

The Political Participation of Rural Women and its Societal Impact

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Abstract- *Women in rural areas are catalysts for the social, economic, & environmental change that is necessary for society's long-term viability. For rural communities to progress and women to feel empowered, it is essential that they actively participate in politics. The battle against marginalisation, trivialisation & oppression, as well as the socio-economic growth of rural women, depend on their political engagement and empowerment. Cultural norms, education, economic independence, & government policies are some of the aspects that have been studied as potential facilitators or deterrents to political activity among rural women. Additionally, it evaluates the broader social effects of their involvement, including advancements in gender equality, stronger government, and enhanced social welfare. In this research, we will represent that a positive association between women's labour force participation and GDP growth. A more diverse and inclusive district may see faster development and progress if more women are involved in the political process, have high-quality leadership roles, and have decision-making authority.*

Keywords- *Women, Rural Women, Political, Socio-Economic, Empowerment*

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INTRODUCTION

One crucial aspect of democratic government and social advancement that is sometimes disregarded is the political engagement of women in rural areas. Entrenched patriarchal traditions, economic reliance, & lack of educational opportunities are just a few of the obstacles that rural women encounter across the world, limiting their ability to actively participate in political processes. More egalitarian and representative government cannot be achieved without rural women's participation in political decision-making, notwithstanding these challenges.

Women in rural areas are catalysts for social, economic, & environmental change, which is essential for societal sustainability. Achieving equality, democracy, peace, or rural development also requires women to be involved in decision-making at all levels and to actively participate on equal terms with men on a political basis. Their perspective & background has to be taken into consideration. A focus on rural women's leadership and their contributions to the reform of laws, initiatives, & tactics that impact their daily lives. It can only happen if rural women become politically active, both locally & nationally. By gaining political agency, rural women are better able to assert their rights to land, opportunity, leadership, and a voice in the creation of public policy, legislation, &

programmatic rules. A nation's democracy, the battle against marginalisation, trivialisation, and oppression, & rural women's socioeconomic growth may all be advanced via their political engagement & empowerment. Because they are unaware of their rights, particularly their legal and political rights, rural women often stay home and don't cast ballots in local elections or attend community political activities.

There is a severe lack of representation of rural women in positions of leadership and government, and they have very little say in policymaking. With the only purpose of taking a revolutionary step in India as a local self-government unit due to powerful, capable, & active panchayats, the seventy-third constitutional amendment enacted (1993) defined the establishment Panchayati Raj system in rural areas on a three-tier basis. People living in rural areas now have more say in local matters thanks to three new bodies: the Gramme Panchayat, the Janpad Panchayat, and the Jila Panchayat. These bodies are located at the Tehsil or Block level, and at the District level, respectively. In response to specific regional requirements, these representatives play a pivotal role in service delivery and development planning. Another revolutionary measure was the reservation of one-third of the seats for women, which was doubled to 50% in 2009 and 2010 by the

government of Madhya Pradesh. In May-June 1994, Madhya Pradesh became the first state in the nation to hold Panchayat Elections after implementing a three-tier Panchayat Raj system.

The state's Fifth Panchayat Election took place in 2014–2015 without any difficulties. The 360487 Panch (Ward members), 6774 Janpad Panchayat members, 847 Jila Panchayat members, and 22604 Sarpanch (or gramme pradhan) were chosen for five years in an election procedure. The sixth Panchayat election was delayed for a variety of political and pandemic-related reasons. Perhaps in the middle of 2021 it will take place. The northern region of Madhya Pradesh is home to the Indore district. The overall population of Indore District is 20,320,36 as per the 2011 census, with women making up 46.3% of the population. The political, cultural, and industrial history of the Indore district is closely tied to its past. There are currently 566 villages in the Indore district, with 298 Gramme Panchayats. Women in the district's rural areas are vital to the economy as business owners, wage workers, & farmers. In addition to playing a significant role in the hard labour of agricultural activities, they also shoulder the burden of providing for their family's well-being, which includes cooking, cleaning, tending to children, elderly, and animals. In addition to extreme poverty, their economic production is low, and they rely too much on agricultural input. Most women work in agriculture, low-wage service industries, or other related fields where they earn the lowest wages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mahajan et al. (2021) The gender disparity in political involvement & representation in India remains stark, even after decades of focused policy measures. There are normative reasons for women to get involved in politics, but there is also empirical evidence that shows that politics shifts when women engage. The purpose of this article is to discuss the involvement, role, & function of elected female representatives in Haryana's local politics. Voting behaviour, membership in political parties, campaigning, meeting attendance, contesting elections, reasons for running for office, factors that inspired women to join politics, involvement in decision-making, work independence, meeting agenda items, difficulties women encounter when organising meetings, obstacles to women's political participation, working hours, self-respect, political expertise, access to data, knowledge of political activities or acts, and so on are all part of the attempt to assess women's participation and activities in grassroots politics. In this study, we gather information from the chosen respondents on the political process and the involvement of women.

Titty Varghese et al. (2020) Despite the widespread agreement that women's political engagement is crucial to any kind of progress, India's gender equality measures are still under fire. There have been several attempts since India's independence in 1947 to devolve authority to the country's many local self-government organisations in an effort to boost

women's political representation. Historically under-represented groups, including as women, are now more actively participating in political decision-making thanks to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. So, this study employs qualitative methods, like document analysis of the Panchayati Raj Institutions amendment act and expert conferences with elected women participants in one district of the Kerala state, to investigate women's political leadership in Local Self Government institutions. India is the biggest democratic nation in the world, and this study aims to find out what it's like for women to be in political leadership roles there. While the study's results show that women have made great strides towards leadership equality, they also highlight some significant barriers that women still face when trying to get involved in politics.

Madan Biswal et al. (2019) Democracy is a political system that promotes gender equality and other forms of social justice. Democracy of India describes an ideal scenario, but the reality on the ground is far different. The women's exclusion from the country's political scene & affairs is increasingly pronounced. Odisha has a pitiful rate of female political engagement at the municipal level, despite several measures aimed at increasing female political participation. Policy formulation & decision-making procedures are two crucial areas where women's engagement is significantly lower than men's. There has been no complete implementation of the gender equality concept that is approved by the Indian constitution. On both the federal and state levels, Odisha's female citizens are grossly under-represented in political leadership roles. No state in India, including Odisha, has been able to successfully denounce sexism and other forms of discrimination against women based on traditional gender roles & conventions. This research looks at how women in western Odisha's Panchayati Raj Institutions are involved politically. It is clear from the study's results that women in Odisha are under-represented in political leadership roles; as a result, more support & autonomy for women is needed to increase their engagement.

Ajit Kumar Basantaray et al. (2019) This research aims to fill a gap in our understanding of women's political engagement in Panchayati raj institutions. Within this framework, an effort has been made to gain insight into their political consciousness and engagement, to comprehend the role of decentralised political systems in women's political participation, to learn about the socioeconomic status & educational qualifications of the elected women participants to Gramme Panchayats in the study area, to evaluate the effect of "Reservation" on women's political empowerment, to determine if women actively participate in the development or execution of developmental programs and in decision-making, and to offer some helpful recommendations for women's effective participation in local self-governance systems. Participating in the research are members of the Zilla Parishad,

Panchayat Samiti, and Gramme Panchayat from the Khandapada, Gania, and Dasapalla Blocks in Odisha's Nayagahrh district.

Ms. K. Elavarasi et al. (2018) During India's colonial era, women were completely barred from participating in politics & voting, and only a select few males were allowed to do so. Reservation for women's participation in parliament or state assemblies was not mentioned or officially provided for in the Indian constitution after independence. A number of laws were passed to legitimise gender equality once it was granted constitutional status in independent India. After the introduction of Panchayati Raj in 1959, a small percentage of women in India actually cast ballots. When it comes to the functioning of a democratic system, the Balvantrai Metha Committee (1957) & Ashoka Metha committee (1977) both stressed the importance of women's roles in the Panchayati institution. Two bills, the 72nd Amendment Bill for Municipalities and one other, were introduced in September 1991 by the Congress administration headed by the late P.V. Narasimha Rao. According to the Panchayati Raj Institution Act of 1993, the historic 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution were a quiet revolution in the history of the country. In order to improve society as a whole, rural areas need to invest in infrastructure including roads, drinking water, forests, water conservation, housing, sanitation, horticulture, and more. Women used to live inside the confines of their homes, but today they are active members of the PRI and are often overlooked in society.

Hanumanthappa H.B et al. (2017) This research aims to find out how the panchayat raj program empowers women. Secondary sources & field observations in Channagiri Taluk formed the basis of this work. Due to the pervasiveness of liadilions in Indian culture & historically male-dominated sociological structure, educated Indian women have had to fight hard for equal rights and positions. In every aspect of her life, including business, she has competed with men and triumphantly maintained her ground. Unlike male leaders, women aren't afraid to speak their minds and take calculated risks. In an effort to make Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Grama swaraj a reality, the institution of panchayati raj was granted constitutional status on this historic day in 1993 as part of the seventy-third constitutional amendment act, 1992. It is the women who must be woken if we are to awaken the masses. When a woman moves, her family, community, and nation follow suit.

Umesh Gadekar et al. (2016) In India, half the population is female. No nation can progress unless its whole populace pitches in. Fifty percent of Indians still help out around the house. It is believed that women should have an active role in the nation's social, cultural, political, & economic spheres in order to contribute to its overall progress. In order to increase their engagement in politics As a result of the 73rd amendment to the constitution, one-third of the seats in local self-governance are reserved. The Panchayati Raj Institutions, which are responsible for local self-

governance, now have a 50% reservation for women. The goal of granting women this constitutional right is to encourage them to take an active role in municipal politics, particularly in positions of power. Their rights, albeit guaranteed by the constitution, remain just in writing. Again, the question arises as to whether these fundamental rights are being enjoyed by them or by someone else. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Panchayat Raj System and to learn how women's families affect their political careers. Researchers in Maharashtra's Palus Taluka were part of the Sangli district. Primary data, which formed the backbone of the study, was gathered using an interview schedule. The current research included 30 samples drawn from the Grampanchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad levels of Panchayati Raj. All three levels of the Panchayati Raj were represented in the samples that were chosen using a stratified sampling approach. The female delegates in Panchayati Raj Institutions are still swayed by family members, according to this report. The rest of the family has already made their political decisions. The first step in fixing their performance issues is identifying what they are.

Sabina Begum et al. (2015) Even though democracy in India has been around for over half a century, the country's values, particularly those of its women, still have a long way to go. The under-representation of women in politics is a universal reality. The significance of women's political engagement for a functioning democratic state is being more and more recognised globally, despite the fact that their political engagement is almost nonexistent. Nearly half of any country's population is female, and a democratic government cannot function well with only half of the people. Debilitated democracy is what it will be. It is therefore impossible to conceive of a democratic government apart from their involvement, and their decision-making powers are necessary for their social, economic, and political empowerment. Also, guys aren't always the best messengers when it comes to women's collective concerns, needs, & ambitions. Foreign policy, international relations, issues of war and peace, science or technology, environmental protection, and other people-centered problems—including education, employment, health, or nutrition—need a female perspective because they impact women differently than men. Looking at the global picture, however, paints a bleak image: with a few notable exceptions, males make about 93% of parliamentarians and women just 7%. The 1995 World Congress of Women in Beijing reaffirmed the significance of women's increased political engagement and offered suggestions to the participating nations in its "Platform of Action" to create more "space for and visibility" of women in political institutions and procedures. Empowering women begins with this crucial initial step. After being dragged into a never-ending pit of despair from the beginning of time, the Women's Reservation Bill in Congress appears to have finally found a way out. We would go nothing if we just complained about the state. From local to state and

federal legislatures, we must see the initiative to include half of our people in decision-making processes through to its conclusion. Aiming to highlight the necessity and imperatives of increasing women's political engagement, this article makes an effort to do just that. There has also been an effort to probe the past of women's involvement in politics.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the political rural women applied for various Panchayat posts.
2. To propose the rural women might be more empowered to participate in politics and enhance their socioeconomic contributions to the district's development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research that has been given is primarily descriptive. Secondary sources, including reports from the State Election Commission and Panchayat elections in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, form the basis of this planned research article. The majority of the articles in this publication dealt with rural women's empowerment, participation in politics, and the ripple effects it had on society.

Data collection technique

That research included both primary and secondary sources. Primary & secondary sources are really consulted for the collection of such data. The study proposal alludes to the goals and actions. The research is an organised effort to learn more. Overall, it's a qualitative analysis.

Primary data collection

Formal & informal interviews are used to gather primary data. Data gathering is the foundation of this research and study kind. Quite a few regulatory agencies are present. Participants from the Indore district was chosen to serve on 13 Jila Panchayats, 100 Janpad Panchayats, 4301 Panchs (Ward members), and 256 Sarpanchs (Pradhans). This is an area where local government is crucial. Social integration is the primary emphasis of these statistics. Social statistics, records, media, and scholarly journals all contribute to the secondary data set used in this research. There is a critical function for official reports and data as well.

Secondary data collection

Secondary data comes from newspapers, reports, government documents, social statistics, yearly reports, and journals.

Table: The Status of Rural Women's Participation in Indore's 5th Panchayat Election District (2014–2015)

S. No.	Representative post	Total seats	Female representative	Percent
1	Panch (Ward member)	4301	2247	52.24
2	Sarpanch (Pradhan)	256	130	50.78
3	Janpad member panchayat	100	52	52.00
4	Jila member panchayat	13	07	53.84
	Total	4670	2436	52.16

RESULTS

Only seven women were elected to the Jila Panchayat, fifty-two to the Janpad Panchayat, twenty-two thousand four hundred and seven Panch (Ward member), and one hundred thirty-hired as Sarpanch (Pradhan). By granting rural women more agency in politics, we can help them reflect on and analyse the present state of women, as well as the social norms and constraints that stand in the way of their full participation in shaping policies, programs, laws, regulations, and decision-making that are inclusive of women. In order to increase the G.D.P., they take decisive action by putting their skills to work in social & economic development. With the help of government authorities, the women's representative leaders in the village work on development through a number of committees, including the development, finance, & planning committees. These leaders serve as members of the Janpad Panchayat and the Jila Panchayat. Village roads leading to cities, intramural roads, water treatment facilities, playgrounds, schools, clinics, restrooms, and Anganwadi centres will all be built with their active participation. Environmental concerns and water resource management were also major areas of focus. At the Gramme Panchayat level, women delegates often speak for male relatives. There are several obstacles that rural women face while trying to participate in politics and gain empowerment, including a lack of education, political ignorance, gender norms & social limitations, and limited involvement in household and other decision-making processes.

If the obstacles to equality are removed, rural women may realise their immense potential to contribute to socio-economic development & increase G.D.P.

There are several instances where women were elected to Panchayat positions as a result of the reservation policy. The political involvement of several women representatives is a proxy for their male family members, as they just served as their representatives' mouthpieces. In accordance with their desires, abilities, and the realities on the ground, they will not be providing services to the community. Their numerous problems stem from things like social norms & attitudes, a lack of social safety, low productivity, low productivity due to a lack of education, and bad working circumstances. Plus, fewer people are involved in decision-making at various levels. Collective & individual efforts to alter political norms via, for instance, teaching citizens about government and its workings, expanding citizens' access to information, and fostering more

esteem for citizens' ideas, voices, and rights to have a say in policy decisions. For rural women to get more involved in politics & political process, it is important to empower them politically. The following steps can help achieve this goal.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Empowering women is making society and women's growth mutually beneficial by establishing an equitable atmosphere in which women may make their own decisions. Equal rights for women, increased self-confidence, and improved social, economic, political, and legal standing are all aspects of women's empowerment. In addition to being an equitable factor, women's empowerment is a prerequisite for long-term social and economic growth, as stated in the Jakarta Declaration. An essential instrument for women's empowerment and for monitoring norms of political preference is their involvement in the political arena & decision-making process. Women in India are guaranteed equality in all areas of society by a constitutional clause that specifically addresses their needs. India has made great strides in establishing constitutional protections and institutional frameworks for women's welfare campaigners. Women have become the focal point of growth since independence. In 2001, the government of India designated the year as a national celebration honouring women's empowerment. In contrast, women still face significant obstacles in today's society, including an uneven distribution of power, and they are fighting tooth and nail to break free of these constraints.

WOMEN IN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Equally difficult for women was gaining the right to vote. For women, becoming politically active was fraught with numerous challenges. In 1917, women battled for the right to vote and many movements occurred. At long last, in 1929, women were granted the right to vote. However, this privilege was conditional on meeting certain criteria, such as being married (wifhood), owning property, and having adequate education. In 1935, the government of India passed an act granting women the right to vote. To qualify, women must have the ability to influence the state through less traditional forms of politics, such as environmental movements, anti-alcohol campaigns, peace movements, or revolutionary activities. Despite this, politics has always been and will continue to be a male-dominated domain where women face severe barriers to advancement. A more vocal call for women's representation in India's political institutions was made by the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1971. The term "political participation" encompasses more than just the ability to cast a ballot; it also refers to being actively involved in making decisions, being politically engaged, being aware of the political system, and contributing to the policymaking process. Fewer women than males are active in politics, whether as voters, party leaders, or in public office. In a broad sense, political participation is when an individual takes part in the political life of his or her society, has the chance to weigh in on important

decisions, and helps determine the society's common goals and the best means to reach them. So far as Srivastava Rashmi is concerned By "political participation," we mean taking part in the many non-mandatory ways that people in a society help choose the laws and, in some way, shape the policies that are put into place. When it comes to women's representation in politics, the particular bills pertaining to them have been crucial.

WOMEN RESERVATION BILL

The reserve bill advocate stated it would assist women build their social standing & resist assault, abuse, etc. For a long time, the women's reservation law has been a contentious topic in politics. Despite the bill's introduction, it was unable to pass due to a lack of political agreement. On 12 September 1996, Deve Gowda filed a bill in the Lok Sabha proposing a 33.3% reservation in parliament & state legislatures. The bill's passage ensures that women will have 33.3% of the legislative chamber's seats earmarked for them, and it also encourages & rewards their involvement in municipal and state government. The efficient implementation of 33.3% seat reservation and its maintenance in gramme panchayat raj institution and women's experiences as members of the political system is more encouraged, according to several studies performed on panchayat raj institutions & reservation of women. It is an outstanding accomplishment that has played a significant role in empowering women throughout the world and in mobilising them to participate.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Most people's everyday interactions with the government, public services, marketplaces, and political system take place at the local level, where they also live & enjoy life. In order to empower them, effective & inclusive local citizenship necessitates their involvement and responsibility in decision-making and local governance. The implementation of development policies takes place at the local level. Limited access to essential social services & economic opportunities are some of the challenges faced by the poor. One possible solution to these problems is the promotion of social & political empowerment on a regional level. Local empowerment can pave the way for greater empowerment on a national or even international scale. When individuals gain confidence in their capacity to influence policy at the local level or conquer local difficulties, it naturally empowers women to tackle issues on a broader scale, maybe even at the regional or national level. More participation in political processes is possible when people are empowered to manage basic services. In order to include women's concerns into governance, it is crucial for women to participate in decision-making. State actions that are neither democratic nor inclusive frequently end up affecting governance systems that do not allow for enough women's participation. The creation of gender equal opportunities & policies that are sensitive to gender

requires the participation of women, particularly in local governments (Richa Shankar). By overcoming stereotypes about women's responsibilities in society and public space, women's representation in local governments encourages other women to pursue careers in diverse fields. After witnessing women have a positive impact on the lives of others, people began to believe in women's abilities as public administrators and members of local government legislative bodies. The reservation policy was a major factor in the increased participation of women in political movements, voting, and other political activities. During Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as prime minister, the process of reservation was begun. As the debate raged on, it became clear that the introduction of reservation at the level of panchayats & urban local bodies was not a genuine attempt to improve women's representation, but rather a populist strategy to create a women's constituency at a time when the Congress party needed to revive its image. This politicised the entire issue.

PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The panchayati raj system has its roots in a less formal structure that has been around for a long time. In the beginning, our society has a loose framework that establishes basic ground rules for everyone to obey for the common good. Because men possess all the authority in our culture, women are expected to stay at home and take care of the house. Women used to have a far harder time achieving certain social positions than males do now, but times have changed. Women were mostly able to join the official political system due to legislative requirements. Women in India are more active in the Panchayati raj system than they are in parliament. We find that 35.3% of district panchayat members were women, 37.8% of intermediate panchayat members were women, and 37.8% of gramme panchayat members were women. In the three-tier structure, 36.87% of the participants are women, demonstrating that the Indian constitution's article 243D, which mandates a 33% reservation for the PRI, is being effectively implemented. Some detractors, as stated in Rai Manoj's publication, have argued that women are only proxies for the males who make the real decisions, and there are many more who are disputing over the new reservation bill, which aims to provide 50% reserves for women in the political system. Alternatively, research from other states has indicated that women in Panchayats are actively working to solve issues affecting women, such as water, education, & access to public goods (Ban, Radu & Rao, Vijayendra,). Research also shows that women benefited from this reserve in terms of reproductive health, reduced burdens associated with housework, and increased agency in making decisions about their own lives and careers. This is a significant step towards women's empowerment in many areas. Women now have a better chance of achieving full empowerment thanks to the reservation increase from 33% to 50%. Some Indian states that have made

gender reservation a priority include Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, & Kerala.

Case study:

The woman, whose name has been changed, is 34 years old. She barely completed fifth grade before being married at the age of 19. Her husband was a member of the gramme panchayat when they were married. Since then, Mallama has had three children & actively involved in home chores. Every five years, according to the panchayat raj system, there should be an election for the panchayat, which gives the people a chance to have a say in local politics and ensures that they are well-represented. As Mallama mentioned, in her husband's family, every election has a winner, whether it's for a post of president or member. It was at this point that her father-in-law thought there was no need for Mallama to take part in the growing trend of women's reservation in the panchayat raj system. Even though she was never encouraged to join a club or participate in extracurricular activities at home. Her father-in-law & other male members of her family make choices at their residence. Her husband has been a member of their gramme panchayat for five years, and now it's time to elect a new panchayat. This time around, too, the local government regulation specifies that the presidency must be held by a woman. Her father-in-law considered all of this before deciding that Mallama would run for president this time. Research on women in politics has shown that exposure to the outside world increases their vigilance & engagement in politics. Two approaches may work here. Encouraging communication between educated rural women and their elected counterparts who are illiterate should be the first priority. As a second option, these ladies may be escorted to cities where they could meet with educated female elected officials. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) play a significant role in empowering women beyond what is required by law by encouraging women to take part in the political system. The right to political involvement was being taught and women's capability was being built through NGO.

CONCLUSION

Women are demonstrating their potential to succeed in any sector they join, which is empowering. Though women are making their voices heard & valued in many arenas, including politics, males continue to hold the reins of power. Women in rural areas have been able to strengthen their sense of self-worth, develop their leadership skills, and gain knowledge of their political and legal rights as a result of their increased participation in politics & empowerment. It is imperative that several initiatives pertaining to women's education & literacy, excellent healthcare, recognition of their role, and political empowerment be sustained in order to guarantee a more effective strategy for the district of Indore's socioeconomic growth. Women should be included in decision-making, but males aren't letting them. On the other

hand, there are examples of thriving communities where women have an active role in decision-making and leadership roles, demonstrating how political engagement empowers women. So, women are becoming more empowered, and they will be much more so in the near future.

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