

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

COURSE -424

UNIT – V

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND PANCHYATS

20 MARKS.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts are the landmarks in the history of women's development in India as these Acts is revolutionary steps towards women's participation in decision making and in the political process of our country. In order to ensure empowerment of women in political arena the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provided 33% reservation of seats for women in all Rural and Urban local elected bodies. The Constitutional 73rd Amendment Act, Article 243-D (3) provides that not less than one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. Article 243-D (4) provides that the offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall also be reserved for women and such reservation shall not be less than one third of their total number of offices of the Chairperson in the Panchayats. The Constitutional 74th Amendment Act, Article 243-T (3) provides that not less than one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different

constituencies in a Municipality. Article 243-T (4) provides that the offices of the Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall also be reserved for women and such reservation shall not be less than one third of their total number of offices of the Chairpersons in the Municipalities.

- Panchayati Raj institutions are a watershed in India's democratic history as they not only percolated democratic decentralization to the grassroots level but also made a giant leap in women empowerment by granting them 33% reservation. This decentralization model has its own blend of realism and tokenism.

REAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- By granting 33% reservation Panchayati Raj institutions restored its faith in women leadership.
- It sent a strong signal to the patriarchal society to correct its stereotypes associated with females.
- It also provided an opportunity to hitherto deprived low caste women.
- Its spiral effect boosted women confidence in their abilities and encouraged them to seek a meaningful role in society.
- PRIs through women worked on creation, development, and promotion of Self Help groups, Cooperatives, MSMEs for better employment and livelihood options in Rural areas.
- Women's issues have come to the forefront at the local level and consequently state and national level.

- Political empowerment is gradually spilled in over into personal level.

Challenges

- While the women got political representation, the real power was usurped by their husbands, “The Sarpanch Pati” depriving them of any meaningful gains.
- The caste and gender-based discrimination are still prevalent and also despite earning political position women are denied their due respect.
- Gram Sabha's are unruly and women are not allowed to speak there freely.
- Widespread illiteracy and ignorance further inhibit their capacity to perform.
- Many women leaders in Panchayats have been attacked and some casualties too have been reported as their actions are seen as stretching the conservative social fabric.
- The recent change in Rajasthan regarding the inclusion of criteria to participate in PRI election like education up to 8th and 10th standard can be another setback to women empowerment through PRIs

Certain major hindrances can also be identified in the path of the functioning of the women members and functionaries

- ***Dual responsibility:*** Women traditionally burdened with domestic workers face difficulties in balancing the official work with their home.
- ***The lack of security:*** sometimes due to lack of security women members fail to visit remote areas in odd hours or attend

meetings in faraway places. The gradual criminalization of politics also is arresting their participation.

- ***The lack of information and knowledge*** about government programs especially for both women and child development poses problems. However, again limited exposure to formal education breeds information gap and dependency on second-hand knowledge. In fact, consequently, political lineage determines the distribution of benefits of the different schemes.
- ***The communication problem*** hinders performance as most of the correspondences, rules and also the regulations are in English.
- ***Due to the lack of exposure and experience*** women, members face difficulty in asserting themselves. And the fact that the majority of women enter politics through reservation and kinship arrangement only accentuates this problem.