

# Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj System (With Special Reference to Gram Panchayats of Rajnandgaon district)

Dr. (Mrs.) KiraniTigga\*

\*Assistant Professor (Political Science) College of Rajmata Vijaya Raje Sindhiyan Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Kawardha, District Kabirdham (C.G.) INDIA

**Abstract :** In India, leadership has always been male dominated since ancient times, irrespective of the form of the system, whether it is monarchy, dictatorship, aristocratic system or modern democratic system, it is clear that in any country of the world, national leadership has mostly been in the hands of men. After independence, in India, except for the tenure of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, national leadership has been run by men in the last 70 years. Today, from Panchayat to Parliament, power is in the hands of men in most of the states of India as Chief Minister. At the national level, the Prime Minister and the main members of the cabinet are men. Whenever it comes to leadership, from 2000 till today, all the national parties have advocated 33 percent reservation for women in Parliament many times. Political participation for all types of systems prevalent at present, including the democratic system, political participation is important. For its permanent basis and strength, it is necessary to have political participation. In its absence, the success of the democratic system can be questioned. That is, the basis of the democratic governance system is participation. Because it is run by the people. In the 20th century, all political systems, whether authoritarian or democratic, conservative or reactionary, give their citizens the right to participate in politics and encourage them to do so. Because the more political participation expands, the more stable, popular and powerful the system will be. In India, after the 1980s, most of the time mid-term elections have weakened India's parliamentary democratic system. Because whether it is a state or a centre, where there is a coalition government, the political system remains weak and temporary. Because the percentage of public participation is weak there.

**Introduction -** The 73rd Constitutional Amendment proved to be a milestone in the direction of democratic decentralization. The question of ensuring women's participation in politics is of national importance today. Leaving aside other problems, important questions like politicization of tribes and bringing them to the center of the process of formation of political power have sparked debate across the country. Despite half of the world's population being women, their number in elected positions is negligible. The low participation of women in politics is indicative of their second-class status and powerlessness. Illiteracy, economic dependency, social customs, traditions and patriarchal attitudes are the basic reasons for women's political inactivity. Women perform two-thirds of the work in the world. But they become the owner of only 10% of the income and 1% of the means of production.

**Political status of women:** In January 1957, a study group was formed under the chairmanship of ShriBalwantRai Mehta. Following the recommendations of this committee, Panchayati Raj was formally established in the country on 2 October 1959 in Nagaur, Rajasthan. For about a decade

after 1959, steps were taken by the Center and the states for the progress of Panchayati Raj, but between 1965-1969 this enthusiasm cooled down and the period 1969-1977 was a period of decline for Panchayati Raj institutions. In 1977, a committee was formed under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta, which was not accepted by the then Congress government in 1980. Then in 1985 a committee was formed under the chairmanship of G.B.K. Rao, which emphasized on block level revival, but this too could not be implemented. The same fate befell the report of the Singhvi Committee formed in 1986 and finally the day came when the NarasimhaRao government amended the bill related to Panchayati Raj institutions prepared by the Rajiv Gandhi government and got it passed in Parliament as the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in December 1992. This 73rd Constitutional Act was implemented from 24 April 1993. After the report of the committee formed on the status of women, the need for women empowerment at the Panchayati Raj level was felt. After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992, the political ambitions of women in villages have increased and a new revolution has started

in the villages.

**Political importance of the subject of study:** The main result of the processes of change in Indian society is the change in rural political participation. The reality is that to understand the social and political structure of any community, it is necessary to understand the power structure of that organization. The reason for this is that the position of various individuals and groups is determined according to the power structure in the organization. Whenever the nature of political participation changes, the basis of power in the organization also starts changing. Till some time ago, when hereditary leadership and political participation based on caste and religion were dominant in the villages, the role of caste panchayats was very important in the rural power structure. Political participation is a universal phenomenon. Wherever there is life, there is society and wherever there is society, there is also leadership. As far as the question of women's political participation in society is concerned, but when it comes to leadership and participation, society has acknowledged their participation. Whether it is Rani Durgavati, Razia Sultan, Devi Ahilya Bai, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kamala Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, the contribution of all these cannot be forgotten. In this too, women's political participation is a more challenging subject. But in a state where almost half of the population is women, its relevance increases further. The proposed framework is related to women's political participation in the Panchayati Raj system. Gram Panchayat is the pillar and center point of Indian society, from where the doors of participation in state and national politics open. Women represent half of the society, but their political participation has been almost negligible. The present Panchayati Raj is a collective effort to give a new shape to rural life based on social, equality and justice, economic development and dignity of personality. This can be called an effort towards women empowerment.

**Objectives of the study:** The proposed study is an analytical study of the political participation of women in the political system at the state level (with special reference to the Gram Panchayats of Rajnandgaon district) in which it is proposed to do a detailed study of the status of participation in women leadership after the implementation of Panchayati Raj system with special reference to the Gram Panchayats of Rajnandgaon district. The proposed study has the following objectives:

1. To find out the level of political participation of women in the Panchayati Raj system.

**Study Area:** Rajnandgaon district is spread from 20.07°N to 22.29°N latitude and 80.2°E to 81.24°E longitude. It's average height from the ground level is 330.78 meters. Its total area is 9202.36 square kilometers. Kawardha is in its north, Durg in the east and Bastar district in the south. The western border of the district is connected to some border of Gondia district of Maharashtra and Balaghat district of

Madhya Pradesh. It is connected to some border of Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh. Along with the richness of mineral and forest wealth, it has its own importance from commercial and political point of view. From administrative point of view, there are 8 tehsils and 9 development blocks in the district. In which Manpur, Mohla, Ambagarh Chowki are Scheduled Tribe dominated development blocks. There are 3 towns, inhabited villages 952, revenue villages 1001, forest villages 10, deserted villages 59 and 632 gram panchayats and 2 municipal corporations in the district. There are a total of 9 Janpad Panchayats in the district. According to the 2001 census, the population is 12,81,811. In which 5,39,726 urban density is 159, sex ratio is 1024 and literacy rate is 77.58%. Rajnandgaon district is the most literate district of Chhattisgarh state.

Rajnandgaon district is basically a farmer dominated family. But the biggest pilgrimage place of Chhattisgarh state is Dongargarh Devi temple. The biggest pilgrimage place through Panchayati Raj system is Dongargarh Devi temple. By giving political opportunities to women through Panchayati Raj system, they will be more capable of fighting against inequality, injustice and exploitation against themselves. Also, through political participation in society, they can play an important role in the development of women at the rural level. Study methods of the proposed research:

- The methodology of the proposed research will be divided into the following parts.

#### **Selection of the study area.**

**Unit of study:** In the proposed study, it is proposed to analyse the political participation of women representatives elected in the Gram Panchayat of Rajnandgaon district as a unit of study.

**Selection of respondents:** For the proposed study, the women representatives of Gram Panchayat of the study area Rajnandgaon are to be selected through multi-level guidance. Under this, the women representatives of the same four development blocks are selected through purposeful guidance and from among them, a total of 300 respondents including women representatives are selected for the study through daily guidance. 4. Data collection method, technique and tools - The data is to be collected in two ways. For the proposed research work

1. Primary source
2. Secondary source

**Primary Sources** - Under this, facts will be collected through interview schedule from all the representatives of women dominated development blocks of the study area.

**Secondary Sources** - Under this, various government forms and documents related to political participation of women and Panchayati Raj system in the study area, facts published from time to time in various research journals, magazines, newspapers and material through internet will be included. Collection of Facts.

Based on the nature of respondents, interviews related

to Gram Panchayat are to be conducted through schedule and interviews related to women representatives of Panchayat are to be conducted through schedule. Also, during the research work, the study is to be conducted through schedule. Also, during the research work, facts will be collected from the people of the study area through group discussion and observation techniques.

**Meaning and Definition of Political Participation:** When someone starts getting interested in politics, then it is called group or public participation in the context of politics. Public participation or political participation can be considered synonymous with each other. There is no society in the world today where there is no politics. Political system is an extremely important fact for the good functioning of the society and the society. Political participation is an important concept in democracy. Every citizen of the society is taking interest in understanding politics today. Participation means taking part or being a participant. In political participation, the members of the society participate in political activity directly or indirectly in more or less quantity. Such activity or action is called political participation. The political action of a person can be continuous or can be occasional, which has a direct impact on the political system of the society. Even in ancient times, where there were institutions with political participation, there was a democratic rule and the systems deprived of political participation had autocratic rule.

It will remain only a desolate forest. As a result, from the beginning till now, scholars have been interested in the study of political participation. Aristotle has presented the classification of the system of governance based on political participation. In modern times, politics has remained the lifeline of people which depends on the amount of political participation. The political behavior of a group or an individual or his attachment to politics or involvement in politics is generally called political participation or group participation. When a person is involved in political action, behavior or political activity in a small or large amount, then such an action is called political participation.

Various scholars have defined political participation as follows

Norman H. Nye Sidney Varsh "Political participation is the lawful activities of the common people whose aim is to directly influence the selection of political officials and the decisions taken by them."

McGlaskey "Political participation can be defined as those voluntary actions by which people participate in the selection of the rulers of the society and in the formation of direct-indirect public policies."

Matthews and James W. "Every behavior related to the direct expression of political views by the public is political participation." Today, in the era of democracy, public participation has definitely increased. The only means of making public power practical is the election of its representatives by the public. By casting their vote, people

hand over their political sovereignty to their duly elected representative for a fixed period. This casting of vote is a political action because it affects the decision-making of the political system. Therefore, voting is an important example of political participation.

**Nature and characteristics of political participation:** The nature and characteristics of political participation have been determined on the basis of definitions. The characteristics of political participation are as follows-

Political action and activity is political participation - Political participation includes political activities of man. For this, various means are used by people. Participation in interest groups, pressure groups, political parties, etc. are important among these means.

It affects the decision-making process of governance - Such a process of people is called political participation, which directly or indirectly affects the system of governance or the public. The main actor doing political action is a person. This person remains engaged or entangled in such actions or activities. Therefore, political action has been considered an essential element of political participation. Apter has also called public projects as political participation.

**Political Participation:** Political participation is an essential system for all political systems. Participation is the basis of democratic governance because it is run by the people. In the 20th century, all political systems, whether authoritarian or democratic, conservative or reactionary, give their citizens the right to participate in politics and on this basis they give their country the pride of being based on democratic governance. Modern democratic systems are based on the principle of public participation. The only basis for making public power practical is the election of its representatives by the people. Voting is a political act because it affects the decision-making of the political system. Therefore, voting is political participation, due to which whatever be the reason for the political act, its result is always the same.

**Table No. 01: Participation of women in Panchayat meetings**

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	137	45.67
2.	No	140	46.67
3.	Can't say anything	13	4.33
4.	Did not understand the question	10	3.33
	Total	300	100

It is clear from the above table that 45.67 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that women regularly participate in the meetings of the Panchayat. Whereas 46.67 percent of the respondents believe that women are not able to participate in the Panchayat because they have many family responsibilities attached to them, that is why they first fulfill their family responsibilities, later in the time that is left, they do the work related to the Panchayat and society. 433 percent of the respondents did not say anything about this question because they migrate to other states and work,

that is why they do not have any information about these local activities and 333 percent of the respondents did not understand the question at all, the reason for which is that they are illiterate and live in slums, they have neither voted till date, nor have participated in any political activities.

**Table No. 02: 50% reservation for women in Gram Panchayats will create awareness**

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	174	58
2.	No	93	31
3.	Can't say anything	30	10
4.	Did not understand the question	3	1
	Total	300	100

From the analysis of the above table, it is clear that 58 percent of the respondents believe that the provision of 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayats has increased women's public awareness. Whereas 31 percent of the respondents disagree with this argument. Because they believe that even before 50 percent reservation, there was as much public awareness as there is after getting this reservation for women. The reason given for this is that all the work of the Panchayat is done by their husbands and the women only put their thumb impression. 10 percent of the respondents maintained complete neutrality in this regard. 1 percent of the respondents could not understand this question.

The respondents disagree with this argument. Because they believe that even before 50 percent reservation, there was as much public awareness as there is after getting this reservation for women. The reason given for this is that the entire work of the Panchayat is done by their husbands and the women only put their thumb impression. 10 percent of the respondents maintained complete neutrality in this regard. 1 percent of the respondents could not understand this question.

**Table No. 03: Increase in the social status of women by getting leadership in Panchayats**

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	203	67.67
2.	No	67	22.33
3.	Can't say anything	20	6.67
4.	Did not understand the question	10	3.33
	Total	300	100

From the analysis of the table presented, it is known that 67.67 percent of the respondents believe that giving leadership to women in panchayats has increased their social status. Whereas 22.33 percent of the respondents expressed their disagreement in this regard. They believe that even today, in practice, whatever happens in society, women's voice is ignored as per the wishes of the men. Whereas 6.67 percent of the respondents did not say anything in this regard. Whereas 3.33 percent of the respondents could not understand this question because

they are all labourers and have nothing to do with society or politics. They say that for us, filling our stomachs is the biggest achievement.

**Table No. – 04: Effect of political participation on social status**

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	152	50.67
2.	No	106	35.33
3.	Can't say anything	29	9.67
4.	Did not understand the question	13	4.33
	Total	300	100

It is clear from the above analysis that 50.67 percent of the respondents say that political participation of women affects their social status. They have an influence in the society and their social status increases. Whereas 35.33 percent of the respondents expressed their disagreement in this regard. 9.67 percent of the respondents remained neutral in this regard. 4.33 percent of the respondents did not give any information because they did not understand the question itself.

**Table No. – 05: Participation by women Sarpanchs in the meetings of District Panchayats**

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	153	51
2.	No	105	35
3.	Can't say anything	229	9.67.67
4.	Did not understand the question	13	4.33
	Total	300	100

Analysis of the above table shows that 51 percent of the respondents believe that women Sarpanchs regularly participate in the meetings of the District Panchayat. Whereas 35 percent of the respondents expressed their disagreement in this regard because they argued that women take so much time in carrying out their family responsibilities that they do not get even a day to travel to and from the district level to attend the meetings of the District Panchayats. They only participate in the meetings held at their village level. 9.67 percent of the respondents remained neutral in this regard. 4.33 percent of the respondents did not understand the question at all.

**Conclusion:** Throughout the present times, the rural population in different countries has been using different means to carry out their programs. In the recent general elections that have been held in these years, the rural population has used their votes by participating in the general elections and after providing reservation for women, the participation of these people in politics increased due to which women were elected to different posts under the three-tier Panchayati Raj system, through which women got the opportunity to provide leadership in rural areas, through which women played an important role in political change in rural areas. The analysis of the opinions received from the respondents in the study area makes it clear that



58 percent of the respondents believe that the system of 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayats has increased the public awareness of women. Whereas 31 percent of the respondents disagree with this argument. 10 percent of the respondents maintained complete neutrality in this regard. 1 percent of the respondents could not understand this question.

From other analysis, it is known that 58.67 percent of the respondents agree that political influence is increasing due to social participation at the rural level. While 32.33 percent of the respondents completely disagreed in this regard. 6.33 percent of the respondents remained completely neutral in this regard

Other analysis shows that 58.67 percent of the respondents agree that social participation at the rural level is increasing political influence. Whereas 32.33 percent of the respondents completely disagreed in this regard. 6.33 percent of the respondents remained completely neutral in this regard. In the present environment, many educated graduate and post graduate women are providing commendable leadership as Sarpanch at the rural level and increasing social awareness among women. A living example of this can be seen that an educated woman in Chhattisgarh, dedicated to the Swachhata Abhiyan of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sent back the wedding guests who had come to the wedding hall because she cannot get married until a permanent toilet is constructed in her house. This has been appreciated in the entire state. Hence, today women leadership, women public awareness, women political and social participation are developing rapidly and in the direction of women empowerment, women fulfilling their responsibility in social and political participation is being

considered the biggest achievement. In the study area Rajnandgaon district, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Beti Padhao Beti Bachao program is being successfully run by women Sarpanchs, which is commendable. Through the social and political participation of women, effective leadership is being provided by women in the Gram Panchayats, giving a new direction and condition to the Gram Panchayats in Chhattisgarh, which will prove to be the biggest contribution of women in improving the fate and image of the Gram Panchayats.

#### **References:-**

1. Sharma, Hari Om: Role of Women in Political Participation in Rural Areas, Emerging Patterns of Rural Leadership, Arjun Publishing House, New Delhi, 2004, p. 75
2. Kukreja, Sundarlal: Need to Strengthen Panchayat Raj System, Kurukshetra, p. 11
3. Puri, S.: Indian Political System or Indian Governance and Politics, New Academic Publishing Company, Jalandhar, p. 301
4. Giri, D.K.: People Participation and Rural Development, Kurukshetra, New Delhi, 2002, p. 11
5. P.R. Dubhashi Administration and the Citizen Eye Prices, Volume July 1975, p. 28
6. Gaina, Hari B. Modern Political Theory, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2004, p. 330-332
7. McGloxy, Herbert: Political Participation in David, edited Volume 12, page 253
8. Bharti, Dr. Dharamvir Political Sociology, Rajasthan Hindi Granth: Academy, Jaipur, 1998, page 151

\*\*\*\*\*