

SOCIAL CAUSE TRIGGERED TO BECOME A SARPANCH

Name : Smt. KusumKavre
Age : 38 Years
Education :VIIIth Standard
W/O : Sh. Antar Singh Kavre
Caste Category : Schedule Tribe (ST)
Caste Name : Gond
Village : Kesla
Block : Kesla
District : Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh

MADHYA PRADESH

Popularly known as “Heart of India” Madhya Pradesh is India’s second largest state with an area of 3,08,252 sq km. The state has four agro-climatic zones and is a unique mix of indigenous tribes and groups, castes and communities etc. Madhya Pradesh is the sixth most populous state in the country contributing 6% to the total population of India with a population of 72.6 million. Of the total population, 72.4% population resides in the rural areas. Home to a significant percentage of tribal population, Madhya Pradesh constitutes for more than one-fourth of tribal demography of the total population and 14.7% of India’s total tribal demography. The state configures for the highest number of Scheduled Tribes in India and thus referred to tribal state of India. As per the Tendulkar Committee Report 2009, nearly 48.6% of the population lives below the poverty line and as per Multidimensional Poverty Index, about 68.1% of the state’s population is poor. (N.R. Bhanumurthy, 2016).

Madhya Pradesh as a state performs poorly in most of the human development indicators. For example it is one of the most food insecure states of the country and falls in the extremely alarmingly category as per the Indian State Hunger Index (IFPRI, 2008). As per the reports by National Family Health Survey, the state ranks in one of the lowest nutrition and health indicators in the country. For example the state ranks in the bottom five in terms of women with Body Mass Index <18.5 (41.7%). The Gender Development Index of Madhya Pradesh stands at 0.516 much lower than the national average of 0.590 as on 2006. (UNDP)

The state is gifted with rich mineral resources and has the largest reserves of diamond and copper in India. Madhya Pradesh is the sole producer of diamonds in India. Other significant mineral reserves are manganese; dolomite; methane; coal etc. The thickest coal seam (135 m) of Asia is found at the Singrauli coalfield in the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh. Besides that Madhya Pradesh is a manufacturing base for a number of medium scale and large scale industries from diverse sectors like cement, automobile, auto-components, agro-processing, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals etc. Jawad and Neemuch of Madhya Pradesh belong to one of the seven major limestone clusters in India and hence provide easy access to

critical raw material resource for the cement industry. The state has a total limestone reserve of 3625.9 million tonnes spread across 15 districts.

Natural resources including agro-based products, forest products and minerals, the state policy and incentives and its central location are the reason why Madhya Pradesh attracts major investments in all the sectors. Report by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, 2009 figures for 0.16 billion of FDI inflows to the state in term period from 2000 to 2009.

Madhya Pradesh stands among the largest producers of pulses, oilseeds and soybeans in the country. Some major crops grown in the state are sugarcane, wheat, rice, cotton, rapeseed, mustard, soybean, arhar etc. in the year 2006-07, Madhya Pradesh ranked as the largest producer of oilseeds, pulses and soybean in the country. It is also one of the major cotton producing states in India with large number of cotton textile mills clustered around Ujjain, Dewas and Malanpur. With a forest area of 94,689.4 sqkm accounting for nearly 31% of the total states area, Madhya Pradesh has largest area covered by forests among all the Indian states. The state accounts for nearly 25% of all tendu leaves produced in India. State government of Madhya Pradesh has taken all efforts to build good National Highways with Public-Private partnerships. The state is well connected to major cities of the country, consumer markets and ports on the west coast such as Kandla and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust. Owing to its history, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has declared three locations in the state as heritage sites: Buddhist monuments at Sanchi, rock shelters of Bhimbetka and Jagadambika temples at Khajuraho. The Directorate of Archaeology, Archives and Museums, takes utmost care to preserve more than 300 monuments and 22 museums across the state. The Khajuraho festivals of dance and Tansen music festivals in Gwalior are among the cultural festivals of Madhya Pradesh state.

HOSHANGABAD DISTRICT

With its headquarters located at Hoshangabad city, Hoshangabad district is located in the Narmadapuram region of Madhya Pradesh. The district encompasses a geographical area of 6,703 sqkm and a total population of 12,41,350 including 6,48,725 males and 5,92,625 females as per 2011 census. The sex ratio of the district stands at 914 females per 1000 males and literacy rates at 75.29%. (<https://www.datanetindia->

[ebooks.com/District_Factbook/Madhya_Pradesh/Hoshangabad](https://www.datanetindia-ebooks.com/District_Factbook/Madhya_Pradesh/Hoshangabad)). It consists of 7 Tehsils, 7 Blocks and 428 Gram Panchayats with a population density of 185 inhabitants per sqkm. River Narmada and River Tawa forms the lifeline of the districts demography and these

two rivers join together at Village Bhadra Bhan and holy mela is also organized in this spot on the occasion of Kartik Purnima. Northern boundary of the district is River Narmada, Betul district lies in the South, Harda district faces with the western and south western boundaries and Narsinghpur and Chhindwara districts close to the north-eastern and south-eastern sides of Hoshangabad district.

Agriculture remains the most important occupation for the people since the land is quite fertile and farmers enjoy good canal irrigation facilities from Tawa dam throughout the year. Their major income from yield of wheat, soyabean, sugarcane, gram, mung bean etc. Hoshangabad also stands as one of the Soya Bean producer district and the largest Wheat producer district in India. (Madhya Pradesh, 2010)



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE – HOSHANGABAD

INDICATORS	HOSHANGABAD	MADHYA PRADESH	INDIA
POPULATION	165,749	72,626,809	1,210,854,997
SEX RATIO	907	931	940
SC POPULATION	17%	15.6%	16.63%
ST POPULATION	6.2%	21.1%	8.63%
LITERACY RATE (%)	83.8%	69.32%	74.04%
MALE	86,910	37,612,306	623,724,248
FEMALE	78,839	35,014,503	586,469,174

CENSUS 2011

STATUS OF WOMEN IN MADHYA PRADESH

The under-estimated role of women in various economic sectors has led to the under-presentation of women in our country. International Labour Organization has reported a number of factors underlining the role of women like unequal access to stable employment, perpetuation and accentuation of job segregation, differences in men's and women's paid wages etc. In Madhya Pradesh state majority of women work as cultivators and agricultural Labourers. Further these women as cultivators, unpaid laborers and laborers in their own farmland contribute to the quantum of work much higher and tedious to that of men. They play a significant role in sowing, weeding, harvesting in agricultural jobs. (Women Status in MP and Planned Interventions - A Gender Review , 2010). The state currently reserves 54% for women in the local Panchayat level. Also Madhya Pradesh stands as one of the leading states in India where women representatives are being empowered to lead and monitor the implementation of flagship schemes. (UN Women and the Government of Madhya Pradesh announce special mahila sabhas for women to monitor local development in Sagar district, 2012). Statistics suggests that women Sarpanch and Panch in Madhya Pradesh state have not only established themselves as effective leaders of the community but also have been successful in subverting male dominance over these years. Women candidates have defeated male contestants even in general seats demolishing the misconception of male political superiority. Also the number of contestants vying for the reserved seats has gradually increased in successive elections. One Sarpanch in Madhya Pradesh represents 1695 persons and thus nearly 12000 women Sarpanches across the state represent well over 2 crore people. (Khare, 2013)

PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

Panchayats constitute the local self-governments as mandated by our Constitution. Constitution says three tiers of Panchayats are to be constituted through elections in a term of five years. It envisages that

the Panchayats are to function as institutions of local government and prepare plans and execute schemes for economic development and social justice. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj set up in the year 2004 envisages for attaining decentralized and participatory local self-government through the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The ministry visions in making Panchayati Raj Institutions as efficient, effective and transparent vehicle towards for the local governance, social change and encouraging states to devolve powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, their Capacity Building and creation of a vibrant interface between the rural people and the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The major functions of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj may be summed up as follows.

- I. To monitor the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution
- II. Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj Institutions
- III. Promote decentralized planning and strengthen the District Planning Committees
- IV. Devolve powers to Panchayats – Funds, Functions and Functionaries
- V. Strengthen Gram Sabhas
- VI. Promote e-governance in Panchayats
- VII. Support states to build capacities of Panchayats
- VIII. Implementation of Panchayats (extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 [PESA]
- IX. Promote accountability through up-to-date and accurate accounts disclosure, regular audit and social audits

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 made provisions in which the state will have to provide for conducting the Panchayat elections at regular intervals of five years, formation of a State Election Commission to conduct elections in lieu of Panchayati Raj Institutions, setting up of State Finance Commissions for a term period of five years, creation of a three tier Panchayati Raj Structure, reservation of women in Panchayats and reservation of seats for the ST/SCs in Panchayats in proportion to the demography and a minimum age for contesting elections to PRIs. 50% Reservation of seats including that of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes is a mandatory provision

Panchayati Raj Institutions as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution are responsible for economic development and social justice to be achieved through participatory planning process. Article 243G of the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution delineates the role of PRIs in the planning, implementation and monitoring of centrally sponsored schemes. Panchayats rely more on transfer of grants from the state governments as per the recommendations of the State Finance Commission. (Dwivedi, 2013). Besides tax sharing, State Finance Commission reviews the financial position of Panchayats thereby making recommendations on issues like duties, taxes, fees and grants to be provided from the consolidated fund of the states. Article 243J of provides for the legislature of a state to make provisions with respect to the maintenance of accounts by the Panchayats and the auditing of such accounts. (MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ - COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES, 2017)The auditing of such accounts is to be done through the offices of Director (Local Audits) as well as through the office of Accountant General.

As a result of the enactment of this Act; 2,32,278 Panchayats at the village level; 6022 Panchayats at the intermediate level and 535 Panchayats at the district level have been constituted successfully in our

country and manned by more than 29 lakhs elected representatives of Panchayats at all the levels. This is the broadest representative base that exists in any country around the globe. The role of Panchayati Raj Institutions remains very crucial since they provide an opportunity to the villagers to participate in their own development as well as implement different developmental programs in coordinated action at the grassroots level for the benefit of disadvantaged sections of the society. The linkage between financial, political and economic decentralization remains the key to successful local self-governance. (Panchayat Raj System in India, 2012)

PANCHAYAT SYSTEM IN MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1993 was enacted to strengthen and empower the Panchayat institutions in effective involvement of the institutions in local administration and development activities. Panchayat institutions were to make more democratic through democratic decentralization, greater participation from the people, effective local self-governance and act as agents of economic and social justice. This Act was to serve as the backbone for all changes and development carried out in the sphere of Panchayats in the state and the Act was drafted in conformity to the objectives, substance and directives of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The structure can be illustrated as follows:

GRAM PANCHAYAT

All people listed in the voter list of the village are to form the members of Gram Panchayat. The meeting should be conducted at least four times in a year. The required quorum is one-tenth of the total members of the Gram Sabha. The Sarpanch or UpSarpanch presides over the meeting and the Secretary of the Gram Panchayat has to convene the same. As required by the Zila Panchayat or Janpad Panchayat or Collector or if one-third of the total members of the Gram Sabha submit a request in writing, an extra meeting may be called for the same. A Gram Panchayat with 50% or less of seats reserved for both SCs and STs has 25% seats reserved for the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) on a rotational basis. Seats are to be filled by direct election. Significantly, the Act reserves one-third of the total number of seats of Sarpanches within a block for women. Village Panchayats are to take care of sanitation, maintenance of water resources, construction of roads, building, bridges, latrines, lighting of village streets, prevention of contagious diseases in the village, promotion of youth and family welfare, establishment and management of market and melas, control over entertainment shows, maintenance of Panchayat property etc. they hold the power to levy tax on land or building, tax on private latrines, lighting tax, market fees, fee on registration of cattle sold in any market under the control of Gram Panchayat.

JANPAD PANCHAYAT

It is the second tier of Panchayat system constituted at the Block level and consists of members from State Legislative Assembly, Co-operatives, Marketing Societies etc. A Janpad Panchayat has been divided into constituencies and each constituency is comprised of population not less than 5000. Reservation of seats for the STs, SCs and women are in accordance with the guidelines adopted by Gram Panchayat. Every Janpad Panchayat needs to constitute 5 standing committees namely General Administration Committee, Agriculture Committee, Education Committee, Cooperation and Industries Committee and Communication and Works Committee. The Panchayat has to take prime responsibility in Integrated Rural Development programs, employment programs, arrangement in connection with local pilgrimage and

festivals, agriculture, social forestry, set-up of cottage industries, management of public ferries public markets, melas, etc. and any other function with the approval of the State Government and the Zila Panchayat. Janpad Panchayat holds ultimate power to impose tax on theatre and other public entertainment, fees for any licensee or permission granted by the Janpad Panchayat and for use and occupation of lands or other properties vested in or maintained by the Janpad Panchayat.

ZILA PANCHAYAT

Zila Panchayat acts at the district level for a term period of 5 years with members elected from its constituencies; Chairperson of District Cooperatives and Development Bank; all members of the Lok Sabha representing the district. The President and Vice-President of Zila Panchayat are elected for a term period of 5 years and the reservation of seats are in accordance to the principle followed by Gram Panchayat and Janpad Panchayat. It controls and supervises the administration of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and other functions assigned to DRDA by the state government. A government appointee Chief Executive Officer acts as the Secretary of the Zila Panchayat and is accountable towards keeping and maintaining records. A Zila Panchayat is to co-ordinate and control the functioning of Gram and Janpad Panchayats, consolidate on the plans forwarded by them, coordinate the demands for grants for special purposes received from the Janpad Panchayats and forward them to the State government; secure the execution of plans, projects or other works common to two or more Janpad Panchayats of the district. It is also to advise the state government on social forestry family welfare, welfare of the disabled, women, youth, child, destitute etc. and exercise other such powers which the state government entrusts on it. (Kumar, 2002)

FAMILY BACKGROUND of SMT. KUSUM KAVRE

Married at a very younger age, Smt. KusumKavre is blessed with two sons and two daughters. Her two daughters after completing their higher secondary education have been married. Similarly her two sons are engaged as guest teachers in the primary schools of her village. Coming from a very poor family and unable to impart higher education to her daughters lacking financially, she got them married. She is a Scheduled Tribe living in a semi-pucca house in village Kesla, 35 km from the district of headquarters of Hoshangabad. The main source of income comes from agricultural land of 2.5 hectares and husband's monthly wages working as watchman in the nearby zone. In spite of such a meagre livelihood income, Sh. Antar Singh Kavre and her wife ensured that their children complete their high schooling.

CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES ADOPTED

Once Smt. Kavre went to the weekly haat situated along the roadside in her village to fetch her domestic items. In front of her a tribal pregnant women who also visited the haat for the same met with a fateful accident by the truck passing by and ultimately got killed. In a stroke two lives were lost. This incident moved her heart and she decided to stand for the shifting of the weekly rural haat to some other safe place. She mobilized women members and other people from her village to stand against the toad incident to make people aware about the safety concerns in carrying out the affairs of weekly haat. They

approached the Panchayat Samiti for the same but no such favorable response was received. This incident moved her to contest the Panchayat election due in the coming years and take a stand in resolving the development and safety issues of the village. A group of women members along with some male members influenced by her leadership from the road accident approached her and motivated her to fight the Panchayat elections.

The incident became the prime message on which the whole strategy to position Smt. KusumKavre was based upon. Her positive message campaigns would talk only about the developmental ideas to be executed in the village for its social and economic upliftment. Smt. Kavre's campaign messages were so overwhelming that her opponents failed to respond to any endorsements or attract volunteers to contact the voters. Her message was specific to vote for an issue i.e. the road incident concerning the safety of the village people without hampering the economic business affairs. Secondly she divided the demography based on variations in voter base and ideological division. The opposing ideology encompassed that of business oriented people reaping benefits from the weekly haats along the roadside. Thirdly her team started campaigning through persuasion and mobilizing the village people in voting for Smt. Kavre. The team identified a supporter base in the village, persuaded them to increase their supporters and then get those people to poll for Smt. KusumKavre. They targeted specific periods and time zones like melas and other social programs in the village to frame the campaign and positioned Smt. Kavre as the best candidate for the socio-economic upliftment of the village affairs. Another strategy which the team successfully implemented was comparing Smt. Kavre with all the other incumbents fighting for the same position. But the comparison was based only on positive terms which presented the village electors to point out the reasons to not re-elect the incumbent but added reasons to elect Smt. Kavre. In most of the campaigns Smt. Kavre highlighted the issues that were strongly identified by men as important. Since voters tend to remember the activities of men candidate and appearance and family of female candidates, so triggering on issues identified by men as important gained her the compassion vote which readily enlarged her voter base. So with all the help from women members and her zeal to do something for the village, Smt. Kavre won the Panchayat elections by a huge margin and served as the Sarpanch from 2010 to 2015.

A **IEVEMENTS**

Smt. Kavre's minimal literacy and inexperience were the main hurdles in executing her duties as a Sarpanch of the village. She was totally ignorant about the government schemes and development program to raise the socio-economic upliftment of a village. She approached an NGO named "Hope Center" to learn about the administrative affairs of a democratic Panchayat system. She was enrolled in various training programs at the Block level which imparted the basics of Panchayat functioning. Winning the trust and votes of the Kesla people was a major achievement in the life of Smt. KusumKavre. After gaining the leadership her first target was to shift the weekly haat from roadside to a safer place. Resolution for shifting village haat-bazaar was presented at the Gram Sabha but the business community stood against the resolution. With all her efforts and after multiple meetings, she was able to convince the business community and a resolution was passed in Gram Sabha for shifting the haat-bazaar to a safer

place. A weekly haat bazaar was set up replacing the Kutcha stalls and muddy floor with raised floors and permanent roofing. This in result has removed zero business hours and distress sale which earlier used to occur during the rainy season by products damage. Additionally farmers were provided opportunity in initiating new small scale businesses thus creating economic value through livelihood option. On one hand, it boosted the inflow of tax to the Panchayat and on the other hand improved facilities for village level sellers and buyers. She conducted a Need Assessment of the village and accordingly starting working simultaneously on infrastructure building, augmenting the agricultural yield, up keeping the sanitation and benefiting the destitute with social welfare programs of the government. Village Kesla used to suffer from the contagious diseases arising out of improper sanitation may be due to open defecation, unhygienic practices at home etc. Demography of Kesla village due to their traditional beliefs were reluctant in building toilets at home. Under the leadership of Smt. KusumKavre, individual toilets were constructed with the help of government schemes and an extensive awareness drive was done making people aware about the benefits of toilets and hygienic practices resulting 90% of toilets in use by the villagers. This initiative improved the health of people, accessibility of services and increase in Women's Dignity. Availability of water in the region varies from season to season and so agriculture remains confined to a single crop throughout the year. Farmers were entirely dependent on monsoon rains to recharge their wells and due to lack of proper irrigation facilities, agricultural production were severely hampered. Raising the problem at Gram Panchayat and Janpad Panchayat, it was finally decided to build a Check dam in the village. The check dam led to more intensive cultivation resulting in higher yields per hectare with double cropping pattern, with increased soil humidity, capturing runoff rain water, silt and promoting growth of surface vegetation. In a way this also increased the quality of life through increased availability of water for domestic use thus decreasing women's workloads. Lack of playground in the schools hampered engagement of children in different games and physical activities thus making schooling as monotonous and unattractive. Absence of physical activity leads to improper development of motor skills in children. Since both the sons of Smt. KusumKavre are teachers in school they consulted with their mother and accordingly in the Gram Panchayat meeting it was decided that playground shall be provided in schools. After the playground was made at Kesla High School, the enrollment of children and their attendance at schools increased considerably. To fulfill the dearth of proper burial ground in Kelsa village, Smt. KusumKavre with the help of government officials approved a government land for burials and fenced the same. The previous burial ground used to be full of ditches and uneven with improper facilities available. In some instance people were forced to re-use the same tombs for burial since there were hardly any spaces left for cremation. Village Dhasain and Morepani being in the sub-urban zone inflicted with poor drainage facilities remained cut-off from the main village. A CC road connecting both the villages with the main road was constructed to improve the communication system which in rainy season hindered the movement of these sub-urban people. Along with a proper drainage system for the villages were planned and executed under the expert guidance of Janpad Panchayat. Simultaneously two numbers of bridges were constructed at Bhumkapura under the term period of Smt. Kavre. Bhumkapura village in rainy season gets cutoff from the mainstream due to river overflow which was the only and main route connecting the Kesla village and other towns.

Under the banner of Kapildhara scheme, the farmers of Kesla village holding one to two and a half acre of land were made the joint beneficiaries of a well farm pond. These ponds served irrigation water to the

agricultural fields. Such beneficial schemes were never in knowledge of the farmers. It was Smt. Kavre who disseminated the government scheme and other social scheme benefits to the demography of Kesla village. Similarly under the animal husbandry welfare projects cattle sheds were built to provide shelter to the roaming cattle in the village. These cattle were provided food grains from the government schemes and simultaneously dairy farming was carried out later on. The attendance record of Panchayat meetings witnessed a considerable increase in the membership from women and backwards caste members under the leadership of Smt. Kavre. Four Gram Sabha meetings were held consistently every year under her term.

Major Highlights of Works

- Playground at Kesla High School worked as a catalyst in higher enrollment of children and their retention at school. It generated interest in pursuing the higher education who earlier used to drop out due to lack of interest.
- Earthen Check Dam was constructed in villages to for higher agricultural yield and multiple cropping throughout the year. The dam was a source for the domestic use by women members who earlier had to travel long distances to fetch the same.
- A burial ground encompassing all the facilities was constructed to provide a place for the dead to rest since there was hardly any empty space available for burial forcing people to re-use tombs.
- 2 numbers of CC roads were constructed in the village connecting the rural sub-urban villages of Dhasain and Morepani with the main village road of Kesla.
- 5 numbers of cattle sheds were constructed to shelter and care of roaming cattle in the village. This sheds later on became a base for dairy farming.
- A weekly Haat Bazaar was constructed which served as a platform for both the buyers and sellers to carry out the business. The rural haat aslo paid taxes to the Panchayat system and generated livelihoods for many.
- Counteracting the problem of poor sanitation and open defecation in the village, individual toilets and a community toilet was constructed. Around 200 numbers of individual toilets were constructed in the whole village.
- Under the banner of Kapildhara Koop scheme, 15 well farm ponds were dug to store water during the off season thus providing water throughout the year for agricultural purpose.

LESSONS LEARNT

Smt. KusumKavre campaigns focused on building networks which helped creating a platform and bring together the village mass to stand against a common purpose of shifting the haat-bazaar to a common place for the safety and security of all. It proves that women can collectively strategize and prepare action plans according to the felt needs of the community and implement them thereafter. Within a democratic set-up, a group or a collective holds power. This network or group acts as a pressure group on the government and civil society to work for a better cause. Highlighting issues strongly identified by men and women judged by their appearance and family background became a myth for the people when Smt. Kavre campaigned on issues relative to men. Smt. Kavre was able to win the confidence of male members

when she used the socio-economic spectrum of shifting the haat bazaar to a safer place. Basic training on the role and functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions is instrumental in bringing women out of the assigned roles and space and helping them claim their rights and function effectively. So training should be an ongoing process. In this case, Smt. Kusum was able to execute her duties effectively when helped by an NGO and after receipt of proper training.

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