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## **Women participation in Panchayati Raj with special reference Haridwar (Uttarakhand)**

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**Abstract**---The study was conducted in Haridwar district, Uttarakhand, India (2022 Jan). The primary purpose of the study was to analyze the role of women in the Panchayati Raj program in the study area. Data were collected from 129 randomly selected respondents randomly assigned to different polling stations in Haridwar district. The purpose of this study was to explore the platform provided to Panchayati raj institutions in improving women's participation in decision-making. On the basis of which the conclusion can be drawn whether the test is successful or not. If so, to what extent and in what circumstances? And if not, why not? After studying and analyzing the role of women in the Panchayati raj in selected areas of Haridwar district, it is commendable that women's education is important because an educated woman can play a more important role in decision-making than an illiterate woman. For this purpose, better educational resources should be provided to women. In addition, the promotion of research into women's issues and problems is important. Women's incomes in the Haridwar region are low due. Research shows that there is not much awareness about political issue and their rights. Active membership that is ignored in the community means two things. Either there is a complete lack of political indifference among the people about the political system or there is a lack of political awareness. There were other ways of getting involved in politics. Through general observation, it was found that women were not encouraged because of cultural barriers to becoming active members of political attire.

**Keywords**---Panchayat, women rights, Haridwar.

### **Introduction**

Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) is a grassroots democracy in our country they have provided a new dimension to rural development and democratic

decentralization in direct administration. By involving PRIs for the expansion of the rural region, maximum utilization of human and material resources is possible. For efficient and meaning functioning these bodies would really upon active involvement and contribution of its citizens- each male and female. The participation of women in the democratic method is woefully inadequate at all the levels- central state and the local. Rural women are the signal largest group of the backward citizen, Who neither have access to power structure nor any other effective method to overcome their age-old inequality and subordination.

Panchayati Raj Institution while providing a definite space for women to participate in rural politics for planning and development of the locality, It ensures thereby the contribution of rural women in decentralized decision making process while providing the opportunity for them to steer the local level governance. Reservation of seats thus prepared the context for women's contribution to the effective governance at the local level leading to their political empowerment and effective functioning of the system. This goal of empowerment of the rural women through 73rd Amendment was further stimulated with the adoption of a National Policy for Empowerment of women in 2001 which attempted to encourage equal access and active participation of women at all levels of judgment and execution of policies and programmes on the basis of the principle of gender equality enshrined in the Constitution of India.

While many advances have been made by women, their inferior status to men continues to be a global phenomenon. As one of the 191 member states of the United Nations, India is also bound by MDGs and is accountable to fulfill these goals. Globally, India is one of the fastest growing economies (although the recent figure of 5% gross domestic product (GDP) for 2012–2013 shows a decline from 8–9% two years ago) and a knowledge super-power, yet it has the largest number of illiterate women in the world and is ranked 101 among 136 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index. Within India, literacy figures show a significant gender gap: 82.14% of men as compared to 65.46% women are literate (Census, 2011). Maternal mortality is the second-highest in the world and its negative sex ratio is among the worst in the world (gender gap). In the Education for All Development Index, India is among the lowest 22 on the scale of countries. A 2004 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report puts India high in gender disparity (close to Arabian countries).

### **The Structure of Panchayati Raj Institution in India**

1. Zilla Parishad
2. Anchalik Panchayat
3. Gram Panchayats

### **Area of study**

District Hardwar is bounded in the north by Dehradun, the state capital of Uttarakhand and in the east by the district of Garhwal. Districts Muzaffarnagar and Bijnor of Uttar Pradesh make its boundary in the south and Saharanpur district in the west. Total area of the district is 2360 sq kms. The shape of the district is rectangular.

## **Panchayat Raj Institutions in Haridwar District**

### **Gram Panchayat**

The gram panchayat (GP) is the grassroot level Panchayati Raj body under the three-tier PR System. The first General Elections of Urban Local Bodies were conducted by State Election Commission, Uttarakhand in 2003 in all 13 Districts of the State. Thereafter further elections to the ULBs was conducted by SEC in the years 2008 and 2013. The last election to 84 ULBs was conducted in October-November 2018 in which 15,55,257 voters exercised their franchise with the voting percentage being 66.67%. Elections to ULBs of Bazpur, Srinagar and Roorkee were held in 2019. At present Uttarakhand has 8 Municipal Corporations, 43 Nagar Palika Parishads and 41 Nagar Panchayats.

The first General Elections to the three-tier PRIs were held in 2003 in 12 districts in the State (excluding district Haridwar which were held in 2005). Further elections to the PRI's were conducted by SEC in the years 2008 and 2014. The last General Elections were held in 2019 for 55572 Gram Panchayat Members, 7485 Pradhans, 2984 BDC members and 356 Zila Panchayat members. In these elections a total of 30,06,378 voters exercised their voting rights with the voting percentage being 69.59%. Currently Uttarakhand State has 13 Zila Panchayats, 95 Blocks and 7485 Gram Panchayats.

As of now the election results of both ULBs and PRIs are available on a real time basis on the State Election Commission website and also by a mobile app for android phones developed for the purpose by NIC Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand Panchayati Raj (amendment) Act 2019 introduced in July 2019 has many novel provisions like setting educational qualifications, High School/ Matric pass for General category candidate & Middle/Eighth pass for women & reserve category candidate as a pre-requisite for candidates aspiring for all positions in the three tier Panchayati Raj set-up and also debarring all such candidates from contesting PRI elections if they have more than two living children.

Over the years the State Election Commission, Uttarakhand has strived to conduct free, fair and transparent elections thus upholding the mandate given to it by the Constitution of India. Haridwar is a Town and Tehsil in Haridwar District of Uttarakhand. According to census 2011 information the sub-district code of Haridwar Block (CD) is 00354. Total area of Haridwar tehsil is 903 km<sup>2</sup> including 839.55 km<sup>2</sup> rural area and 63.26 km<sup>2</sup> urban area. Haridwar tehsil has a population of 6,57,829 people, out of which urban population is 3,20,892 while rural population is 3,36,937. Haridwar has a population density of 729 inhabitants per square kilometre. There are about 1,25,249 houses in the sub-district, including 66,089 urban houses and 59,160 rural houses. When it comes to literacy, 65.41% population of Haridwar tehsil is literate, out of which 71.05% males and 59.05% females are literate. There are about 142 villages in Haridwar tehsil.

### **Objectives of the study**

Keeping in mind the importance and gravity of women's involvement and

contribution in political affairs of the country, the study makes a humble attempt to assess the political participation of women at the local level in the study area. It has following specific objectives.

1. To assess the involvement and participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institution in the study area
2. To know about the level of awareness and political ambition of women in the study area
3. To analyse the problems and challenges encountered by the women of the study area in the process of political participation

### Methodology

Data and information for the present study have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data are collected from relevant books, magazines and official documents of the Panchayati Raj Institution with proper procedures. Primary data have been collected through the methods of interview schedule, personal interview from the sample respondents of the study area. Data have been collected from one hundred twenty nine women who are above the age of 18 years from different villages of Khanpur Gram Panchayat of district Haridwar.

### Results and Discussion

Table 1: Education status of women (N=129)

| Classes          | No. | Percent |
|------------------|-----|---------|
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | 33  | 25.58   |
| Graduation       | 47  | 36.43   |
| Post graduation  | 49  | 37.98   |
| Total            | 129 | 100     |

Table 1. depicts educational status of sampled women in District of Haridwar. 25.58 percentages of women have 12<sup>th</sup> standard and maximum 37.98 percent women have post graduation qualification.

Table 2: Marital status of women (N=129)

| Marital status | No. | Percent |
|----------------|-----|---------|
| Married        | 41  | 31.78   |
| Unmarried      | 88  | 68.21   |
| Total          | 129 | 100     |

Above Table shows marital status of sampled women in District of Haridwar. 31.78 percentages of women was married and maximum 68.21 percent women was unmarried. It shows that in this study maximum women was unmarried.

Table 3: Age- Group of women (N=129)

| Age group | No. | Percent |
|-----------|-----|---------|
| 18-25     | 98  | 75.96   |
| 25-32     | 10  | 7.75    |
| 32- +     | 21  | 16.27   |
| Total     | 129 | 100     |

Table shows the age group of sampled women. 75.96 percent of women was from eighteen to twenty five age group, 7.75 percent women was from twenty five to thirty two age group and 16.27 percent women from thirty two plus age group.

### **Awareness Level of PRIs Among Women**

Women's participation in politics is directly related to the level of awareness of women. The level of awareness about the panchayati Raj Institutions should be assessed to know the level of participation in political affairs. It is important that women in any state should know about political issues and their political rights. Women can only participate in the political process in a real sense where there will be increased awareness among themselves about the various political provisions. Women should be aware of the power and functioning of PRIs, panchayat revenue sources, seats reserved for women at various levels and a good understanding of political leaders. In this context the following table Table provides an overview of the level of awareness among the sample respondents in the study area.

Table 3: Awareness Level of PRIs Among Women

| Awareness                                                  | Yes | Percent | No | Percent | Total |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|----|---------|-------|
| Sources of Income of Panchayat                             | 59  | 45.73   | 70 | 54.26   | 129   |
| Power & Works of Panchayat                                 | 67  | 52      | 62 | 48      | 129   |
| Seats reserved for women in PRI's, Assemblies & Parliament | 43  | 33.33   | 86 | 66.66   | 129   |

Consciousness plays an important role in the political participation of women, and the general public in each country. It is indirectly related to women's political empowerment at the grassroots level. The table above clearly shows that women in the study area are less conscious. The table shows that of the 59 respondents in the sample, only 45.73 of women are aware of the sources of income of Panchayat. Due to the low level of education of the sample respondents, it is not possible to give a positive answer to the question regarding this.

During the focus group discussion, many of the interviewees said they had never heard of the change. However, some younger respondents, who are relatively more educated than older respondents, answer their questions positively.

Knowing the source of income for Panchayat is important for the smooth running of your office. It's a little disappointing that only 70(54.26%) of the respondents don't know about Panchayat's sources of income. A total of 67 people (52%) know the power of the Panchayati system and how the Panchayati system works. The constitutional provisions for securing women's seats in the PRI have been enacted to ensure greater political participation of women, and recognizing this is for women to be included in the political sphere.

### **Women's Representative Challenges**

People's indifference, ignorance, and lack of awareness are some of the main reasons for the low participation of Panchayati members in implementing development programs. Women's representatives in the field of study also point out that they cannot make independent political decisions. They reported that they were consulting with their spouse and other family members to make a decision at the Panchayati meeting. This means that even if a woman is elected as a political representative, she does not enjoy such political power. In a personal interview, the interviewee said: "I was elected political representative in the last election and was involved in political activities, but I always consult her husband before making a decision. My husband also advises me not to make my own decisions. She says she should be very careful when making decisions, as her husband can get into trouble from opposition parties. The decision is influenced by a local male member. People generally tend to believe that women are more emotional than men and therefore unsuitable for making political decisions. This concept of antifeminist location affects a woman's ability to make decisions because she is not given the proper opportunity and freedom to make her own decisions. In their dissertation, Sivanna and Gayathridevi (2012) investigate the status of elected women's representatives (EEAs) at various political, social, economic and personal levels. In particular, it aims to understand how the EEA can use agencies to address and negotiate issues such as invisible feminization, proxy governance, and exclusion politics. Sarmah (2010) explains women's position in Assam society in her essay, "Political Empowerment of Women: A Case Study of Boro Women in Assam." The authors conclude that Boro women have taken on a new role, leaving the private sphere and actively participating in the public sphere without dividing traditional family life. However, very contrasting findings were found in the study area, which showed that women had problems taking care of household chores and Panchayat activities.

### **Conclusion**

It is worth noting that the provision of the settlement really helped increase women's political participation throughout the state and country. It has been able to bring about many positive changes in the status of women in rural areas. She absorbed women's qualities such as love for power, self-confidence, political consciousness, and affirmation of identity. However, there is still a long way to go to empower and politically participate in women. Simply enacting legislation and affirmative action is not the solution. The need for time

involves people from all sectors, including civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, policy makers, supporters, and most important families, to create an accessible environment for women.

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