



Political empowerment of women at the local governance level as an outcome of the 73rd amendment to the Constitution

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Abstract

Women's inclusion in local governance has culminated in a fundamental transformation in rural governance. The change in power dynamics have created new opportunities for women at the grass root level. The 73rd Amendment, which presented new democratic processes for local governance by allowing women the opportunity in the local administration, significantly expanded political participation and grassroots democracy. The panchayat raj system's female reservation percentage was increased by the Indian government from 33 to 50 percent. In order to affect and experience the changes she wants, an elected women representative requires the necessary social space.

This research paper attempts to examine the changes in local governance legislation due to the 73rd Amendment Act. It further studies the reformed Panchayati Raj institutions thereof due to the 73rd Amendment Act in lieu of the development of ladies' political involvement in the local governance in India. The methodology used in this research is doctrinal in nature, examining various laws, journals, research papers and existing literature. The findings of the study conclude that with the introduction of PRIs in our nation, women now have the chance to demonstrate their value as administrators, decision-makers, or leaders. The involvement of highly competent ladies in village Panchayati at the outset of the Panchayati Raj Institution's interlocation in village regions must be taken into consideration as a key planning tool for raising social standing and empowering women.

Keywords: women empowerment, women's political participation, women in politics, 73rd amendment to Indian constitution, local governance, Panchayati Raj Institutions



Introduction

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act opens the door for Indian women to participate in the political process. It is a significant turning point for the women's involvement at the grassroots creation of representative organizations. Although it is a slow and arduous process, the reservation in Panchayats has allowed for the eroding of traditional gender, caste, class, and hierarchical roles. Women must overcome numerous other challenges in addition to fighting for their opportunity to be much more than proxy representatives. If women are not included as partners in a country's development process, there can be no true growth. Women's political empowerment and equal involvement in all institutions of decision-making are essential components in their fight against patriarchal oppression. Singh (2020) The reformed Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have especially been rebuilt to accommodate and safeguard women's political participation in Indian local governance.

Datta (2021) examined the legislations put forward via the 73rd amendment to the Constitution and concluded that giving the panchayats constitutional status was the principal goal of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. It attempted to democratically decentralize authority and resources between the national government and local entities like PRIs. The public will become more involved in government as a result. Oberhouser (2021) proposed that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment was enacted with hopes that it will improve governance & give political push to society's most marginalized groups, including women, schedule castes, and schedule tribes. Panchayati Raj Institutions have long remained as a path to respectable government. Similarly, Chakrabarti (2021) has examined the effect of the reformed PRIs in the local governance on the contribution of womenfolk in the political scope. Compared to men who do not prioritise focusing on home and women's concerns, women are better at handling local difficulties at the grassroots level. Similarly, Radhakrishnan (2021) has argued that women must participate in decision-making if women's interests are to be taken into consideration in governance. Governments must engage women in decision-making processes in order to take into account all societal views.



Sedalet.al (2020) established a positive link between women and the reformed Panchayati Raj system, he also concluded that one of her key priorities should be her political participation & empowerment, and both the government and society must take action in this direction to encourage women to enter politics. Chatterjea (2022) concluded that the growth of women and the establishment of a society that values equality between the sexes depend on their empowerment in all domains, but particularly in politics. It is essential to the pursuit of peace, progress, and equality.

The objectives listed below are proposed based on the above lines:

1. To observe the changes in local governance legislation due to the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in regards to women.
2. To study the reformed Panchayati Raj institutions due to the 73rd amendment act in lieu of the development of women's political participation in the local governance of India

Based on the objectives, the hypothesis for the study are as follows:

H1: There is a significant transformation in the local governance legislation due to the 73rd Amendment Act.

H2: There is a major change in the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) due to the 73rd amendment act with respect to the stance of women participation.

Material and method

A doctrinal research methodology was used by the researcher for this investigation. Therein is involved a comprehensive research of relevant laws and procedural rules. Other primary data sources were examined in addition to data from secondary sources. Historical methods of inquiry are also employed to understand the reformed legislations with respect to PRIs and local governance.

Results and Discussions

In accordance with the first objective of the study, in regards to the 73rd amendment to the Constitution:

73rd Amendment Act

Years before the Amendment Act were implemented in 1992, village Panchayats were already in use in India, but the system had a number of flaws that prevented it from serving as the people's government or responding to their demands. This was caused by a number of things, including a lack of funding, the absence of regular elections, and the underrepresentation of the weaker groups, such as women and schedule'd1 caste`s and tribes1. (Jaiswal, 2018)

The 73rd Amendment Act was promulgated by the central government of India in 1992 to solve the grass root problems and enhance local self-governments. The law was approved by both chambers and went into effect on April 24th, 1993. Only by widespread engagement in the political process can the democratic system of a nation be guaranteed. Therefore, a democratic decentralisation system know`n as Panchay`atiRa`j has bee`n implemented in India in order to accomplish this goal.

The key characteristics of the amendment are:

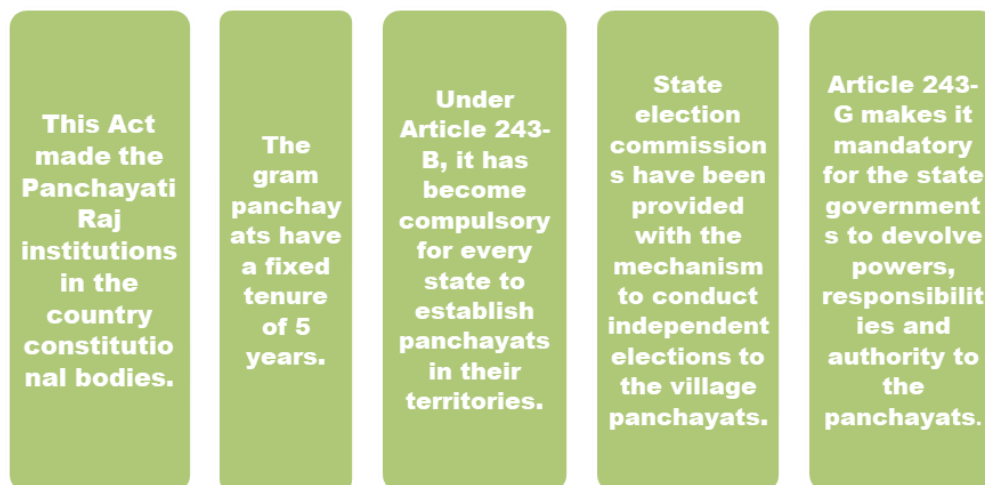


Fig 1.1. Characteristics of 73rd Amendment

Source: Chakrabarti(2021)



Changes pivotal to women in the 73rd amendment

As “Local government,” “Panchayat” is included in the “State list of the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution. By requiring a minimum of 1/3rd reservation for women out of the seats to be filled by direct election and Clause (3) of Article 243D ensures the inclusion of women in PRIs, regardless of the number of Panchayat chairperson positions.

As per the information held by the Ministry, the State Panchayati Raj Acts of “20 States, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, have made provisions for 50% reservation for women in PRIs.”

The Chairpersons in the Panchayats at local levels or some other standard, their reservation of seats for the SCs, the STs, and womenfolk like way as the administration, by legislation, deliver, in accordance of Article 243D(4) of the Constitution, According to the law, "in any State, the number of Chairpersons reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats at each level shall carry, as well almost as potential, the very same ratio to the overall amount of these offices in Panchayats at every point as the demography of the Scheduled Castes, or provided even farther that not less than one-third of the total number of such offices in Panchayats at each level."



Table 1.1 Number of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the country, State/Union Territory-wise (2020)

State / UTs	Total PRI Representatives	Total EWRs
Arunachal Pradesh	9383	3,658
Andaman and Nicobar	858	306
Andhra Pradesh	156050	78,025
Arunachal Pradesh	9383	3,658
Assam	26754	14,609
Bihar	136573	71,046
Chhattisgarh	170465	93,392
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	147	47
Daman & Diu	192	92
Goa	1555	571
Gujarat	144080	71,988
Haryana	70035	29,499
Himachal Pradesh	28723	14,398
Jammu & Kashmir	39850	13,224
Jharkhand	59638	30,757
Karnataka	101954	51,030
Kerala	18372	9,630
Ladakh	NA	NA
Lakshadweep	110	41
Madhya Pradesh	392981	196490
Maharashtra	240635	128677
Manipur	1736	880
Odisha	107487	56,627
Puducherry	NA	NA
Punjab	100312	41,922
Rajasthan	126271	64,802
Sikkim	1153	580
Tamil Nadu	106450	56,407
Telangana	103468	52,096
Tripura	6646	3,006
Uttar Pradesh	913417	304538
Uttarakhand	62796	35,177
West Bengal	59229	30,458
Total	3187320	145397

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj, PIB Delhi

In light of the second objective of the study, with respect to the PRIs in Indian local governance:



Panchayati Raj Institutions and women

Due to constitutional revisions requiring the reservation of seats for women in municipal councils or the Panchayat Raj Institution System, are being largely selected. Whether in a local village, a district made up of 100 villages, or a larger territory, the women who the PRIs helped enter politics are now in charge. A difference has been made by the sheer quantity of women the PRIs has introduced to the political system. As a consequence of the amendment to the constitution, the proportion of women involved in the political process has substantially increased between 4-511 percent to 25-4011 percent. and qualitative difference also exist since these females are contributing their expertise in civic society governance. In doing so, they raise the awareness of the issues like poverty, inequality, and gender injustice.

Women's ideas and needs are now found significant associations in government policies that have the greatest impact on their daily lives. Political empowerment is defined as "the ability to influence the political system's decision-making, planning, implementation, and assessment processes." It entails political engagement, which includes the right to vote, the ability to run for office and to be represented by political parties at all levels. Political engagement successfully shapes decisions, resulting in political empowerment.

Women participation in local Governance

The democratic process at the grassroots level places a premium on women's first participation in Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs). Women have been utilised as rubber stamps despite the fact that certain reservations have indeed been given to women in municipalities under the democratic system of today. Their male relatives take the important decisions. Under the Panchayati Raj system, women may have overrun the masculine stronghold, however in several instances, their husbands or other male family members are still in charge. According to reports, elected women lawmakers have been replaced with the male relatives of such ladies. Political system and decision-making process is seen evidently in the



fluctuations assimilated in the PRIs. Due to the representation at the village Panchayati level, women may effectively manage matters pertaining to the furtherance of womenfolk, possess a prevailing status in the decision-making process, & provide appropriate recommendations towards enhancing the position of ladies in the consultation. It gives women the chance to have greater say in how services are designed, delivered, and managed to manage resources to their advantage. In local politics, there are a lot of women running against the men, and advancing gender-related matters is seen as a step toward gender equity.

The milestone of expanding the economic stance of women and their empowerment can only be met by only implementing suitable efforts and stages for their empowerment. Womenfolk cannot be empowered up until they are provided enough involvement in the political structure. By establishing the provision for the largest number of women to link and associate with political activities from the smallest level of electoral action, this purpose should be realised at the desired level.

Conclusion

Conceptually, including women in PRIs have the potential to be seen as a key arrangements scheme for dropping old-fashioned discernments of how women are treated in our culture, chiefly those that place women under the control of men, forbid them from taking advantage of definite prospects, and have additional negative communal, traditional, and old-style ties that disadvantage them.

Therefore, this recently enacted regulation will indeed boost the chances of expanding fairness in the macroeconomic development phase, involvement in numerous aspects that promote interactional comprehension, responsibilities to play in the home and in activities carried out outside the home, and multiple family judgement procedures between many men and women. Variables like the intent and attitude of elected women toward the commencement of various implementation initiatives and the ability to put forth endeavours to connect ranging



from various population portions with the presented schemes are also very crucial in elevating the standing of women representatives in the community context of village Panchayats. As a result, this approach would upsurge and strengthen women's empowerment.

Further steps to enhance women participation in local governance:

Literacy- Empowerment of women in politics and otherwise can only be safeguarded with education and literacy of the women folk. Women politicians need to be well versed in the language to scrutinize policies and day to day activities of the local governance.

Development of leadership skills- The women in the politics need to inculcate strong leadership qualities whereby the subordinates and peers can follow and be guided under her command.

Factions in local government parties- When it comes to planning, including the choice and placement of schemes, there shouldn't be any factions or party politics; instead, real-world project implementation is required to improve autonomous planning.

Systemic awareness- To improve rural women's ability to assume their new roles as local legislators, systemic knowledge is required. Introduce them to the state and federal governments' initiatives for the development of rural areas, women, and children.

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