

## WOMEN'S RESERVATION IN PANCHAYAT: A THEMATIC REVIEW ON ITS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS

---

Ms. Sonam Dhakad\*  
Dr. Soniya Joshi\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*This study provides a thematic review of women's political leadership through the lens of women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India. It traces the historical evolution of reservation policies, key legislative measures, and committee recommendation to improve women's representation. By analyzing its impact, the study explores both opportunities and challenges, offering a theoretical evaluation of its positive and negative effects. Moving beyond surface level indicators, it seeks to offer a deeper understanding of women's actual political influence in local governance.*

---

**Keywords:** *Women Political Leadership, Reservation Policies, Panchayati Raj Institution.*

---

### Introduction

Decentralization became an essential component of the Indian political and governing process after the country adopted a federal democratic system. Democratic decentralization is rooted in the principle of freedom and extends democracy into the developmental process at the grassroots level (Singh, 2002). People's participation is the lifeblood of democracy. Thus "democratic decentralization ensures the maximum people's participation at the lowest level of the governance, starting from the village administration, in both decision-making and execution of the local government affairs. "Of the people, by the people, for the people" is the foundation behind democratic decentralization, aiming to make democracy a lived reality. In a diverse and populous country like India, where over 63% people lives in villages, each with unique topographical, ethnic groupings, cultural background and socio-economic conditions, true democracy is impossible to achieve if power remains centralized in the hands of a few leaders in New Delhi. Mahatma Gandhi stated that twenty men sitting at the centre can't run true democracy. It must be approached from below by the people of each village. This emphasizes the significance of grassroots participation for genuine democratic governance (Padalia, 2002). The Indian constitution's Article 40 states that it is essential to establish village Panchayats and grant them necessary authority and functions to operate as self-governing units. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act (1993) achieved the self-governance vision for village panchayats by granting autonomy, responsibility and active participation in democratic process, as envisioned in Article 40.

Women's participation through reservation was introduced after recognizing them as historically disadvantaged group that required solutions to address their long-standing discrimination (Gowada, 1998). Despite being half of the world's population, women have historically been among the most underprivileged segments of the society. To address this systemic exclusion, Indian government implemented reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for women. The Constitution Amendment Act of 73<sup>rd</sup> guaranteed women's involvement in decentralized governance by enforcing reservation in Panchayat Raj Institutions. This act mandates that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of seats in every panchayat's council and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the leadership positions, be reserved for women. This marked the beginning of a silent revolution,

---

\* Ph.D (Research Scholar), Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Banasthali Vidyapith, Tonk, Rajasthan, India.

\*\* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Banasthali Vidyapith, Tonk, Rajasthan, India.

enabling million of women to enter in local politics and created political space that was previously unimaginable. Before this act, women were hardly involved in politics; in fact, their presence was minimal. However, despite the opportunities provided by reservation women continue to face several challenges.

### **Historical Background**

Women's political involvement has its origins in the social and economic reform movements of the nineteenth century, after which their participation in the nationalist activities and independence movement emerged as the pathway for their political presence. The question of political representation was first raised by Indian women in 1917 with the demand of universal adult suffrage and political participation at that time. The Reforms Act of 1921 granted women the right to vote, but it came with limitations related to education and property. Finally, women were granted equal political rights by the Indian constitution in 1950. The foundation of the Indian constitution, particularly in democratic system, is deeply rooted in the principle of equality, which ensures equal rights and opportunity. Women's participation is an important aspect of this principle, as it reflects the extent to which a democracy is truly inclusive and representative.

The introduction of Panchayati Raj in India in 1959 initially saw limited representation and unsatisfactory participation by women. To improve the women's political participation in local governance, a number of policies and suggestions had been put forth over the time. Two women who have an "interest in work among women and children" should co-opt or nominated by the 20 member panchayat samiti, according to the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), which was established to investigate how India's community development programme operated in order to address decentralized issues.

The demand for women's representation in Indian politics gained momentum after the 1976 Committee for the Status of Women in India (CSWI) report, titled 'Towards Equality'. This committee emphasized that issues and perspective of rural women were not sufficiently taken into account in the government's plans and development policies. Additionally, it also recommended establishing statutory women's panchayats at the local level and implementing seat reservation for women to increase their representation in panchayats. The Andhra Pradesh government also suggested a 5% women reservation for the Sarpanches position in 1979. The significance of women representation in panchayat was emphasized by the Ashok Mehta Committee (1979) on Panchayati Raj Institutions, which also suggested allocating two seats to women in each panchayat. In the response to low level of women political participation, the Indian government recognized the 1976 committee for status of women's recommendations and took inspiration from Karnataka's pioneering experience of implementing 25% women's reservation in its three-tier Panchayati Raj Institution in 1983. Thirty percent of executive-head positions be reserved for women at all three tiers, from the village to the district levels was suggested by the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988). This showed a shift from the earlier approach of nomination and co-option of women in local governance, as suggested by Balwant Rai Mehta Committee and Ashok Mehta Committee, to guaranteeing a 30% "critical mass" in decision-making. In order to strengthen democracy, the L.M. Singhvi Committee (1986) stressed the importance of involving women in local self-governance and suggested that PRIs be recognized by constitution.

The unsuccessful 64<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1989 made the same recommendation. In 1990, V.P Singh government presented the 72<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill, proposing one-third reservation for women at all levels, but excluded chairperson positions and was not discussed in parliament. Women's reservation in PRIs were inconsistent across states prior to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment act of 1992. Every state had a different Panchayat Act, with varying percentages of reserved seats for women. Some states like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, and Maharashtra provided 25-30% reservation, while other states included women only through co-option and nomination. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), formally incorporated Panchayati Raj into the Constitution through the article 243D, created new opportunities for women by reserving 33% of the seats for them in local governance. It upheld the one-third reservation for women in both membership and chairperson roles at all level in PRIs to be distributed by rotation among various panchayat constituencies. This rotation system guarantees equitable representation, avoids power monopolies and foster inclusivity by providing equal leadership opportunities. The eleventh and twelfth five-year plan concentrated on capacity-building initiatives and leadership training program for elected women representatives in PRIs. The plans also proposed additional support mechanisms, including gender-sensitive budgeting and awareness campaigns for women in PRIs. The goal of both plans was to enhance their performance and leadership skills in the panchayat so they could play an active role in governance.

The constitutional amendment, however, had a revolutionary impact; as a result more than 1.45 million women hold political authority as chairperson or member at different decision making levels. Presently, 21 states and 2 union territories have implemented 50% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (Kumar & Ghosh,2024).

### **Women's Reservation in Panchayat**

Despite their share in the population, women remain disproportionately underrepresented in all political roles. The widespread application of gender quotas is one of the major political reforms intended to address historical marginalization of women from the formal politics. Women's representation in political offices is directly increased by these quotas. Research has indicated that women's representation has been significantly impacted by reservation policies (Agrawal, 1997). These measures have gained widespread recognition as a fast-track strategy due to their global adoption, local implementation, and varying impacts which has sparked discussion on their broader effects and widespread implications. Descriptive representation refers to the physical presence of women in political bodies, reflecting their share of the population. In the context of Panchayati Raj, this involves electing women as members and heads in panchayats in numbers that reflect their demographic share. This was made official by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act (1993), by reserving 33% of seats in PRIs across India for women. While the aim was to strengthen their role in governance and decision-making, the reality is that increase in number has not resulted into genuine participation. Substantive representation, on other hand, focuses on the actual influence of women in governance. It goes beyond mere numerical inclusion and examines the extent to which women leaders actively shape policies, contribute to decision-making, and address gender related concern. This form of representation requires not only political awareness but also access to resources, leadership training, and a supportive environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in governance.

Previous research has shown that reserving seats for women in panchayat has significantly increased their political access (Ambedkar, 2000; Zones, 1997; Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). Vissandjee (2006) observed that women previously avoided politics due to its association with negative perceptions. However, due to reservation and its widespread involvement at the PRIs, this perception has changed to some extent. By involving rural women in administration and development activities, this act acts as a powerful catalyst for their empowerment. Women's empowerment in PRIs seeks to enable them to confront prevailing structures, acknowledge their subordination, and take an active role in politics. They are expected to change from silent and illiterate to self assured, questioning agents with greater autonomy and mobility. The primary objective of this policy is to facilitate women's political empowerment. There political empowerment is guaranteed through contesting election, running offices, making decision at local levels, and implementing programs and schemes. The reservation policy shares perception of justice, addressing marginalized groups, provides a pathway to collective empowerment, supportive affirmative action and helps to develop leadership.

Gender quotas are widely regarded in the literature as the useful mechanisms to address women's exclusion and guarantee their presence in political structures. However, many critical studies also note that although their numbers are growing and becoming more visible, their political participation is still either low or only a symbolic representation. The central debate revolves around on whether women's increased representation has led to the integration of gender perspective into governance. This raises important questions about the effectiveness of quota implementation, as well as the need for additional measures to support women's leadership beyond formal representation.

Even though the grassroots level politics experiences, over the past three decades, do not paint a wholly positive picture, indicate that challenges persist however there have been notable instances where women leaders have driven changes in rural communities. While these incidents may still be relatively few, it suggests that progress is underway, beginning of a more inclusive political landscape.

### **Importance of the Reservation**

Why has it become necessary to implement government interventions and reservation to guarantee that every group of society is adequately represented in Panchayats? The politics of presence concept introduced by Anne Philips, argues that the mere physical presence of member of marginalized or underrepresented groups (such as women, SC and ST) in political institutions and in position of power is crucial for ensuring their interests are considered and addressed in policymaking. The premise behind this concept is that people who belong to underrepresented or marginalized groups bring unique perspective and life experiences that are often overlooked or inadequately represented by others, even if those in power claim to advocate for their interests.

Affirmative action in political institutions, gender quotas, and reservation policies are largely justified by the politics of presence. These actions seek to address historical injustices, dismantle gender barriers, and establish a more inclusive and representative democracy by guaranteeing that a diverse voices are heard.

Several studies have demonstrated that women's representation in politics is either nonexistent or extremely low in the absence of reservation. Chhibber (1999) highlights that in Indian political parties, women are already underrepresented and absent. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) found that women constituted only 1.7% and 6.5% of the Sarpanches in the districts of Rajasthan and West Bengal, respectively, where they are not given reserved seats. Furthermore, in the 2000 Rajasthan panchayat election, none of the woman who had elected to reserved seats in 1995 were able to retain their positions or re-elected. In West Bengal, 33% of female Sarpanches reported that they will not seek re-election. In rural India, the majority of middle-class, literate women who are able to run office come from families where it is considered inappropriate for women to engage in work outside the home, let alone participate in political offices. Without external pressure, it is uncertain whether political parties would nominate candidates from underrepresented groups. Research indicates that 26% of women leaders in West Bengal would run for office if their political party encouraged them to do so. However, political parties are reluctant to fill SC, ST, or women candidates for unreserved seats. Voter biases further compound the issue, as public perception often favors male leaders over female leaders, irrespective of performance.

Research conducted by Topalova and Duflo (2004) indicates that women leaders tend to deliver higher-quality public goods. Additionally, this study found that under women leaders, corruption levels were lower; the villagers are significantly less inclined to pay a bribes for public service matters when the Sarpanches are woman, suggesting the a potential link between female leadership and reduced corruption. Despite this, villagers generally expressed greater satisfaction with male leaders, highlighting a deep seated cultural bias that prevent women leaders from being acknowledged as capable policymakers.

Given the challenges of political representation, party preferences, social discrimination, and voter perceptions, government intervention and reservation policies remain essential to ensuring adequately representation of women and marginalized communities in Panchayats. In order to achieve this, broad-based electoral reforms are necessary. These reforms should focus on limiting the influence of money and muscle power in politics, democratizing party decision-making by ensuring regular and transparent elections at all levels, and simplifying the process for citizen to contest elections without having to depend on political elites (Kishwar, 2016).

#### **Positive Impact of Reservation**

The process of social transformation initiated by the Panchayati Raj system and the reservation of seats has led to notable shift in governance, policies, power structure, leadership dynamics, social outlooks, and relationship within rural communities that extends beyond merely increasing women's representation. The women's involvement in politics is breaking traditional hierarchies and challenging the entrenched dominance of historically powerful groups. It also offered them an additional chance to exhibit their leadership skills (Behar & Kumar, 2002). Numerous studies indicate that the reservation policies have increased the presence of eligible women in leadership position, providing them with greater opportunities to enter politics, participate in formal decision-making, and bring their perspective into the mainstream political discourse.

A study by Jan Priebe (2017) and Lal (2005) revealed that almost all elected women officials accepted that reservation policies have open the door for political participation and empowerment in rural governance, calling it a commendable step. Duflo and Topalova (2004) used survey data from the "Millennial Survey" to compare panchayats with reserved and unreserved presidencies. Their finding revealed that women leaders in reserved Panchayats contributed to the development of higher-quality infrastructure and public good. Additionally, corruption levels in these reserved Panchayats were found to be lower, demonstrating the positive impact of women's leadership on governance. Study by Nirmala Buch shown that more than half of the community members are of optimistic view about women representative and hope that corruption and favoritism will decrease under their leadership. Similarly, a study by Lalita Joshi and Thomas Palghadmal on Bhojdari Gram Panchayat found that majority of elected women representative focused on solving critical issues such as roads, water supply, sanitation, toilets and construction of the farm ponds. Additionally, women leaders prioritized public goods that directly benefit women such as road construction, recycled fuel equipment, and drinking water facilities. Raghavendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo (2001) conducted a study, revealing that mandated representation of women in local governance significantly impacts policy decision. In Gram Panchayat that is designated for women, women are more actively involved in the political process.

Reservation policies have also empowered disadvantaged and backward groups to identify themselves in local governance and granting them access to political decision-making. While some studies argue that women's representation in panchayats remains symbolic and notional, achieving even this level of empowerment is critical first step in the broader struggle for gender equality in politics. Amitabh Behar and Yogesh Kumar (2002) noted that empowerment in some cases has been significant and many women representatives have become more confident and assertive in their roles within Panchayats. According to Dr. Chandrashekhar, women representatives believe that reservation in PRIs have benefitted them socially and economically, encouraging their contributed involvement in politics. They advocate for the continuation of this provision to sustain and build upon these gains. Women's reservation has significantly contributed to their political and social empowerment, providing them with greater self-confidence, awareness, change in life style, visibility, and a stronger voice in public life. Additionally, villages with female Sarpanches showed a noticeable improvement in political awareness among women. Study by Raghavendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo (2001) observed that women in such villages were more politically active and aware of their voting rights, duties and responsibilities. These findings are significant because they show that reservation policies have successfully altered local governance dynamics and modified policymaking, making it more inclusive and responsive to community needs.

The above studies highlight the emergence of new leadership among rural women within these grassroots institutions. An empowering process is indicated by their perception, respect, recognition, improved status, political aspiration and confidence, as well as by the evaluation and perceptions of the community. Their new roles bring transformative changes in recognition, new identity, respect, mobility and attitudinal change. Ultimately, reservation policies create a positive "acceleration effect", facilitating women's access to political positions. It can contribute to inclusive governance and social equality while addressing long standing inequality in political representation.

#### **Negative Impact of the Reservation**

Political reservations for women have been a step toward gender equality, but the policy has not been free of criticism. The benefits of panchayat reservation have been the subject of many studies; relatively few have examined the drawbacks of the reservation policy. However, a critical research paper claimed that adding more "quota women" had negative consequences for the political system, including stigmatization and backlash. This negative perception refers to the belief that women selected through quotas are less competent and undeserving, less educated and political inexperienced (Duflo, 2005), designated as "dummy political leaders" (Chakraborty & Mukhopadhyay, 2014) which undermines their credibility and diminishes appreciation for their contributions in politics.

Reservation policies often provoke resistance or hostility from those who oppose them, which can create a challenging working environment for women representatives. Despite the reservation clause, their leadership is undermined by traditional power structures that pass votes of no confidence, reinforcing caste and patriarchal domination in local government.

In her research study, Panda (1996) found that most women representatives did not enter politics voluntarily, but rather only as result of pressure from families and communities or the requirement of reservation. Families have been identified as the most supportive social institution, despite the fact that they are frequently perceived as taking over or influencing their work and decision in panchayats, and such influence can hinder the learning. According to Narayan (2005) women participate in politics not because of their leadership aspirations and social position but rather because seats were reserved for them in panchayats. The reservation policy compelled them to participate in elections and enter in politics, but it has not necessarily encouraged them to actively participate in decision-making process within local bodies (Kaul & Saini, 2009). Furthermore, Santosh K. Tripathi (2022) pointed out that while the number of women on roll appears higher, their actual participation and decision-making power remain significantly lower in practices.

A study by Ms. Shailiza Mayal highlights the prevalence of proxy representation among women sarpanches in Karnal District, Haryana. Although 45% of the 382 gram panchayats had women sarpanches, many of them lacked active participation. According to baseline assessment, 16 out of 95 women sarpanches never called gram sabha meetings, instead male family members managing these responsibilities. Around 76.67% of women sarpanches were supported by their husbands, with male relatives consistently aiding in Panchayat duties. The study uncovered a pervasive "Sarpanch Pratinidhi/Pati" culture, also referred to as "Pati Pradhan", "Co- Pradhan", and "Invisible-Hand", where male performing the actual duties. Nilekani (2010) studied panchayat system in Karnataka and found that many women leaders were symbolic leader while the male vice president held the real power.

This phenomenon highlights the concern about the genuine empowerment of women through reservation policies. In the study done by Amitabh Behar and Yogesh Kumar (2002) concluded that on initial analysis the impact of reservation in panchayats has been minimal and this view is supported by the countless instance of inactive female sarpanches and proxy male sarpanches. These phenomena have become more noticeable as result of the reservation policy of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendments, and the proxy participation has become a point of criticism for the legitimacy of system as well as for women leaders (Lenneberg, 2007). Merely assuming a passive leadership role without active engagement within the panchayat is insufficient.

In a study, O. Brien highlights trade-off effect of quotas, where women's quantitative representation increases immediately but are later excluded from positions of power undermining their long-term influence and leadership opportunities. Reservations have a lasting impact only if they help women to advance their political careers and win re-election, even in seats that are not reserved. The 2007-08 nationwide study by the Panchayati Raj ministry titled "Elected Women Representatives in Gram Panchayats" highlights that four out of five elected women representatives (EWRs) were chosen from reserved seats, indicating that reservation policies greatly facilitate women's involvement in politics. However, the study also notes that the many women representatives did not contest elections again once reservations were removed from their seats, with only 14% of women representatives were re-elected, while 87% contested only one election. This is primarily because most reserved seats later become open for general competition in subsequent elections and male candidates tend to dominate these general constituencies, further reducing women's representation and hindering their chances of becoming long-term leaders. For example, 33% reservation for women at grassroots level provides a constitutional support and makes pathway for women to enter politics, but post-1993 phase many women joined PRIs as elected representatives, but this does not ensure that they will remain in the political system, and few advancing in higher politics. These factors somehow limit women's leadership to only just five years. After that, they are never elected again.

The rotation requirement of reserved seats in PRIs poses the challenges to women's political empowerment. Newly elected officials frequently have five years to fully settle into their positions, comprehend governance skills, understand administrative processes and acquire real-world leadership experience. However, by the time they become more confident and capable, their seats might be de-reserved, prematurely ending their political careers. Additionally, the rotation of reserved seats diminishes the likelihood of re-election for women leaders, often reducing their political ambition and the incentive to prioritize long-term governance. The reservation system creates lame duck representatives, as heads whose seats will be de-reserved in the next election may lack incentives for long term governances. As a result, many lame duck leaders are emerged who potentially affecting the continuity and effectiveness of local leadership (Duflo, 2005). In the end, their political journeys end there but without any significant outcomes or true empowerment.

The increasing influence of money and muscle power in electoral politics disproportionately affects women, who often lack the financial resources or strong political networks needed to compete effectively. Due to the high cost of the running offices, women generally avoid to take part in politics. Despite the fact that the proposed reservations may result in a quantitative change in women's representation, women's political participation will continue to be influenced by the nature of Indian politics. The entire political system including the government and bureaucracy has been undermined by corruption at every level (Dhavan, 2008). Women and marginalized groups long-term political engagement and empowerment in grassroots governance are seriously threatened by this confluence of factors. While quotas play a crucial role in addressing women's exclusion from the political domain, they are only a part of more extensive strategy for women's empowerment. Along with quotas, this strategy must focus on redistribution of resources within societies and encouraging greater political participation from women. Women's active leadership in PRIs can't be ensured only by quotas and reserved seats but by their effective participation in leadership processes due to various factors, including their educational background, patriarchal values, lack of experience, domestic responsibilities, and restricted access over resources and limitation on public spaces (V & A, 2014).

### **Suggestions**

- The misconception that women lack interest in politics and are mere nominal members in panchayat hinders their participation. Need public awareness initiatives, orientation programs and campaigns that highlight the women leader's accomplishment which can aid in changing societal attitude and stereotypes.

- It is imperative to establish regular monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track their performance and make sure they are actively participating in meetings and decision-making process of panchayats. This would not only enhance accountability but also tackle the issue of proxy leadership.
- For women leaders to continue in politics after de-reservations of seats, post reservation assistance is crucial for them like networking opportunities, leadership skill development and mentoring programs, helping them smoothly transition into non-reserved constituencies. Need to incentivize long term political career which is crucial to ensure their sustained presence even without reservation and to help them remain active in politics for long term.
- When women are deprived other rights such as, civic, economic, social and educational they are unable to fully exercise their political rights and this may undermine democracy. As a result, gender quotas must be connected to the social and economic justice in society because they do not function independently and are interdependent, especially in the decision-making process within Panchayats.
- Obstacles such as the division of labor, low self-esteem, lack of skills and confidence, stereotypes, restricted mobility, and isolation continue to exist. They have not vanished in an instant. These factors that hinder women from entering politics are connected to the potential role of political reservation. To overcome from all these obstacles government need to develop capacity building programs, comprehensive training for women leaders, skills in negotiation, communication and planning, building alliances, and setup network & connectivity.
- Women need to acquire these technical skills required for political campaigns and administrative participation, such as resource management, political strategy, media management, voter behavior analysis, polling data, and understanding bureaucratic process. Without these skills, their ability to effectively engage in elections or administration is limited.

### Conclusion

The aforementioned studies make it abundantly clear that including women in panchayats through reservation has significantly transformed the political system from grassroots level to higher governance structure. Women's political reservation in Panchayati Raj System has led to a transformative shift in local governance, promoting gender equality, increasing the women's access to political system, and empowering them politically, socially and economically. Additionally, it has influenced policy formation and implementation, ensuring that governance becomes more inclusive.

However, alongside these positive impacts, reservations have also introduced challenges in the political system. The journey toward true empowerment remains ongoing, as challenges such as tokenism and symbolic representation, proxy leadership, social stigma and backlash continue to hinder women's full participation. Many women still lack active engagement in Panchayats, which perpetuates their unequal status and leaves their concern unaddressed. To achieve genuine empowerment, improvements are necessary like stronger policy implementation, capacity-building initiatives, and a shift in societal perceptions to enhance women's leadership roles.

Study by Esther Duflo and Petia Topalova (2004) noted that women may initially face difficulties in governance, voters and society require some time to adjust to these changes. Thus, before achieving equal political representation, removing reservation would take a long time. While there is no doubt that reservation policies have enabled them to contest election and increasing their numerical presence in Panchayats, the key questions remain: Are women truly participating in governance and decision-making? Are they effectively exercising their authority as elected leaders? Are they successfully performing the function of the Panchayat? While numerical representation has improved, the real challenges lie in ensuring meaningful participation.

### References

1. Adhikari, H. (2012). Leadership at the grassroots: Positioning women in patriarchal society. *Review of Management*, 2(3/4), 13–22.
2. Agarwal, B. (1997) Environmental action, gender equality and women's participation. *Development and Change*, 26(1), 1-44.
3. Ahmed, N. (Eds.). (2018). *Women in governing institutions in South Asia*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57475-2\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57475-2_1)
4. Ambedkar, S. N. (2000). *New Panchayati Raj at work*. ABD Publishers.

5. Bari, F. (2005). Women's political participation: Issues and challenges. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Expert Group Meeting.
6. Behar, A., & Kumar, Y. (2002). Decentralisation in Madhya Pradesh, India: From Panchayati Raj to Gram Swaraj (1995 to 2001). Working Paper No. 170. Overseas Development Institute.
7. Bilkis, V., Abdool, S., Apale, A., & Dupéré, S. (2006). Women's political participation in rural India: Discerning discrepancies through a gender lens. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 13(4), 425.
8. Billava, N. (2016). Empowerment of women representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions: A thematic review. *Journal of Politics and Governance*. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2456-8023.2016.00001.2>
9. British Council. (2002). Effective leaders: View from Central and East Africa. Mimeo, London.
10. Buch, N. (2000). Women's experience in new Panchayat: Emerging leadership of rural women. *Occasional Paper No. 35*.
11. Buch, N. (2009). Reservation for women in panchayats: A sop in disguise?. *Economic & political weekly*, 44,(40).
12. Chakraborty, T., & Mukhopadhyay, I. (2014). 'Proxy women' or empowered politicians: Democratic decentralization & Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) in rural India. *Journal of Politics & Governance*, 3(4), 15-24.
13. Chary, M. R. (2012). Women and political participation in India: A historical perspective. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 73(1), 19-132.
14. Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2001). Women as policymakers: Evidence from a India-Wide randomized policy experiment. *Econometrica*, 72(5), 1409-1443.
15. Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). The impact of reservation in the panchayati raj: Evidence from a nationwide randomized experiment. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39, 979-986.
16. Chhibber, P. (1999). Democracy without associations: Transformation of the party system and social cleavages in India. University of Michigan Press.
17. Dahlerup, D. (2006). *Women, Quotas and Politics*. Routledge research in comparative politics.
18. Datta, P.K. (2023). Gender quota and women's participation in rural local bodies in India: the context, constraints and consequences. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 69(4).
19. Dhavan, R. (2008). Reservations for women: *The way forward*. *National Law School of India Review*, 20(1), 1-45. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44283670>
20. Duflo, E. (2005). Why political reservations? *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 3(2/3), 668-678. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40005009>
21. Duflo, E., & Topalova, P. (2004). Unappreciated service: Performance, perceptions, and women leaders in India. Unpublished manuscript. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
22. Dalal, R. S., & Dhilon, S. (2023). Decentralized governance in India: An Evaluation in context of Panchayati Raj Administration. *Indian journal of public administration*, 69(3).
23. Gandhi, M.k. (1946). Constructive Programme: Its meaning and place. Navajivan Publishing House.
24. Garg, A. (2016). Experiencing contribution of women in Panchayati Raj institution of Sambhal district. *Voice of Research*, 4(4).
25. Gowda, G. (1998). Political linkage of women leaders of Panchayati Raj institutions: Empirical evidence from Karnataka. *Administrative Change*, 25(2), 84-89.
26. Hoque, A. (2020). Political empowerment of women through panchayati raj institutions in India. *International journal of advanced research in engineering and technology*, 11(10), 1827-1840.
27. Joshi, D. K., & Goehring, R. (2018). Conceptualizing and measuring women's political leadership: From presence to balance. *Politics & gender*, 14(3), 350-375.
28. Joshi, L., & Palghadmal, T. (2010). Women in panchayat raj institution (PRIs): development preferences, desired role, and constraints. *Watershed organization trust*.
29. Kaul, S., & Sahni, S. (2009). Study on the participation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions. *Studies on Home and Community Science*, 3(1), 29-38.



30. Kaushik, A., & Shaktawat, G. (2010). Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions: A case study of Chittorgarh distri council. *SAGE Publications*, 26(4), 473–483.
31. Kishwar, M. (1996). Women and politics: Beyond quotas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(43), 2867–2874. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4404714>
32. Kumar, S., & Ghosh, A. K. (2024). Elected women representatives in local rural governments in India: impact and challenges. Observer research foundation.
33. Lal, S. K. (2005). A study of issues and challenges in empowerment of women through their participation in PRI: A case study of Allahabad district of U.P.
34. Lenneberg, C. (1994). Women and political leadership in India: Able politicians or token presences? *Asian Studies Review*. 17:3, 6-14.
35. Mir, M. A., & Bhat, J. A. (2022). The politics of inclusion and equality in India: A gender perspective. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(3), 10045–10050.
36. O'Brien, D.Z., & Rickne, J.(2014). Gender quotas and women's political leadership. IFN Working Paper, No. 1043. Research Institute of industrial Economic(IFN).
37. Padalia, m. (2002). A concept of democratic decentralization. In M. P. Dube & M. Padalia (Eds.), *Democratic decentralization and panchayati raj in India* (pp. 58-63). Anamika Publisher & Distributors.
38. Pandit, L. A. (2018). Political Leadership of Women: Constraints and Challenges. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 71(4), 1139-1148.
39. Panwar, N. S. (2017). Decentralized political institution in Madhya Pradesh (India): Inclusion of the marginalized through local self-government. *IFF Working Paper Online*, No. 23.
40. Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., & Hughes, M. M. (2007). Gender in politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 263–284. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131651>
41. Pini, B., & McDonal, P. (2013). *Women and representation in Local Government-International case studies*. Routledge research in comparative poliitcs.
42. Priebe, J. (2017). Political reservation and female empowerment: Evidence from Maharashtra, India. *Oxford Development Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2017.1298740>
43. Rai, P. (2011). Electoral participation of women in India: Key determinants and barriers. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46(3).
44. Rajasekhar, D. (2021). *Handbook of Decentralised Governance and Development in India*. Routledge.
45. Sindhuja, P., & Murugan, K. R. (2018). A gender perspective on role performance of elected Panchayat leaders in India. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 19(3), Article 15.
46. Singh, S. N. (2002). Democratic decentralization and panchayati raj: A conceptual framework. In M. P. Dube & M. Padalia (Eds.), *Democratic decentralization and panchayati raj in India* (pp. 27-32). Anamika Publisher & Distributors.
47. Thirupathi, L. (2021). From reservation to participation: Issues and challenges of Dalit representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions. *International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods (IJARESM)*, 9(5).
48. Tiwari, N. (2014). Panchayati Raj institutions as a tool for empowerment at the grassroots. *Journal of Politics & Governance*, 3(4), 5-14.
49. Tripathi, S. K. (2022). Proxy participation by women in Panchayati Raj institutions – A critical study. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Innovative Ideas and Education (IJARIIE)*, 8(3).
50. V. S., & A, R. (2014). Women in local self-governance – A leadership perspective. *International Journal of Research*, 4(12).