

# Role of Women in Panchayat Raj System

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**Abstract:** *It is a basic principle of democracy that adult citizens from all walks of life should have equal access to participate in the political activities. Ideally all groups in a democracy have the right to represent their specific interest and perspectives and participate directly in the decision making process and leadership to ensure that their agenda of issues are considered and the decisions taken subsequently are incorporated*

## 1. Introduction

In development of the country it needs wider participation of the people irrespective of caste, creed, sex, etc, in its political process. In order to provide this opportunity the system of democracy plays very important role. The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equality, and it guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but it also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth. However, these rights have remained de jure and have not been turned into de facto rights. As such, women have been denied social, economic and political rights in many aspects. An important area where women have been inadequately represented is in the field of political. In independent India the constitution has guaranteed legal protection and created an illusion of equality which these elite women seemed satisfied Articles 325 and 326 this guarantees political equality, equal right to participate in political activities and right to vote respectively.

## 2. Women in Panchayat Raj Institution

The present study is about to know the extent of participation of women representative in Panchayat and the reservation system, their actual presence in the Panchyati, and also the problems related to the rural women.

Economic development was one of the major goals of independent India. To achieve this economic prosperity the government favoured centralization of power rather than decentralization. Centralisation though was able to accelerate economic growth poverty remained a major challenge especially in rural areas, despite of the rural development programmes like the Community development programme and IRDP the local problems could not be addressed in the centralized system of governance, so they go for decentralisation system.

### Karnataka Panchayati Raj Instiution

November 1<sup>st</sup> 1959 In Karnataka the Panchayat Raj was introduced when Mysore Village Panchayat and Local Boards Act were passed within the broad framework of Balwant Ray Mehta Committee Report. In the southern state of Karnataka the Janata party came to power in 1983. The chief minister Ramakrishna Hedge took an important step to give direct representation to disadvantaged section of people in the decentralized Panchayat Raj Institution. In August

1983 chief minister Hegde and his Rural Development Minister Abdul Nazir Saab introduced Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat samitis, Mandal Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayats bill in the state assembly. The Bill became an act in July 1985; it was brought into force with effect from 14th August 1985 and was called The Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samitis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayat Act 1985.

There the 25 percent of the seats in local councils would be reserved for women. The elections to the councils were held on 1 May 1987, in that 56,000 representatives are elected, out of which 25 percent were women. It was a wonderful sight to see 14,000 women in the audience, shining bright, 80 percent of who were participating in politics. By 1995, the presence of women in local government had increased by many multiples, as the whole nation had introduced this political administrative change to reserve seats in local councils for women through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution.

### The Constitutional 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act of 1992

The panchayati raj bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha for the first time by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1989, for the purpose of enforcement of the organisation of village panchayat as a unit of self-government that comes under Article 40 of the Constitution, but he was failed to get support of requisite majority in the Rajya Sabha. In 1990 the V P Singh Government tried to implement but did not successes, during the general election of Lok Sabha once again Congress Government took the agenda of implementing the Balwant Rai Mehta committee report within 100 days as soon as it came to power in central, as a result of election the Congress Government came to power. The Prime Minister P V Narshimarao again introduced the bill in the Parliament and gets the majority support of Parliament and State Legislative assembly and finally it approved on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1993 by the President of India. As a result of that they did 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the Constitution and added part IX and IXA, Scheduled 12<sup>th</sup> to the constitution under Article 234A to 243O. It gives opportunities to all the people including SC, ST, OBC and Women to take participate in the local self Governing bodies.

73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, dated 24 April 1993, directed all state legislatures to amend their respective Panchayat within one year. All the states complied and adopted new Panchayat legislation by 23 April 1994. By April 1995 all the states

were expected to complete decisions on new Panchayats. It established a three tier system of fully elected decentralized Governance. 33% of the seats are reserved for women at all the levels and another 33% are reserved for the backward classes additionally seats are reserved for the SC and ST in proportion to their population. The post of Adhyaksha and Upadhyakshas are subject to reservation by rotation. The Grama Sabha comprising of all registered voters is established by the act.

To strengthen the Panchayat Raj Institution the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993 has been amended several times. In August 2010 Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Amendment) bill 2010 was passed and a gazette notification was issued reserving 50% of the seats for women in all three tiers of the Panchayat Raj set up. In December 2010 Zilla and Taluk Panchayat election 50% of the seats were reserved for women. Polls were held for 997 Zilla Panchayat in 30 districts and 3659 Taluk Panchayat seats in 176 taluks. 498 and 1,829 seats were reserved for women in all Zilla and Taluk Panchayats respectively in the state. Since election to the Grama Panchayats was held in May 2010 the new act could not be implemented and 33% reservation continued at the Grama Panchayat level. 50% of the seats for women shall be reserved at the Grama Panchayats level from 2015. The percentage representation of women in the three levels of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka Grama Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat are 43.02 %, 55.15 %, and 53.21% respectively.

Karnataka has been considered a pioneer in devolution to Panchayats. This has led to impressive development particularly in rural infrastructure such as water supply, roads and school buildings over the past two decades. Karnataka was also the first state in India to introduce the policy of reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions. This Act has had a tremendous effect on rural women in the state by legitimizing not only the entry of women in great number into hitherto male dominated public space but also by giving them functional decision making powers.

Panchayati raj institutions is focused to girl's education, health and sanitation, drinking water facilities and similar other problems. Has Women become the member she acquire confidence and feel empowered, she also rise her voice in vital problems like prohibition of child marriages, and domestic violence and find important place in the agenda of panchayat discussions. 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment has brought a marked improvement in the political socialisation of women. The political training and experience they gained during the process is likely to contribute towards their empowerment. The doubts earlier expressed about the ability and capacity of the elected women are now getting cleared and being replaced by increased confidence in them.

**Table of Women representatives in politics (2017)**

S.No	State	Legislative Assembly	Panchayati
1	Arunachal Pradesh	33%	34%
2	Goa	33%	73%
3	Gujurat	33%	54%
4	Tamil Nadu	33%	34%
5	Daman & Diu	29%	6%

6	Jarkhand	59%	52%
7	Rajasthan	58%	54%
8	Utttarckhand	58%	50%
9	Chhattisgarh	55%	53%
10	Karnataka	53%	51%
11	Bihar	52%	45%
12	Kerala	52%	50%
13	Andhra Pradesh	50%	52%
14	Assam	50%	41%
15	Himachal Pradesh	50%	-
16	Madhya Pradesh	50%	50%
17	Maharashtra	50%	50%
18	Sikkim	50%	50%
19	West Bengal	50%	47%
20	Manipur	49%	2%
21	Odisha	49%	58%
22	Telangana	45%	53%
23	Uttar Pradesh	41%	34%
24	Hariyana	47%	41%
25	Tripura	36%	28%
26	Dadar Nagar Haveli	36%	55%
27	Punjab	35%	43%
28	Jammu & Kashmir	34%	-

### 3. Role of Women in Panchayats

- **Participation in election:** The Act provides for the reservation of not less than one-third of the total number of seats for women. It is an endeavour to ensure greater participation of women in election process directly and indirectly. It would be the nursery of creating women politicians for national politics. Even the participation of common women citizens in various activities such as attending Gram Sabha meeting, etc. has reportedly increased (68-78 percent).
- **Participation in rural development:** Women are actively participating in rural development as per their capacity right from labourers to policy-makers.
- **Participation in decision-making:** The participation of women as elected as well as non-elected members are rising due to reservation for women. It acts as pull factor for women to participate in meeting. They give their suggestions for various works and problems faced by them.
- **Agent of social revolution:** Women are acting as an agent of change in the society and they are raising voice against injustice and atrocities against women.
- **Reduction in violence against women:** Domestic violence has substantially declined due to women pradhan or surpanch. These women representatives take proactively take up such violence. The victims also feel free to share their grievances to women representatives.
- **Reduction in violence against Dalits:** The dominance of upper caste patriarchs are substantially declined, hence the restraints of caste is subsiding.

#### Difficulties faced by women representatives in PRS

- Political intercession of men in the functioning of Panchayats.
- Women act as representative of men.
- Husband and other members of their family are intervention of elected woman in her functioning.

- Education-wise, women were classified into illiterates, literates, most of them acquired primary level education this is difficult for them to take effective decision.
- Rural women facing lack of political awareness due to illiteracy.
- Pessimistic public opinion regarding women's leadership capacity.
- Lack of administrative training especially for women representatives.
- Supremacy of elected male members of the Panchayat.
- Politically motivated violence against women is hardly increasing.

#### **Suggestions for effective participation of women in Panchayati Raj System**

- Interventions of political parties are increasing day by day in the election of Panchayati, so it is necessary to the government as well as to election commission to take a strict action in such a way that an intervention of political parties should be stopped and election should be conducted in free and fair manner.
- Political awareness among the women in rural area is fully neglected. It is the duty of the state government and other nongovernmental organisation to give proper education to the women about the political issues through conducting programs to create awareness among them.
- Education-wise, respondents were classified into illiterates, literates, and those acquired primary level education & above. This was done in view of the widespread illiteracy and low education among women.
- Special training and refresher courses for women representatives should be conducted from time-to-time. It gives the ideas about the administration.
- They could not exercise their right of freedom of expression as their husbands or other male members did not support them. A lot more still needs to be done by the Government in training and empowering the women to exercise their authority at all the three levels of Panchayati Raj institutions.
- Government should conduct necessities programme to educate them about their powers it helps them to work efficiently and effectively.
- There should be a provision to give honour and financial rewards to the women members for their hard works.
- The rotation term of reserved seats should be made after every atleast 10years. It would help women representatives to fix their feet in the panchayati.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Women constitute half of the population of our country. With the establishment of PRIs in our country a woman gets an opportunity to prove her worth as a good administrator, decision-maker or a good leader. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 is a milestone in this regard. It provides women a chance to come forward. It is up to them to make use of this opportunity. The fruits of democratic decentralization are that of greater participation of the people, especially of women, and of effective and efficient implementation of rural development schemes. So it becomes necessary to encourage the women in such a largest democracy of the world. To give a proper status to the

women, Government, NGOs, and Universities have to play a vital role in this field.

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