



## Political Participation, Empowerment And Experience of Women Representatives

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### Introduction:

The most remarkable feature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been development of women. Now when the humanity is in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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. The opportunity of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> reservation for all PRI seats create a climate of happiness, excitement, anxiety and bewilderment. Reservation facility suppressed the age old prejudices with confine women to an inferior social position and come outside the four folds of houses. In real sense PRI act advocates the women's political participation, empowerment and development.

The national perspective plan (1988-2000) also accepts a broader definition of political participation when it says: "It includes the gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political processes, including voting, support of political groups, communication with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities. Besides social relationships, there are spheres of power relationships which are generated and institutionalized by being used to encourage, control or move people's behaviour attitudes and beliefs in specified directions. Political participation can be considered to include an involvement in any form of organized activity that affects or seeks to affect, the3se powers relationships".

Women empowerment process is being initiated and realized in terms of personal assertion and confidence building of women as individuals in their personal lives and their ability to protect themselves as women. Opportunities are provided for attaining economic independence as well as ownership of productive assets, besides the ability to handle small capital as revolving funds providing leadership to both women related issues as well as community related issues at the village and panchayat level. All these empowerment processes give the direction and the confidence to establish their autonomy in the sphere of political self-governance of their village, block and district level.

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.

### **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 whether and to what extent the 73<sup>rd</sup> 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 to 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 problems faced by elected women.
3. To what extent women reservation have been helpful in women empowerment.
4. To examine the elected women’s view about the solution to the problems of women participation in PRI’s

### **Methodology:**

#### **Sampling:**

Since the universe of our research study is female representatives of panchayat raj institutions of Bhiwani District, it’s neither possible nor 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 analyse 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.

**Time Devotion:**

Rural development is comprehensive and multi-dimensional process. It includes the development of socio-economic conditions of people living in the rural areas and ensures their participation in the process of development for complete utilization of physical and human resources. The table given below presents the data on the devotion of time for the PRI functioning by women leaders:

**Table 1.1****PER-DAY TIME DEVOTION IN PRI RESPONDENTS**

Time Devotions per day	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
1-3 hrs.	45 (31.68)	05 (33.33)	12 (20.33)	02 (25.00)	64 (28.57)
3-6 hrs.	17 (11.98)	03 (20.00)	05 (8.48)	01 (12.50)	26 (11.61)
As and when required	80 (56.34)	07 (46.67)	42 (71.19)	05 (62.50)	134 (59.82)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table shows that majority 134 (59.82%) leaders devoted time in PRI functioning as and when it required according to issues brought or related to PRIs. Next maximum 64 (28.57%) number of women leader spent 1 to 3 hours per day followed by 26 (11.61%) who usually devoted 3 to 6 hours per day for PRI functioning. Similarly at the Gram Panchayat level 80 (56.34%) panches devoted their time as per issue of the day. Next majority 45 (31.68%) devoted 1 to 3 hours daily to undertake PRIs activities followed by 17 (11.98%) women panches who devoted 3 to 6 hours per day in PRIs. 5 (33.33%) sarpanches devoted 1 to 3 hours, 3 (20%) sarpanch devoted 3 to 6 hours daily. 7 (46.77%) sarpanch who usually devoted time as per issue. Similarly at the panchayat samiti level maximum 42 (71.19%) members devoted daily as per issue while 5 (8.84%) devoted 3 to 6 hours daily, 12 (20.33) 3 hours daily for PRI works. Further at the 3<sup>rd</sup> level 5 (62.5%) Zila parishad members work as per issue daily for 2 (25%) devoted time for 1 to 3 hours and one member for 3 to 6 hours.

It is clear from the above analysis majority that of the leaders devoted time for PRIs as and when required, particularly in case of Panchayat Samiti members and members of Zila Parishad.

**Table No: 1.2****MAIN AGENDA AT PRI MEETING REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS**

Time devotion per day	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti member	Zila Parishad Member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Construction and Maintenance of Road	29 (20.42)	3 (20.00)	15 (25.42)	2 (25.00)	49 (21.87)

Drinking Water and Electrification	35 (24.65)	3 (20.00)	14 (14.34)	2 (25.00)	54 (24.10)
Sanitation and Health	27 (19.01)	3 (20.00)	12 (20.34)	1 (12.50)	43 (19.20)
Education and training	13 (9.15)	3 (20.00)	10 (16.94)	1 (12.50)	27 (12.05)
Women and Child Development	16 (11.27)	3 (20.00)	8 (13.56)	2 (25.00)	29 (12.95)
Do not know	22 (15.50)	----	----	----	22 (15.50)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table confirms that 54 (24.10%) respondents stressed on facility of safe drinking water and electricity, 49 (21.87%) on construction and maintenance of roads, which get worst condition during rainy season. 43 (19.20%) on sanitation of village, cleanliness of drainage, streets and opening land maintenance of dispensary/Primary health centre. To open new school, girl's school, college and vocational training centre for youth and ladies were in the agenda of 27 (12.05%) women leader. 29 (12.95%) women leader stressed on balwadi, anganwadi, stitching and embroidery centre for women establishment at mahilamandals.

22 (15.50%) Panches had no idea about work because most of work was done by their husband or family member. 35 (24.65%) Panches mainly made agenda to work on electricity and safe drinking water. Next 29 (20.42%) Panches preferred to work for construction reconstruction, maintenance and repair of roads, streets and increase the frequency of buses in their areas. Similarly 27 (19.01%) Panches brought attention on promotion of health and sanitation, cleanness of street drainage and bringing of good medical faculty in their villages. Another 13 (9.15%) Panches wanted to open the school up to Higher Secondary for girls and boys. Remaining 16 (11.27%) Panches wanted to work for Women, child development and other social welfare activities in their respective villages. 2 (20%) Saarpanches worked for electricity and water faculty. 3 (20%) of Saarpanches were idle in their PRI functioning, same number of Saarpanches work for constructor and maintenance of road. 8 (13.56%) Panchayat Samiti member stressed for women and child development in PRI Meeting. The understood the ICDS programme and help pregnant and other women and child in their areas. 15 (25.42%) Panchayat Samiti women members liked to do construction of roads and similar number for health and sanitation in their constituency.

Table No: 3

**DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Methods of Decision Making	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti member	Zila Parishad member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
As per rules voting	99 (69.72)	08 (53.33)	24 (40.68)	6 (75.00)	137 (61.16)
Unanimously	23 (16.19)	03 (20.00)	34 (42.37)	2 (25.00)	53 (23.68)

No response	20 (14.09)	04 (26.67)	10 (16.95)	----	34 (15.18)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

The table reveals that 137 (61.16) respondents opined that PRI decision are taken as per rule, i.e. voting system followed by 34 (15.18%) respondents who have no clear idea about the decision making process. While 53 (23.66%) responded that all the decision are taken unanimously. Similarly at the gram panchayat level 20 (14.09%) Panches 4 (26.67%) Sarpanches and 10 (16.95%) Panchayat samiti members did not response to it. It means that act as a person of just thumb impression or singing on paper about the consensus of final decision taken by other member of the panchayat. Majority of 99 (69.72%) panches and 8 (53.33%) sarpanches opined that all the decisions are taken as per the rules like casing of vote. 6 (75.00%) Zila Panchayat members responded that maximum of decision taken through the process of casting vote. So on the basis of above data that decisions are taken either by voting or by unanimity.

**Table No: 4****INVOLVEMENT IN FAMILY AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

A women leader has to devote time and feel concern towards functioning/activities of PRI as well as in the family. Some women leaders feel PRS's work as an extra work as for them because it affects their involvements in family and other activities. For the purpose of present study, respondents were asked about their involvement in functions.

Reason	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti member	Zila Parishad member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Yes	112 (78.87)	12 (80.00)	49 (83.05)	6 (75.00)	179 (79.92)
No	30 (21.13)	3 (20.00)	10 (16.95)	2 (25.00)	45 (20.08)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table shows that majority of 179 (79.92%) respondents agreed that they participated in their family and other activities, while 45 (20.00%) respondents did not participate in social activities. Similarly 112 (78.87%) panches, 12 (80.00%) sarpanches, 49 (83.05%) panchayat samiti members and 6 (75.00%) zila parishad members constitute the group of women leaders who participate in their family and other activities but extent of their participation is directly lies on their family socio-economic and political position like male dominance, economic situation, education standard and PRI position.

So on the basis of above analysis we may conclude that there is a large extent of participation in family and other activities by women PRI leaders. The social system of rural society contains that extent of freedom, participation and rights of women in all sphere of socio-economic and political life.

Table No: 5

## CO-ORDINATION WITH OTHER LEVEL OF FUNCTIONARIES

Time devotion per day	Gram panchayat		Panchayat samiti member	Zila parishad member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Only during meeting	85 (59.86)	09 (60.00)	18 (30.51)	8 (100)	120 (53.57)
As and when required	45 (31.70)	05 (33.33)	13 (22.03)	----	63 (28.12)
Never	12 (8.44)	01 (6.67)	28 (47.45)	----	41 (18.31)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table show that majority 120 (53.47%) respondents met other women colleagues only during meeting followed by 63 (28.12%) who contact to other women colleagues as and when required, 41 (18.31%) women never meet their women colleagues. Majority of panches 85 (59.86%) and 9 (60.00%) sarpanches meet other women colleagues during meeting while 45 (31.70%) panches ad 5 (33.33%) sarpanches meet other women colleagues as and when required. The situation is different in case of panchayat samiti and zila parishad level. Majority 28 (47.46%) panchayat samiti women members never meet to other women colleagues. While all the zila parishad women members meet only during meetings.

On the basis of above analysis, we may conclude that there is less linkage/relationship of panchayat samiti women member with other women colleagues while all the zila parishad members always contact other women colleagues during meeting.

Table No: 6

## UTILIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Scheme	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti member	Zila Parishad member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Yes	52 (39.62)	05 (33.34)	59 (100)	08 (100)	124 (55.36)
No	90 (60.38)	10 (66.66)	----	----	100 (44.64)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table indicates that 100 (44.44%) women leaders neither give any help to the people of their constituency not they do any effort for the utilization of government schemes like PRI, IRDP, NREP, TRYSEM, ApniBetiApanaDhan while 124 (55.36%) leaders help their constituency people either by signing on paper or giving information about scheme initiated by government for employment generation, poverty alleviation or providing pension or loan for the welfare of villagers. Similarly of gram panchayat level 52 (39.62%) panches know about these scheme and they provide their help to villagers while 10 (66.66%) women sarpanches sign on the papers for

utilization of government scheme help in getting old age pension, widow pension and loan and pension to handicap persons in their village. It is significant to explain here that all the 59 panchayat samiti members and all the 8 zila parishad members give benefit to the people of their constituency by signing on paper or by giving information about the procedures of different schemes.

On the basis of above analysis it may be concluded that the panchayat samiti and zila parishad women members are more aware regarding different economic welfare schemes run by government.

**Table No: 7****EXERCISE OF DECISION MAKING POWER OF WOMEN PRI LEADERS**

Scheme	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat samiti member	Zila Parishad member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			
Yes	19 (07.04)	02 (13.34)	08 (13.50)	02 (25.00)	31 (13.84)
No	66 (46.48)	04 (26.66)	06 (10.18)	----	76 (33.93)
Sometimes	37 (26.05)	05 (33.34)	27 (45.76)	03 (37.50)	72 (32.15)
Often	20 (14.08)	04 (26.66)	18 (30.50)	03 (37.50)	45 (20.08)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table reveals that 76 (33.93%) women leaders do not take decision while 72 (32.15%) take decision sometimes and 45 (20.18%) leaders take decision often. Only 31 (13.84%) leaders do take decision in PRIs. At gram panchayat level 66 (46.88%) panches and 4 (26.66%) sarpanches do not take decision while 37 (26.05%) panches and 05 (33.34%) sarpanches do take decision sometimes. At panchayat samiti and zila panchayat level 27 (45.76%) and 3 (37.50%) members respectively do take decision sometimes.

From above analysis we can conclude that women are more active as sarpanch, panchayat samiti members and zila parishad members as compare to panch.

**Table No: 10****ATTITUDE OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF WOMEN PRI LEADERS**

Attitude of family	Gram Panchayat		Panchayat samiti member	Zila Parishad member	Total
	Panch	Sarpanch			



Happy and supportive	85 (58.86)	12 (80.00)	50 (84.75)	06 (75.00)	153 (68.30)
Partially happy	35 (24.65)	02 (13.33)	09 (15.25)	02 (25.00)	48 (21.43)
Not happy	22 (15.49)	01 (6.67)	----	----	23 (10.27)
Total	142 (100)	15 (100)	59 (100)	08 (100)	224 (100)

This table shows that 153 (68.30%) families of women PRI leaders are happy and supportive, 48 (21.43%) are partially happy and rest 23 (10.27%) women panches, 12 (80.00%) sarpanches, 50 (84.75%) panchayat samiti members and 6 (75.00%) zila parishad members are happy and supportive. On the other side, families of 35 (24.65%) women panches, 2 (13.33%) women sarpanches, 9 (15.25%) panchayat samiti members and 2 (25.00%) parishad members are partially happy. Rest of the families i.e. 22 (15.49%) panches, 1 (6.67%) women sarpanches are not happy. They give reason that the PRI responsibilities/duties of women leader create problems in household work.

### Conclusion:

This is a study of participation in Panchayat Rah 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 73<sup>rd</sup> 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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