



# DALIT WOMEN STATUS AND PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTION IN WEST BENGAL

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**Abstract:** *The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India in 1992 ensured the participation of Dalit women in panchayat elections through the Panchayat Raj Institution. West Bengal has the largest population of Dalit in the Indian states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. The issue of empowerment through leadership in any organization has a special impact. Gender inequality is a particular problem in Indian society, as in other areas of society, participation in education and elections Gender inequality is present. A special status can be observed in the elimination of racial discrimination in the society through the participation of Dalit women. Although all citizens have equal opportunities under the Indian Constitution, Dalit women are lagging far behind, especially when it comes to participating in elections. After gaining important political rights like suffrage in India, special awareness has been noticed about the social and political rights of the Dalit people in particular. Through the participation of Dalit women in panchayat elections through democratic methods, a new social structure has been formed in the whole of India. West Bengal ensures 50% participation of women in panchayat elections through reservation and positive attitudes towards women especially on social, political, cultural issues are seen to be developing in the society. At present, the research paper seeks to assess the social, political, economic and cultural issues of Dalit women in West Bengal through their participation in panchayat elections. Secondary information has been used in this research work. Secondary information has been collected in various papers, newspapers books, personal sources, journals, government records websites, etc.*

**Key Words:** *Dalit women, Gender inequality, panchayat election, reservation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

India is the largest democracy in the world. The Indian Constitution ensures that all people who are at least 18 years old have the right to vote. Looking at the social context of different countries, it can be seen that gender based discrimination is an issue. In India's social system, social ills such as gender inequality, caste system, etc., hinder the establishment of true democracy. In order to establish the social, political and economic status of Scheduled Caste people as enshrined in the Constitution of India, various schemes have been put in place for government programs, education, employment, promotion and participation in elections. The Panchayat Raj system has a special role to play in the development of rural society in India. Due to the rights enshrined in the constitution, the empowerment of women has been ensured through the participation of backward class and Dalit women in the panchayat elections and at present the issue of women's political rights is changing. "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved," said Dr. BR Ambedkar, the framer of the Indian Constitution. It is no exaggeration to say that the Panchayat system has played a significant role in changing the political destiny of Dalit women in India and has brought these nations closer to the mainstream of development. A review of Indian women's history the political participation of Dalit women is low, especially in rural areas (Ghosh et al, 1997). The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution in 1992 established the Panchayat Raj and ensured the participation of Dalit women in the political arena. Changing the social infrastructure in rural areas is being noticed by ensuring the political rights of women.

## 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To Understanding the role of Dalit women in decision making in the current environment in the study area.
- To examine the impacts dalit women's rights in Panchayat Raj institutions.
- To observe and study the changed status of Dalit Women in West Bengal.
- To study awareness among Dalit women through Panchayat Raj Institution.

**3. METHODOLOGY:** This study followed descriptive research design based on secondary data. Secondary data information has been gathered from various places like Newspaper, TV, and Official reports, documents, Journal etc.



#### 4. DALIT WOMEN STATUS IN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN INDIA: OVERVIEW:

**Gram panchayat:** The Gram Panchayat, frequently known as the village panchayat, is the primary assortment of rural local self-government, going about as a chief advisory group of the Gram Sabha. Gram Panchayat is the most reduced level of the Panchayati Raj Institutions three-level association. The general number of gram panchayat individuals changes from one town to another not entirely set in stone by the populace. As a general rule, the quantity of individuals, known as Panches, goes from 5 to 9, and they are chosen by the Gram Sabha through direct races. The head of the Panches is known as the President or Sarpanch. (Amruta, n.d.)

**Political participation and empowerment:** Dalit women are politically marginalized, but Dalit women are really given less voice in the decision making process. In India, Dalit are primarily protected from participating in elections at the panchayat level, but Dalit women are also consistently defeated by their masculine opponents in politics. Dalit women face pressure and occasional violence from men and influential people in creating new things to use their power by participating in panchayats. Dalit women are often told that they are not even allowed to sit in chairs, but they have to sit on the floor, which means that Dalit women have been deprived.

**73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992:** A democratic process was established in the country to recognize the importance of elections at the panchayat level. "The tracing journey of the 73rd Amendment Baviskar (2003) to ensure representation at all levels in rural elections in India, noted that the building block of this amendment is back in the 64th Amendment. The Amendment Bill (1989) was introduced in Parliament for the development of Panchayats in every village, intermediate and all district level of the country. The amendment enabled them to function as self-governing institutions. Accordingly, the 72nd Amendment to the Constitution was introduced in September 1991.

Later, in December 1991, the amendment was sent to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament for critical examination. After mandatory changes, the amendment was passed unanimously in the Lok Sabha on December 22, 1992 and in the Rajya Sabha on December 23, 1992. Finally, on April 20, 1993, the President of India gave his consent. This amendment to the Constitution is known as the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992. This Act was enacted by a notification effective April 24, 1993" (Kumar, 2012).

#### 5. PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH PANCHAYATS IN WEST BENGAL:

- West Bengal is the main State in country to go in for political panchayats even before the Ashok Mehta Committee had suggested it. Right now there are two sorts of circumstances in issues of party support in panchayat political decision. In States like Andhra and Karnataka the gatherings partake however not in the least levels. West Bengal is the main State where equalities partake in decisions to all levels of panchayats.
- West Bengal is the main State in the country to address a break from an earlier time Political examples in India regarding social foundation of provincial initiative. The Ashok Mehta Committee commented, "The panchayat institutions are dominated by economically and socially privileged sections of society.
- West Bengal is the first State in Quite a while to hold panchayat races at ordinary stretches starting around 1978 for example over 10 years before the 73rd amendment of the Constitution was made. One of the fundamental reason for this revision is to force the State legislatures to hold races at standard stretches. Curiously indeed, even after this correction individuals needed to move to the court in states like Karnataka, Madras, Bihar, and Orissa to urge the state government to hold decisions to panchayat bodies.
- West Bengal was the main State during the period of the second era panchayat to see panchayats as stages for battling against the rural personal stake (niti.gov.in).

#### 6. ESTABLISHMENT AND POWERS TOWARD THE WEST BENGAL PANCHAYATS:

West Bengal ventured out in front of the 73rd Constitutional amendment act by saving 33% seats for ladies to the panchayat bodies before the last elections held in 1993. At present West Bengal has 24,799 women chosen for the various levels of the panchayat framework. Of them 8 are office conveyors of the Zilla Parishad, 82 of the panchayat samitis and 196 of the gram panchayats. As far as rate women establish over 36% of the multitude of delegates. There is no detailed study concentrate on their social foundation. One miniature review directed by State Institute of Panchayats in Burdwan shows that a lot of women have either the experience of taking part in developments or in the proficiency crusades. Given the social foundation of the individuals overall it very well might be assumed that a significant number of them come from unfortunate families. ("Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal," n.d.). At present there is an increase in the number of women representatives at all levels of West Bengal Panchayats, although this was made possible by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution in 1992 and the protection of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Ordinary Women in West Bengal. There are 3 levels namely- Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and



Gram Panchayat. In the case of panchayat elections, the posts of ward, head of panchayat, president of panchayat association, president of district council and women are reserved. Financial power in panchayats in West Bengal was given up after consideration by the state legislature. If we look at the number of Scheduled Caste representatives in different states of India, we can see that the number of Gram Panchayat level representatives is 343692, the number of Panchayat Samiti level representatives is 16 and the number of Zila Parishad representatives is 1904.

#### 7. STATUS OF DALIT WOMEN OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN WEST BENGAL:

- **Social Position and Empowerment:** With the establishment of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, the representation of Dalit women is increasing, which has increased the status of women in the society and created reluctance towards patriarchal social system.
- **Political Empowerment:** Awareness of the political rights of rural women in West Bengal is being raised through the Panchayati Raj system, which has resulted in increasing the political power of the Dalit women head of the village as the President of the Panchayat Pradhan Panchayat Samiti and President of the Zila Parishad.
- **Power of leadership:** In a democracy, the power of leadership has been seen to develop among the women of the party as the people's representatives have connections with people from all walks of life. In addition to having positions like panchayat head, president and president, he has become proficient in leaders.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The Panchayati Raj system pays special attention to the economic empowerment of Dalit women in West Bengal as there are various projects at the panchayat level which have made Dalit women economically self-sufficient through various facilities.

**8. CONCLUSION:** Panchayats establish one of the fundamental elements of Indian culture. This arrangement of rustic nearby self-government was given to usher grass-root level vote based system in the town set up in India. This over the course of the years has empowered diminishing bureaucratization and an expansion in the democratization of the Panchayati Raj System. Reservation has empowered the investment of people from weak segments of society in independent direction, prompting the monetary and monetary strengthening of people. The Gram Sabhas ought to be completely engaged with the arrangement definition, execution, observing and assessment of the advancement attempts to be embraced by the Gram Panchayats. The NGOs of notoriety might be allotted the occupation of making mindfulness among the individuals from Gram Sabha. The presence of the ladies ought to likewise be guaranteed specifically. Since people interestingly have gone into Panchayati Raj legislative issues at an enormous scope, appropriate preparation for them is exceptionally fundamental. In this association it could be suggested that for ladies agents two sorts of preparing be given, for example one solely for themselves and one more a joined one with their male partners.

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