



## Awareness of S.c. Women on Panchayat Raj System

### KEYWORDS

**Dr. K. Manjulamma**

Department of Political science  
and Public Administration,  
Sri Venkateswara University,  
Tirupati-517502

**Prof. K. Sudharani**

Department of Adult and  
Continuing Education,  
Sri Venkateswara University,  
Tirupati-517502

**Dr. O. Samraj**

Department of Philosophy  
Sri Venkateswara University  
Tirupati-517502

The India Constitution has enshrined equality as a fundamental principal. In the country's effort develop an engendered development model, various laws are amended and created to include an important excluded section of society namely women. Special efforts are made to give equal opportunities to women in the social, economic and political spheres. The nation therefore adopted a new agenda to bring about equality. A comprehensive policy reform was visible in the political set-up. Panchayati Raj was considered as the best form to promote best and increase democratic participation and became the cruse of the system of governance adopted by the country viz, Democratic Decentralization.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment act provided a new constitutional platform which ensures the representation of one – third women in the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI). This legislation accelerated the power of the participation of women in the policy making bodies. In many areas of social and political development women now a day are accorded more and more importance. It might be regarded as a traditional, benevolent point of view to state that women promote value codes and encourage, in their own way a human society. But no matter whether this prospective can be taken at face value. It also has to be emphasized that women equally to men implement democracy as a way of life and generate economic resources. Hardly and country in the world has yet succeeded in fully implementing the equality of women and men. In India, women are the first and most to suffer from poverty, illiteracy, oppression, violence, and the infringement of human rights. Over and above the same India women have proved on many occasions that they can be more accountable equally skilled and less corrupt than men. Confronted with all possible social and political problems, they have demonstrated their social competence and their own income generating capacity. The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment Act provides an opportunity to about one million rural women to encourage as leaders and decision makers at the grass root level and enter in public life.

To make the participation of women in the Panchayath Raj Institutions really meaningful, it would be desirable that the percentage of reservation has to be raised to the proportion of women's population. Further, conferment of judicial and police powers would go a long way in elevating the status and authority of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Lack of education in the rural areas, social and family barriers and preoccupation with house hold duties prevent women from participating in the political process. However it appears that defector women's participation in grassroots democracy will make its mark on the democratic structure of the nation sooner rather than later. The most significant aspect of women's participation in the decision making process at the grassroots level is that it would throw up a trained younger leadership for the political mainstream, which has been restricted to men and a few women.

Though Panchayati Raj Institutions were established in almost all the states, women's representation did not exceed two or three. It was only in 1976, with the publication of the report of the committee on status of women that there was a demand for the representation of women in the Panchayati Raj through reservation. The local people know the needs of the villages and towns better than the state and Central Governments. They can prepare their own plans in order to fulfill their needs and execute them properly the local needs such as supply of drinking water, constructing and maintaining drainages, roads and bridges, providing schools, entertainment, health and sanitation, street lighting etc., can be under taken by them economically, efficiently and of quickly. Thus when local people can fulfill their own needs locally the administrative pressure on state and Central Governments are also reduced. Thus the Governments can concentrate on national issues and other developmental activities.

### Local self – Government in Andhra Pradesh

The state of Andhra Pradesh was formed on first November 1956. Soon after three years that is, in 1959 Andhra Pradesh implemented the three- tier Panchayati Raj system suggested by Balvanth Rai Mehta Committee. After Rajasthan, the credit of having implemented Panchayat Raj system goes to Andhra Pradesh. Later many states implemented this system. But the system of Panchayat Raj is not the same in all the states. While some states implemented a three- tier system, some implemented a two –tier system. Similarly the nomenclature of Panchayat Raj Institutions is different indifferent States.

The three –tier local self- Government system implemented in Andhra Pradesh in 1959 is given below.

Village level	: Grama Panchayat
Block level	: Panchyat Samithi
District level	: Zilla Parishad.

This system was there up to 1986 when modifications were made in the system. It was felt that the developmental activities could be effectively implemented since the number of villages in a Panchayat Samithi was more and hence unwieldy. Beside with a view to taking administration to the people, Mandal Praja Parishads were formed with 20-30 villages. Now, 1125 Mandal Parishads were formed in the entire state 2011 census. This system was also a three –tier system. The tiers are,

Village level	: Grama Panchayat;
Mandal level	: Mandal Parishad;
District level	: Zilla Parishad.

Reservation of 50% (per-cent) seats for women in the Panchayat Raj Institutions was provided to accelerate the power of participation of women in local governance. As per the

provision the women were contesting in the elections and utilizing their votes in electing their representatives. Through the personal observation of the investigator and the findings of the some rulers it is clear that majority of the women were dummy and main responsibilities will be undertaken by their husbands or by the people of the other higher castes. Recognizing the importance of their participation, a study was conducted to know their awareness on Panchayat Raj System.

**Objectives of the study**

- To know the annual income and educational status of the sample.
- To study awareness on the functions of the Gram Panchayat.
- To identify their awareness on the functions of Mandal Parishad.
- To identify their awareness on the functions of Zilla Parishad.

**Methodology**

Chittoor district was the locale of the study. The district has 3 revenue divisions 4 villages in each revenue divisions was selected randomly. 25 S.C. women from each village totally 100 S.C. women were randomly selected as the sample for the study. A Schedule was prepared contesting of items on personal information, village panchayat, Mandal and Zilla parishads. Data was collected from the sample by using the Schedules. The percentages were calculated and the findings were presented below.

**Table-1: Profile of the sample;**

S. No	Educational Status	Level	Percentage, %
1	Primary education	58	58.00
2	Secondary education	28	28.00
3	Intermediate	14	14.00
Annual Income in Rs.		No. of Persons	Percentage, %
1	Below 30,000/-	62	62.00
2	Above 30,000/-	38	38.00

**Profile of the sample:** The entire sample were women and belonging to rural background. Educational status of the sample shows that 58 per cent were of Primary education, 28 per cent were having Secondary education 14 per cent were have completed Intermediate. The annual income of the sample shows that 62 per cent were of the income levels, below 30,000 Rs and only 38 per cent were of above 30,000/- Rupees.

**Functions of Gram Panchayat:**

Gram panchayaths are local self governments at the village level and the sarpanch is in charge of it. The functions of the Gram Panchayat are to maintain street lights, constructions and repairing of roads, collection of tax keeping record of births and deaths, looking after public health and hygiene by providing facilities for sanitation and drinking water, providing free education and to organize Gram sabhas. Gram Paanchayat consist of between 7-17 members elected from the ward of the village, with one eight of seats reserved for women. The main source of income to Gram Panchayat is the property tax, grant received from the state Government and the grants received from Zilla parishad.

**Table-2, Awareness of sc Women on the functions of gram panchayat**

S. No	I team	Frequency	Percentage, %
1	Functions of village panchayat	78	78.00
2	Women role in Gram Panchayat	18	18.00
3	Role of panchayat samithi	20	20.00
4	Percentage of Reservation for Women in village panchayat	22	22.00

5	Equal participation of women with Men in village development	56	56.00
6	Awareness on government development programmes	47	47.00
7	Awareness about the village Panchayat Grants	25	25.00
8	Participation in the discussion of Utilization of grants	25	25.00
9	Role of village sarpanch	50	50.00
10	Role of ward members	26	26.00

Among 100 women 78 per cent of them know the functions of village panchayat, 18 per cent know about the role of women in the village panchayat. 20 per cent were aware of role of Gram Sabha in village panchayat 22 per cent know the percentage of reservation in village panchayat and expressed that there should be equal participation of women along with men in the development of the village .47 per cent of them were aware on government development programmers, 25 per cent know about the village panchayat grants, 25 per cent participation in the utilization of grants, 50 per cent know the role of village sarpanch and 26 per cent know the ward members.

**Functions of mandal parishad**

Mandal Parishad are local self government as at the mandal level and the president and a Vice President are elected for each mandal parishad they are elected by the elected members of the mandal parishad from among them. President take-up Community Development programs with the help to gram panchayats, all steps which are necessary to enhance the agricultural produce. Supply of quality seeds and fertilizers, providing irrigational facilities growing forests, initiates action necessary to improve the crossed varieties of animals, undertakes health and sanitation activities, to proved free educational facilities for children's and establishes and maintains primary school.

**Table-3**

**Awareness of sc women on the functions of mandal parishad.**

S. No	I team	Frequency	Percentage, %
1	Function of Mandal Parishad	50	50.00
2	Women role in mandal Parishad	33	33.00
3	Role of mandal Parishad in mandal Development	31	31.00
4	Percentage of Reservation for women in mandal Parishad	24	24.00
5	Equal Participation of women with men in mandal parishad	56	56.00
6	Awareness on government development Programmes	50	50.00
7	Awareness about the mandal parishad grants	47	47.00
8	Participation in the discussion of utilization of grants	11	11.00
9	Role of mandal praja parishad MPP	10	10.00
10	Role of MPTC	10	10.00

50 per cent of the samples know about the functions of Mandal Parishad. 33 per cent were aware about the role of women in mandal development, 31 percent know about the Role of mandal parishad in mandal development, 24 per cent of women reservation in mandal parishad, 56 per cent expressed should be equal participation with women men, 50 aware on Government Programmes 47 per cent awareness about the mandal parishad grants, 11 per cent participation in the discussion of utilization grants 10 per cent mandal parishad president (MPP) and 10 per cent know the (MPTC).

**Functions of zilla parishad.**

Every district has a Zilla parishad, a chairman and vice- chairman are elected for each Zilla Parishad and they are elected members of Zilla parishad from among them. Observing scrutinizes the budgets of Mandal Parishad in the district,

Distributes the funds received from state and central governments among the Mandal parishad in the district. Coordinates the plans, projects and schemes, supervise the activities, related to the district and establish and maintain secondary schools, vocational schools and industrial schools.

**Table – 4: Awareness of sc women on the functions of Zilla Parishad**

S.No	Item	Frequency	Percentage, %
1	Functions of Zilla Parishad	41	41.00
2	Women role in Zilla Parishad	50	50.00
3	Role of Zilla Parishad in Zilla Parishad development	50	50.00
4	Percentage of reservations for Women in Zilla Parishad	45	45.00
5	Equal participation in women with Men in Zilla Parishad	16	16.00
6	Awareness on government development Programmes	47	47.00
7	Awareness about the Zilla Parishad grants	08	08.00
8	Participation in the discussion of Utilization of grants	04	04.00
9	Role of ZPP Chairman	10	10.00
10	Role of ZPTC members	10	10.00

Among 100 women of sample 41 per cent know the functions of Zilla parishad, 50 per cent women role in Zilla parishad, 50 per cent of the sample know about the role of Zilla parishad in Zilla parishad development, 45 per cent know the Reservation for women in Zilla Parishad, 16 per cent of the sample know about the equal participation in women with men in Zilla Parishad, 4 per cent awareness on government development programmes, 8 per cent, awareness about the Zilla Parishad grants 4 per cent participation in the discussion of utilization of grants, 10 per cent know the role of ZPP and 10 per cent know the role of ZPTC members.

#### Findings

- The internal factors affecting the participation of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions are lack of awareness, lack of exposure etc.

- Low level of education has become a major obstacle in the path of playing active, role in the functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- The elected members are unable to understand the basic of working of Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- The external factors that affect the process of local participation of women are influence of family, caste, social outlook, patriarchy etc.
- The dominated Indian society does not perceive women as capable or worthy of leadership. The Indian males still perceive that they are alone capable of occupying positions and holding power. Patriarchal influences and traditional norms of our society are the obstacles in the path of women's in the local government.

#### Suggestions

- Awareness programmes should be organized to generate awareness among women
- about Panchayat Raj System.
- Women should be motivated to come out of the ban walls of their homes and take in mates
- Women should be included in all developmental projects

**Conclusion;** PRI (Panchayat Raj Institutions) can be genuinely empowered only after the rural masses and the elected leaders in the Panchayat Raj Institutions themselves put strong pressure on the central and state government for implementing the aforesaid subjects. For this, they will have to sink petty political differences and unit, organize and struggle for a common cause. To conclude, it is expected that the present United Progressive Alliance Government some concrete steps towards enabling panchayat leaders skill, knowledge and attitude in be coming proficient riders and performing their role effectively by getting adequate skill, knowledge and attitudes for local governance, planning and development on priority basis. It is hoped that carving out a separate minister of Panchayat Raj from the Rural Development and recently help conference of the Chief Ministers and State Ministers on RD and PR on the theme of poverty alleviation and rural prosperity through Panchayat Raj held in New Delhi may be a strategic and innovative step towards this direction.

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