

REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN POLITICS THROUGH PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

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Abstract: The aim of recent work is to find out the women's representation, participation and empowerment in politics through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India. The recent work is based on observation made in Ghauranda city of Haryana district and secondary data. Generally, 50% Of the total population are women. In a developing nation like India, women scarcely play role in planning and executing advancement programs. Role of women is confined even in modern society due to assortment of social, lawful and institutional limitations. These facts have a huge impact on their individual social orders and even on their political cooperation too. The Indian constitution ensures the political, financial and social rights of women through the 73rd Amendment Act; which accommodates reservation of one third (1/3rd) seats and positions for female in the PRIs. In this paper, the main focus is to comprehend women's representation, participation and empowerment in PRIs. Besides that, it also intends to explore answers to a variety of the inquiries, for example, Are women truly taking an interest in the Panchayat Raj Institutions, or would they say they are only present? What are the variables that hinder the dynamic support of women in the Panchayat raj institutions? What ought to be done to make the effective participation of women inside the general public and subsequently inside its local political structure?

Keywords: Empowerment, Panchayat Raj Institutions, Constitution, Amendment.

1.0 Introduction:

Basically India is a rural nation, even today, villages comprises over 75% population of India. So extension of power of democratic system at the grass-root level is utmost need, by observing the fact that the participation of local public in democracy is necessary not only at top level as well at the groundwork level of politics. The deconcentration of power should be in a manner that participation of the local public is done through a way of their positive participation¹. PRIs are merely the grass-root units of administration in rural India which is represented as the vehicles of financial change. The persuasive and important working of PRIs would rely upon dynamic inclusion, commitment, participation and interest of its general public, both male and female. In rural India, idea of PRIs is fundamentally from tradition and customs and is therefore not a new idea. The underlying principle behind this basic idea is to engage citizens in formulation, reorganization of beneficiaries, appropriate execution of programmes and policies of general public and decision making process. In recent era, PRIs have fundamental devotion in the direction of progress of rural areas. Several committees lead by Ashok Mehta, P.B. Patil, Balwant Rai Mehta, V.P. Naik, L.N. Singhvi etc. has strengthened PRIs which gave essential impulsion to 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA).² The PRIs being a mysterious and indescribable idea, has undergone chaotic changes in its purpose, function and shape after 73rd CAA, 1992 which came into existence from April 24, 1993. After effectiveness of 73rd CAA, PRIs has become an Indian brand of local independent administration and is at central juncture in advancements of PRIs. It has made sure representation and participation of local public in progression, planning, decision-making, execution and delivery system. All over the globe year 2001 was known as the year "of empowerment of women" with pleasure, realizing our survival in a different century. Empowerment is a term generally used for escalating the social, economical, educational, political, gender and spiritual strength of individuals and communities. The empowerment include over all progress in terms of employment, awareness, education, asses to basic assets, decision making powers and health. Empowerment of women in political context is

¹ Kaul, S., & Sahni, S. (2009). Study on the participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institution. *Studies on Home and Community Science*, 3(1), 29-38.

² Yasmin, E., & Khan, J. I. (2013). Women Empowerment Through Panchayat Raj Institutions--A Case Study of District Kupwara of J&K State. *Indian J Econ Dev*, 9(4), 365-373.

a very important concept of the 21st century³. Mahatma Gandhi had said “Female are the accompanying persons of male having equivalent mental capabilities. She has equal rights to take part in the every activity of man, rights to freedom and liberty. Gender equity and equality are rising as most important task in the universal development. Development activists and social scientists are giving ever-increasing importance to PRIs in their programme for development. As the winner of Noble prize economist Amartya Sen has said, “Democracy is not merely the goal of development, it is the major way of development.” Representation of women in politics is essential for reinforcement of democratic organization and for great effort in opposition to oppression, trivialization and marginalization. Essential political practices will be modified by Emergence and appearance of women as a strong group. In the process of policy formulation and implementation power and rights of women’s must be taken care. Although equal rights for women are guaranteed and reserved through the new Constitution with the help of a different Articles such as Article 14, 15, 23, 29, 30, 42, 45 etc. Even now women of India are continued to be exploited and has shown vast attempt over everything from continued existence to assets. Although women have made significant development in fields like education and employment, but then also existing patriarchal attitudes of Indian society influences participation of women. In present time, the predicament for Indian women is that even though various laws and liberal provision of the Constitution, there is existence of serious inequalities. Actually from the day of Independence women of India have been constantly encouraged to be an effective part of political framework. However in just because of context of active politics, the representation, participation and empowerment of women have been affected in an adverse manner regardless of the reality that merely a noticeable boost is noticed in women’s level of education and awareness of politics.

2.0 Women Position:

Support of women in self-administration envelops fundamental changes in the financial condition of the country so as to achieve the flourishing government support, which is an authoritative objective of development. The evidence show that the women chose for the PRIs has confirmed that they can formulate devotion to the development of rural region and country building. But women elected to PRIs on quota basis have frequently been characterized as ‘proxy women’ due to interference of their husbands; they are just as stand-ins in their place⁴. Even their husbands are present in place of then in mostly meetings. In several regions of world also these women who are elected through quota are seen as ‘token women.’ Several studies and research on women elected through quota has exposed a lot of cases of merely symbolic participation and representation. The participation of elected women member’s in local government bodies usually remains irrelevant, as no specific duties are assigned to them⁵. The term of reference for female elected representative, operational laws and guidelines, limited and inadequate capability of female elected representatives to operate in public institutions of this nature, systematic discrimination, lack of awareness over their duties and roles and biases by male elected colleagues all these are seen as factors impeding meaningful participation of women in rural government.

3.0 Individual Weakness Of Women Representatives:

Majority of women elected members are:

- Either illiterate or their education level is very low.
- Overburdened with family everyday jobs and responsibilities.
- Have less communication skills which become a reason of Introversion.
- Poor socio-economic conditions and poor capacity building with which women have come into the politics.
- Misguided by local government about their rights and duties.

³ Chetia, M., & Gogoi, D. (2013). Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj System-A critical analysis with special reference to North East India. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* ISSN (Online): 2319-7722, ISSN (Print): 2319-7714 www.ijhssi.org Volume 2 Issue 6|| June. 2013|| PP. 05, 9.

⁴ Agnihotri, S., & Singh, V. (2014). Women Empowerment through Reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Himachal Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 60(3), 417-425.

⁵ Hanumanthappa, M. B. (2017). Political empowerment of women through panchayat Raj in India. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 6(9), 107-118.

- Increasing pressure from the political party which has vested comfort in the gender reservation for seats in PRIs.

4.0 Suggestions To Be Followed:

- Majority of rural women has a feeling of inferiority from male members of society, Panchayats and even their own family. Their feeling of inferiority must be changed to make them a active participant and representative of family, society as well as panchayats. To tackle this problem, it is necessary to inculcate confidence among them and to bring attitudinal changes through training in the psyche of the upper classes.
- From very beginning of life in rural regions, there must be capacity building training in schools so that girls must feel independent.
- They must be well educated and free from hurdles of family and society.

5.0 Objectives

Against this back ground the following objectives are set for the purpose of recent study:

- To study the social, legal and political status of rural women.
- To measure the political representation, participation and empowerment of women at work place, within the family and society.
- To assess the extent of empowerment achieved by women via PRIs.
- To identify the chief problem experienced by elected women Panchayat leaders.

6.0 Review Of Literature

Across the globe a plenty of studies and literature have been done on empowerment of women and to know the issues, which can causes foray of women into local government. However several researches have been done to find out the women's representation, participation and empowerment in PRIs. Some of studies related to our topic are:

- **Agnihotri, S., & Singh, V. (2014)** measured the process and method for altering political, social and economical parameters of empowerment of women. They studied on several parameters that must be included or excluded for effective participation, representation and empowerment of women and in ignition of the process of analysis. They also measured the problems of women elected in PRIs.
- **Aiyar, M. S. (2002)** supported participation and empowerment of women in local political framework so that women can be a powerful part of local Indian governance. Additionally he mentioned the benefits to make process of decision making more autonomous. He also focussed on requirement to alter social structure, historical subjugation, to be an important feature for Women Empowerment.
- **Bryld, E. (2001)** researched on various factors that must be included in the process of empowerment such as psychological, physical, religious sociocultural, economical, political, family/interpersonal etc. Along with aforementioned parameters, the most repeated parameter is political one to bring women empowerment.
- **Chetia, M., & Gogoi, D. (2013)** mentioned that for equal participation of women in politics it is necessary to enhance the interests of women into politics and to ensure change and justice. They measured representation and active participation of women in politics as an excellent indicator for women empowerment. Some hurdles recognised by them to a healthy and general neutral political framework are family burden and environment of their family and society.
- **Das, S. (2014)** researched on various complexities felt by elected women politician in India, which include ground truth related to religion, caste, identity and class. He also exposed that house-hold duties and responsibilities and less financial power are more and more undefeatable challenges for active participation of women in politics. Women elected were found to be less keen on being part of other electoral activities, such as participation in campaigns, listening to speeches, or getting membership in political parties.
- **Kaul, S., & Sahni, S. (2009)** pointed out role of women politicians in political parties, they found that at leadership positions hardly ever women participants are chosen. In fact, a common complaint between women candidates is that they are fielded from typically "losing" constituencies since the party does not wish to "waste" a male candidate. Often, females are the proxy representatives' formales from their families, but such reservations also cater to creating awareness among the masses.
- **Mathew, G. (2003)** has taken a detailed study to find the parameters on which one can assess the political rights of women in the Surat region based on age, social background, marital status, and privileged and unprivileged economic background.

7.0 Material & Methodology:

The recent work is based on both primary and secondary data. Both exploratory and descriptive type of research methodology is used in present study. The primary data is collected from keen observation of women elected in PRIs, their behaviour, representation, participation and role in PRIs. While the source of secondary data is review of past researches, record of result of elections and several other authentic reports. The various factors have been recognized and finally differentiated in two categories liable for hindrance and reasons for success in women empowerment. In recent study, two approaches have followed for women empowerment. Various determinants of women empowerment is considered in first set of studies. Different proxies for women empowerment are examined during second set of studies. Female empowerment in social norms is measured by ability of women to make domestic and financial decisions, in comparison to her husband. While empowerment of women in politics itself is measured by women's comparative decision making capability, physical mobility, and freedom from domestic violence, economic security, political awareness, participation and representation. Numerous investigations have established that women empowerment is positively affected from access to credit programs whether through micro finance organizations or Rotating Savings Credit Association (ROSCA). Different researchers have also revealed a positive link between use of contraceptive and empowerment. But focus of our study is merely empowerment of women through PRIs.

An unparalleled step was taken consciously in 1992, with the introduction of 73rd CAA in local self governance, to enhance participation, representation and empowerment of women. According to Figure 1, 14 states of our country have 50%-58% representation of women in PRIs. The highest representation of women is in Jharkhand with 59%, closely followed by Rajasthan and Uttarakhand i.e. 58%. Lowest participation and representation of women is in in Daman & Diu with 29% only.

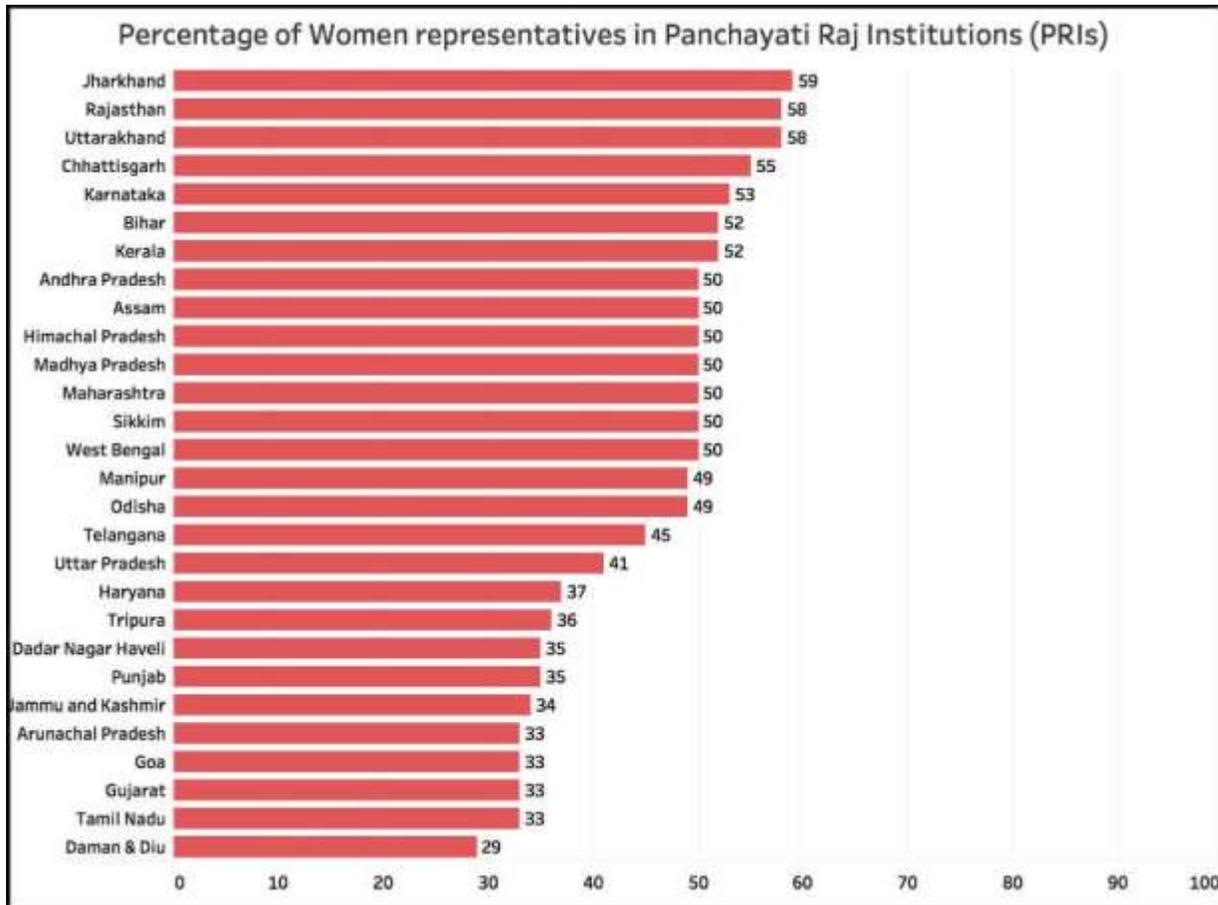


Figure 1: Percentage of Women Representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs)

According to study in year 2017, Figure 2 shows highest number (19,992) of women sarpanches is in Uttar Pradesh but according to population of state it is merely 34% of total elected sarpanches. According to survey maximum number of women sarpanches is 58% of total number and in number it is 3600. Manipur has only 2% representation of women sarpanches.

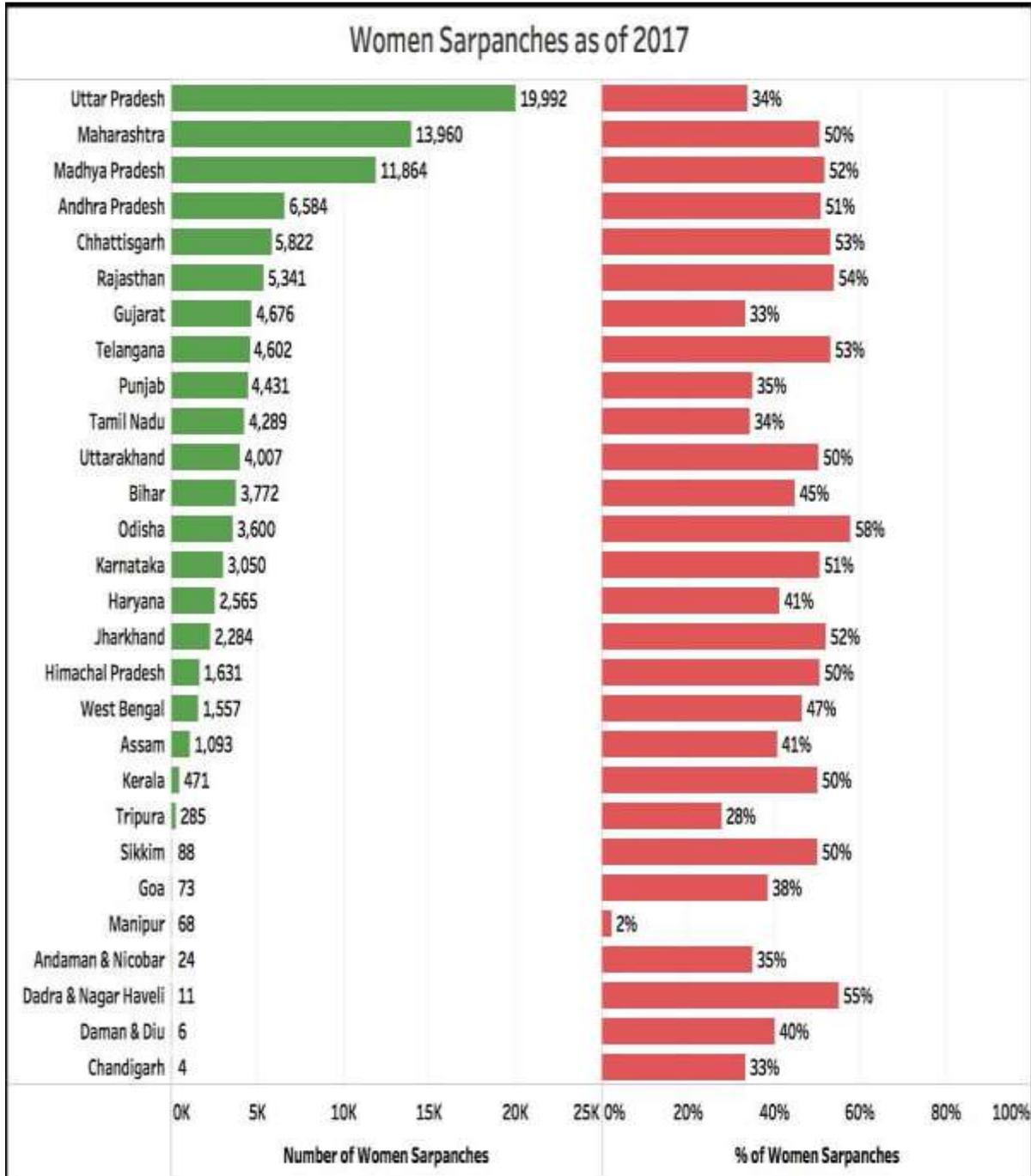


Figure 2: Women Sarpanches as of 2017

According to statistics of the Government of India for election of various State Legislative Assemblies, as shown in figure 3 in Bihar, Haryana and Rajasthan percentage of women representation is 14%. On an average at all India level, as of 2017, 9% of the State Assembly members and 5% of the State Council members were women. Pondicherry, Nagaland and Mizoram have zero women MLAs.

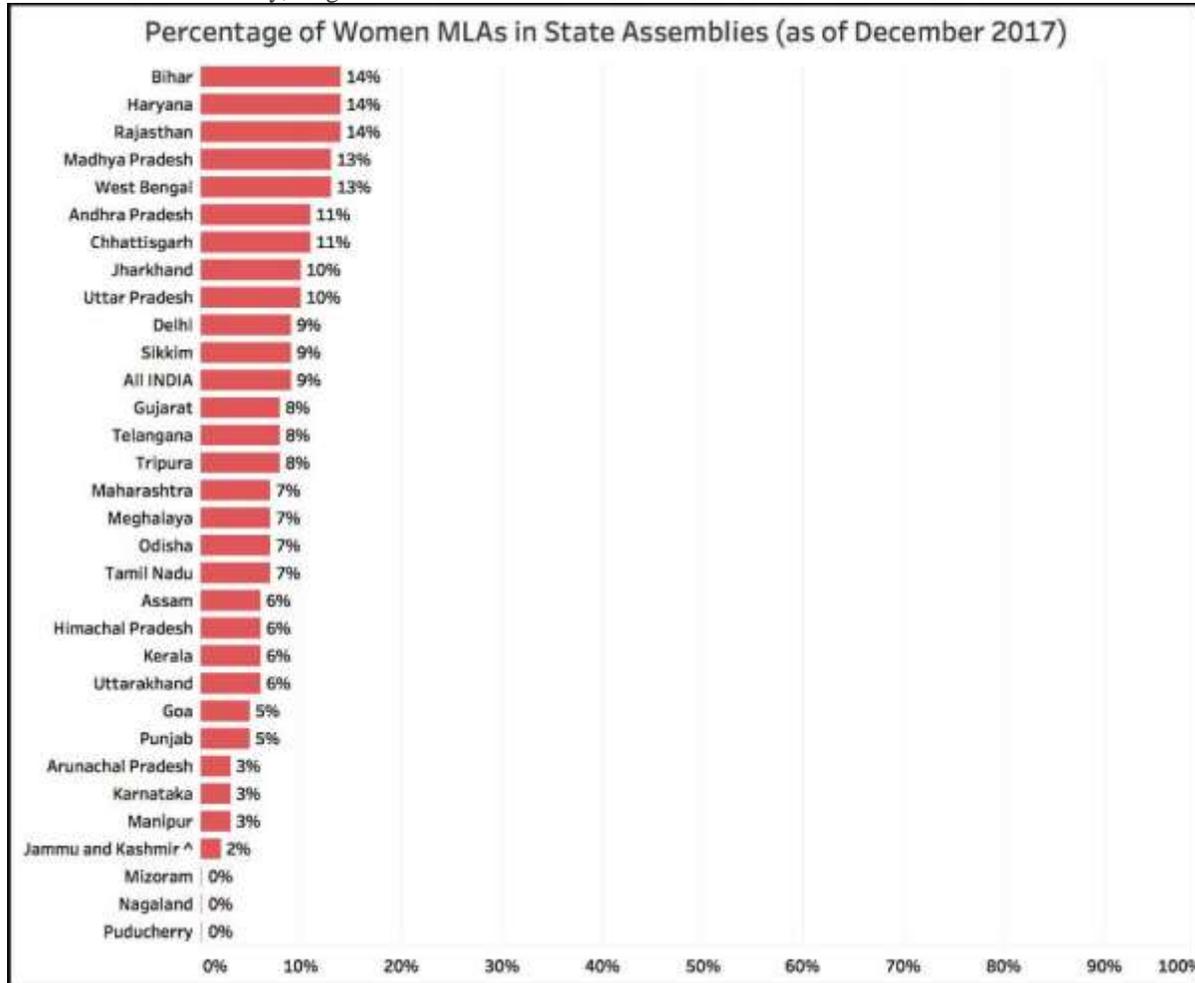


Figure 3: Percentage of women MLAs in State Assemblies (as of December 2017)

8.0 Research Findings And Conclusion:

Just because of misuse and manipulation by local power-brokers, effective representation and participation is hindered in PRIs despite of reservation for women. Unawareness of women regarding their potential, responsibilities, duties and rights has kept them far behind in the rural regions. A genuine effort is done to educate women and to enhance their participation, representation and empowerment in political framework but then also nothing much is gained. Their family and society is also a barrier to their representation in politics. Even they themselves feel restricted and inhibited to take participate and speak especially in a large male dominating assembly. Even a very little attention and respect is given to those women who muster up sufficient strength and courage to speak. It has been experienced that women are invited merely to fulfill the formality. Local bureaucracy systematically nullified the women's rights and responsibilities. The cultural dimensions and segments of our society are such that only personal relationship among them can be a effective mean for their social progress. Only a woman can inspire and ignite confidence and put forward stimulus for social change especially among their sisters in rural regions. Links have to be strengthened between the village and the bureaucracy at the lower level. Special programmes on the role of women in Panchayat, on rights of women and procedures should be prepared and

highlighted through the mass media so as to make women aware and improve the quality of their participation in the socio-political system. Reservation for women in panchayats will be good step but it should be supplemented with effective measures that ensure the qualitative aspect of women's participation. The India Panchayati Raj Report 2011 reveals: "Women's expectations and hopes for a greener, cleaner, responsive and representative politics have gone up. They will send out more clearly and energetically the message of women's empowerment and social development. For that reservation needs to be accompanied by considerable amount of affirmative action programme." To influence and lead effectively, women representatives must develop and use legitimate power (authority). To empower is giving women the capacity to influence the decision-making process by integrating them into our political system.

To conclude, without a doubt the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution has given Indian women incalculable chances to rethink their capacity with which countless women have been brought into the Panchayat Raj Institutions. At the same time, it is profoundly incomprehensible, that regardless of their incorporation into the Panchayat Raj Institutions they are not effectively taking an interest in the dynamic procedure. Viable investment requests expertise, information, and mentality which are to an enormous degree obviously missing in women. The requirement for efficient preparing and direction is subsequently important to enable the women individuals to practice their power and to get to the assets accessible to change the current states of presence to a superior one, it is a need of great importance that the women organizations and developments should outline their own motivation for women's strengthening in all circles of life and make it a mass-development. It should challenge political parties and gatherings to satisfy their dedication with respect to sex balance. In this way, the opportunity has already come and gone to make women move from minimum amount to basic activity.

9.0 References

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