

# **Role of Women in Local Government in Panchayat Raj Institutions: A Rhetoric or Reality**

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**Abstract:** In 21st century there are five pillars of development namely Women empowerment, Youth advancement, intervention of Digital technology, Gender equality and rising trend of Subalterns and Marginalized sections of society. Having setting the bearings of priorities, Women empowerment is the key domain in the Role of women in local government in Panchayati Raj Institutions which finds its prominent role in the sustainable development in society. There are 29 power point programs have been entrusted in the Panchayat institutions in Rajasthan at three tier system. The 73rd amendment Act in Rajasthan Panchayati Raj System becomes a vehicle of social change and acts as The Harbinger of Women's engendering the Panchayati Raj Institutions since its inception in 1994. The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994 provides for reservation of one third of elected seats for Women at three levels i.e. Gram Panchayat (G.P.) Panchayat Smiti (P.S.) and Zila Prishad (Z.P.) There is also one third reservations for women to the seats of chairpersons of these PRIs. These women include general and scheduled castes. This act further provides for reservation of one third seats for Schedule castes women out of total seats reserved for schedule castes in proportion to S.C. population. The engendering Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rajasthan requires rigorous regimen of total overhauling of social structure per se. In fact, engendering Panchayati Raj Institution in Rajasthan is a euphemistic concept. The PRIs are in infantile stage and lack in all encompassing approach. Bluntly stating, women are still at a periphery of progress in the eyes of policy makers and decision takers.

**Keyword:** Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), Women empowerment, Youth advancement, Digital technology, Gender equality, Subalterns, Marginalized sections.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Women empowerment is the key domain in the Role of Women in local government in Panchayati Raj Institutions find its prominent role in the sustainable development in society. Panchayats have been the backbone of grass root democracy in the Indian villages since its beginning. Gandhi had aptly favoured the Panchayati Raj and his dream got translated with the passage of the Constitution (73rdAmendment) Act, 1992 (or simply the Panchayati Raj Act), which introduced the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction in general and that of women in particular. It came into force with effect from April 24, 1993. Gandhiji advocated panchayat raj as the foundation of India's political system

Emergence and enactment of 73rd Amendment in Indian Constitution heralded a new era of vigorous campaign with an irrevocable commitment to the engenderment, betterment, empowerment, strengthening, emboldening and epitomizing the Women by giving the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) a statutory status. The 73rd Act provides Women an access to PRI and reserves one third seats for Women in three tier system of Panchayati Raj. It is an exercise of capacity building for sustainability and “Holistic development” and growth of much neglected half of the population of India. The journey of woman has been apparently oppressed, perennially perturbing, abysmally abject, meanderingly tortuous, patiently painful, knowingly dismal, deliberately tumultuous, systematically anti-matriarchal, strategically ambivalent, glaringly glorious, historically hostile, conventionally suppressed, venially vexatious and scientifically androgynous et al. The path of subjugation and mindset of marginalization adopted by male-oriented social setup in global terms qualifies this above charted course. The path of gender discrimination has waded through various ups and downs since times immemorial. As Dr. S. Ram relates this issue in his famous book, *Women Through Ages*. “Feminism investigates that why women are marginalized and there are many divergence of views as they look at this very question from their ideological and methodological perspective”.

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visibility, from immobility to mobility, from silence to vocality, from acquiescence to protest, from margin to mainstream, from personal to public participation in democratic ways.

### **REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PRIS**

In PRIs, Gram Sachiv, B.D.&P.O. and A.D.C. are the three keys of power in their respective fields of development at the bureaucratic levels. More than 80% women representatives at Gram Panchayat level divulge the fact that Gram Sachives, J.E.s and B.D.&P.O.s are the real functionaries in development works. They steal the sheen of the total show of village development. What an irony in the development concept! At Panchayat Samiti level, the nexus of B.D.&P.O.s staff, S.D.O (P.R.) and J.E. make moolah. The chairpersons of Panchayat Samiti remain chairpersons without exercising much powers entrusted to them through devolutions and decentralized processes. The Executive officer of the Panchayat Samiti (E.O.P.S) is the real player of development game plan. It is again a question mark on marked reality of participatory approach in PRIs. Similarly at the level of Zila Parishad, A.D.C.-cum-E.O. of Z.P. enjoys the same pattern of functioning. The majority of the Sarpanches divulged the fact that they become the victim of the whims and fancies of Technical branch of the Block. J.E. (Junior Engineer) and S.D.O. are the main eye sore of the Sarpanches in the matters of preparations of detailed estimated plans of proposed works at village level. As the proverbial statement is that discretion breeds corruption, the discretion of executive authorities flouts the norms of people participation. The bond of reciprocity gets loosened and the sins of stomach rule the roost. The concept of the political neutrality in PRIs is also a casualty in Haryana. The degree of interfering monopoly of ruling class people in PRIs activities is at an awfully overwhelming rate.

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The social profile of the PRI representatives is, still by and large, of a middle class woman 5% of them are “dumb dolls” of illiterate families without occupation or economic independence, awareness level of duties and responsibility obviously in shambles, their presence in the meeting of PRIs in doll drum, the proxy representation in the meeting is a rule rather than an exception. It acts as a big stumbling block to the effective participation of women in rural fabric of PRIs. Such representatives become showpieces and mannequines in the showcases. To the same extent of attributes and modalities of elite group in Rajasthani Rural Society, the hurdles and rumbles in the path of progress and full participations in PRIs, created by the inherent class contradictions of the Daughter-in-law, Bahu, Mother, Mother-in-law etc. of middle class. Women in rural area should not be taken as one homogeneous group. There are various categories and sharp divisions based on irregular, illogical, irrational social stratifications, dogmatism and obfuscation of patriarchal value systems which are out rightly antagonistic to the concept of engendering of PRIs in Rajasthan.

The degree and intensity of participation of women in PRIs varies the dominant husbands/ father-in-laws and sons who don't concede leadership in PRIs to the first timer, naïve, semi-literate or reserved categories women. Women are used as puppets by their male chauvinist husbands et al. From this social perspective, it can be inferred that women are basically victim of domestic crooks and parasite ( Husband, Father-in-law), cramped and crushed into the job of wife or mother as child bearing machine. There is no ascent for the ordinary women even in PRIs or in the corridors of power as assumed and presumed in the book of law.

Women in Rajasthan primarily overburdened with high degree of household and agrarian activities emerge as the prime reason behind the lack of participation in majority of PRIs.

### **MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN SOCIETY**

The PRIs suffer from Myths, Misconceptions, Biases, Bottlenecks, Prejudices and Discriminations galore.

1. The PRIs in Rajasthan are ridden with and enmeshed in the network of male macho image of feudal mindset propped up by traditional stronghold of men over women in every walk of life.
2. In PRIs meeting, the majority of women participants are accompanied with men in chameleon forms.
3. In every PRIs, the son, father-in-law, husband props are overwhelmed with pseudo and sham image of women representatives. Men are inherently more assertive than women.
4. Men are more authority - oriented and competent. The tragedy and travesty of the PRIs is that women have been accorded with the status of stepeny to their guardians

5. Woman's status is lower than that of a man. The irony is that women have been accorded the status of Devi (goddess) or Devdasi (Servant ) or Charno ki dasi or Paron ki Jooti in a male dominated patriarchal presence in every walk of life.
6. The presence of women representatives in Gram Sabha is virtually negligible i.e. 0.03%. The magna carta of engendering PRIs is the presence of women in the Gram Sabha which is held three times a year. A real woman is always wrapped in veil and shrouded in domestic chore from womb to tomb.
7. Woman is a poor, ignorant, illiterate, superstitious and suppressed lot who has low access to information and technology, low access to income generating assets, low access to new employment opportunities, low access to leadership position, She has multiple burden that remains unaccounted, invisible and most vulnerable creature on this earth. A woman is a constant victim of male debauchery, licentiousness and contemptuous allusions to exploitation of much neglected lot.
8. A woman is 'Cocooned' in her own gender disparity network.
9. Woman is a politically powerful, socially awakened, morally upright and technologically skilled lot.
10. Culture has been used as a tool of dominance by the male counterpart.
11. Dr. Madurima elaborates various incidence of violence that , "Due to asymmetrical roles, women assumed subordinate position denied equal status. They meekly suffered discrimination, disgrace and dehumanizing practices. They accepted their sufferings because of the lack of alternative support system."

### **FUTURISTIC VISION OF ROLE OF WOMEN IN PRI'S**

To get the objectives of 73rd Constitutional Amendment fructified and fulfilled in PRIs, women can play their role in decision taking and decision making by debunking and dismantling the Myths, Misconceptions, Biases, Bottlenecks, Prejudices, Discriminations, roadblocks, rumbles and removing the unwanted spokes from the running wheel of progress and prosperity in rural fabric of Indian Society. To awaken women to their rights, duties, powers and potential is the vital need of the hour. Women have to be awakened to the fact that their subordination, subjugation, subservience and erosion to men is not ordained in heaven. Women have to be capable of demystifying and falsifying the male made definitions. Women have to fight out against all social ills and malaise to build a solid ground for engendering and embolding the PRIs in real sense by rebutting the Myths and Rhetorics prevailing in dogged, dormant, dehumanized, degenerated, debauched, debased, degraded society of differences and discriminations. Who to blame for the quandary and quagmire of complex social problems of PRIs is an open ended question of 24 carat value. My personal perception and firm belief if that these positive steps regarding debunking of Myths, Misconceptions, Biases, Bottlenecks, Prejudices, Discriminations, roadblocks from the insane and irrational society of male bastions would be crumbled down. The sooner it is, the better it is. But no one and nothing can stop the turning of wheel. Man will be and to be dethroned from the much possessive citadel of patriarchal value

system of rotten society of obscurantist, orthodoxies archetypes, conservatives, superstitions, self conceited smugs.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER**

To study the nature and scope of Panchayat Raj Institution with special focus on women's participation. To analysis the role of women in Panchayat raj Institution whether a rhetoric or reality. Random sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample from different members of the village and from different district of Haryana. Personal Interview was used to collect primary data from the respondents. Opinion of DDPO, BDPO was also taken into consideration to analyze the real situation of women's participation in local Government.

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