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# case study

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**Judge me by my character, not  
my clothes**



Tulsi Mudiya Devi is single and brave. Talking about her background she said that she has studied up till BA 2nd year and regrets that she could not appear for her final year exam due to her mother's illness. Tulsi belongs to a very poor family with very little agricultural land. She lives with her extended family, which comprises uncles, aunts and their children. When asked about what motivated her to contest election as Mukhiya, Tulsi replied: 'Hum samaj sewa kar ke kaam kamana chahte hai, aur kuch kar nahi

paye, naukri bhi nahi kar paye to soche ye kar ke dekhte hai kya hota hai. Public ko koi dikkat nahi aye (I couldn't find a job so I thought I would find my earnings by serving society, so that the public face no difficulties'). Tulsi supported her cousins, by making some investments, to open a small dhaaba which is the main source of income for the family.

Name:	Tulsi Mudiya
Age:	35 yr
Education:	BA attempted (left in 2nd year)
Mukhiya:	Since 2015

Panchayat:	Choya
Panchayat Samiti:	Jhikpani
District:	West Singhbhum

While talking about her experience as a Mukhiya of Choya Gram Panchayat (West Singhbhum) she narrated an incident that occurred when she was new at her job. It was late in the evening when three drunk men came to her place, abused her and threatened to shoot her. At this Tulsi replied, 'Goli marna hai to mar dijiye magar iska khamiyaza kaun bhugtega (Shoot me if you want but what use will that be?)'. Hearing what she said, the men went away. The next morning Tulsi filed an FIR at the nearby police station. Tulsi said that was the only ugly incident she has faced— now she feels no fear even in moving around alone. She has always received support from the community and it was through this support that she became the Mukhiya. She said her family is extremely poor, so she teaches the children at home so that they make something of themselves. If she had money,

she added, she wouldn't buy new clothes. Clothes don't make character.

Tulsi Devi regretted that there was no Panchayat Bhawan in the Choya Panchayat as earlier Mukhiyas were not interested in building one. When Tulsi won the election as Mukhiya, she was asked about her main agenda to which she replied that it was to build a Panchayat Bhawan. People became sensitised to the need for building such a Bhawan, for which land was also selected, and a letter was written to the Deputy Development Commissioner to the effect. This was later passed on to the Deputy Commissioner and even a tender was issued—but got cancelled due to conflict between the villages. A Maha Sabha was organized and again a piece of land was chosen as a site for constructing a Panchayat Bhawan, because the land lies in the centre of the Panchayat and convenient to commute to, especially for senior citizens. Letters has

also been written to the Deputy Development Commissioner and is awaiting response.

Currently activities, such as digging of wells, and construction of puliya (small bridge) and roads (under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) are going on for which Tulsi Devi does regular monitoring. Provisions for making puliya (small bridge) and roads is passed at Gram Sabha meetings and approved by the Mukhiya. She complained, during one such discussion, that the female Meth (a designated worker under MGNREGA) does not arrive on time. She informed us that all the records of Gram Panchayat are maintained by the Rozgar Sewak. Two Anganwadis and a primary school are there in the Gram Panchayat and they are functional.

Talking about functional difficulties, Tulsi said that the Ward Members do not support her and are unable to carry out their official duties, roles and responsibilities. They do not carry out conduct surveys correctly; forms to open accounts are not filled on time due to which many development works have stopped. She has also raised the issue of lack of coordination between the Mukhiya and Ward Members in the Gram Sabha and has requested them to cooperate, which would result in benefit to the Panchayat and the people themselves.

Alcoholism is common in the village. Brewing and selling spirits is a major source of income. As it is manufactured in the village itself, people have easy access to it. Men are often drunk and beat their womenfolk. In this matter, Tulsi says she finds herself helpless in tackling it. However, those found guilty of drunken behaviour are punished by the Munda and asked to apologise to their victims. If the mistake is repeated, the punishment is stricter.

Another difficulty Tulsi Devi encounters is in budget allocation under the 14th Finance Commission, as there is no proper guideline she is aware of, but if she commits a mistake in distribution, she has to bear the repercussions.

Tulsi has received training in SIRD (State Institute of Rural Development) and also from the 14th Financial Commission, MNREGA and others. But due to information overdose on a great number of subjects, she did not understand clearly what she was being taught. Tulsi would like to be trained at writing applications, and budget allocation, so that she can avail of her training sessions more usefully.

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**Participatory Research in Asia**  
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi-110062  
Ph:+91-011-29960931/32/33  
Web: [www.pria.org](http://www.pria.org)