

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYATS OF CHHATTISGARH: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract

At present, it has been more than thirty years since the 73rd Constitutional Amendment was implemented in India. In this amendment, a provision of 33 percent reservation for women in panchayats, so that the political representation of women could be increased at the rural level so women can be empowered. As a result, at present lakhs of women are playing their role as Panchayat representatives. Due to this, the political participation of women in rural self-governance has increased and women empowerment is taking place. Lakhs of women are participating in the process of democratic decentralization through Panchayati Raj. And ultimately affecting the character of our overall politics. All that is happening, because of the reservation made by the 73rd Amendment. This is a unique experience in the world of democracies all over the world in which lower-level women have been found suitable to sit in political positions and participate in law-making, decision-making, and governance and there is no effect on their educational, behavioral, and socio-economic status. In Chhattisgarh, since 2008, the reservation for women has been increased to 50 percent. The results of which we get to see in the report of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in 2019 in which the political representation of women in panchayats is 58.78 percent, which shows that the representation of women in panchayats increases the political participation of women, which promotes women's empowerment. This data seems to be achieving the goal of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, in which the representation of women in Panchayats has increased, but there is still a need for many reforms in Panchayati Raj Institutions, which are being addressed by the government. The purpose of the study of the presented research paper is to study the change in the status of women brought about by the political representation of women in the panchayats of Chhattisgarh and to find out how the political representation of women has promoted women's empowerment.

Keywords: Political Representation, Empowerment, Women, Chhattisgarh.

PREFACE

Women empowerment refers to the freedom of women to make decisions in legal, mental, political, social, and economic fields at par with men. Such a capacity should be developed in them, in which they can live their life according to their way, and self-confidence and self-respect should be awakened in them. Women empowerment is a multidimensional and continuous process, it aims at establishing a just and equal society, as gender equality is said to be the key to good governance. Must be seen as such. The discussion on the provision of reservation for women first arose in 1974 under the Committee on the "Status of Women" in India. At the local level, the committee recommended that women's councils be formed at the village level, to form these units to ensure that women participate in the political process in greater numbers.

In India Today the Panchayati Raj system is in force and women also have 33 percent reservation in these basic units of self-governance. Reservation for women in Panchayats is a new system, but the history of the Panchayati Raj system in India is very old. It is an authentic fact that gram sabhas existed in India since ancient times and representatives of all the castes living in the village used to be the members of this gram sabha. Even during the Buddhist period, such institutions existed in the villages, and their representatives were elected in an open assembly. In later times, India was ruled by Muslim rulers and the British for centuries, but even hundreds of years of slavery could not destroy the core of India's village councils.

At the time of the freedom movement, when the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi was roaming around the country, he saw the plight of the villages and felt the need for Panchayats there. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to give legitimacy to the village institutions along with independence so that the village society could work as a self-dependent, administrative, and judicial unit. The Panchayati Raj system was mentioned in the Constitution of India, but this system could not be implemented, because the provision of Panchayati Raj was given in the Directive Principles of our Constitution and thus it is binding on the state government. was not. After this, many committees were formed at different times to consider various topics related to the forms, structure, rights, and approach of Panchayati Raj institutions. In this context, the Women's Reservation Balwantrai Mehta Committee, Ashok Mehta Committee, Planning Commission's G.V.K. Rao Committee, and Dr. L. The Panchayati Raj Bill, passing through the hands of the M. Singhvi Committee, was passed in the Lok Sabha on 10 August 1984.

This 64th amendment of the Indian Constitution was passed by the Lok Sabha, but due to some reason, it could not be passed by the Rajya Sabha. After this, the process of setting up committees again went on and finally, it was passed by the Parliament in the form of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Bill. In this way, the Panchayati Raj system got statutory recognition in India. On April 20, 1993, 33 percent reservation was also given to women at the panchayat level. In this women's reservation, seats are also reserved for women belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes. Today, reservation has been given to women at the panchayat level, but there has not been much change in the status of women's participation in the government, because most of the women's representation has remained only as a rubber-stamp, politics in their name is done by their male relatives. Are. If we are seeing Panchayati Raj flourishing in India today, the credit goes to our Parliament.

The steps taken to bring these women into politics can be called positive discrimination. The Panchayati Raj system has also played an important role in changing the thinking of women about themselves. As former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh while addressing Panchayat representatives said "The biggest success of Panchayati Raj is that it has empowered women politically and socially, which is a unique example in world history in the modern era". Elected women in Panchayats are bringing change in functioning through leadership qualities and feminist thinking.

These women give priority to issues like water, education, health, domestic violence, de-addiction, harassment, and infrastructure development, as they have similar needs. Women's empowerment is very important for the socio-economic development of the country and for this reason, bringing women into the mainstream for the development of the country has been the main concern of the government. Women's empowerment is necessary for the development of the whole of India.

Regarding the rights, powers, and responsibilities of women in Panchayats, collecting financial and non-financial resources, various rules and laws for Panchayat proceedings, and The Central Government, State Government, and various voluntary organizations are giving training to women regarding the preparation of decentralization plan, as a result of which women's thinking and understanding have expanded and they are playing their role effectively in Panchayats, which is encouraging.

It is said that even though women are uneducated and suffering from many problems, they have presented new examples in rural society. As women mobilize in the future through training and participation in panchayat meetings, vocal women will have a demonstrative effect on less vocal women representatives, which will positively affect their role in panchayats.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma, Rakesh has told during his study in his book "**Panchayati Raj: Then and Now**", that "the biggest reason for the awareness among women is the representation they got in the Panchayat". The women's sarpanch keeps a special eye on discrimination between men and women, hence the atrocities on women are being exposed. Women have established many paradigms of rural development. Elected women representatives are giving rise to the process of representation at the grassroots level by drawing powerful support and capacity from women's organizations and civil society agencies. Representation of 60 lakh women directly and indirectly in Panchayati Raj institutions has accelerated the process of social mobilization and women are reshaping their role in private and public spaces. It is also believed that the experiment of providing women's reservations in panchayats is yielding positive results as women have not only acquired political skills but have also become effective advocates of women's causes.

Mahipal in his book "**Women in Panchayats: Challenges and Prospects**" pointed out during his study that more than two decades have passed since the Panchayats started functioning after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The study of women working in panchayats during this time shows that they have many social, economic, and political challenges, due to which they have not been able to play their roles effectively. In the northern states of the country, a new post has even been created, even as Pradhan Pati or Sarpanch Pati. Instead of contesting elections herself, she contests elections as mother, sister, or daughter-in-law of any politician or influential person of the village or family. Apart from all this, the desired rights and powers have not been given to the panchayats themselves. This is the reason, that the panchayats themselves have not

emerged as institutions of self-governance, due to which women have not been able to work independently in them. Despite these challenges, various programs run by the Central Government and State Governments for the economic development of women, many training and capacity-building programs run by the Central Government, State Governments, and voluntary organizations have yielded good results. There are many examples of assertiveness of women Panchs and Sarpanchs, whose positive impact is being had on less vocal women. In addition to this, the Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies and the national policy announced by the government for women, etc. are assured that women will be able to perform their duties effectively.

Chandel, Dharamveer Dr. in his book "**Panchayati Raj and Women's Participation**" has told during his study that 33 percent of reservations available to women in Panchayats have worked to provide political empowerment to almost half of the population in India, due to which as a result, the hope of getting strong and effective guidance for the coming generation has been strengthened. Reservation for women in politics has increased the political participation of women at all levels, today the scenario of Panchayati Raj is changing. Women are acquiring the necessary skills to play their roles successfully, thus ensuring women's representation in Panchayati Raj institutions and local municipal bodies has paved the way for women's political participation.

Bansal, Vandana in her book "**Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj**" has pointed out during the study of the Morena district of Madhya Pradesh that "due to reservation in panchayats, there has been a change in the form of the traditional representation of rural power structure". The entry of women has also loosened the control of the upper castes in the rural structure. And to some extent, it has also influenced decision-making. This has been seen through the experience of women's reservation in Panchayati Raj. This is a very successful attempt to increase the participation of women in politics. Regarding reservations for women, it is clear that many revolutionary changes have taken place in Panchayati Raj since its implementation. There has been awareness among women and a situation of self-reliance has arisen in them. Due to reservations in Panchayats and local bodies, the interference of women in the field of politics has increased, which is commendable from both social and political points of view.

Thakur Minni in his book "**Women Empowerment Through Panchayati Raj**" has told in the study of the Samastipur district of Bihar that "The participation of women in local politics through Panchayati Raj institutions has brought about qualitative changes in local administration." In the Panchayat, women public representatives have worked honestly and seriously in the process of social welfare as compared to men. In many areas where women Panchayat representative members have arranged primary education management, sanitation, health, and drinking water for girl students, it is concluded that participation in the organization by women has awakened their self-confidence, due to which women Both physically and mentally strengthened, but further fundamental development and changes are yet to be done. Women Panchayat members have

contributed a lot to their Panchayat, such as promoting basic facilities like primary education for girls, land reforms, and roads. The entry of women into Panchayati Raj has provided such a platform to women, through which they are contributing in promoting rural development. Which somewhere is strengthening the process of democratic decentralization in India, as a result of which the empowerment of women has been promoted.

Soumya, Singh in his book "**Women's Participation In Grass-Root Level Of Panchayati Raj**" in her study of the Rae Bareilly region of Uttar Pradesh has pointed out that "At the grassroots level of Panchayati Raj institutions, elected women members usually have an active participation in the decision-making process. This participation is an intrinsic value for women, which in itself guides future action. Women's participation in the Panchayat ensures accountability and makes policies and programs more successful. The representation of women in Panchayati Raj has given a new direction to the thinking of women, due to which they can make their own identity, and at the same time it is promoting women's empowerment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the political representation of women in gram panchayats of Chhattisgarh.
- 2) To study the political participation of women in Panchayats of Chhattisgarh
- 3) To study the political awareness of women in Panchayats of Chhattisgarh.
- 4) To study the changes in the lives of women brought about by reservation for women in Panchayats of Chhattisgarh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the presented research paper, the selection of a representation of women in Panchayats of Chhattisgarh has been compiled from primary data. In the first level under probability sampling through a stratified sampling method, Bilaspur district has been selected out of 28 districts of Chhattisgarh.

In the second level under non-probability sampling based on purposive sampling, 10 women sarpanches of the Bilha development block (Baima, Bartori, Beltara, Chakarbhatha, Jhalsa, Karma, Mangla, Mohra, Sarwani, Urtum) gram panchayats of Bilha development block were selected.

The complete characteristics of the rural society are found in the suitably selected village, and the geographical location, population, and occupation of all the village panchayats are almost the same. The selection has been done in such a way that there is no bias while concluding. In these Gram Panchayats, information has been collected by talking to women sarpanches on political representation, political participation, and awareness about political activities through questionnaires.

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used for analysis. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for data collection. While questionnaires and interview methods have been used for primary sources, books, research journals, research texts, and the internet have been used for secondary sources.

FINDINGS

After emerging as a republic, the democratic system has been accepted to run the governance of the country. For which national-level institutions have been established at the local level. Due to the recognition of the democratic system, the rights and power of India are not monopolized by any acquired class or any limited ruling class.

Equal opportunities have been provided to all sections of the society to participate and enter the governance system and efforts have been made to make the entire society a partner of this right. The Indian people have been provided with various rights in the political field such as the right to vote, and the right to be elected.

To change the status of women after independence, 33 percent reservation has been ensured for them in Panchayats, so that women's participation in the political field can increase.

Table 2.1

Do you go to the Gram Panchayat meeting?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No
- (C) Sometimes

Answers of Women Sarpanches	Answers of Women Sarpanches	Percentage of Women Sarpanches attending meetings
Yes	10	100
No	0	0
Sometimes	0	0

It is clear through the above Table 2.1, that women Sarpanchs go to every meeting of their Gram Panchayat every month, Gram Panchayat meetings are also chaired by women Sarpanchs. With this, both the women sarpanch and the women panch get information about the problems related to the gram panchayats.

Due to this, there is direct political participation and representation of these representatives in Gram Panchayats, from which it is concluded that reservation of women in Panchayati Raj has led to social, political, and economic empowerment of women, which imbibes the basic concept of democratic decentralization. is, in which the direct participation of women at the lower level of governance has been ensured.

Table 2.2

If yes, how many times the Gram Panchayat meeting is held in a year?

- (A) 1-5
- (B) 5-10
- (C) 10-15
- (D) 15-20

Meetings by women sarpanches in gram panchayats in a year	Answer of women sarpanches	Percentage of meetings held by women sarpanches in gram panchayats in a year
1 - 5	0	0
6 - 10	0	0
11 - 15	10	100
16 - 20	0	0

It is clear through the above Table 2.2, that Gram Panchayats meeting is organized by women Sarpanches at least once every month, in which they hear about the problems of that ward by Panches of each ward of Gram Panchayat, in this way women Sarpanchs inspect the works of their gram panchayats from time to time after that women sarpanches solve those problems according to priority and amount. It is beneficial that women sarpanches participate in public activities and present this example in front of the rural women of the Gram Panchayat that women can also run the Gram Panchayat in a better way by becoming the head. Due to this other women of the village also get interested in the works of Gram Panchayats, which increases the interest of women towards politics.

Table 2.3

If you go to the meeting, do you propose?

- (A) Related to Budget
- (B) Related to Education
- (C) Related to Health
- (D) All of The Above

Proposal in the meeting	Answer of women sarpanchs	Proposal percentage in the meeting of women sarpanchs
Related to budget	10	100
Related to education	10	100
Related to health	10	100
All of the above	10	100

It is clear through the above Table 2.3, that when the women sarpanches hold meetings in their gram panchayats, many proposals related to the problems of the gram panchayat are passed by the secretaries and panches, such as those related to the budget, education, health-related proposals are passed so that the fundamental problems of the

Gram Panchayats can be resolved and the work of the Gram Panchayat can run smoothly. In the previous study, it was found that better work has been done by women Sarpanchs in the field of education and cleanliness in their Gram Panchayat, which shows that reservation of women Sarpanchs in Panchayati Raj has increased the interest and interest of women. Priority has also got a boost.

Table 2.4

Do you know about the government schemes being run by the government in the Gram Panchayat?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Information about government schemes being run in women sarpanches gram panchayat	YES	NO
Answer of women sarpanches	10	0
Percentage information about government schemes being run in women sarpanches gram panchayat	100	0

It is clear through the above table 2.4, that all women sarpanches are aware of all the schemes being run by the government, as well as the government is giving training to women sarpanches from time to time to run these schemes in a better way So that women sarpanch can take the benefits of these government schemes to those citizens who are the real beneficiaries under these schemes.

Table 2.5

If yes, are these government schemes being implemented?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Implementation of government schemes being run in village panchayats of women sarpanches	YES	NO
Answer of women sarpanches	10	0
Implementation of government schemes being run in village panchayats of women sarpanches	100	0

It is clear through the above table 2.5, that all women sarpanches are aware of all the schemes being run by the government, as well as they are trying to implement these government schemes in a better way so that the Gram Panchayats and citizens' development can happen.

Table 2.6

If yes, then which government schemes are being implemented in your Gram Panchayat?

- (A) Godhan Nyaya Yojana
- (B) Ujjwala Yojana
- (C) MNREGA
- (D) All of the above

Implementation of government schemes in Gram Panchayat	Answer of women sarpanches	Implementation percentage of government schemes in gram panchayats of women sarpanches
Godhan Nyaya Yojana	10	100
Ujjwala Yojana	10	100
MANREGA	10	100
All of the above	10	100

It is clear through the above Table 2.6, that all the ambitious government schemes like Jal Jeevan Mission, Godhan Nyaya Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, and MNREGA are being implemented by women sarpanches in their gram panchayats dedicated to rural development. It has been working, so that the people of the lowest level in the rural environment can get basic facilities so that the living standard of the citizens of all the gram panchayats can be improved.

Table 2.7

Are the citizens of the Gram Panchayat getting employment through the implementation of these government schemes?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Employment to the citizens of Gram Panchayat due to the implementation of government schemes	YES	NO
Answer of women sarpanches	10	0
Due to the implementation of government schemes in the village panchayat of women sarpanches, the employment percentage of the citizens of the village panchayat	100	0

It is clear through the above Table 2.7, that artisans and laborers are required by all women sarpanches to implement the government schemes of Gram Panchayat, for which they first give priority to job card holder citizens in their Gram Panchayats. After those other citizens of Gram Panchayats are given a chance, this improves the standard of living of the citizens of Gram Panchayats and problems like unemployment of Gram Panchayats are solved for a few months. Generally, it has been found that most of the benefits of government schemes in Gram Panchayats benefit their relatives and caste people so that the vote bank of Sarpanches can remain.

Table 2.8

If yes, then what changes are taking place in the standard of living of the citizens of the Gram Panchayats?

- (A) The citizens of the Gram Panchayat can provide nutritious food to their families
- (B) Citizens of Gram Panchayat can give quality education to their children
- (C) The citizens of the Gram Panchayat can provide primary health facilities to their families.
- (D) All of the above

Changes in the standard of living of the citizens of Gram Panchayats	Answer Of Women Sarpanches	Percentage Change In The Standard Of Living Of Women Sarpanches, Gram Panchayat Citizens
The citizens of the Gram Panchayat are able to provide nutritious food to their families.	10	100
Citizens of Gram Panchayat are able to provide quality education to their children.	10	100
Citizens of Gram Panchayat are able to provide primary health care to their children	10	100
All of the above	10	100

It is clear through the above Table 2.8, that all the women sarpanches are giving priority to the citizens of Gram Panchayats for implementation of government schemes of Gram Panchayats, due to which many positive changes are taking place in their standard of living by getting employment, due to which the village Panchayats members can provide nutritious food to their families, quality education to children and primary health facilities to children, and by taking advantage of all government schemes, they are realizing the concept of proper development of the government.

Table 2.9

Does the female sarpanch do more development work in her gram panchayat than the male sarpanch in the gram panchayat?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Changes in the standard of living of the citizens of Gram Panchayats	Answer Of Women Sarpanches	Percentage Change In The Standard Of Living Of Women Sarpanches, Gram Panchayat Citizens
The citizens of the Gram Panchayat are able to provide nutritious food to their families.	10	100
Citizens of Gram Panchayat are able to provide quality education to their children.	10	100
Citizens of Gram Panchayat are able to provide primary health care to their children	10	100
All of the above	10	100

It is clear from above table 2.9 that most of the women sarpanches believe that they are doing better work than male sarpanches in their gram panchayat during their tenure,

whereas some women sarpanches say that male sarpanches are doing better work than women sarpanches. Let's do it, this is the same woman sarpanch, all the work of her village panchayats is done by her husband, women sarpanch only work as a representative. But most of the women sarpanches are showing better work in their village panchayats by getting the opportunity as sarpanches, which is an example for our society, women can work outside the home in a better way in public areas, which The result will be seen in the form of more strength in the coming few decades.

Table 2.10

If yes, then what is the difference seen in the work of a female Sarpanch as compared to a male Sarpanch?

- (A) In the field of education
- (B) In the field of cleanliness
- (C) In the implementation of government schemes
- (D) All of the above

Answers of women sarpanchs	Answers of women sarpanchs	Answers of women sarpanchs in percentage
In the field of education	7	70
in the field of cleanliness	7	70
in the implementation of government schemes	7	70
all of the above	7	70

It is clear from above table 2.10 that women sarpanches say that they are doing better work in the field of education, cleanliness, and implementation of government schemes in their village panchayats than male sarpanches. Providing all the basic facilities in Panchayats, it can be assumed that if a woman gets to work as a sarpanch, then she can also discharge her functions like a male sarpanch, due to which we have a women's village. A new form of women sarpanches is being seen in panchayats, in which she is discharging her new responsibility in a better way.

Table 2.11

If not, in what cases do male sarpanches perform better than female sarpanches during their tenure in the Gram Panchayat?

- (A) In the field of education
- (B) In the field of cleanliness
- (C) In the implementation of government schemes
- (D) All of the above

Male sarpanches perform better during their tenure in the gram panchayat than female sarpanches in the following areas	Answers of women sarpanchs	Answers of women sarpanchs in percentage
In the field of education	2	20
in the area of cleanliness	2	20
in the implementation of government schemes	2	20
All of the above	2	20

It is clear from the above table 2.11, that it is believed by the women sarpanches that the male sarpanches have not performed better in all the areas of work of the gram panchayats during their tenure in their gram panchayats, which shows that Women Sarpanchs are getting better work done in all areas of Gram Panchayats during their tenure in Gram Panchayat, so they know that better work is not being done by male Sarpanchs in their Gram Panchayats. This shows that women sarpanches are doing better work than male sarpanches in all areas of their gram panchayats.

CONCLUSION

Women's representation has increased at the village level in democratic institutions. Women's participation is one of the most important results of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. As a result, today lakhs of women are playing their role as Panchayat representatives. Due to this, the political participation of women in rural self-governance has increased, as a result of which women's leadership has developed. Based on the ground data and electoral trends, it can be said that after ten to fifteen years, women's representation will be more than fifty percent of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country. The integrity and leadership capabilities of women in India have been recognized at the national and international levels, which is a ray of hope for women's leadership. It has been found in the present research study that the government has made a lot of efforts and efforts for women's empowerment. Positive laws have been made, but social, economic, and political empowerment of women cannot be achieved just by making laws. Therefore, there is a need to adopt flexible and effective strategies. For this, we have to imbibe and accept that all the efforts made towards the empowerment of women are not anti-men, but it is an essential component of development. This effort is necessary for the empowerment of women as well as the entire society because the empowerment of the entire society is not possible until half of the population is empowered. Active participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions will promote balanced and inclusive development in the development of the country, which will ultimately strengthen Indian democracy. Equality and equitable development have been achieved by the active participation of women in decision-making and implementation at all levels. Courage has increased in them to raise their voice against injustice and exploitation, their personality has changed their self-confidence has increased and their participation in constructive programs has increased. That's why the empowerment of Panchayats is necessary for women's empowerment. Political empowerment of women will promote sustainable development in all spheres of life, a transparent and responsible government, and a balanced development of the country, which will ultimately strengthen the process of decentralization in Indian democracy. Equality, social justice, and democratic ideals will not be achieved without the active participation of rural women in decision-making policy-making, and implementation at all levels. Laws cannot remove structural inequality, but they can certainly help in social change. We need to create awareness of the culture of non-violence and non-prejudice to achieve an egalitarian and just society. We need to make systemic reforms and not limit our success to individual

cases. Political participation is not only a symbol of women's development and empowerment, but it further creates awareness and encourages other women to be a part of the political arena to promote their and social interests at large. In this way, the political representation of women in Panchayati Raj is promoting rural women empowerment in various ways in the form of a silent revolution. It has now changed the male mindset as well, with time women are gaining political skills. Looking at the present participation of women in Panchayati Raj, it can be said that in the coming time, better results will be achieved in the condition of women only when determined women will try to empower themselves and in this, they will be supported by the enlightened members of the society.

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