

HUMILIATION LEAD TO GLORY

Name : Smt. Poonam Devi
Age : 30 Years
Education : Std. Vth
W/O : Sh. Brijesh Kumar Shrivastava
Caste Category : Schedule Castes (SC)
Caste Name : Washerman (Dhobi)
Village : Kesla
Block : Nareni
District : Banda, Uttar Pradesh

UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh constitutes for the most populous state in India and stands fifth in terms of its total geographical area i.e. 240.93 sq. km. Situated between 23°52'N and 31°28'N latitudes and 77°3' and 84°39'E longitudes, it is bounded by Bihar state on the East, Himachal Pradesh on the North West, Haryana on the West, Nepal in the North and Madhya Pradesh on the South & South West. The population density stands at 828 persons per sq. km and population is growing at a rate of 2.3% annually well above the national average of 1.94% as per Census 2001. (Bhandari, 2007). However the Census 2011 refers to some promising figures about the state of Uttar Pradesh. The literacy rate of the state has considerably improved from 56.3% (Census 2001) to 67.68%. But it is still much lower when compared to other states like Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh. As per the Census 2001, Uttar Pradesh ranked 31 among a total of 35 States and Union Territories.

With a total Population of 19.98 crores, Sex Ratio stands at 912 much lower than the national average of 933. Allahabad is the most populous district while Mahoba district ranks for the least populous in the state. Hinduism remains the dominant religion in Uttar Pradesh followed by a majority of 80% people. The second largest community of Muslims with 18% forms the second largest community. According to 2011 Census, OBC constitutes 40% of the U.P population while Dalits constitute 21% of the total population. Human development Report states that sharp differences in the level of Human Development prevail among the social and religious groups in the state. The socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes, Muslims and other backward classes is much lower as compared to higher states. (Keshav, 2011) High fertile gangetic plains occupy the major areas of Uttar Pradesh stretching from east to west. Economy of the state is agrarian and could be divided into four major economic zones i.e. Central Zone, Eastern Zone, Western Zone and Bundelkhand. Gangetic plains constitute the three economic zones of Western, Eastern and Central regions while Bundelkhand region forms part of the southern plateau. The state is divided into 721 districts, 821 development blocks and 51,914 Gram Panchayats. (Census 2011). The peripheral regions of Uttar Pradesh are home to a number of tribal communities like Baiga, Bhar, Chero, Kol, Korwa, Gond, Bind etc.

BANDA DISTRICT

Banda District in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh is famous for Shajar stone used in making jewellery and for the architecturally significant sites of Khajuraho and Kalinjar. The geographical location extends between 24° 53' to 25° 55' N latitudes and 80° 07' to 81° 34' E longitudes and geographical area of the district is 4460 sq km. of the total population, 84.68% lives in urban areas and 15.32% in the rural zone. Banda district is covered with dry deciduous forests and around 600 sq. km of the district is covered with forests. Some of the main forest species found are Kardhai, Tendu, Teak, Palash, Bamboo, medicinal shrubs, herbs etc. The district falls under the Chitrakoot division and Banda town is the district headquarters. The district has 01 Parliamentary constituency and 04 Assembly seats. Out of the total villages in the district, 660 villages are populated and 34 are uninhabited. (District Industrial Profile of Banda District). Human Development indicators reveal that per capita income and the literacy levels of the district is quite low especially among women. Of the employed population, around 70% of those are engaged in skilled, agricultural and forestry works, around 10% of the population engaged in craft and related works. More than 40% of the population remains unemployed. The migration of village people to the urban centers in search of work as daily wage laborers is very high. (District Analytic Report - Banda District, 2014). Ministry of Panchayati Raj in the year 2006 placed Banda in one of the country's 250 most backward districts of the total 640 districts. Currently it is one of those 34 districts in Uttar Pradesh being allocated funds from the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme for its socio-economic development



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DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE - BANDA

INDICATORS	BANDA	UTTAR PRADESH	INDIA
POPULATION	1799,410	199,812,341	1,210,854,997
SEX RATIO	863	912	940
SC POPULATION	21.55%	20.7%	16.63%
ST POPULATION	0.09%	0.6%	8.63%
LITERACY RATE (%)	66.67%	67.68%	74.04%
MALE	965,876	104,480,510	623,724,248
FEMALE	833,534	95,331,831	586,469,174

CENSUS 2011

PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

73rd Amendment 1992 added the part IX to the constitution titled “The Panchayats” which covered provisions of the Article 243 to 243 (O). It also includes a new eleventh schedule covering 29 subjects within the purview of Panchayats. The amendment implements Article 40 which states that “State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government”. It also puts constitutional obligation upon states to enact the Panchayati Raj Acts as per the provisions of PART IX. It provides for a three tier Panchayat System to be constituted in every state at the district, intermediate and village level. All the members at three tier level are to be indirectly elected amongst the elected members. But the village the Chairperson (Sarpanch) of Panchayat may be directly or indirectly elected as per the provisions of the state in its own Panchayati Raj Act. At every level of Panchayat, there remains a provision of seats reserved for the STs and SCs in proportion to their population at each level. One-third seats remains totally reserved of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections. Of all the reserved seats 1/3rd of the seats is reserved for the women members. An Amendment bill remains pending which seeks to increase the reservation for women upto 50% in our Panchayat system. A term of 5 years has been provided for the Panchayats and may be dissolved on specific grounds in accordance to the legislation of the State Government. Article 243F also provides for the disqualification from the memberships. As per the Article any person who is qualified to become an MLA is qualified to become a member of the Panchayat, but for Panchayat the minimum age prescribed is 21 years.

The 73rd Amendment provides constitutional status to Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha represents a forum whereby the deprived and the marginalized poor can influence the decision making affecting their lives. It is a body represented by members registered in the electoral rolls in context to a village comprised within the areas of Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha exercise powers and functions as per the provisions of the state law. These functions are related in ensuring equitable distribution of benefits to all, retaining transparency in the functioning of Gram Panchayats, active participation of STs, SCs and the women members in meetings, plan and prioritize the village development works etc.

Gram Panchayat constitutes the first executive tier of Panchayati Raj system and its size and term varies from state to state. It is presided over by President or Sarpanch who may be directly or indirectly elected as per the state’s provision. He supervises and co-ordinates the activities of Panchayat, participates in decision-making as well as in the election of Pradhan. Panchayats are entrusted with both the obligatory and discretionary functions in context to the civic and developmental functions. Additionally Panchayat also acts as the agent of Panchayat Samiti in executing developmental schemes at the village level.

(Misra, <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/panchayati-raj-2/3-tier-structure-of-panchayati-raj/66692>)

The second tier of Panchayat Samiti constitutes the Panchayat Samiti. The chairman convenes over the Panchayat Samiti meetings and guides the Panchayats in preparing plans and carrying out the programmes. It is his responsibility to ensure implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Samiti and its Standing Committees. The mode of Chairman’s selection is almost indirect in all the states. Panchayat Samiti is the most powerful body entrusted with functions of developmental activities like

promotion of village industries; augment the agricultural production; animal husbandry; promotion of co-operatives; construction of irrigation structures etc.

The topmost tier i.e. Zilla Parishad at the district level is primarily a coordinating body supervising all the activities of the Panchayats and Panchayat Samiti. It advises the government on developmental schemes and allocates required funds among the Samitis. The Parishad co-ordinates and consolidates the plans for Blocks in developmental arena.

PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN UTTAR PRADESH

With the enactment of UP-Panchayat RAJ Act, 1947, Uttar Pradesh introduced the Panchayati Raj system immediately after the independence in the state. a three tier system of Panchayats was formed through the enactment of the U.P. Kshetra Samitis and Zilla Parishads Act, 1961 (now, renamed as UP Kshetra Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats Adhiniyam, 1961). With the introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Government of Uttar Pradesh amended the aforesaid Acts, through the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994. History depicts that the first Village Panchayat in Uttar Pradesh was formed in the year 1920 whereby the village local bodies assisted in the administration of sanitation, agricultural, civil and criminal justice work. After India gained independence, the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act 1947 (also known as Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1947) signed by the then Governor General in the year 1947 was enacted by the government of Uttar Pradesh. However it was the Collector who appointed the Panchs of the Panchayats set up under the Act. (Report - Ministry of Panchayati Raj). During the period, three general bodies i.e. Gaon Sabha, Gaon Panchayat, and Panchayat Adalat or Nyaya Panchayats were formed at three levels. A total of 35,000 Gaon Panchayats and 8,000 Nyaya Panchayats started functioning for the rural population of Uttar Pradesh. To the day, Panchayati Raj has strengthened. (Sauni, 2017)

In a state like Uttar Pradesh, Panchayat elections hold an important substance because around 34% of the seats are shared by women members. But the states performance in devolution of powers to the Gram Sabha compared to other states fares well below the national average. The state ranks 20th compared to other states in devolving financial and administrative powers to the Panchayat. In Kerala for instance, Panchayats holds the authority in decision making over the activities of 29 departments. And for the same in Uttar Pradesh only 16 subjects related to 12 departments may be taken by the elected Panchayat representatives. More than 5 crore women members are eligible to vote in the UP Panchayat elections but the limited role of women in the process worsen their situation. Bihar was the first state to increase the share of women's participation upto 50% but Uttar Pradesh is yet to take the step. (Mathur, 2015). But overall Panchayat Raj system in Uttar Pradesh has contributed significantly and been successful. It has improved the overall infrastructure of the state and strengthened the primary education level. For ready access to medical treatment, mobile ambulances have been provided in remote villages. Electrification of rural villages, Public Distribution System through issuance of Ration cards, rural connectivity with the highways, improved drainage system, improvised and updated agricultural systems are some of the major areas where Panchayats have raised the socio-economic profile of villages in Uttar Pradesh. (Prasad, 2016). In the year 2002, 20 Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh were able to achieve a historic feat when they joined hands and came together with the health workers i.e. ASHA members and Anganwadi workers to stop female foeticide as a part of the "Let's girl be born" campaign.

FAMILY BACKGROUND of SMT. POONAM DEVI

Coming from a Scheduled Caste community, Smt. Poonam Devi lives in a joint family where she holds the responsibility of taking care of both the family's alongwith her father-in law. Due to the poor financial background of her family and social hindrance, she was unable to complete her schooling and married to Sh. Brijesh Srivas at a very tender age. With a literacy level of upto Std. Vth, Smt. Poonam Devi believes that education is the most important and invaluable gift which a responsible parent can offer to his/her children. She is the mother to three daughters and one youngest son but ensures their attendance at the government school. The primary source of livelihood comes from 10 bigha of land used for agriculture. But agriculture alone could not suffice to the needs of the joint family. So her husband Sh. Brijesh Shrivastava serves as a Gram Rojgar Sevak for the village. She manages the family's well-being from the earnings of agriculture and husband's salary. She assists her husband in the agricultural field work. Her elder brother-in-law and father-in-law are also involved in the agricultural work. Her family members contested election two times earlier for the post of Village Pradhan but lost.

CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES ADOPTED

Village Kesla was reeling under the problems of low agricultural yield, drying out of ponds and wells in the village, inconsistent supply of water for agricultural purpose, no pucca house in the village, lack of transparency in selecting beneficiaries towards the government schemes and rising level of poverty etc. Suffering humiliation from the elite class and ex Sarpanches of her village, Smt. Poonam Devi decided that the agendas for winning the local Panchayat elections will be the weakness set by her opponents in the past. After her family members losing election for 2 times in the past, the elite class of the village embarrassed her by saying – “you may contest elections 100 times but we will defeat you everytime you contest”. The humiliation by the senior administrative members touched her heart and set the tone for defeating her opponents and rise as a leader. She had a careful examination of the social and economic factors crucial for socio-economic development of the village which her opponents did not paid heed to while they served as Sarpanch. Among these factors were the poor implementations of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, lack of accountability in selecting beneficiaries towards Samajwadi Pension Scheme, uncaring the required water supply needs for agricultural purpose and connectivity of roads. Her first step was she reached the house of affected people who have been denied of their rights towards accessing the government schemes. Her ideology behind this initiative was to showcase that the present Sarpanch is functioning off the track and it is Smt. Poonam Devi who cares for them. There is really only one reason why people of Kesla are willing to throw the present Sarpanch out of the office and they have found someone better. Even though the Panchayat elections were scheduled after 9 months but she started early than her opponents could gain the momentum in elections. But in the back of her mind she assumed that she is behind their opponents and need to catch up with her opponent's challenges. She made her presence in every door so frequently that village was sick of seeing her so much and that's where she gained the trust and likeness of village people.

For her voters to remember her she developed and consistent and understandable message i.e. “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas” which defined the overall tenor of her campaign. Inspired by her relentless hard work and outwork, some women members were inspired to campaign for her. Smt. Poonam was instrumental in analyzing the situations in delivering authority and when to work in tandem with her team members. Accordingly several rallies were scheduled in different villages for the next six months. In her speech, Smt. Poonam Devi never spoke of any negative about her opponent or spoke in a mudslinging manner. She was very much aware of the village people’s psychology that if you speak anything unsavory or untrustworthy of your opponent’s character in front of the public, they will never trust you and it is very hard to change the voter’s mindset once the election dates are near. Such negative campaigning will risk in alienating a block of voters whose opinions about her opponents are already cast in stone. In the midst of campaigning, she and her team carried out a survey on Smt. Poonam Devi’s performance in the last 3 months. The results came quite astonishing which gifted her a competitive rating of 45% and depicted her the ground status in village Kelsa. On the basis of survey reports her team strategized to start afresh again of visiting and knocking on every door again. The voters start rolling their eyes when they saw Smt. Poonam Devi approaching them again which in turn created a bond of intimate relationship between the voters and Smt. Poonam. The team did set a goal of reaching 15 household and the 10 marginalized families every day. They concentrated on comparing the relevant and past records and the policy positions of the former Sarpanches. With these analyses, in her next rallies she focused on explaining the voters why policy decisions or any official actions taken during the tenure of the said Sarpanches weren’t effective and not good for the constituents. Apparently she also expressed her strategized plans to be delivered once she gains the office of Sarpanch. Coming from the joint family Smt. Poonam Devi never hint a temptation of going alone be her team members or be her voters. With all the hard work and efforts Smt. Poonam Devi was able to win the Panchayat elections by 174 votes and consequently served as the Pradhan of Mahui. She served the term for a period of five years since December 2015 onwards.

A **EVEMENTS**

After gaining the power and position as Pradhan, Smt. Poonam Devi assessed the shortage, lack of transparency, lack of technical supervision, lack of convergence, low quality of house, unavailed loans by the beneficiaries and the marginalized sections of village people under the Pradhan MANTRI Awaas Yojana. She targeted the genuinely deprived, objective and verifiable households under the umbrella of this scheme. Under her leadership Pucca houses were availed to the needy section of the society through assistance at the expense of Rs. 1.30 lakhs. While selecting beneficiaries Smt. Poonam took special care using the housing deprivation parameters in the Socio Economic and Caste (SECC) 2011 data to be verified by the Gram Sabha. The project was successful in providing pucca houses with basic amenities to all the households in the village living in kutcha and dilapidated houses. The agricultural yield were very low in the previous successive years because of the soil erosion in the sloppy agricultural areas. Smt. Poonam Devi with the help of soil experts was successful in analyzing the fact that it was due to the soil unable to retain the runoff water. Also there is lack of consistent supply of water to the agricultural field required for adequate yield of crops. To counter the issue she first introduced Land Levelling was pursued

in the agricultural field using surface irrigation methods to improve surface drainage of the non-irrigated field. This practice control erosion from slopping land surfaces and retains runoff water. Another concept i.e. Land Bunding was introduced to create obstruction across the path of surface runoff to reduce the velocity of flowing water. These bunds stand well in shallow, medium and deep soils and prevents the erosion of soils to a larger extent. Smt. Poonam Devi having an agricultural background had the experience and knowledge in solving these issues. Only problem was funding which she utilized from the Gram Panchayat treasury meant for utilization in economic development of the village. To counter the water issue, ponds and wells in the village were renovated to provide a long-lasting livestock water source. The ponds were deepened to a required extent of sustaining water livestock and also silted in the meantime. For the better connectivity to the suburban areas of her village she was able to build up a murrum road which connected each house to the permanent road.

Most of the deprived people couldn't avail the benefits of Samajwadi Pension Scheme launched by the Government of Uttar Pradesh to encourage savings among the people living below the poverty line and provide them financial assistance. Poverty being a major issue for the Kesla village and Uttar Pradesh state, Smt. Poonam Devi ensured people get enrolled under this pension scheme. With all the BPL family enrolled under Samajwadi Pension Scheme, the children of the family also got enrolled in the nearest government school and assured an attendance of minimum 70% at school every month. With a single mission Smt. Poonam Devi was able to fulfill two objectives i.e. getting maximum children enrollment at school and pension to the deprived families of her village. Without the ration cards, the marginalized and deprived people could not avail the subsidized food grain under the Public Distribution System. Smt. Poonam Devi with the help of government block officials was successful in crediting the deprived people with a ration card whereby they were able to access 35 kg of food grains under the subsidized rate. Low attendance of women and the backward class at the Gram Panchayat meetings was one of her concern in making the meetings fruitful. She achieved this by motivating them and providing them a sitting fee in the Panchayat meetings.

Major Highlights of her good work

- 27 families were able to benefit a shelter for their family and themselves under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna. With shelter their children were also enrolled in the government schools without paying a single penny. The children enrolled regularly attended the school scoring 70% attendance every month (a pre-requisite for availing the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna) and also benefited from the Mid-day Meal scheme.
- Under the Samajwadi Pension Scheme, 134 families were enrolled to encourage savings per month and avail a pension from the state government every month. The initiative by Smt. Poonam helped control the poverty scaling higher in the village.
- The Public Distribution Scheme saw a new rise when it was implemented successfully with careful and required selection of beneficiaries. 99 families were issued new ration cards and thus could take home 35 kg of subsidized food grain to feed their family.
- To control soil erosion and resolve other issues in agricultural arena, Smt. Poonam Devi practiced Land Levelling and Land Bunding of 1000 running meter in the agricultural fields. These initiatives helped the farmers in retaining water from run-off in the sloppy fields while reducing their velocity.

Similarly Ponds were deepened to ensure the availability of water to agricultural work throughout the year. This also sustained the water livestock which village people later used it for fish farming and earned livelihood for many people.

- There was a sharp increase in the participation rate of women members and other backward class people in the Panchayat Meetings under the leadership of Smt. Poonam Devi. Women started raising their voice against the exploitation and violence in the village to shape a better future of village for their children.
- Some of the houses in the outskirts of the village weren't connected to the main road of the village which hindered the movement of those families in the general and social affairs of the community. It was Smt. Poonam Devi who connected those homes with murrum roads from their homes to the main village road.

LESSONS LEARNT

Despite the family background of losing to Panchayat elections and suffering humiliation under the hands of elite class village people, Smt. Poonam Devi was instrumental in mustering courage to fight against them alone for herself and the glory of her family. She never used the wrong ways of winning her voters by mudslinging her opponent. While contesting elections Smt. Poonam Devi was ecstatic in remaining within the boundaries of political ethics and persuade her voters in voting for her. Without having any previous experience in campaigning for elections, Smt. Poonam Devi could assume the psychology of voters approaching them and successfully building an intimate bond with them. In the process she outworked all her opponents and proved that theory of Politics – “the harder it is, the better it works in campaigning”. While she and her team were strategizing to win her the elections, Smt. Poonam Devi had a tangential way of delegating authority to her team members and in resultant proved successful for her. Without investing a single penny, she was able to inspire women members to work for her with a simple ideology of showing concern and care for them. This proved her leadership characteristics. With a mere literacy up to Std. Vth, Smt. Poonam Devi could analyze the agricultural problems in a conceptual manner and involve herself with the Soil scientists to augment the agricultural yield and provide them a better livelihood. She is always on a mission in building up a good rapport and relation with concerned departments for the benefit of common people without any discrimination.

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