802	16472		28232	56442

Source: <https://sec.odisha.gov.in/panchayati-raj-result/>

‘Table No- 10’: The Table shows the Elected Members in the Gram Panchayat election in 2022.

Position Hold	Name	Male/Female	Category
Sarpanch	Padmabati Pradha	Female	ST
Member Ward No-1	Anita Bagh	Female	ST
Member Ward No-2	Pramila Naik	Female	ST
Member Ward No-3	Ilabati Kusum	Female	SC
Member Ward No-4	Samira Mahapatra	Male	GEN

Member Ward No-5	Padmabati naik	Female	ST
Member Ward No-6	Rebati Bhanja	Female	SC
Member Ward No-7	Baidhei Pradhan	Female	ST
Member Ward No-8	Rupesh Dehury	Male	SC
Member Ward No-9	Nitu Patel	Female	OBC
Member Ward No-10	Mansi Chhatria	Female	ST
Member Ward No-11	Subal Pradhan	Male	ST
Member Ward No-12	Sobharam Bagh	Male	ST
Member Ward No-13	Nabaratna Nayak	Male	OBC

Source: Gram Panchayat Office record displayed in notice board (primary data)

‘Table No- 11’: The table shows the Elected Members in the Gram Panchayat election in 2017.

Position Hold	Name	Male/Female	Categoey
Sarpanch	Lambodhar Ping	Male	ST
Member Ward No-1	Vikari Ping	Male	ST
Member Ward No-2	Manjari Dehury	Female	ST
Member Ward No-3	Indrani Pradhan	Female	ST
Member Ward No-4	No namination	***	***
Member Ward No-5	Padmabati Naik	Female	ST
Member Ward No-6	Jayanti Patel	Female	OBC
Member Ward No-7	No Nomination	***	***
Member Ward No-8	Sasmita Chil	Female	SC
Member Ward No-9	Gabalu Karali	Male	SC
Member Ward No-10	Nalini Chhatria	Male	ST
Member Ward No-11	Banita Bagh	Female	ST
Member Ward No-12	Jyotshna Rani Bagh	Female	OBC
Member Ward No-13	Subaibi Palei	Female	OBC

Source: Gram Panchayat Office record displayed in notice board (primary data)

‘Table No- 12’: The table shows the Elected Members in the Gram Panchayat election in 2012.

Position Hold	Name	Male/Female	Categoey
Sarpanch	Padmabati Pradhan	Female	ST
Member Ward No-1	Rajkumari Pradhan	Female	ST
Member Ward No-2	Yoshda Kharsel	Female	SC
Member Ward No-3	Pankajini Luha	Female	SC
Member Ward No-4	Kailash Mahapatra	Male	GEN
Member Ward No-5	Yoshabanti Bhoi	Female	ST
Member Ward No-6	Anjali Nag	Female	SC
Member Ward No-7	Prabhasini Ping	Female	ST
Member Ward No-8	Santosini Chil	Female	SC
Member Ward No-9	Bijaya Krishana Jayapuria	Male	SC
Member Ward No-10	Mithila karali	Female	SC
Member Ward No-11	Bipin Nayak	Male	OBC
Member Ward No-12	Jyotshna Rani Bagh	Female	ST
Member Ward No-13	Subaini Palei	Female	OBC

Source: Gram Panchayat Office record displayed in notice board (primary data)

'Table No- 13': Male-Female Representation In Gram Panchayat Election In
Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat From 2022 To 2012.

	2022	2017	2012	2007	2002	1997
ST FEMALE	05	05	05			
ST MALE	03	03	00			
SC FEMALE	02	01	05			
SC MALE	01	01	01			
OBC FEMALE	01	02	01			
OBC MALE	01	00	01			
GEN FEMALE	00	00	00			
GEN MALE	01	00	01			

3. Results and discussion

From the Literature review, and study from different sources it is found that there are many challenges in the path of achieving the goal of women's political participation voter participation in the Kuturachuan Gramme Panchayat for the year 2022: The table displays the gender-based distribution of registered voters in three villages: Kirasasan, Kuturachuan, and Satakama. The voter participation in Kuturachuan Village was the highest, reaching 87.97%. Kirasasan had the lowest voter participation rate, with just 79.26% of eligible voters casting their ballots. Satakama, which has the highest number of eligible voters, had a voter turnout of 84.16% .Female voter turnout was somewhat greater in all three villages, indicating an active electorate among women. This suggests that the political empowerment of women, especially St Women, has been realised to a sufficient extent. It also displays the number of voters who cast their votes and calculates the voter turnout percentage for each village. Representation of Women in Odisha Panchayati Raj Elections (1997-2022): Several tables' present data from six elections held between 1997 and 2022. Each table breaks down the number of elected members across different categories:

Total Members

Scheduled Caste Women (SC Women)

Scheduled Tribe Women (ST Women)

Backward Class Women (BC Women)

Reserved for Women (Women elected to seats reserved for women candidates)

Total Elected Women Members (Sum of women elected across categories)

The information is further divided into positions within the Panchayati Raj system:

Ward Member

Sarapanch (Village Head)

Panchayat Samiti Member (Block Development Committee)

Zilla Parishad Member (District Council)

Greater voter turnout may be linked to enhanced representation and vigorous engagement in the political process. There has been a noticeable and gradual rise in the proportion of women being elected, indicating the implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions or societal shifts that promote women's involvement.

This might be associated with a rise in voter participation in recent times since enhanced awareness could contribute to the growth of the community and foster confidence in the voting system. Impact on local elections: The rise in the number of female candidates may have potentially affected the level of participation in the electoral process in villages such as

Kirasasan Kuturachuan and Satakarma. The level of participation in local government may be associated with the proactive steps in representation seen in the Panchayati Raj election data.

Obstacles to Political Participation of Women:

i) **Sexual violence:** Sexual violence is a major obstacle in the path of empowerment of women. Women often hesitate to engage in politics due to concerns about sexual violence in the workplace. In the 1990s, feminist political scientists began to acknowledge rape as a weapon of war, leading to a redefinition of political violence (Krook, M.L. 2020). This type of violence has many forms such as physical harassment, eve teasing, threats of violence, online trolling, etc. It can be changed by spreading education to respect the dignity of women.

ii) **Illiteracy:** Illiteracy poses a significant obstacle to women's advancement. In numerous parts of our country, girls continue to face restrictions from accessing educational institutions. Various social factors contribute to this issue. The insufficient educational initiatives by the government and other social organizations are hindering the empowerment of women and their active participation in the political arena

iii) **Lack of Family support:** Support of family provides ways and energy to the political empowerment of women. In India only 26% of families support women taking part in the political process (National Commission for Women). Due to the threat of domestic and sexual violence, women keep themselves away from voting and running for public office.

iv) **Political Factors:** Most of the women are politically not involved so women-friendly policies are yet to be seen. The path to progress of women is not clear so women do not see themselves fit for politics.

v) **Socio-Cultural factors:** This is one of the important factors women get limited time to get involved in political spares. Women have to perform multidimensional roles in the family as well as in society. Giving birth and bringing up the child demands attention and time. The conservative family culture also do not allow her to come out from home to perform political functions. Sometimes it is seen that women are just forced to contest elections as their male family members cannot contest due to restrictions such as reservation of seats.

vi) **Economic factors:** Women lack economic viability because of their traditional role in the family as well as in society. Participation in politics needs money. Political activities become expensive, for example arranging political meetings, contesting in elections, and election campaigns, etc.

vii) **Psychological Factors:** There are many psychological challenges always encountered by women in political participation. Fear of failure is a cause that keeps women away from taking a new step. In this regard, another notable point can be a lack of confidence. Discrimination, doubt about one's capability due to less exposure, lack of experience, and gender stereotypes are deeply rooted in the minds of most women. It is seen in society that women are less motivated or less encouraged to take up new challenges like active participation in political activities such as "dirty games" (Sindhuja, P. & Murugan, Dr. 2017).

viii) **Gender Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes prevent women's opportunities to take on new challenges as they take it as they don't belong in certain roles.

ix) **Tradition:** In many countries traditions and cultures are so strictly followed by the people that women are hardly provided with scope to join in the decision making process. Mostly women are bound by their traditions, so they are kept outside of politics and given the role to

deal with families and homes. This type of affairs keeps them away from active political activity. They hardly find time and energy to get them steps involved in such affairs.

4. Conclusion

The Empowerment of Scheduled Tribe Women is very important for a just society. Scheduled Tribes are also known as “Adivasi” which means primitive community. They have their own way of life and pride. Their religious belief and simplicity are quite remarkable and a point of fascination for all. As they mostly live in forest and hill-dominated areas that’s why modernity is far away from most of them. Their communication networks like road and transport, mobile networks, news, media, etc., are very rare and untouchable to them in many remote places. Education and awareness of government plans and programs are not playing as much role as they should be due to unreachable and poor communication. The government is trying its best to bring all of them into the mainstream but education like other parent problems is a major challenge. The reservation of seats in educational institutions, government jobs, and political fields is gradually making sense for their personal and community growth. These days many schemes are being designed at local government and state government levels that can reap the goal of sustainable development. There are many key issues and challenges which require a sincere and sensitive approach by all stakeholders. One of the prominent issues in this regard is education at all levels such as Primary to Higher Education. Many dynamic steps have been taken such as free education, mid-day meals at schools, free health checks in Low-cost hostels in primary schools, running of Tribal Schools and hostel campuses, etc. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are constantly working to eradicate poverty through many useful schemes. The formation and management of Self-Help Groups, Mission Shakti under the Child and Social Development Department are frontrunners.

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