

RESERVATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN VILLAGE GOVERNANCE: INSIGHTS FROM BHIWANI

Sarita

Research Scholar

Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala
University

Dr. Ram Darshan

Associate Professor

Department of Political Science
Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala
University

Abstract:

We are discussed about this paper Reservation for women in panchayat raj institute in Haryana Bhiwani. Between 2015 and 2025, Haryana witnessed significant strides in enhancing women's Participation in Panchayat Raj Institution particularly in districts like Bhiwani. Here an overview of the key developments during this period: In Haryana, including the Bhiwani district, the reservation for women in panchayat Raj Institution is governed by the Haryana Panchayat Raj Second Amendment) Act 2020. Thus legislation mandates a 50% reservation for Women across all level of PRIs- Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Simitis, and Zila Parishad. The Implementation of Reservation Policies for Women in Rural Governance gender equality in Haryana, Particularly in districts like Bhiwani. The Haryana Panchayat Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2020, marked a pivotal step by increasing women's reservation in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) from 33% to 50%. The Study investigates the impact of gender-based reservation in PRI's on promoting gender equality in rural governance with a specific focus on Bhiwani district, Haryana. Through a mixed-method approach incorporating interviews, field surveys and analysis of government records the research evaluate how political reservation for women influences their participation, decision-making power, and societal perceptions. Findings reveal that white reservation policies have led to increased numerical representations of women in local governance challenges persist in the form of patriarchal interference tokenism, and limited autotomy. Nevertheless, the study also identifies progressive shifts in community attitudes, increased female leadership visibility and gradual empowerment of rural women. The paper concludes with policy recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of reservation in realizing true gender equity in rural governance structures.

Keywords: *Reservation, Gender equality, Governance, PRIs*

Introduction

Background:-Gender equality in governance has been a persistent challenge in India, particularly in rural regions where patriarchal norms dominate social structures. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 marked a significant milestone by mandating the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), aiming to enhance women's political participation and empower them in local governance. Bhiwani district, located in the state of Haryana, represents a complex socio-cultural landscape where traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched. Despite Haryana's historically low gender development indicators, the implementation of gender-based reservation in PRIs has opened new avenues for women to assume leadership roles. These reservations have provided an institutional mechanism for addressing gender disparities, but the real impact on empowerment and governance effectiveness varies across regions and communities. Women's political participation in India was emphasized after independence, but remained limited for decades. In 1992, through the 73ed and 74th Constitutional Amendments the Indian government made it mandatory to reserve one-third (33%) of seats for women in PRIs village level governance and urban local bodies. The landmark reform aimed to empower women at the grassroots and states were expected to implement it.

1. Introduction

Reservation policies in India, especially in the realm of rural governance, have been designed to promote social justice and ensure political representation for historically marginalized communities. Implemented through the Panchayati Raj system, these policies aim to empower Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women by reserving seats in local government bodies. However, the effectiveness and broader implications of such measures on general equality—especially in rural areas—remain a subject of active debate.

This study explores the impact of reservation on general equality in the context of rural governance in Bhiwani district, Haryana. Bhiwani, a predominantly agrarian region with a diverse social structure, presents an important case for understanding how reservation policies influence power dynamics, social cohesion, and governance efficiency at the grassroots level. By examining the socio-political outcomes of reservation in Bhiwani's panchayats, this research seeks to evaluate whether the policy fosters inclusivity or inadvertently creates new forms of division and disparity. The Impact of regulation on gender quality in rural governance in India has been significant, particularly following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This amendment mandated the reservation of 1/3 of seats for women in PRIs leading to substantial increase in Women's participation in local governance. Currently over 1.45 million women serve as elected representatives in PRIs constituting approximately 45.61% of the total elected representatives. Studies have shown that the presence of female leaders in village councils has positively influenced societal attitudes towards women. For instance, in village with female leaders, parents have higher aspiration for their daughter, girls spend less time on household chores and their educational outcomes improve to match those of boys.

Objectives of the Research:

1. To examine the whether the mandated reservation have led to increased and meaningful participation in local governance roles, such as sarpanches and Panch positions
2. To determine the extent to which these reservations have empowered women, both politically and socially enabling them to influence decision-making processes and policy implementation at the village level.
3. To evaluate the impact of women's reservation on policy priorities, legislative agendas, and governance outcomes, including the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and the empowerment of marginalized communities.

Journey of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament: The women Reservation bill seeks to reserve 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and all state legislative assemblies.

Key moments in its journey:-

1. 1966- First Introduction -: The bill first introduced by the United Front government led by Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda.
2. 1998-2003-Repeated Attempts: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA government tried multiple times to pass the bill (1998,1999,2002,2003).
However, each time it faced disruptions and could not be passed
3. 2008-Major progress in Rajya Sabha-The UPA government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Introduced it again.

In 2010, the bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) with a two-thirds majority. However, it was not taken up in the Lok Sabha and eventually lapsed again when Parliament was dissolved in 2014.

3. 2023-Finally Passed-: The bill was reintroduced in a special session of Parliament as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Passed in the Lok Sabha on September 20, 2023 with a huge majority. Passed in Rajya Sabha on September 21, 2023. And approved by the President of India and became law.

Key Provisions of Women's Reservation in Haryana PRIs-:

1. 50% Reservation for Women: Half of the total seats in PRIs are reserved for women, ensuring their substantial representation in local governance.

2. Rotation Policy-: The Reservation of seats for women is subject to rotation to ensure equitable representation over successive terms. This means that the specific seats reserved for women may change in each election cycle.

3. Implementation at all levels-: The 50% reservation applies uniformly across all tiers of the Panchayat Samiti, Block Panchayat Samiti and District (Zila Parishad) levels.

In the 2024-2025 period, Haryana has made significant strides in promoting gender equality within its PRIs particularly in the Bhiwani districts. This progress is largely attributed to the Haryana PRIs (second Amendment) Act 2020, which mandates 50% reservation for women across all tiers of PRIs, including Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat Samities and Zila Parishads.

Key Highlights of Gender Representation in Bharani's PRIs (2024-2025)

Category	Details
Legal Framework	Haryana Panchayat Raj (Second) Act, 2020
Reservation for Women	50% across all Panchayat Raj Institutions
Implementation Mechanism	Odd-even numbering system for alternating reservation in successive terms
Average age of Women Sarpanches	Approximately 32 years
Educational Qualifications	44% of Women sarpanches have at least a 10th grade education; 245 are graduated or hold higher degree

Impact of Increased Women's Participation

1. Enhanced Representation and Empowerment-: The Reservation policy led to a substantial increase in women's participation in PRIs, providing them with a platform to influence local governance and decision-making processes.

2. Youthful Leadership-: The average age of women sarpanches was reported to be 32 years, indicating a trend towards younger leadership in village governance.

3. Educational Qualification-: Among the elected women Sarpanches 44% had completed at least 10th grade and 245 held graduate or higher degrees, reflecting the increasing educational qualification among women leaders.

4. Recognition and incentives-: To encourage effective governance, the Haryana government initiated a program to award the top 100 performing women representatives with scooters, fostering motivation and acknowledging their contributions.

Table 1: Percentage of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats in Indian States

	States	Percentage		States	Percentage
1	Andhra Pradesh	50	16	Manipur	50.69
2	Arunachal Pradesh	38.98	17	Odisha	52.68
3	Assam	54.6	18	Punjab	41.79
4	Bihar	52.2	19	Rajasthan	51.31
5	Chhattisgarh	54.78	20	Sikkim	50.3
6	Goa	36.72	21	Tamil Nadu	52.98
7	Gujarat	49.96	22	Telangana	50.34
8	Haryana	42.12	23	Tripura	45.23
9	Himachal Pradesh	50.12	24	Uttar Pradesh	33.34
10	Jammu and Kashmir	33.18	25	Uttarakhand	56.01
11	Jharkhand	51.57	26	West Bengal	51.42
12	Karnataka	50.05			
13	Kerala	52.41			
14	Madhya Pradesh	49.99			
15	Maharashtra	53.47			

The Impact of the Women’s Reservation Bill in Haryana Bhiwani-: The women’s Reservation Bill formally known as the Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill,2023, seeks to reserve 33% of Seat in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemble for women. While it’s a national law, its impact at the local level, such as in Bhiwani district of Haryana can be significant. Here’s a focused analysis.

1. Political Empowerment-: More women candidates from Bhiwani will contest in both state and national elections. Traditional male-dominated constituencies may now see female representation, shifting long standing political dynamics.
2. Social Impact-: women in Bhiwani, often from conservative or rural background may feel more encourage to engage in public life activism or local governance.
3. Local governance influence -: The bill may amplify ongoing efforts at the PRI level, where women already have reservations. This could lead to a pipeline of experienced female leaders moving to higher positions.
4. Challenges-: There might be tokenism or proxy leadership, where female candidates are elected but real power stays with male relatives.
5. Long-term Transformation-: over time the Bill could lead to better representation of women’s issue such as education healthcare and domestic violence especially in districts like Bhiwani.

2. Literature Review

The issue of gender equality in Political participation has gained significant traction in India, especially following the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), which mandated the reservation of one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institution. This policy intervention has been particularly influential in rural areas, where entrenched patriarchal norms have traditionally marginalized women from governance.

Thermotical Foundation and policy context, Scholars like Bandyopadhyay and Sekhar (2004) Empirical Evidence from India Empirical studied have shown mixed result. Chattopadhyay and Duflo's (2004)

3. Chatto raj, K., & Bhattacharyya, S. (2018). Reservation for Women and Its Impact on Governance in India: A Study of Gram Panchayats in West Bengal. Indian Journal of Public Administration, 64(3), 374–390.

3. Research Methodology

The research method followed here is suggested outline for our research methodology section.

Research design-: Case Study Method: Bhiwani Serves as the single unit of analysis. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collection through surveys and government records with qualitative insights gathered through interviews and focus group discussion.

Study Area-: The research focuses on Bhiwani, a rural area in the state of Haryana, where gender-based reservation have been implemented in Panchayat Raj Institution (PRIs).

Population and sampling-:

Target Population: Elected female representatives, male counterpart's local government officials and villagers.

Sample Size: Approximately 200-400 participants special for focus on women in local area in Bhiwani Haryana.

Sampling Technique: Stratified purposive sampling to ensure representation across age caste and socioeconomic status.

Data Collection Methods-:

Primary Data-: 1. Interviews with women Panchayat members both reserved and general seats

2. Focus group discussion with villagers (male and female)

3. Field observation of Panchayat meeting

Secondary data:- Government reports, academic articles, local election data.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling for selecting women representatives and key informants.

Random sampling for community survey.

Structured questionnaires: For elected representatives and villages to measure awareness, participation and empowerment.

4. Figures and Tables :- 1. Increase in Female Representation in Panchyati Raj Institution in Bhiwani (2020-2025)

Year	Female Sarpanches	Female Members	Panch	Total women in PRIs

2020	35	220	255
2021	42	240	282
2022	50	265	315
2023	58	285	343
2024	62	310	372
2025	67	330	

Results and Discussion

Increased Female Participation in Local Governance

The implementation of reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Bhiwani district has led to a significant increase in female representation. Out of the total surveyed Gram Panchayats, approximately 33% of the leadership positions were held by women, in line with the mandated quotas. Notably, many women assumed the role of Sarpanch (village head) for the first time due to the reservation policy.

Changes in Community Perception and Attitudes

The data suggests a gradual shift in societal attitudes toward female leadership. Interviews with community members indicated that initial resistance gave way to cautious acceptance, especially when women leaders demonstrated competence in managing local issues such as water supply, education, and sanitation. However, traditional patriarchal attitudes still persist, with some women leaders facing opposition or lack of cooperation from male counterparts.

Proxy Leadership and Decision-Making Power

One key issue observed was the prevalence of "proxy leadership" – where the elected female representatives were often influenced or controlled.

Conclusion

The Study concludes that Reservation policies have made a significant positive impact on gender equality in rural governance in Bhiwani. While challenges like tokenism and resistance persist, the growth in representation, education, and leadership quality among women in PRIs is a critical achievement.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this study on the impact of reservation on gender equality in rural governance in Bhiwani, Haryana. First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to the women elected representatives of Bhiwani's Panchayati Raj Institutions. Their candid insights and experiences provided invaluable depth to this research. Their resilience and commitment to public services amidst societal challenges have been truly inspiring. I also acknowledge the support of local NGOs and community organizations working tirelessly to promote women's empowerment in rural Haryana. Their grassroots initiatives and advocacy efforts have significantly influenced the landscape of gender equality in the region.

References :



1. Archna, Singh, J., & Singh, A. (2021). *Women's Reservation in Politics A systemic review. International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods*, 9(6), 1180-1183.
2. Basu, A. M., & Bhattacharya, P. (2020). *Women in Indian Politics: The Struggle for Representation and Empowerment. Women's Studies International Forum*, 78, 102324.
3. Chatteraj, K., & Bhattacharyya, S. (2018). *Reservation for Women and Its Impact on Governance in India: A Study of Gram Panchayats in West Bengal. Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 64(3), 374–390.
4. Chhibber, P., & Verma, S. (2021). *Exploring Women's Political Representation and Its Impact on Policy Making in India: A Case Study of Women's Reservation in Gram Panchayats of Haryana. Gender, Place & Culture*, 1–22.
5. Desai, S., & Temsah, G. (2014). *Women's Political Representation in India: Understanding the Role of Party Politics. India Review*, 13(3), 207–230.
6. Duflo, E. (2012). *Women empowerment and economic development. Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(4), 1051–1079.
7. Jha, R. (2021). *Women's Reservation and Political Empowerment in India: A Case Study of Bihar. Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, 63(2), 204–222.