

WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

2020-4-2 14:36

- In India, the rural local government is called Panchayat Raj.
- Panchayat means 'assembly of five' and Raj means 'rule.' In ancient India, it was usually an assembly of wise men and women chosen by the local community.
- Traditionally, panchayats helped in the settlement of disputes and conflicts within rural communities and villages.
- The modern Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI) are instrumental in the decentralization of several administrative functions to elected gram panchayats.
- There are three levels of panchayat raj institutions in India:
 - ❑ Gram panchayats at the village level
 - ❑ Block level panchayats at taluks
 - ❑ Zilla Parishad at the district level
- Political participation of women is a way for them to take part in electoral and decision-making process. It gives representation to women's needs and aspirations.
- Some methods of political participation are voting, seeking information, holding discussions, meetings and demonstrations.

- PRIs were envisaged as a vehicle for political justice to people at grassroots level.
- Only in 1923 in India, women's names first appeared in electoral rolls. First woman member of the Indian legislature was nominated in 1926.
- In 1931, Indian women's struggle for universal adult franchise began.
- Ashok Mehta Committee had recommended 25% of reservations for women at Zilla and mandal level PRIs.
- But, real devolutions of power to women came with 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment Act of 1992. These acts made the following mandatory with respect to women in PRIs:
 - It reserved not less than one-third of seats for women in panchayats through direct elections.

2020-4-2 14:36

❑ One-third of the offices of chairpersons in Panchayats at each level should be reserved for women.

❑ It also reserved one-third of seats in municipalities and offices of chairpersons in municipalities for women.

• But, the actual level of representation of women in politics is only 11%, according to the World Development Report, 2017.

• Factors adversely affecting women's political participation are lack of political will, patriarchal social structure, male dominance, etc.

• Most women in PRI are acting as proxies for male members or husbands.

• They also face political interferences when they try to perform their administrative functions in the PRIs.

• The average age of women in PRIs is above 45. Most women are able to take up political responsibilities after completing their family responsibilities only.

• Women are bold in expressing their views in assembly meetings but face non-cooperation from male ward members and sometimes face abuse and threat.

• Their household work also constraints their complete participation and they do not usually receive support from family members. For women to participate in PRIs, motivation, political training and awareness campaigns are needed.

male ward members and sometimes face abuse and threat.

- Their household work also constraints their complete participation and they do not usually receive support from family members. For women to participate in PRIs, motivation, political training and awareness campaigns are needed.
- The 110th and 112th Constitutional Amendment bills introduced in 2009 seeks to provide 50% reservation of seats for women in all the three tiers of PRIs and urban local bodies.
- But, some states are ahead of the central government in implementing 50% reservation for women in PRIs. Bihar was the first state to allocate 50% of PRI seats for women in 2005. Other states currently implementing 50% reservation are Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

2020-4-21 4:37