

Name : Smt. SunitaUike
Age : 39 Years
Education :XIIth Standard
W/O : Sh. GolmanUike
Caste Category : Schedule Tribe (ST)
Caste Name :Gond
Village : AdarshPipariya
Block : Bhimpur
District : Betul, Madhya Pradesh

MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh, the heart of India is bordered by Uttar Pradesh on the northeast, Maharashtra on the South, Chhattisgarh on the east, Rajasthan on the northwest and Gujarat on the west. With Bhopal as the capital, the state is located at 21.2°N-26.87°N and longitude 74°02'-82°49' E and constitutes for the second largest state in terms of area and thickly covered by forest region. The state comprises for all types of geographical structures including plains, hills, forests and rivers. Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Pench, Panna and Satpura National parks are home to diverse ecology in the state. Madhya Pradesh is gifted with numerous rivers, the important ones being Narmada, Chambal, Betwa, Mahanadi, Sone, Tapti etc. Total population of Madhya Pradesh counts at 7.27 crores with a density of 236 persons per km². Hinduism (90.89%) religion is majorly followed by the demography followed by Islam (6.75%) and a mere percentage of population follow Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism etc. As per the reports by India State Hunger Index (2008) compiled by the International Food Policy Research Institute, the malnutrition status in Madhya Pradesh is quite alarming and rates on a severity index between Ethiopia and Chad.

(<https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/madhya+pradesh.html>)

Madhya Pradesh state is comprised of 51 districts with 51 Zilla Panchayats, 369 Tehsil, 313 Janpad Panchayats and 23043 Village Panchayats. The economy of Madhya Pradesh largely depends upon agriculture and industries. Being one of the leading producers of urad, mung and arhar; 70% of the total workforce is dependent upon agriculture. The state has got many textile mills and artificial silk manufacturing plants. A sizeable population in the village makes traditional crafts such as chanderi sarees, clay and leather toys etc. Madhya Pradesh state is gifted with rich mineral resources which includes dolomite, iron-ore, coal, rock phosphate, copper, bauxite, diamond etc. diamond mine at Panna is the largest mine in the country having recoverable reserves of about 1 million carats. The enriched culture and dominance in the state can be traced from the paintings found near the caves and temples in the Vindhya region. The painting of Bhimteka Rock shelters dates back to that of 10000 BC. The state is also home to many Gharanas in classic and folk music like Gwalior Gharana, MaiharGharana, SeniaGharana etc. (<http://www.mponline.in/About/profile/index.html>)

BETUL DISTRICT

Located in one of the southern districts of Madhya Pradesh, Betul is situated almost wholly on the Satpura plateau between the valley of Narmada on the north and bharer plains on the south. With a population of 15.8 lakhs, Betul district in Madhya Pradesh is the 17th most populous region. Total geographical area stands at 10 thousand sqkm and forms the fourth biggest district by area in the state. Literacy rate of the district stands at 69% with 77% of male and 61% of female being literate. There are 8 sub-districts in the state with Bhainsdehi rated the most populous and Chicholi as the least populous sub-district. Of the total population 42% belongs to Schedule Tribe categories and 10% to the Schedule Caste. Agriculture serves as the main lifeline for



Betul district associated with positive factors like availability of fertile land, moderate annual rainfall etc. The rich biodiversity and flora also makes Betul a very fast booming forest industry. In fact Betul stands as home to one of the largest reservoirs of wood in the entire Asian continent. Overall 50% of the population is engaged in either main or marginal work. 43% of the male population work as full time workers and 14% involved in marginal work. Similarly 21% of the total female population is engaged as main workers and 22% as marginal workers. The major occupation of the district people either to work as laborers, cultivators, artisans etc.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE - BETUL

INDICATORS	BETUL	MADHYA PRADESH	INDIA
POPULATION	1,575,362	72,626,809	1,210,854,997
SEX RATIO	971	931	940
SC POPULATION	10%	15.6%	16.63%
ST POPULATION	42%	21.1%	8.63%
LITERACY RATE (%)	69%	69.32%	74.04%
MALE	799,236	37,612,306	623,724,248
FEMALE	776,126	35,014,503	586,469,174

CENSUS 2011

PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

Panchayati Raj Institution stands as the grass root democracy in India. It is the self-government which is meant for providing basic infrastructure facilities initiate for development process at the rural grassroots level and empower the weaker sections of the society. It is a three-tier system whereby there are elected bodies at the village, taluk and district level in a state. The term Panchayati Raj was coined by Shri Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the year 1958. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj as a decentralized form of government whereby each village will be responsible for its own affairs and would stand the foundation of India's Political system.

In the year 1952, Government of India made systematic efforts to ensure rural development through introduction of Community Development Programs with the first Five Year Plan. After this many committees were formed to review and make improvisations in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institution. Some of the committees may be named as Balwant Rai Committee; Ashok Mehta Committee, 1977; G.V.K Rao Committee, 1985; L.M Singhvi Committee, 1986 etc. These committees were instrumental in pointing out the major problems hindering the progress of villages and recommended various amendments thereby. For example, The Panchayati Raj Institutions lack the financial resources to execute the developmental plans and were devoid of power from the state and central government. Similarly the membership of these institutions was confined to rich landlords and the upper caste members. The lower and backward sections of the society were left out in the development process for which the structure was defined.

One of the major hindrance were the lack of political consciousness among the illiterate villagers and seemed little interested in the process. Also the bureaucratic attitudes towards the Panchayati Raj Institution at different levels of management were not fruitful.

In order to get through the above mentioned flaws the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment were unanimously passed by the Parliament making a landmark development of Panchayati Raj Institution in the year 1992. The various provisions of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Bills can be summed up as follows:

- Constitution of Gram Sabhas in villages.
- Constitution of three-tier Panchayat at village or other levels.
- Direct election to all seats in Panchayats
- Minimum age for contesting elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions be twenty one years
- Reservation of seats for schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes
- Reservation of one-third of the total seats at every level of Panchayati Raj institution for women.
- Fixing of tenure of five years for Panchayats
- Giving representation to the members of Parliaments, MLA's and MLC's at the intermediate and district level with full voting rights.

State Legislatures may endow Panchayats with powers and authority as may be necessary to enable the Panchayats to become institutions of Self-government at the grassroots level. Responsibility may be bestowed upon them to

prepare plan in context to economic development and social justice. Such schemes of economic development and social justice refer to agriculture, primary and secondary education, drinking water, health and sanitation, social forestry, welfare of the weaker sections of the society etc. To sum up Panchayati Raj Institutions were formed to awaken the political consciousness and endanger a democratic process at every level of the state and country. Without the meaningful participation of rural

people in the functioning of these institutions, Panchayat systems would be considered as null and void. Panchayati Raj Institution is democracy at the local level and provides for closest democratic experience to the people in rural areas. Rural India have seen Panchayats for ages. The present Panchayat systems are an improvement and advanced version of the old ones in uniformity, institutional structure and state support.

PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN MADHYA PRADESH

The Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam 1993 was enacted in Madhya Pradesh to give a strong foundation to the three tier structure of Panchayati Raj System in the state. In all Madhya Pradesh was the first state to hold elections after the 73rd Amendment. The Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam went for amendment by the Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam in the year 2001, whereby Gram Sabhas were strengthened through constituting committees at the Gram Sabha level to plan and

execute the developmental programs. In recent amendment, Gram Panchayats were restored as the executive arm of self-government. Further it has been come to notice that in Madhya Pradesh state Gram Nirman Samiti and Gram Vikas Samiti both chaired by Sarpanch will replace the separate village-level committees for the socio-economic development in the sectors of education, agriculture, social justice, public property, health, infrastructure etc.

NAME & LEVEL OF THREE TIER PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

LEVEL OF PANCHAYAT	NAME USED
DISTRICT PANCHAYAT	ZILLA PANCHAYAT
INTERMEDIATE PANCHAYAT	JANPAD PANCHAYAT
VILLAGE PANCHAYAT	GRAM PANCHAYAT

PANCHAYAT REPRESENTATIVES AT EACH LEVEL

LEVEL OF PANCHAYAT	NUMBER
ZILLA PANCHAYAT	48
JANPAD PANCHAYAT	313
GAON PANCHAYAT	23051
TOTAL	23412

WWW.NRCDDP.ORG

GRAM PANCHAYAT

The functions entrusted with Gram Panchayats are mostly civic in nature. Sanitation; Construction of roads, bridges, their maintenance; lightning of village streets; control over entertainment, shops & eateries; Maintenance of Panchayat property; Establishment & Management of Markets and

melas; Fine obstruction and encroachment upon public streets or open spaces; promotion of youth & sports; prevention of contagious diseases; providing public health facility; Construction of erection of building etc. are some of the major areas been allocated to the Gram Panchayats.

GRAM PANCHAYAT

	NUMBER OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES				
	GENERAL	SC	ST	TOTAL	WOMEN
TOTAL NUMBER OF WARD MEMBERS	218196	59889	110744	388829	134368
PERCENTAGE	56.1	15.4	28.5	100	33.9

SOURCE: PANCHAYATI RAJ ELECTION, GOVERNMENT OF MADHYA PRADESH, 2004-05

JANPAD PANCHAYAT

The function of Janpad Panchayats is to delineate with clarity the precise activities under the banner of development. The major areas include effective implementation of Integrated Rural Development Program; progress in agriculture and forests industry; establishment and functioning of cottage industries; promotion of sports; provision of emergency relief in case

of droughts, fire, floods, etc.; effective implementation of rural employment programs; Family Planning; arrangement in connection with local pilgrimage and festivals, management of public ferries, public markets, melas; any other function with approval from State government and Zilla Panchayat etc.

JANPAD PANCHAYAT

	NUMBER OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES				
	GENERAL	SC	ST	TOTAL	WOMEN
TOTAL NUMBER OF Elected WARD MEMBERS	3958	1078	1972	6851	2393
PERCENTAGE	57.5	15	27.5	100	33.4

SOURCE: PANCHAYATI RAJ ELECTION, GOVERNMENT OF MADHYA PRADESH, 2004-05

ZILLA PANCHAYAT

The District Panchayat or Zilla Panchayat is entrusted with supervisory powers of Gram Panchayat and Janpad Panchayats but their function remains only advisory in nature in respect to certain matters. Major functioning areas can be summed as Controlling, co-ordinating and guiding the Gram & Janpad Panchayats within the district; Co-ordinate and consolidate for the Janpad Panchayat plans; co-

ordinate to the demands for grants in context to special purposes received from the Janpad Panchayats and forward them to the State Government; execution of plans. Schemes, projects in Janpad Panchayats of the district; advise the state government on social forestry, welfare of the disabled, women, youth, children, family welfare etc.

ZILLA PANCHAYAT

	NUMBER OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES				
	GENERAL	SC	ST	TOTAL	WOMEN
TOTAL NUMBER OF Elected WARD MEMBERS	497	136	222	836	304
PERCENTAGE	59.5	15.4	25.1	100	34.4

SOURCE: PANCHAYATI RAJ ELECTION GOVERNMENT OF MADHYA PRADESH 2004-05

STATUS OF WOMEN IN MADHYA PRADESH

In Madhya Pradesh state, women have been empowered politically through 50 percent reservation in the local civic bodies. After the 73rd and 74th Amendments were made in the Indian Constitution in the year 1993, Madhya Pradesh was a pioneer in implementing local self-governance at the grassroots level. There remains a disparity regarding women leadership at the rural level in varied number of areas be it politically, socially or economically. The majority of women being illiterate and financially weak

do have to face a lot of struggle in maintaining their dignity intact. Still today the leadership of women at the level of political parties, municipalities or at Panchayat level or administrative posts remains a great challenge in the state. There remains a disparity in the education between the boys and girls due to historical patriarchy since girls are considered as others property and thus deprived from education. The girl children in the rural arena stay at home to take care of younger siblings

whereas boys are considered as a support for old aged parents. The policy makers and politicians do not provide enough encouragement to women's education to maintain the patriarchal form of society. Statistics (Jain, 2017) speaks of the higher number of elected women in Panchayats more than the number of reserved seats in Madhya Pradesh shows a brighter portrayal of the state's democracy. But these representatives have to face many hurdles while executing their work and there is no dearth of politicians or people who have been consistently creating hurdles in

their ways. In most of the places the backward class women Sarpanches complain of the District and Janpad level Panchayats openly regarding the administrative and implementation problems but their words are never paid any heed to. Madhya Pradesh as a state is undergoing through huge challenges like Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality and domestic violence against women. In spite of knowing the realities, the state government is unable to combat the same either due to ignorance or deliberate in this new era to keep women out of political puzzle.

FAMILY BACKGROUND of SMT. SUNITA UIKE

Coming from a Tribal community, Smt. SunitaUike is the most literate lady in her village. She dedicates her higher education to her father who encouraged Smt. Sunita in realising her dreams. However due to lack of higher education facilities in her village, she was able to complete her studies till Class XIIth only. Her father believes that education constitutes one of the most important phase in a human beings life and shapes a human being in the same manner. Smt. Sunita also believes in the same ideology. She is married to Sh. GolmanUike and residing at

AdarshPipriya village in Bhimpur block; 80 kms away from the district headquarters i.e. Betul. She is gifted with 2 daughters and 1 son and all her children are enrolled in the Government School. The main source of income comes from Agriculture and horticulture. They have 13 acres of land of which 7 acres of land are used for agricultural sowing and the rest is used in horticulture. Around 62 horticulture plants have been cultivated in the farm which includes Mangoes, Tamarind, Berry, Anwala etc.

CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES ADOPTED

Smt. SunitaUike has been a regular and active member in the self – help group of her village. Being a literate and interested in the socio-economic development of village, she used to be involved in all the SHG functioning, meetings and other activities. At one of the SHG meetings, Smt. Cheiti Bai spoke of the valuation of an educated Sarpanch in the village. She expressed that an educated Sarpanch will be helpful in assessing the needs of the village and can manage the Panchayat affairs of her own. The discussion emboldened her to contest the upcoming Panchayat elections and with consultation to her SHG members she finally decided to fight. When she approached the Panchayat Samiti (led by Male members) for querying about the same, she was misled by the false rumor of no women candidate being eligible for contesting the election. More of the entire Panchayat seats have become a male reserved seat. To clarify

the same she approached one of the NGO's working in the vicinity of her village towards the development program. While discussing the same she was shocked to know that she has been deluded by the elite male folk of the Panchayats regarding the Panchayat election criteria. The truth emboldened her more to fight and win the elections. In the process she was helped by the SHG women members in campaigning for her.

First of all she asked all the SHG women members to personally introduce Smt. Sunita Uike to their family household. An in-person approach was the best way she could gather a supporter base and this in turn would continue the same effort in their circle and expand their voter base. In fact this method proved her beneficial in approaching new or undecided voters in the Panchayat elections. The second step Smt. Uike annexed was the door to door canvassing to win over the swing voters and volunteers to cover the rest of her ground. Her basic aim was to knock as many doors as possible. During this process Smt. Sunita met with the community influencers who could endorse her in candidate of their choice. This helped her bring in the supporters who look up to the local influencers in making important decisions. To raise her candidacy profile; She urged her SHG team to profile her in the district SHG meeting which indulges the women community in highest version. So her candidacy was announced in the District SHG meeting which framed her as a community leader. Smt. Uike's campaigning messages always cared for the voter's perspective. Her message reflected the need of such electorate in her village and was sound enough to draw the voter's attention and influence them by reflecting that her victory would improve their lives. One of the excellent strategies in campaigning was delivering a final reminder before the day of voting. She and her team maintained a voter contact list furnished with information on all the voters contacted over the campaign period. With the help of this voter data she could again send them a message through the audio media all over the village. She held a number of campaigns separately with the women members of SHG groups, youth association and the Anganawadi teachers. During these meetings the problems and issues of future development of the village were discussed and noted down. Simultaneously these issues worked as an agenda in her next campaign. The domestic violence suffered by women members at home, drinking problems of their husbands, various agricultural problems in context to improper irrigation, soil erosion etc. was taken up in the meetings. These discussions were again presented at the Panchayat meetings where Smt. Uike took a lead in expressing the voice of people. Thus her leadership attributes came to be visible by the people. Similarly at the youth association meetings, the problems of unemployment and their demands were presented at the forum. This also included the girl children who were succumbed to take care of the family members and siblings at home because of the patriarchal dominance of male members in the society and at home.

With the support of her group women members and other influencers, Smt. Sunita Uike filled up the nomination form in the year 2005 and could win the election by a margin of 100 votes. Till date she successfully served the Panchayat for two successive terms. After her term as Sarpanch, she contested the election at the Janpat level and also won the same.

Achievements

After winning the Panchayat elections, Smt. Sunita was involved in a varied number of activities to realize her dreams in helping the destitute and needy people of her village. To provide shelter to the shelterless people and deal with the housing issues, Smt. Sunita enrolled the needy people under the scheme of Indira AwaasYojana in one of the many programs under Ministry of Rural Development. All the people under the Below Poverty Line who were either houseless or having inadequate housing facilities for constructing a safe and durable shelter were enrolled in Indira AwaasYojna and provided assistance in building their homes. Widows were also enrolled under this flagship program. MGNREGA program was in continuance in the village whereby the unemployed village people were provided 100 days of employment in each financial year and women workers were given a priority. But there were certain problems in carrying out the program in her village like delay in wage payments, delays in accessing through banks specifically for people residing in the tribal regions. Smt. SunitaUike realized the above mentioned problems and presented this in Janpad and Zilla Parishad meetings. She recommended that MGNREGA should focus intensively on the needy and tribal areas which were highly acclaimed and directed governments to execute their plans towards this manner.

Holding high regards for primary education for the girl children, Smt. Uike found a very high drop-out rate of girl children in her village. Present schools lacked the proper infrastructural facilities, basic amenities like drinking water, clean toilets, and poor course curriculum unable to involve children in the extra-curricular

activities and competitions etc. With consultation in the Panchayat meetings and help from the Zilla Parishad; a middle school was constructed in her village thus craving ways for higher education for the village school children. Village AdarshPipariya had no proper sanitation facilities and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyaan was a complete failure. People used to go for open defecation due to lack of toilets in the village. For the benefit of women's dignity and initiating a sanitation drive, Smt. SunitaUike helped in building up individual toilets and community toilets in the village premises.

To cope with agricultural problems of soil erosion, Smt. Uike with the help of soil experts and Panchayat funds commended "Land Bunding" in the agricultural fields. Through this method the impound water took longer time to infiltrate the soil and thus reduced the run-off water. Water was conserved in huge amount through high infiltration and permeability. KapildharaSubscheme under the banner of MGNREGA provides that persons holding from one to two and half acre land will be the joint beneficiary of a well-farm pond to be built by the government. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Divorced woman and the widows will be preferred first under this scheme. Smt. Sunita helped the farmers of her village in building up 54 wells to be used in the agricultural purpose.

Major Highlights of her good work

- The attendance record of Gram Sabha meetings was very poor with lowest presence of women members and representation of tribal people. Under the leadership of Smt. SunitaUike, the Gram Sabha meetings attendance went to an all

- high record with majority of tribal and women members attending the meetings.
- Under the banner of Indira AwaasYojana, 160 families were enrolled in the Below Poverty Line list whereby 22 single women and 54 destitute households were provided assistance in constructing their homes. She was very meticulous and keen while selecting the beneficiaries under the scheme.
 - MGNREGA program provided 100 days of employment to the 50 unemployed households in the village with regular and easy access to their payments. Smt. Sunita ensured that women members were given a higher priority without any pay discrimination as compared to men.
 - To ensure safety of women and a drive towards open defecation free village, Smt. SunitaUike helped build up 100 toilets for the individual household's along with a Community toilet.
 - Under the flagship programs of National Social benefits schemes, 27 Widow Women and 4 divorced women were enrolled and could avail to the monthly pension and other social security benefits.
 - To augment the agricultural yield, Land Bunding was pursued which helped conserve the water through high infiltration and permeability. This also reduced the higher soil erosion factor in the village. Overall 54 hectares of land were treated through Land Bunding methodology.
 - Coping to the irrigation water problems, Smt. Sunita established 54 wells for the village farmers under the banner of Kapil DharaKup scheme. This ensured water availability to the agricultural fields during the summer season also.
 - A Middle School was constructed to deal with the high dropout rate of girl children and providing access for higher education in the village.

LESSONS LEARNT

The above case study is a pure example of how the women members of the rural villages are deluded by the elite class people by hindering the substantial information from reaching them and thus endangering the democratic process at the grassroots level. There is no dearth of people who try to create hurdles in the path of women's empowerment be it rural or urban zones. The biggest reason behind this struggle is the illiteracy and unemployment level at the rural zones. In this case the disparity stands because of political, social and economic reasons by the male patriarchies. Smt. SunitaUike fortunately as a woman made the best use of opportunities and tried to remove the historical disparity their village has been

facing since decades. This was only possible when Smt. Uike could use education as a potential weapon for her struggle. It is surprisingly clear that male panchayat representatives prioritize construction works, social dignity and employment of male counterparts over welfare works on education and health as done by female representatives. Smt. SunitaUike's first priority was to focus on education for girl children and employment of women under MGNREGA program. The middle level and rural based administrative officials reportedly find it difficult in sharing the work zone with women leaders. It is because they doubt the competency and abilities of these women. This may be the reason why she was

ignored by the Panchayat officials when she expressed her interest in contesting Panchayat elections. Against this if some empowered and educated women decides to participate in the

rural democratic governance by accepting the challenges of leadership, there also somehow conspiracy starts bubbling to remove such women leaders.

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