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Review Of Research



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS



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ABSTRACT

In this 21st century our India is facing lot of issues and in that majorly we are facing gender discrimination. To control our government has brought lot of policies and laws and it has given equal opportunity to both of them. In this context this research paper has conducted in Bhiwani district of Haryana State. Objective of this study is to study the socio-economic background of elected women in Panchayat Raj Institutions second one is to examine the scope and extent of participation of elected women in PRI's and finally to assess the knowledge of election in women's. Sample size of this study is 224 which include 142 women panches, 15 women sarpanches, and 59 women panchayat samiti members, 8 women zila parishad

members among 460 gram panchayats, 9 panchayat samiti and one zila parishad of Bhiwani. In this study we have used interview, observation, schedule and various government offices and department were used for the collection of information for the study. The result shows that 155 (69.19%) of women belongs to general category, 30.36% of women belongs to 36 to 45 age group, 197 (87.95%) of women are married, 209 (93.30%) of women are aware about caste voting, 194 (86.6%) of women are nomination their name as first time in panchayat raj election and 58 (25.90%) of women are getting support for nomination their name in election from family.

KEYWORDS : Women Empowerment, Election, Panchayat Raj, Participation, Support.

INTRODUCTION

The most remarkable feature of the 20th century has been development of women. Now when the humanity is in the 21st century, a new energy is spreading amid the ranks of women of every class, society and country. But even then it is a universally accepted fact that the women as a whole are underrepresented in all the important developmental processes has surpassed them at every stage. In the political arena women have made the least headway.

Participation means direct involvement of masses individually or through representatives. Participation cannot be imposed on the people from above; it should be voluntary and based on the will to participate. Even after independence, for a long time the rural women virtually remained unknown to politics due to religion, caste, tradition, and the male domination in panchayat that played a dominant role in the village, ignoring the interest of women. The prevailing stratification of society, the authoritarian pattern of decision making, limited channel of communication and the low literacy prevented them from being exposed to politics. After independence, with the introduction of new Panchayat Raj and community development of schemes, constitutional provisions were made for the upliftment of women. The spread of education, emergence of political parties, increasing urban contacts, fast means of communication and the impact of mass media have brought in a rapid social change in the rural community which paved the way up to some extent, for the political participation of the rural women.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS:

The constitution of India recognizes that the powers of the government rest with the people; the success of the system arises out of their effective participation in the political processes of the country. The various grassroots movements such as the workers movement the farmers movement as well as the women's movement are forms of political participation and action. Acting as pressure groups, these movements attempt to influence state policies and legislations; they are catalysts of change. Political power, in this context, is defined as the capacity to protect group interests and stimulate socio-political change in the desired direction. As such, the women's movement represents the collective action of women to ensure gender justice in society.

WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA:

When the social reform movement of the 19th century took up the question of women's upliftment, it was in the context of colonial discourse on India; Indians were seen as backward and had to be brought under the enlightening mission of the British. One of the reasons cited to substantiate this was the prevalence of customs like sati, child marriage, and female infanticide. In answer, the social reform movement attempted to eradicate some of the blatant expression of women's subordination through awareness campaigns, pressing for social legislation and education. They did not focus on the issue of women's economic or political participation.

The process, however, led to the establishment of many women's organizations, such as the AryaMahilaSamaj, the Gujarat MahilaMandal, the SevaSadan and the Jain MahilaSamaj. These organizations, undoubtedly, were established by men to educate and train women as good wives and mothers; nevertheless, by the turn of the 20th century, it provided women with a training ground to acquire organizational skills and voice their demands.

The all India women's conference was formed in 1927 through an amalgamation of various regional women's groups, including the women's Indian association established in 1915. These efforts in the early 20th century may be deemed feminist, as they were independent of the male social reform

initiatives. Although avowedly a political and established with the modest aim of promoting women's education, these organizations (reconstituted as the AIWC), consistently put forward both the feminist and the nationalist demands. By 1930, the AIWC passed resolutions adopting the Gandhian ideals and stressing the use of Indian made goods. They also campaigned for social legislation such as the Sarda Act (1929), the dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act (1939) and for the better supervision of orphanages and rescue homes (Veena Poonacha, 1999).

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

Nevertheless, an examination of women's political participation in India since the 1930s, when for the first time women were enfranchised, reveals contradictory trends; they have participated in various mass based protest movements ranging from the sporadic armed struggles of peasants, tribal's and workers in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Kerala to the non-violent Narmada Bachao Andolan and Chipko movement (Kumar 1996).

Thanks to the ethos developed during the freedom movement, in which women from all corners of India played a historic part equaling men in courage, sacrifice and spirit, there would have been no question whatsoever of denying women their democratic rights in a free India. In First World War British women gained the right to vote only in 1918. In the United States women were given the vote by the 19th amendment in 1920, and women were specifically protected from discrimination in the civil rights act only as recently as in 1964. There are still nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America where women are yet to be emancipated enough to enable them to vote. The Indian woman has been more fortunate.

It is not only the participation in the voting process that the commitment of India's women to democracy is reflected, but also in the mounting enthusiasm and interest among women to secure representation in the country's legislatures. Partly, this rising fervor is due to the benefits of education reaching the interior area of rural India. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, which reserve 33% of elective seats in Panchayat Raj and Municipal Bodies to women, not only brought thousands of women in to the democratic process but have also provided major boost to their self-confidence.

In the 1984 general elections, for instance, as many as 128 seats in 23 states of India were contested by 173 women, of whom 43 got elected to the Lok Sabha. The number of women contestants has progressively risen election after election the figure which remained under 50 in the first two general elections rose to 65 in the third, and to 599 in the eleventh. The number of women in the outgoing Lok Sabha was 43. Legislation to ensure 33% representation for women in Parliament and legislatures figured on the agenda of the eleventh and twelfth Lok Sabha but the measure could not be passed. Most of the political parties have committed themselves in their respective manifestos to enact the legislation in the 13th Lok Sabha.

Women participation in electoral politics have been marginal a trend which negates the constitutional promise of gender equality (see table 1.2).

Table 1.2
Representation of women members from the first to the eleventh Lok Sabha

Percentage to	Total no of seats	No of women members	The total % of elected women
First Lok Sabha	499	22	4.4
Second Lok Sabha	500	27	5.4
Third Lok Sabha	503	34	6.7
Fourth Lok Sabha	523	31	5.9
Fifth Lok Sabha	521	22	4.2
Sixth Lok Sabha	514	19	3.4
Seventh Lok Sabha	544	42	7.74
Eighth Lok Sabha	544	44	8.1
Ninth Lok Sabha	525	27	5.14
Tenth Lok Sabha	503	33	6.6
Eleventh Lok Sabha	545	36	6.6

Source: Election Commission India.

These figures indicate that it was only in the eighth Lok Sabha (i.e. after two decades of feminist struggle) that women's representation reached an all-time high of 44 or 8.1 out the total strength of a 544 member house. In all the earlier and subsequent Lok Sabhas, their representation has varied from 5.9 in the ninth Lok Sabha and 6.6 in the Tenth and Eleventh Lok Sabha. The Sixth Lok Sabha had a dismal record of women's political participation as there were only 3.4% of women representations in a 514 member house.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The present Panchayat Raj system with reservation for women has become the focus point of women's participation in planning, decision making and implementation for rural development. With women's increased representation as elected members, they would be able to participate more actively in planning, decision making and implementing different development programmes in the village. They have a chance and a platform to express their views on women related problems and exercise their choice in deciding upon their priorities and even influencing the male members more effectively. The reservation may be treated as an entry point for women's participation in politics at the grass root level. It will help in making the rural women politically more aware about her rights. Elected women representatives can play an important role in solving the women related problems like illiteracy and dowry in villages, problems like violence against women and alcoholism among male members which directly affect rural women.

By the participating in decision making they can also influence the behaviour and can motivate the other women in village to achieve the desired goal of rural development. Ultimately this will affect the structural changes in a changing social structure. The present panchayat raj institutions are to perform necessary development regulatory and general administrative functions. They aim at the rural development with human and natural resources. Apart from economic development, agriculture, land improvement, animal husbandry, village and cottage industries, drinking water, health, sanitation and family welfare etc. will be the concern of the village Panchayat. At the same time provisions are to be made to remove social inequalities such as untouchability, bonded labour, discrimination against women, equal wages for the same kind of work for both sexes.

Keeping in view the above facts and factors in mind it becomes very important to evaluate

weather and to what extent the 73rd constitutional amendment act has improved their status and powers at the grass root level. The research scholar has selected this topic namely “women participation in panchayat raj institutions” so as examine whether they are aware about their newly assigned duties and responsibilities and whether they are being allowed to function properly in these local level institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1.To study the socio-economic background of elected women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- 2.To examine the scope and extent of participation of elected women in PRI's.
- 3.To assess the knowledge of election in women's.

METHODOLOGY:

Sampling:

Since the universe of our research study is female representatives of panchayat raj institutions of Bhiwani District, it's neither possible not advisable to study the all 1421 women panches and 152 sarpanches of the district. So in this study 224 which includes 142 women panches, 15 women sarpanches, 59 women panchayat samiti members, 8 women zila parishad members among 460 gram panchayats, 9 panchayat samiti and one zila parishad of Bhiwani.

Tools for data collection:

The selection of tools for data collection primarily depends upon the type of research work. In this study we have used interview, observation, schedule and various government offices and department were used for the collection of information for the study.

Data analysis:

After completion of the data collection work, all the schedule loaded with data were duly checked and some of the information written here and there on the schedule were filled up against appropriate questions for the purposes of analysis. A codebook comprising of different code numbers allotted for different responses were developed in order to transfer the data on master chart to analyses the data in different forms. To justify the objectives of the study from different angles, simple and cross tables were drawn from the data available on the master chart. After analysis and tabulation of data in different tabular forms, findings were drawn out of it.

Analysis:

The analysis of the study has been mentioned in below.

Table No. 1.1
Caste composition of respondents

Caste group	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
General	96 (67.60)	10 (66.66)	44 (74.59)	5 (62.50)	155 (69.19)
SC	28 (19.73)	03 (20.00)	12 (20.33)	02 (25.00)	45 (20.11)
BC	18 (12.67)	02 (13.34)	03 (5.08)	01 (12.50)	24 (10.70)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	8 (100)	224 (100)

This table indicates the caste of women respondents. The present study reveals that majority of women were Jats, Baniyas, Brahmins, and Rajputs. It is clear from the above table that the leadership is not concentrated in one category of caste. Out of 224, women respondents, 24 (10.70 %) belonged to backward class, 45 (20.08%) belonged to scheduled caste; and 155 (69.19%) were from the other castes. It appears that due to reservation policy SCs and BCs get chance to participate in PRIs. Thus the provision of reservation has no doubt shown its impact yet there seems strong hold of general castes.

AGE COMPOSITION

The age of an elected representative plays different roles at different levels. Grass root level need people with more physical vigor and alertness than an experienced policy maker or a matured politician. As grass root level, dealing with people and their problems in daily life is more than policies. Here are composition plays a vital role.

Table No. 1.2
Age composition of respondents

Age group	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Below 35 years	40 (28.16)	02 (13.33)	14 (23.72)	02 (25.00)	58 (25.00)
Between 35-45 years	45 (31.69)	06 (40.00)	16 (27.12)	01 (12.50)	69 (30.36)
Between 46-55 years	36 (25.36)	03 (20.00)	10 (10.95)	02 (25.00)	51 (22.77)
Between 56-65 years	14 (9.80)	03 (20.00)	12 (20.35)	02 (25.00)	31 (13.83)
Above 65 year	07 (4.95)	01 (6.67)	07 (11.86)	01 (12.50)	16 (7.14)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

The above table shows that the acceptability of younger persons is increasing. This is evident from the fact that half of the women respondents belong to the younger and lower middle age groups. Among them 68 (30.36%) are from lower middle age group and 58 (25.90%) from the younger age group.

The remaining half is from upper middle elder and very old age group. Out of these elder women are 31 (13.83%) and upper middle aged women 51 (22.77%). However, very old women are insignificant. This shows both continuity and change. However, on the one hand the younger leadership has begun to emerge on the other hand very old leadership is on the way out. This undoubtedly, is very encouraging.

Marital status

The normal upbringing of a girl is directed towards marriage as she reaches maturity, be it rural or urban circumstance in India. Most of the girls tend to get married at an early age to keep up the tradition. Married women are much more likely to join politics than unmarried. So it was considered necessary to investigate whether respondents were able to adjust to social situation arising from marriage. Whether marriage was a hindrance in career building table 3.8 below shows the marital status of women representatives. No doubt married women are much more likely to join politics than unmarried.

Table No. 1.3
Marital status of respondents

Marital status	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Unmarried	-	-	-	-	-
Married	120 (84.50)	13 (86.66)	56 (94.90)	08(100)	197 (87.95)
Widow	22 (15.50)	02 (13.34)	03 (5.10)	-	27 (12.05)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table clearly shows that mostly the women representatives were married(197 out of 224) which account for 87.95%. None of the respondents was unmarried. The remaining 27 (12.05%) of them were widows and they were very aged. It is interesting to note that despite being married the women representatives were not attending the meetings of PRIs to a large extent. It also shows that widows in PRIs get representation due to sympathetic and humanitarian attitude of rural people.

Political Awareness

Adult franchise provide right to men and women to participation in politics by right to vote. A democratic country is run by the people and for the people. Casting of vote in election is right as well as duty of every citizen table 1.4 below shows about the casting of vote during election.

Table No. 1.4
Casting of vote during election by respondents

Casting of votes	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Yes	128 (90.15)	14 (93.34)	59 (100)	08 (100)	209 (93.30)
No	14 (9.85)	1 (6.66)	-	-	15 (6.70)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table indicates that 209 (93.30%) respondents have awareness to cast vote in general election, while 15 (6.7%) respondents don't use their right to vote. At the panchayat samiti and zila parishad 67 (100%) women members participate in general election through their right to vote. While at the Gram Panchayat, 14 (9.85%) panches and 1 (6.66%) women sarpanches don't cast their vote in election because sarpanches was elected was unopposed. During interview it was found that they don't have enough time to cast their vote. But while working it Panchayat Raj institution they have started realizing the importance of casting the vote.

Length of experience in PRIs

Political experience of PRIs leaders can also been seen on the basis of their length of political involvement in any form of organized activity that affect or seeks to affect the power relationship. These activities being mainly intended to influence the attitude and behaviour of those who have power for decision making. In fact protests and demonstrations against those in power also form the part of political participation and experience. According to Manikymba P (1981) women members who have previous experience in politics and related to persons in politics generally played a significant role

in the institutions. The table no: 1.5 present the length of experience of women in PRIs.

Table No. 1.5
Length of experiences of respondents in PRI

Experience	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
One tenure	124 (87.32)	13 (86.66)	50 (84.75)	7 (87.50)	194 (86.6)
Two tenure	15 (10.56)	02 (13.34)	7 (11.86)	1 (12.50)	25 (11.16)
Three tenure	03 (2.12)	-	02 (3.39)	-	05 (2.23)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table shows that 30 (13.39%) respondents have earlier experiences of working in PRIs while 194 (86.61%) have first exposure of working in panchayat raj. Similarly 9 (15.25%) of panchayati samiti members and 1 (12.5%) zila parishad members followed by 2 (13.34%) women sarpanches and 18 (12.69%) women panches already worked in PRIs before 2000 it. It is also clear from the study 194 (86.6%) of total 224 women leaders entered in politics after 73rd amendment (1994). Only the 5 (2.23) leaders have joined politics as a nominated members of MahilaMandal in their respective villages.

Person supported women PRI leader during elections

To start a new thing or work, an individual wants the help of other because an is social being who lives in a society in which every individual is interdependent. In election, leaders get support of family members, husband, community, or others. The table given below present the data on the person supported women PRI members during elections.

Table No. 1.6
Person supported respondents during election

Supportive person	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Family member	28 (19.71)	03 (20.00)	25 (43.37)	02 (25.00)	58 (25.90)
Spouse	17 (11.97)	08 (53.33)	18 (30.51)	03 (37.50)	46 (20.53)
Relatives	29 (20.42)	01 (6.67)	6 (10.17)	01 (12.50)	37 (16.52)
Community	43 (30.28)	01 (6.67)	6 (10.17)	02 (25.00)	52 (23.21)
MahilaMandal	25 (17.62)	02 (13.33)	04 (6.78)	-	31 (13.84)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table indicates that 52 (23.21%) respondents were support by community, 46 (20.53%) by their husbands, 58 (25.90%) by family members, 37 (16.52%) by relatives, 31 (13.84%) by MahilaMandal members. Similarly, at the gram panchayat level, 28 (19.71%) women leaders were supported by family members, 43 (30.28%) by community (people of their ward). Another 8 (53.33%) women sarpanches supported by spouse followed by 03 (20.00%) their family members. At the panchayat samiti level, 25 (43.37%) supported by family members while 18 (30.51%) by their husbands. According to the above finding no one of zila parishad members were supported by MahilaMandal or any other people.

CONCLUSION:

This is a study of participation in Panchayat Raj Institution women leadership of Bhiwani District of Haryana covering Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats. This leadership emerged after the enactment of Haryana Panchayat Raj act 1994, which was made to implement the 73rd amendment. Before operationalizing the study, the research made an extensive review of the existing literature which enabled him to decide the objective and methodology. The study has found that rural Haryana particularly Bhiwani district has overwhelming population of the Jat, Thakur and Brahmin and the same is true in case of women's representation at rural level politics. It is evident from the fact that 70% women leaders belonged to these castes, whereas remaining 30% belonged BC and SC castes. The study shows that these women leaders continued performing their usual household activities after getting elected. The majority of them came from the agriculture families while a few of them were self-employed labors families.

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