



Women's Empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana: A Study of Rohtak District

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Abstract: The late years of 20th century in India have brought a significant change in the life of woman. However, the Reservation Bill for women is pending in Indian Parliament, nevertheless, reservation for women at grassroots level has shown a remarkable change in their socio-economic and political status in the wake of 21st century. Now the political participation of rural women has increased after the implementation of 73rd Amendment Act in different parts of India. Haryana is a leading state that has ensured reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institution. This proves that gender quota for women in the elected bodies is the only effective way through which all the women can make a statement of equality in politics as well as socio-economic level. Therefore, women's empowerment has become a buzzword for academicians, social activists and political analysts in the present scenario. Today we hear it in workshops, seminars and conferences at regional, national and international levels. The present research paper highlights the present scenario of women empowerment in the state of Haryana focusing at the Panchayati Raj Institutions in District, Rohtak.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Local Politics, Panchayati Raj, 73rd Amendment Act, Grassroot Level, Reservation.

Introduction: Recent legislative enactments have drastically changed the scenario of women empowerment in India. The 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts passed by India parliament have provided 33 percent reservation for women at the different levels of local bodies in rural areas as well as in urban areas. Now there is 33 percent reservation for women to the post of chair person and the same is reserved for

woman belonging to the SC/ST community. Consequently, it has increased the level of woman's participation in local bodies. However, it is for the State Legislature to decide the number of terms for which seats will remain reserved. Moreover, Panchayati Raj Institutions have not been given full financial and political powers to function independently, but 29 subjects have been devolved to these bodies under the new Panchayati Raj Act. Now a large number of women have started to take part in politics at the grassroots level and in case of Haryana all the women representatives at the local level are educated. Now, they seem more confident and no more dependent on the family members than before. Nevertheless, the whole scenario is different in other states and they need to develop their leadership skills for their social, economic and political empowerment.

Research Methodology: The present research paper is descriptive in nature and based on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The researcher has used a questionnaire to seek all the needed information regarding the women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rohtak district. The collected data has been tabulated and analysed to get the better results of the study. The pace the study, data from various articles and reference books has also been taken.

Sample Size: The study is based on the random and convenient sampling technique. The researcher has selected 100 women representatives from different areas of Rohtak district who represent or ever represented in Panchayati Raj institutions i.e. in Zila Parishad, Block Samiti and Village Panchayats.

Research Objective: The main objective of the present research is to find out the level of women participation and women empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the State of Haryana focusing at the district Rohtak.

What is Women's Empowerment?

The literary meaning of 'Empowerment of Women' refers to empowering them particularly, increasing their participation in decision-making process and power sharing in the representative bodies, employment, access to property,

productive assets, access to common land and financial assets etc. This concept is based on the assumption that in a developing country like India, there exists inequality in all aspects of life which may be social, economic and political etc. As women are usually oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life. Thus, women's empowerment is the initial phase of their liberation, freedom, equality as well as long run goal of their political participation. Moreover, it is the first step in a long journey towards formulation and realization of human rights and responsibilities which transcends stereotype gender role in the changing scenario of Indian politics at the grassroots in the wake of 21st century.

A Profile of Haryana: Haryana emerged as a new state on 1st Nov. 1966 and is located on the North-Western side of the Indian Union adjoining Delhi, the NCR. It extends from 27°3' to 31°9' North Latitude and 74°.5' to 77°.6 East Longitude. Its total area is 44, 212 km. to the east of Haryana are Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. The state has Rajasthan in the South and West, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in the South and West. Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in the North and Uttrakhand is in the North-East of the State of Haryana. Total population of the State is 25,351,462 as per census of 2011. Out of which 11,856,728 are females and 13,494,734 males. Female literacy rate is 65.94 percent. There are 6 administrative divisions, 22 districts, 72 sub divisions, 93 tehsil, 50 sub-tehsil, 140 community development blocks, 154 cities and towns, 6841 villages and 6212 village panchayats in the state of Haryana.

A Profile of the Study Area: The district derives its name from headquarter town Rohtak which occupies an area 1668 km or 644 sq. miles. The district has two sub divisions, Rohtak and Meham. There are five blocks in the district. According to the census of 2011, Rohtak district has a population 10,61,204. It forms a part of NCR and has literacy rate of 84.08 percent. There are 3 tehsils, 143 villages and 5 towns in Rohtak district. The population consists of 568479 males and 492725 females.

Socio-Economic Background of the Women Representatives: Women's empowerment is keenly associated with socio-economic factors such as age, caste,

education, occupation, social status etc. D.K. Gosh in his study has pointed out that the present day village panchayats consist of more youthful members. Suresh Mishra and Rajvir Dhaka in their study have pointed out that due to the 73rd Amendment Act, a large number of women have been elected to local bodies and their participation has increased. Some of the key factors affecting women's participation in Panchayati Raj institution in Rohtak district are as:

Education: It plays a vital role in shaping the pattern of women's participation in politics. It also opens the door in life which is essentially social in character. In case of Haryana, the entire women representatives are educated and no longer dependent on family members.

Table- 1 Education of Women Representatives

Sr. No.	Educational	Frequency	Percentage
1	Primary	08	0.8%
2	Middle	20	20%
3	Matriculation	25	25%
4	Graduate	42	42%
5	Post Graduate & Above	05	0.5%
	Total	100	100%

The data given in table shows that all the women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions are educated and a significant number of women representatives (47%) are graduate and Post Graduate. This indicates a positive relationship between women's participation and education in Rohtak district.

Caste: It is one of the dominant factors of rural politics. Today in spite of new contents of political democracy in India, it still remains a central element of politics at the grassroots level as well as upper levels.

Table- 2 Caste of Women Representatives

Sr. No.	Caste	Frequency	Percentage
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1	General	30	30%
2	Backward Class	15	15%
3	Scheduled Caste	40	40%
4	Schedule Tribes	--	--
5	Other Backward Class	15	15%
	Total	100	100%

The above data indicates that traditional leadership pattern has changed and women's from weaker sections have ensured their participation in local politics. There are only 30 percent women representatives from upper section and remaining (70%) are from Sc's, BC's and OBC's. To conclude, woman from all sections of the society are participating in local politics in Rohtak district.

Occupation: Today it is one of the dominant factors affecting the woman's participation in rural India. Dharam Raj Singh in his study has pointed out that rural leadership emerges from families with well reputed occupations.

Table 3- Occupation of Women Representatives

Sr. No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Agriculture	60	60%
2	Business	02	0.2%
3	Service	10	10%
4	Laborer and Artisans	28	28%
	Total	100	100%

The table 3 shows that most of women representatives (60%) belong to agriculturist families and 28 percent are from laborer class. Only 12 percent are from business and services doing families. Thus, agriculture as the main occupation is playing a key role to determine the participation of women in rural politics.

Family Income: Actually, economic status is a powerful determinant of rural leadership. Therefore, most of the scholars have pointed out a positive relationship between family income and political participation.

Table 4- Family Income of Women Representatives

Sr. No.	Range of Family Income (Monthly)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below Rs. 10,000	40	40%
2	Up to Rs. 20,000	30	30%
3	Up to Rs. 30,000	15	15%
4	Above Rs. 30,000	15	15%
	Total	100	100%

The data given in table 4 shows that a large number of women representative (40%) belong to the lower family income strata and 30 percent from middle income group. The same number (30%) is from the high middle or higher family income group. It indicates that a large number of women representatives still belong to the lower and middle family income groups in Rohtak.

Social Status: Most of the studies done in the field of rural politics have indicated that there is a positive relationship between social status and political participation in rural areas.

Table 5- Social Status of Women Representatives

Sr. No.	Ranking	Frequency	Percentage
1	High	15	15%
2	Middle	65	65%
3	Lower	20	20%
	Total	100	100%

The data given in table -5 shows that 85 percent women representative belong to lower and middle social state. Therefore, high social status is no longer helpful in the emergence of women leadership in Rohtak district. It may be possible

due to reservation of seats for women at all levels of Panchayati Raj institutions. The women's participation from all sections of the society has been ensured through the policy of reservation of seats for women from Sc's/ST's category.

Party Affiliation: It plays an important role in the process of political participation. K.C. Vidya in her study has pointed out that the political parties have an important role as catalysts in the representative aspect of the local government. Today all political parties are keenly eager to attract the rural voters and they have the main focus on women voters. Most of the political analysts consider it as a positive step to strengthen the level of women participation in local politics which would ensure the realization of women empowerment.

Table 6- Party Affiliation of Women Representatives

Sr. No.	Party	Frequency	Percentage
1	Congress	60	60%
2	BJP	06	0.6%
3	INLD	20	20%
4	BSP	02	0.2%
5	Others	06	0.6%
6	NA	06	0.6%
	Total	100	100%

The above table shows that 94 percent of women representative are affiliated to political parties. Therefore, party affiliation is emerging as a powerful determinant of rural politics and a key factor of women empowerment through their active participation in rural politics in Rohtak.

Need of Training for Women Representatives: The fact is that lack of economic, social and political empowerment of women impedes growth and poverty reduction. Today education is one of the most valuable means of achieving gender equality and sustaining process of empowerment. Moreover, the reservations of seats for woman

in Panchayati Raj institutions have paved a way to women's empowerment. But still we need to enhance the participation level of women and capacity building in the changing socio-economic and political scenario of Indian politics. Therefore, here it is an urgent need of training for women representatives at the local levels for capacity building. Today women in rural areas suffer from lack of mobility and interaction. Therefore, Panchayats must be seen as a nursery of leadership for woman. That is why; the women from all communities need very special training for empowerment and capacity building.

Concluding Remarks: Thus, if reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions are to lead their empowerment in real terms, socio-economic and political conditions which facilitate and encourage their participation need to be created. Now it is suggested that a due emphasis on consensus in decision-making should be adopted laid down and the important role of women representatives in the whole process should be acknowledged by society. They should be in need based training programs for women in local bodies. Education can play a vital role in their capacity building and bring a drastic change in their socio-economic and political life.

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