



Quotas to address the practical gender needs

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The reservations for women

- 1.26 million EWRs , who constituted 44.52 percent of the total number(· 2.83 million)
- Women were the major group of first time entrants
- That there are now more women in India in positions of elective authority than in the rest of the world put together”

Rationale for 30 percent Reservation

- Firstly they constitute half the population and are involved in rather more than half the economic life of rural areas
- that sound finance of the household had traditionally been the responsibility of women.
- it is the women in India in their role as grandmothers and mothers, who are repository of India's ancient culture and traditions. It is that strength of moral character which women will bring to the Panchayats

Different from reservations for other population groups.

- The reservations for SC/ST introduced in 1950 itself were meant to be short term measures for 10 years
- Hence, these had to be continued by a further 10 year period every time by a new Amendment to Article 334.
- The reservations for women have no such time period.
- Further, these also take note of the fact that woman is not one category.
- The reservations for women have, of course, to be by rotation in the seats and chairpersons' position, "may be" in the former and "shall be" in the latter.

Women's reservation 50 percent

- The new expected Constitutional Amendment already in process to make women's reservation 50 percent
- Fifteen states have already enhanced them to 50 percent : Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal. (Source: MOPR)

Evolution of Reservations for Women:

- The state Panchayat laws only included a *token of one or two co-opted/nominated* women in a panchayat
- This was also recommended by the Balvant Ray Mehta study team of the COPP (Committee on Plan Project) 1957
- These women had to be those who were interested in working among women and children.
- The Asoka Mehta Committee in 1978 reiterated inclusion of only this number except changing the mode of this entry to women contestants in the Panchayat *election who lost but received the highest number of votes.*
- Thereafter the political parties and ruling party groups interested in controlling Panchayats ensured that in the Panchayat elections, whenever and wherever held, women did not contest (para 2.15, P.10)

NCAER-IDRC study

Outcome variables explored in this study include

- women's ability to hold elected Panchayat and other officials to account,
- specific indicators of women's empowerment such as
- participation in Gram Sabha meetings,
- labour market participation
- autonomy in terms of reproductive choice and
- independence in the management of financial resources.

The study shows that –

The quality of service provision does not necessarily improve but the policy has led to an increase in the extent and nature of political participation, ability to hold leaders to account and possibly as a result individuals' willingness to contribute to public goods.

“This suggests that, although political reservations may impose both short term benefits and short term costs, they can yield overall social benefits, with political participation being a key channel through which these benefits materialize”.

MOPR Comprehensive Study of 2008

- 15 states noted that almost half of representatives (45 percent) were between 36 and 45 years,
- while around two-fifths were in the younger (21-35) age group.
- Only 17 percent of elected representatives were above 50 years of age.
- Compared to the Pradhans, the Ward Members were younger, as at the aggregate level, a higher proportion of them (40 percent) belonged to the 21-25 age group than the Pradhans (33 percent).


(Source MOPR:Study on EWRs in Panchayati Raj Institutions 2008 , P.25, 26 & 28.)

MOPR survey

- 97 percent of women and 85 percent of men had never been in Panchayats earlier.
- Most of the women also stated that but for the reservations, they would not or could not have contested these elections.
- This continued to be the position even in 2009 and women categorically stated that if there were no reservations for them, they would not have contested the elections.
- The MOPR survey showed that this continues to be a trend across states and in time.
- It noted that the time gap between getting associated with local politics and contesting local body election for the first time was very small.

MOPR survey

- In the case of women, prior association with any form of politics was low, and for most women the act of contesting the first election signaled their entry into active politics.
- The provision of reservations had played a determining role. The majority of the elected representatives had contested only one election (87 percent) and hence the proportion of first timers in politics was also high (86 percent).
- *MOPR: Study on EWRs in PRIs, P.157, 158*



Response to Women's Entry in Panchayats

- The myths about women's passivity and disinterest in politics, the doubt that only well to do, politically connected women will enter these bodies and that they would be only 'namesake' members and proxies for their male kins
- But then women's entry and their socio-economic profile questioned these stereotypes.



a critical mass

- Constituted a critical mass of women in the newly revived local government structures to have a voice and a potential to make a change in the character of these institutions.
- Critical mass is a certain level of political representation with which women are able to achieve solidarity of purpose to represent women's interests or even to impact decision making in a male dominated body.
- 30 percent is identified as the relevant point at which “a large minority can make a difference even if still a minority”(Drude Dahlerup. The story of the Theory of Critical Mass ,2006).

Their new identity and recognition - potential of this new power

- It became almost fashionable to speak of women's proxyism and non-participation in Panchayats without having to substantiate such observations by any data.
- Thus it was said that the female pradhan can be dismissed as being only a proxy for her husband, sons or powerful relations.
(Kaushik:1996,MARG:1996, Leiten and Shrivastava:1999).
- A study in Orissa(Panda:1996), in Tamilnadu (Athrey and Rajesshwari: observed high levels of EWRs **participation in meetings**.
- A study in MP, Rajasthan and UP recorded EWRs' perception of their **enhanced status in the family, among neighbours and in government offices**.
- Among social groups, highest percentage of tribal women(70 %) reported such enhancement. They noted a new recognition of their identity and respect. *(Buch: 2010, P.75)*

Their new identity and recognition cont....

- all social *groups was seen with anxiety, disbelief and doubts but the response in their recognition, status and family support moved in the right direction.*
- The empowering impact had started with these signs.
- These also indicated their potential to work on enhancing the reach of the initiatives of education of girls,
- child marriages,
- dowry and malnutrition which was part of their lived in reality along with those who were their beneficiaries.

Assessment of women's participation in the new PRIs

- Two contrary tendencies –
- the obviously enabling character of the constitutional provision facilitating participation through inclusion
- plenitude of constraints that inhibit participation through exclusionary practices, both social and institutional
- There is, however, evidence to suggest that the *quotas have enabled women to address their practical gender needs and interests,*
- even if the articulation and realisation of strategic interests is moving at a somewhat slower pace

(Joyal: 2006)

Impact in Delivery of Public Goods and Services

- It is well known that devolution to, and autonomy of, the panchayat representatives is highly problematic.
- Further, the factor of class and caste of the female Pradhans have not been adequately addressed.
- The studies have referred to the randomised nature of their sample. The local and institutional factors are salient but the large and increasing number of studies focus on short term effects during the immediate reservation period which may be different from longer term changes in behavior.

Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2001

- Chattopadhyay and Duflo using a data set of 105 Gram Panchayats in West Bengal compared the public goods provided in those reserved for women and in others and show that- women invest more in infrastructure directly relevant for rural women's needs (water, fuel, roads), and men more in education.
- Further, women are more likely to participate in the policy making process if the leader is a women.

Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004

- States of West Bengal and Rajasthan (Birbhum and Udaipur district respectively) found that *reservation and consequent adequate representation assists in adequate delivery of local public goods to disadvantaged groups.*
- Women tend to invest more in goods preferred by women.
- more in water and less in roads. This underscores the power of elected women Panchayat leaders and that they make a difference on the ground.

Duflo and Topalova

- An empirical analysis by Duflo and Topalova examined whether the performance of women leaders are perceived differently than men
- Villagers are less likely to pay bribes in Gram Panchayats reserved for women.
- Yet residents of these villages are less satisfied with the public goods, including goods that are beyond the jurisdictions of the Panchayats.
- This “less satisfaction” can be seen to reflect the patriarchal mindset not accepting women’s leadership role or quality.(***Duflo and Topalova, 2004***)

Besley, Pande and Rao

- Observe that Panchayats led by women are no worse or better in their performance than those with male leaders, and
- women politicians do not make decisions in line with the needs of women.
- Importantly, however, political experience enhances the performance of women leaders more than it does for men,
- women in villages which are less dominated by upper castes, and in states that have relatively mature Panchayat systems, perform better(Besley, Pande and Rao, 2005)

Rabe et.al, 2009- to qualify and quantify the role of political reservations for women

- Using a sample of 80 GPs and 966 households in 12 districts of Karnataka in 2006, they find weak support for these gender effects.
- They find that outcomes of local governance and service delivery) are predominantly determined by social, economic and institutional factors that are unrelated to women's reservation requirements
- *Women's reservations per se are insufficient means for making rural service provision and local governance more inclusive and gender equitable.*

A recent study by Beaman

- using data from 11 states, GP meeting data collected from five states, obtaining data on public goods provision from a nationwide survey and conducting a survey of 165 gram Panchayats in Birbhum district of West Bengal
- confirms earlier findings that female Pradhans elected to reserved seats deliver more drinking water, sanitation, and roads than their non-reserved counterparts.
- Continuing to push drinking water investments,
- women elected in the second term under a reserved seat also invest more in “male issues” such as school repair, health centre repair, and irrigation facilities.
- Further, while women elected in reserved GPs do differ from their male counterparts in their experience as leaders, they are able to increase female participation in the political process and make different policy decisions.

Ethics and Corruption

- A study of Karnataka by Neema Kudwa reveals that reservation for women here has shown mixed results. It made women more visible, decreased levels of corruption and increased self-efficiency of women representatives. (*Neema Kudwa, 2003*)
- Vijayalakshmi examining the relationship between corruption and gender in the context of local government in India concludes that “the evidence we examined indicates that gender is not a significant factor in explaining levels of corruption”.
- Gender cannot be isolated from the political and institutional conditions that either constrain or facilitate good governance. (*Vijayalakshmi V: 2008*)

MOPR Comprehensive All India Survey

- The MOPR Comprehensive All India Survey covering 23 states, 114 districts, 228 blocks, 1368 GPs, 1368 Pradhans, 5350 Ward members, 20154 Community members sought to assess the quality of participation of EWRs in PRIs against the polarised earlier studies –
 - tokenism and surrogates vs. celebration of only success stories.
 - It looked at, among others, the **developmental outcomes of women Panchayat leaders**
 - whether their leadership has had any impact on the implementation and performance of development activities besides mapping their socio-economic profile political career, quality of participants, empowerment.

Reservation has been critical Representation of disadvantaged groups

- 88 per cent of them were elected on reserved seats.
- 85.8 per cent of all representatives surveyed were first-timers in the Panchayats,
- 14.3 per cent had been elected for a second or third term.
- 15 per cent of women pradhans had been re-elected twice or more,
- 39 per cent indicated that they did not contest a re-election because the seat had been de-reserved.



Reservation has inspired and prompted them to contest elections

- 58 percent of women representatives are now taking their own decisions to contest elections.
- 15 percent of women Pradhans are able to win elections second time.
- Women belonging to younger age groups of 21-35 years have shown better performance compared to the women belonging to the age group of 35 years and above.
- Dalits were also benefited by the whole process.

MOPR Study on EWRs

- The report brought out that “the elected representatives initiative for public health such as awareness generation campaigns, drives for the prevention of disease, counsellings/providing medical aid for family planning were mentioned by 41-51 percent of community members,
- while around 58-66 percent reported their elected representatives efforts for providing better education by efforts to increase enrolment and reduce drop outs from school.
- MOPR Study on EWRs in PRIs 2008, P.159

SHGs and Women in Panchayats

- it economically empowers women both as individuals and as groups.
- The combination of economic empowerment through the Self Help Groups and political and social empowerment through the institutions of local self-government is changing the face of rural India. In consequence, social equations are changing within the family and in society at large.

(Address of Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyer Minister for Panchayati Raj in Mexico, 2008 – Decentralisation, Local Power and Women's Empowerment)

Kudumbashree

- With the increase in reservation to 50 percent in local bodies, women became a category of political citizens and before deciding to field women candidates, political parties had to consider their experience in Kudumbashree.
- Kudumbashree achieved unprecedented results in such a favourable *administrative, political and financial environment*.

Source: B.L. Biju, K.G. Abhilash Kumar – Class Feminism. *The Kudumbashree Agitation in Kerala, EPW March 2, 2013, Vol. XLVIII No.9.*

Big difference between representation and participation –

- It is easier to legislate representation, but it is rather a complex and difficult task to create conditions for participations.
- Proper representation does not automatically lead to proper participation.
- It is important that they are in a position to influence decision making and prepare and implement the schemes for economic development and social justice.

Gendered governance

- It is expected that elected women in Panchayats will not only perform their role like other elected representatives but will also make significant contribution to models of gendered governance with equity, social justice and efficient delivery of public goods and services.
- They are expected to enhance levels of attention to gender concerns and meet women's practical as well as strategic needs.
- At the same time they are also to ensure efficiency and equity for all sections of the local populations

linkage of women

- The linkage of women in Panchayats and women in *their SHGs* and other groups can be a powerful instrument and need to be supported in the policy not only at the national level but also at the state and sub-state levels.
- Already there are successful examples of women starting their entry in the public sphere in the SHGs/Kudumbashree group and then moved to the Panchayats.

Rotation of reservation

- reservations are rotated not before 10-15 years i.e 2 to 3 tenures.
- If any women's reserved seat becomes vacant for any reason, it should be filled by woman only even temporarily. Participation of women in Gram Sabha is another factor to be addressed and stipulation of a minimum percentage of women's attendance in these meeting will be significant and is being attempted in some of the states.

Mahila Sabha

- Organising of a Mahila Sabha meeting before the Gram Sabha meeting should be made a compulsory
- Through these meetings they can present their collective voice on important service needs which would include not only social services but also the security environment for women and girls, and the accountability of service providers

Organize regular surveys

- There is need to organize regular surveys of the status of EWRs and their performance and contribution in different parts of the country and
- to address emerging issues indicating positive trends as well as any persisting barriers.
- The MOPR need to start a publication of women's status in Panchayats reports annually to review the position and introduction of needed additional interventions.
- The Panchayat Shashaktikaran Scheme must support initiatives which innovate on effective capacity enhancement of Panchayat women at local level, developing and strengthening their federations/alliances/ networks at sub-district, district and state levels and women and Panchayat status report preparation and publication.

Success stories

- Initiated work on plans of bringing in piped water in the village
- To build schools as against infrastructural development favoured by men.
- Women prioritise developmental needs - the presence of teachers and medical staff in the school or health centre, and inspecting nutrition centres under the Integrated Child Development Scheme.
- Women-headed Panchayats experienced a dramatic increase in their revenues, sponsoring the auction of village ponds, community forests and village markets for the larger welfare of the community.

success stories contin.....

- In making efforts for smokeless stoves, crèches, community halls, and have taken the initiative in family and matrimonial matters, counseling abusive and/or alcoholic husbands.
- A Cluster Group of Women SHGs from Block – Basopatti, Madhubani in Bihar where the total number of members are 45 used to conduct regular monthly meeting at block level on different issues



Thank you