

# A study of Women Empowerment in Haryana with Reference to Haryana Panchayati Raj Elections, 2016

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## ABSTRACT

Present study is descriptive and analytical in nature which aims to examine the social background and representation of women at all three levels of PRIs in Haryana in the light of 73rd constitutional amendment and Haryana Panchayati Raj Act amendment of 2016. The secondary data has been analyzed which indicates that the representation of women has not been limited to one third of the total seats in PRIs as it is about 8-9% higher than that. The data shows that the women secured 42.18% representation as Panches, 41.46% representation as Sarpanches, 41.97% representation in Panchayat Samiti and 43.50% representation in Zila Parishad. Earlier the women was able to secure near about one third or somewhat more. The provision regarding the condition of education has also contributed to increase their representation in PRIs. Social background wise, 27.62% women representatives are from SC category, 11.05% BC and 61.33% from general category. The women representative of young age i.e. on average 31.8 years are there at present at all the three levels in the PRIs. The legal measures seem to achieve their spirit of women's participation in decision making at grassroots level local bodies as 76.34% of the women representatives are educated up to matric & above.

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## 1. Introduction

Indian women have had little representation in institutional political activities since independence. There was more concern in the last two decades towards increasing women's participation in political institutions thereby leading to empowerment. Affirmative action has been accepted as a means to political empowerment. Leadership is necessary not just to govern but to change the nature of governance. Women have been struggling for self-respect and autonomy. Since mid-1980 owing to questioning by women themselves about their oppressed status and plight through varied women's movements, the issue of 'women empowerment' came into focus. Women in Panchayati Raj Institution Political system and decision making process in seen clearly in the changes incorporated in the Panchayati Raj Institution. The objective of bringing improvement in the socio-economic condition of women could be successful only by taking suitable initiatives and measures for empowering them.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Women empowerment is the most used and discussed term today. The empowerment of women is becoming an increasingly popular term in human rights and developmental discourses. Women play significant role in all walks of life. Empowerment of women is a necessary basic condition for socioeconomic development of any society. Although women constitute one half of the population, they continue to be subjugated, unequal in socioeconomic and political status. Women have been struggling for self-respect and autonomy. Since mid-1980's owing to questioning by women themselves about their oppressed status and plight through varied women's movements, the issue of 'women empowerment' came into focus.

The Constitution of Independent India only spoke of local self-governing bodies in Part-IV, the Directive Principles of State Policy, and did not make any provisions for specific reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lines. According to World Bank, empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired action and outcomes.

## 3. Political Empowerment

Empowerment of women in all spheres and in particular the political sphere is crucial for their advancement and for the foundation of gender equal society. It is central to the goals of equality, development and peace. The Indian democracy which is more than half a century old has entered the next century. But a large mass of women are kept out of political arena still. There can be no true democracy, or no true people's participation in governance and development without equal participation of men and women at different levels of decision making. Participation of women in political life is integral to the advancement of women.

Article-21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of the country, directly or through the freely chosen representatives. A proper representation of women in political affairs will ensure their views and needs reflected in public policies that affect their lives most.

Indian women have had little representation in institutional politics since independence. There was more concern in the last two decades towards increasing women's participation in political institutions thereby leading to empowerment. Affirmative action has been accepted as a means to political

empowerment. Leadership is necessary not just to govern but to change the nature of governance. Unfortunately affirmative action and women participation have failed to move beyond local government in India.

#### 4. Women's Reservation under 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1992

This has added a new Part-IX to the Constitution of India from Articles 243 to 243 O by adding a new schedule namely Eleventh Schedule to it. This Schedule contains 29 fundamental items of the Panchayats. It deals with Article 232-G. The act is a significant landmark in the evolution of grassroots democratic institutions in the country which transforms the representative democracy into participatory democracy by making the reservation of one-third of the total number of seats for women (including the number of seats reserved for the SCs and STs). Further not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women on rotation wise. The Act also authorises the legislature of a state to make any provision for reservation of seats in any Panchayat or offices of chairperson in the Panchayat at any level in favour of backward classes.

#### 5. Enactment of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994

With a view to bring law relating to the Panchayats in conformity with the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the Punjab Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1961 has replaced and the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 was enacted with effect from April 22, 1994. In 2016, the Haryana Govt. added some more feathers to it by adding the following conditions for contestants of elections to the PRIs-

1. Education Qualification: 10<sup>th</sup> pass for general candidate and 8<sup>th</sup> pass for general women & SC candidates and 5<sup>th</sup> pass for SC women candidates.
2. Working toilet in the house of candidate.
3. No defaulter of electricity bill.
4. Loan defaulter of cooperative society.
5. No criminal charges framed against the candidate.

#### 6. Review of Literature

There available a lot of literature on empowerment of women in political arena in India which reflects some of the particular aspect of their representation such as **Rounaq (1987)** pointed out that the involvement of women in political activities at local bodies, their participation in the process of decision-making is very marginal. **Deshpande (1989)** found that ineffective participation of women in political process is due to socio-economic constraints. **Manikyamba (1989)** observed that socio-economic background in general and political background in particular are important determinants of shaping the nature and level of women empowerment in political institutions. The study further found that women members having secondary educational qualification are have more participated whereas the participation of the poor women members is found mostly insignificant. The women from middle

class and rich class showed greater degree of participation. **Lakshi (1993)** revealed that reservation has merely brought in a quantitative change in the empowerment of rather than ushering qualitative developmental efforts. **Jain (1996)** highlighted that most of the women are elected to the PRIs due to the status of their husbands, fathers or sons. They often act as proxies for men in the councils and at many times, they felt powerless. Similarly, **Bohra (1997)** observed that even though women electorate constitute half of the voters but maximum of them are reluctant in campaigning activities. **Chand (1997)** found that the role of women members in Panchayati Raj is controlled by the male members of their families, particularly by their husbands due to the lack of education, political, and social awareness among women, on the one hand, and to the traditional feudal and male dominated social context of rural Haryana, on the other. **Indian Institute of Social Science (2000)** in a study of Panchayati Raj in Haryana has reviewed the progress of one hundred elected women in four districts. Majorities of the elected women Panches including younger women were illiterate when elected to office. The study of **K. Jayalakshmi (2000)** found that reservation in Panchayat ensures entry for all sections of society including women and thus visualizes as the harbinger of equality and social justice. **Palanthurai (2001)** observed that after the women's reservation in local bodies, the outlook of the society has started changing towards them. **Singh (2002)** found that though women in Haryana have been able to get representation in village Panchayats but it has remained formal on account of proxy system. They are generally represented by the male members of their families. **Patnaik (2005)** pointed out that numerical representations of women belonging to weaker sections have been increased in the terms of exercise of power. **Bhavnani (2009)** found that after the implementation of the reservation policy of women in local bodies, women's candidacy and chances of winning are secured in reserved constituencies mainly, but in non-reserved seats they have meagre chances. A Report of **International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) of UN (2012)** on Opportunities and Challenges of Women's Political Participation in India reveals that the family remains a key determinant of success and participation in the political process. **Rai (2014)** criticized the way by which the women reservation in local bodies is being implemented. By this, the women representatives are working only proxies for men who still make the actual decisions.

#### 7. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the social background of women representations all three tiers of PRIs in Haryana.
- To examine representation of women against one-third reservation in PRI elections, 2016 in Haryana along with their educational standard.

#### 8. Methodology of the Study

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and is based on secondary data. In this exploratory and descriptive types of research designs have been employed.

9. Data Analysis

**Table-1**  
**Representation of Women in PRIs in Haryana**

| Tier                    | Total Representative | Male Representatives (%) | Female Representatives (%) |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Panches                 | 60436                | 34941<br>(57.81)         | 25495<br>(42.18)           |
| Sarpanches              | 6186                 | 3621<br>(58.53)          | 2565<br>(41.46)            |
| Member Panchayat Samiti | 2997                 | 1739<br>(58.02)          | 1258<br>(41.97)            |
| Member Zila Parishad    | 416                  | 235<br>(56.49)           | 181<br>(43.50)             |

Source: www.prielections.nic.in

As per Table-1 representation of women in Panches 42.18%, Sarpanches 41.46%, Members of Panchayat Samiti 41.97% and Members of Zila Parishad are 43.50 %. The higher

representation of all three levels agents the 33% representation in PRIs.

**Table-2**  
**Social Background of PRIs in Haryana**

| Level                   | Total Representative | Female Representatives | SC              | BC              | General          |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Panches                 | 60436                | 25495                  | 8365<br>(31.81) | 7008<br>(27.49) | 10122<br>(39.70) |
| Sarpanches              | 6186                 | 2565                   | 600<br>(23.39)  | 661<br>(25.77)  | 1304<br>(50.84)  |
| Member Panchayat Samiti | 2997                 | 1258                   | 379<br>(30.13)  | 288<br>(22.89)  | 591<br>(46.98)   |
| Member Zila Parishad    | 416                  | 181                    | 50<br>(27.62)   | 20<br>(11.05)   | 111<br>(61.33)   |

Source: prielections.nic.in

According to Table-2, the social background representation of SC is 31.81%, BC is 27.49%, 39.70% in Panches and 23.39% SC, 25.71% BC, 50.84% General in Sarpanches and 30.13% SC, 22.89% BC and 46.98% General

in Panchayat Samiti and 27.62% SC, 11.05% BC & 61.33% General in Zila Parishads, the majority of general at all the levels.

**Table-3**  
**Educational Status of PRIs in Haryana**

| Level                   | Total Representative | Female Representatives | 5 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> | 10 <sup>th</sup> & +2 | Graduate & other |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Panches                 | 60436                | 25495                  | 10833<br>(42.49)                  | 13750<br>(53.93)      | 842<br>(3.30)    |
| Sarpanches              | 6186                 | 2565                   | 833<br>(32.48)                    | 1463<br>(57.04)       | 245<br>(9.55)    |
| Member Panchayat Samiti | 2997                 | 1258                   | 334<br>(26.55)                    | 839<br>(66.69)        | 81<br>(6.43)     |
| Member Zila Parishad    | 416                  | 181                    | 35<br>(19.34)                     | 101<br>(55.80)        | 39<br>(21.54)    |

Source: www.prielections.nic.in

As shown in Table-3, education status in Panches 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> are 42.49%, 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> are 53.43% and Graduate & other are 3.30%. In Sarpanches 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 32.48%, 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 57.04% and Graduates & other are 9.55% and Members of Panchayat Samiti 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 26.55%, 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> are 66.69% & Graduates &

other were 6.43% and Members of Zila Parishad are 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 19.34%, 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 55.80% and Graduates & other are 21.54%. In the observation of the Table-3 the majority of percentage are at all level, 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> are high and Graduate & other are very low.

**Table-4**  
**Average age of Women Representatives of PRIs in Haryana**

| Level                   | Total Representative | Female Representatives | Average Age |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Panches                 | 60436                | 25495                  | 31          |
| Sarpanches              | 6186                 | 2565                   | 32          |
| Member Panchayat Samiti | 2997                 | 1258                   | 31          |

|                      |     |     |    |
|----------------------|-----|-----|----|
| Member Zila Parishad | 416 | 181 | 33 |
|----------------------|-----|-----|----|

Source: www.prielections.nic.in

According to Table-4, the average age of women representatives of PRIs in Haryana, the Panches average age is found 31 years, Sarpanches average age-32 years, Member of Panchayat Samiti average age-31 years and Member of Zila Parishad average age is found 33 years. The age of PRIs women representative in Haryana is 30-35 years.

#### 10. Problems to Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Negative and positive aspects of a plan or programme are natural things. But in this sensitive issue like women empowerment it is very important to find out the problems and also find out the solutions and suggestions to solve the problems. There are several problems in the way of women representatives in PRIs. It seems that it is injustice with the women until we are not able to solve such problems. Some of the main problems identified during the study are:

- Political intervention in the functioning of Panchayats.
- Women act as proxies for men i.e. patriarchy.
- Lack of political awareness among the women in rural areas.
- Negative attitude of society regarding women's leadership capacity.
- Low standard of education among the women in rural areas.
- Lack of training courses especially for women representatives.

#### 11. Suggestions to Increase the Participation of Women's in PRIs

Some of the following suggestions found during the study to increase the participation of the women in PRIs:

- The government should take a strict action against the un-necessary intervention of political parties and elections should be conducted fairly.
- We should change our negative mentality and government should also organize sensitization programmes to restrict male members from intervening in their independent functioning.
- The government should organise awareness programmes in rural areas with the help of local administration from time-to-time to create awareness among women.

- The government should also initiate efforts for educating for women especially in rural areas.
- Special training and refresher courses for women representatives should be conducted from time-to-time with a view to generate a sense of confidence and empowerment among them so that they may realize about their powers, functions and leadership capacities in letter and spirit.
- There should be a provision to give honour to the women representatives who are elected unopposed from open seats.

#### 12. Conclusion

The study arrived at the conclusion that there found a significant increase in the representation of women in PRIs as a result of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and the Amendment in Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 in 2016. They had only nominal representation prior to the above mentioned Act but now they have been able to get 42.18% representation in Panches, 41.46% representation in Sarpanches, 41.97% representation in Panchayat Samiti and 43.50% representation in Zila Parishad. It proved this apprehension wrong that the one-third seats reserved for women shall not be filled up because they shall not come forward for contesting the elections. It has also made Panchayati Raj Institutions fit for performing the role of inclusive development because the women representatives could ensure that they are able to get their due share in the process of the rural development. It leads to the conclusion that the women have been adequate representation in the PRI Election, 2016 in Haryana. The silver lining of the representation is that they are getting elected from the unreserved seats also. This had also referred the lacking suspicious that women will never be able to step out of their household to fight elections for the seats that have been reserved for them in the Panchayat at all the three levels. Despite this, positive achievement, there is a dire need for their capacity building so that their entry into local governance system become more effective and meaningful. This will also need changes in the social structure, culture and mindset of the rural society. It is also anticipated that the legal provision of education (which otherwise was an excuse for the poor representation of women) will enable women leader to act as catalyst for bringing result oriented changes.

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