



Research Paper

## Empowerment of Dalit women in panchayat raj institutions

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### **Abstract**

People's social accomplishment, economic engagement, and political participation all relate to the notion of Empowerment, which is multidimensional. In addition, since empowerment is a continuing process, there is no endpoint. One does not reach an absolute level of empowerment. In 1993, the 73rd Amendment to our Constitution was a significant step in this direction. In addition to providing for the reservation of seats for scheduled castes and tribes proportional to their population in the panchayat region, the amendment assured that at least one-third of these reserved seats are reserved for women. The impact of reserving one-third of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for women has been positive and has facilitated the political and social empowerment of women. There are roughly 260,000 panchayat representatives in India, 75,000 of who are women, giving India the highest proportion of elected women in the world.

**Key words:** Empowerment, Dalit women, panchayat raj, institutions, and 73rd Amendment.

### **I. Introduction**

The Women's Reservation Bill of 2010, which was approved by the Upper House of Parliament, is an additional significant move that aims to grant women more political space and secure their active involvement in the development process. While ensuring women's participation in the decision-making process at home and in society is more difficult than ensuring their representation in panchayats or parliament, these are nonetheless vital measures. The difficulty will be to build their capability so that they can effectively fulfil their tasks. In India, the constitution guarantees fundamental rights and directive principles to all citizens, regardless of their gender, caste, or religion. In the largely patriarchal and caste-based society of India, Dalit women suffer the triple burden of caste, class, and gender. Positioned at the bottom of Indian society's social hierarchy, Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe women experience multiple forms of discrimination, including lack of education, economic disadvantages, social disempowerment, domestic violence, political obscurity, and sexual oppression. To reduce the likelihood of elite capture, proxy involvement, and single-point decisions, Panchayat decision-making processes must be more precisely specified.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To understand the role of dalit women in the current decision-making environment.
2. To access the rights of dalit women in Panchayat Raj institutions.
3. To investigate the issues faced by dalit women in panchayat raj.

### **Panchayat Raj Institutions with Women**

In order to support the women's 'real' empowerment, they must be 'empowered' in political decision-making. Approximately one million women joined Panchayats as a result of the 73rd constitutional amendment. It is a recognised fact that forty percent of elected women represented underprivileged groups, that around seventy percent of women MPs were illiterate, and that the majority of them had prior political experience. Therefore, it was only logical that widespread concern exists that men will manipulate women. Despite several examples of such manipulation and submission by women, the presence of so many women in Panchayats has had a profound effect on gender equality. The occupation of elected seats and chairperson's posts by marginalised women in grassroots democratic governments is a massive social and political upheaval, the full impact of which will take at least a decade to become apparent.

As States have the discretion to define the scope and ambit of Panchayati Raj, the functioning of Panchayats exhibits the entire spectrum of political behaviour, from the abject subordination of women to

remarkable instances of social and political assertiveness. Therefore, examples are essentially anecdotes — true only in regard to the occurrence cited — and are of limited use for drawing conclusions about Panchayati Raj.

However, it cannot be denied that Panchayati Raj has resulted in enormous benefits that have not been properly comprehended or analysed. These benefits pertain to empowerment and development. The constitution mandates a minimum level of one-third reservation for women in Panchayats, but the States have the discretion to require a higher level. Bihar took the courageous move of reserving 50% of Panchayat seats for women. 54% of seats in Bihar's panchayats are now occupied by women who were elected to their positions. Sikkim followed Bihar's lead by increasing women's reservations to 40 percent and holding elections under the new setup in January 2008. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand have passed legislation boosting women's Panchayat reservations to 50 percent.

These modifications will apply to the next Panchayat elections in these states. The Research Report A recent poll, commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and conducted by Nielsen Company–ORG Marg under the direction of an academic advisory group, offers numerous new insights into the Social and Political empowerment of women in the new Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This is the largest study ever conducted on any aspect of Panchayat functioning, covering Gram Panchayats in 23 states with a sample size of over 20,000, including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), Elected Male Representatives (EMRs), ex-EWRs, official officials, and community members. Nearly three-quarters of the EWRs in the sample belonged to the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, or Other Backward Classes and were evenly distributed between those living above and below the poverty line.

### **Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions**

The gender representation in local self-government or PRIs has exceeded expectations. Despite the fact that only one-third of seats were allotted for women by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, the actual representation of women at all levels is substantially higher. 41, 43, and 40 percent of Panchayat members are women at the district, tehsil, and village levels, respectively. Despite the idea that these women leaders are merely men's proxies, these women gain independence with time. In fact, they have also begun to vie for unreserved seats. It has resulted in the empowerment of women not just in the Panchayats but also in rural areas of India. However, much more must be done to empower women in local self-governments so that they may play a more proactive part in decision-making and, by their sheer presence, encourage an increasing number of women to assert their rights. For this, capacity building is necessary through knowledge, education, and training in several areas relevant to women, such as legislation, rights, and programmes for women, among others.

### **Status of Dalit Women in the Society**

In Indian society, Dalit women are not considered to be human. These women are economically and socially marginalised. In this caste-based society, they are helpless beings whose lives are viewed as useless and disposable. They are victims of caste, class, and sex distinctions. For the majority of women in India, survival is their first concern. Poverty, dowry murders, widow burning, and female infanticide have taken on new forms as a result of modernity and technical progress. Upper-caste men and women commit more atrocities against rural Dalit women.

In our society, safety and security do not exist. The upper caste males may employ them whenever they see fit. Here, untouchability is forgotten, and an upper caste man may rape a poor, pale, weak, sick, dark, mute Dalit lady if he so chooses. There is no end to sexual abuse against Dalit women in India.

## **II. Conclusion**

In the contemporary setting, the empowerment of dalit women is considerably more crucial. To halt the assault against them, it is crucial that they empower themselves to achieve their rights through sustainable development. In addition to upholding its national and international commitments to protect Dalit women from assault, the Indian State might contribute to the expansion of Dalit women's options and agency by improving their socioeconomic conditions. In result, increased Dalit women's agency would contribute to social transformation not only for their families and communities, but also for Indian society as a whole. The objective of women's empowerment will not be achieved by reservations alone, and respondents have cited a variety of barriers. It can be observed that there are more restraining reasons than enabling elements for the entry and participation of women in the political arena, and it is fascinating to learn that the restraining factors are so numerous and varied. Efforts are being made to overcome these obstacles, but it is a lengthy process.

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