

# Impact of Women Reservation in Panchayats: A Study in Uttar Pradesh

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## Abstract

The present research paper is the study of impact of women reservation in Panchayati Raj Institution in the state of Uttar Pradesh after 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Three Gram Sabhas in Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh were selected for the study. 100 women in every Gram Sabha were asked questions on various topics. Thus the data obtained from a total of 300 women were analysed. It was found from the study that women reservation in Panchayats has positive effect on their empowerment. It was also found that some amendments in Panchayati Raj Institution can bring more good results for the empowerment of women in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Panchayati raj, Women Impowerment, Reservation, 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment, Gramsabha.

## Introduction

The Panchayati Raj Institution in India has emerged as a strong medium for women's participation in governance. Steps have been taken towards maximum decentralization of democratic structure with a view to strengthening the roots of democracy and making the common people real partner in their civic and political work. Thus it is designated as *Grassroot Democracy*.

The Panchayati Raj Institution is a concrete step towards making the concept of democracy exist in a more realistic manner as it constantly maintains the interest of people in local work as they can solve their territorial problems at primary level by provincial methods. In this way, Panchayati Raj Institution continue to provide direct and indirect training of governance and administration to local people automatically through their participation in governance which in near future may represent the provincial and Central administration and provide competent leadership to the nation.

## Panchayati Raj Institution in Uttar Pradesh

Before the 73rd amendment, Panchayati Raj Institution in Uttar Pradesh was based on the Uttar Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1947 and Uttar Pradesh Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam 1961. As a result of 73rd amendment, Uttar Pradesh legislature passed the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Law (amendment) act 1994. Panchayati Raj Institution was implemented over a large part of the country after independence, but as far as the representation of women is concerned, their number were negligible and the participation of weaker sections was also nominal in some States.

Before the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the representation of women and weaker section in rural leadership was not reserved. Therefore, the goal of establishing a real democratic society even after independence has remained incomplete for 45 years.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has been implemented in the entire country since 24 April 1993 with a view to ensuring rapid and dynamic rural development through Panchayati Raj Institution. It can be termed as the beginning of the golden age and a revolutionary step to establish autonomous governance in India. At least one third of the seats at the three levels of Panchayats have been reserved for women for the purpose of ensuring their participation in the development, which was a historic step. In this way for the first time in the country, women have got the opportunity to occupy at least one-third seats of members and chairpersons at all three levels of Panchayat.

First, the participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institution has added many hopes and expectations to them. The responsibility becomes even more on them that to remove female illiteracy they can actively cooperate for the social upliftment of women by taking necessary steps like Jan Jagran Abhiyan, Personal Cleanliness, availability of schools and special enrollment of girls in it and paying special attention for their progress. This will generate awareness and ardor for education among uneducated women and increase their standard of education, awareness of self and family health, their attention to essential elements like cleanliness and hygiene. Along with literacy, women are also required to be informed about their rights and special legal provisions provided to them. So that they can successfully fight against all the atrocities being committed on them.

Special contribution of women elected for panchayats can also be made in effectively implementing population control programs. They can give their special contribution in making the family, village, region, state and nation prosperous by informing the woman about the ill effects of population growth in their respective areas by creating the desired awareness among them and by developing the concept of planned family among them. These women representative should especially contribute in informing and successfully implementing the various schemes and programs started for the welfare of the rural poor, especially for the welfare of women and to empower them economically. In order to make women economically prosperous, many important programs and schemes like Women and Child Development Program in rural areas, Mahila Saksharta Yojana, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, especially vocational and technical training programs are being run. But due to lack of awareness in rural areas, full benefits of these are not being available. Many efforts are being made to make women economically independent. Women representatives of newly elected Panchayats may play a special role in making these efforts effective.

The Panchayats gained Constitutional status by 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act proved to be a milestone in terms of women's development which provided reservation to women representatives on 33% seats in Panchayats. Its main objective is to empower women politically. Many types of doubts also come up in the context of women empowerment which create many kinds of misconceptions. Do we really want to empower women? Was there really no laws made before this for women's upliftment? Will women really fight to get their political rights? How women will perform their constitutional responsibility and their duties while a large percentage of them are still illiterate and have zero experience on the political front?

How will they be able to reconcile in these changed circumstances? They have to walk shoulder to shoulder with men. They also have to make decisions that are often against men. How will they be able to make free and fair decisions for others? How will they be able to make themselves and society aware of the persistent inhuman atrocities? How will they present their case on the allegations of corruption against them on the other social organisations like court and police? Will women be competent to protect themselves from such attacks? How will she worked with Panchayati Raj Institution? the present research paper is an attempt to answer many such questions.

## Study

In the present study, 300 women members of three Gram Sabhas Sarsawan, Dashrathpur, Lilauli of Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh were selected for the study. Some of them were Panchayat representatives are had been in the past. The main objective of this study is to get the information about women representatives in Panchayat from women members, to know about the problems and obstacles faced by women members and their awareness about the Panchayati Raj Institution and its objective. This is a direct cognitive and empirical research. The date of the information received by female respondents is shown in Table 1 to Table 5.

In Table -1, an attempt has been made to know the position and category of women representatives in the panchayat area. Of the total respondents 277 women said that women representatives were elected. 17 women said that no women representative was elected. While there is such a lack of awareness among the 6 respondents that they could not tell whether the women representative was elected or not. On asking about the category of women, 124 women told that the women representatives has been elected to the reserved seat of women. 96 women told that women representative have been elected to reserved seat of SC/ST. After that, according to 35 women, the category of women representatives elected was OBC. While according to 15 they were general category. Seven women had no information about the category of elected representatives. This table emphasizes that under normal circumstances women get more opportunity of being elected in the seats reserved for them.

**Table-1 : Information about the participation of women representatives in Panchayat**

S. No.	Information about women representatives	Category	Gram Sabha			Total	Percentage
			Sarsawan	Dashrathpur	Lilauli		
1	Yes - 277	General	10	03	02	15	5
		OBC	19	03	13	35	11.7
		Women	54	56	14	124	41.3
		SC/ST	14	22	60	96	32
		Don't know	00	07	00	07	2.3
2	No - 17		01	09	07	17	5.7
	Don't Know - 06		02	00	04	06	2
		Total	100	100	100	300	

**Table -2 : Women representative and development in Panchayat**

S. No.	Presence of women representative affect the rural development	Gram Sabha			Total	Percentage
		Sarsawan	Dashrathpur	Lilauli		
1	Yes	60	18	59	137	45.7
2	No	40	82	41	173	54.3
	Total	100	100	100	300	

In the Table - 2, 173 women are of the opinion that the participation of women does not lead to the development of villages. while 137 women believe that electing women representatives leads to development of villages. Thus it is clear from the study that presence of women representative does not affect the development of villages. The women believe that even though the panchayat representative is a woman, all her work is done by male relatives.

**Table - 3 : Benefit of electing women representatives by respondents**

S. No.	Women benefit from electing women representatives	Gram Sabha			Total	Percentage
		Sarsawan	Dashrathpur	Lilauli		
1	Yes	63	67	52	182	60.7
2	No	37	33	48	118	39.3
	Total	100	100	100	300	

It is clear from Table - 3 that 182 women out of 300 believe that women benefit from electing women representatives in panchayat vial 118 women respondents believe that there is no benefit in electing a woman representative. It is clear from the study that most women believe that the presence of a female Sarpanch make it easier for them to say and implement their words. This proves that reservation of Women in panchayat is a reformist step in women empowerment.

**Table- 4 : Holding and operating of bank accounts by women respondents**

S. No.	Bank Account and its operation		Gram Sabha			Total	Percentage
			Sarsawan	Dashrathpur	Lilauli		
1	Yes- 254	Operated by themselves	50	37	45	132	44
		Operated by others	34	55	33	122	40.7
2	No Account- 46		16	08	22	46	15.3
	Total		100	100	100	300	

According to table-4, 254 women keep their accounts in bank, in which 132 women themselves operate it while the accounts of 122 women are being operated by others in the household. 46 woman do not have any bank accounts. It is directly related to the economic condition of women which means that women are becoming financially strong and now they are doing outside work without any support. Although most women cited government schemes as the reason for having an account as the funds of various government schemes come into their account.

**Table - 5 : Satisfaction with the Panchayati Raj Institution and changes**

S. No.	Satisfied with the Panchayati Raj Institution		Gram Sabha			Total	Percentage
			Sarsawan	Dashrathpur	Lilauli		
1	Yes- 142		43	55	44	142	47.3
	No - 158	Abolish reservation system	30	38	34	102	34
2		Transparency in expenditure of funds	27	07	22	56	18.7
	Total		100	100	100	300	

In the Table - 5, 142 women are satisfied with the current Panchayati Raj Institution. While 158 women respondents want some change in current Panchayati Raj Institution. In this 102 women want reservation system to be abolished. And 56 women believe that there should be transparency in the expenditure of funds come for the development works. When the respondents were asked about the reservation system, most of the people were of the opinion that this does not give opportunity to the deserving candidate due to which the development of villages is not done properly, also the system of reservation promotes disharmony in the society.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

It was found from the study that in the Panchayat area where seats were reserved for women, there is a greater awareness about Panchayat among women. With the presence of a woman representative, other woman of the Panchayat also shows interest in the activities of the Panchayat. It was also found that women can speak openly to women representatives and can make demands for development work as per their requirements. Therefore, for the empowerment of women, it is very important to maintain women reservation in the Panchayats

It was also found in the study that despite being a woman representative from a seat reserved for a woman, it is her male relative who manage most of the work of the Panchayat in her place. This is the biggest obstacle to women empowerment. Creating a conducive environment in rural areas is essential to make women more motivated. For this, it is more important to make arrangement for women's education and it is also necessary to ensure the security to women representatives so that they can do their work fearlessly. Arrangement for educated assistants should also be made as per the requirement for those area where women representatives are not highly educated. This will create confidence in the women representatives who do not show interest in the functioning of Panchayat and have inferiority complex due to illiteracy.

The study found that women show more interest in economic activities and also ensure their participation in daily household chores when the money of government schemes directly transferred to their bank accounts. With this, women are also getting financial security and they are becoming economically stronger. Therefore, government should run more schemes for women to make them more empowered.

Some women are apprehensive about reservation in Panchayats, the particular reason for their number is the violence in the election of Panchayats. Therefore it is very important to maintain a system of rotation for the reservation of seats in Panchayats, so that the system of reservation does not remain permanent in any Gram Sabha.

An important conclusion from the study is that the significant changes made in the Panchayati Raj Institution after 73rd Constitutional Amendment are proving to be a boon for women's empowerment in rural areas. With this, women are not only becoming politically empowered, but they are also showing interest in development works and they are also becoming economically empowered.

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