



## A STUDY OF CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN SARPANCH

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### ABSTRACT

*Due to the 73rd Constitutional Amendments there was a significant increase in the participation of women in the politics at the grassroots position. It is significantly important to note that India is male-dominated country and the impact of male dominance prevails in all the sector of the society. Being in a male dominate culture the women sarpanch faces many challenges and the objective of the study is to investigate the specific challenges faced by women sarpanch in rural India, including social, economic, political, and personal obstacles. Women Sarpanch have emerged as powerful tool in bringing out the transformation in rural India. Their leadership has contributed significantly to improving the lives of their communities and empowering women at the grassroots level. This research study the various challenges faced by women Sarpanch in India and to inform the development of effective strategies for supporting women's leadership in local governance.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, women, sarpanch, problem, discrimination, society.

## INTRODUCTION

In India the Indian governance operates at the three main levels of administration. These levels are Central Government, State Government and Local Government. The role of central government is to administer all the matters that directly contributed to the sustainable economic development of the nation and to provide healthy and safe life to the people of the country. The middle level of Indian administration is the state government which manages the regional affairs of the state, and it also maintains the law, order and other basic infrastructure facilities in the state. At the grassroots it is local government that strengthens the overall democratic framework of the nation. The local government bridges the gap between the formulation of the plan and policies and implementation of the plan and policies at the local level and remote villages. The local government consists of panchayats in the rural areas and municipalities in the urban areas. These two bodies ensure the proper decentralization of the power and efficient delivery of the benefits to the country's diverse population. Gram panchayat is the basic governing body in Indian governance which operates in the Indian villages. The significant role of gram panchayat is to become an instrumental force for implementing government policies and schemes; it also manages the village resources and ensures basic infrastructure facilities. The gram panchayat also bridges the gap between the government and villages for the overall rural development which significantly contributes to the overall economic development of the nation.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments in Indian Constitution in 1992 is the historical landmark in the history of Indian Law that established and empowered Panchayat Raj Institution and Municipalities. It brought the Panchayat Raj Institution into the constitutional framework and allows the greater local participation and decentralization of the power. This landmark decision mandates the women's reservation at least one-third (33%) of seats for women in Gram Panchayat. This corner decision led to a significant increase in women's political participation at the grassroots position. A Sarpanch is the head of a gram Panchayat. The presence of women Sarpach has brought about positive changes in numerous towns lets across India. Women Sarpanch have frequently prioritized issues like education, healthcare, and sanitation, leading to advancements in these sectors. They've also been necessary in empowering other women in their communities and grueling traditional gender places.

## REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SUBJECT

In the research carried out by the (Sharma, 2017) as the India is male dominated society the women sarpanch face the effects of male dominance while performing their duties and responsibilities. In such cases the Women choose not to step forward to face the challenges created by the male dominance culture. According to the research the respondents, who lived in nuclear families with their husbands working in the cities or some other places, exercised more power and worked more as the representation of male dominance structure was absent. As per Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2008), women rather than being personally motivated from contesting the elections are generally forced by their family members or even the community to stand and contest (pp.19).

Socio-cultural challenges remain one of the primary issues for women Sarpanch. Sharma 2019) identifies how rural communities often associate leadership roles with men, creating obstacles for women leaders. Joshi (2020) provides case studies from Gujarat, illustrating how women Sarpanch face resistance from male colleagues and community members. These studies highlight the need for community awareness programs to address such biases.

According to the (Dutta, 2012) in the state of Uttar Pradesh, women stand for elections because of the reservation of the seat which is sometime against their will. These women stand for the election only to act as a medium through which their husband can exercise the power and regain their position. According to research undertaken by (Chavada, 2025) on various challenges faced by the Women Sarpanches in Gujarat. The women sarpanch faces the numerous challenges which affect their ability to lead and perform their duties and responsibilities effectively. Lack of education, economic dependence on the other, cultural value and belief restrict them to work efficiently. Even having all legal provisions the women sarpanch encounter many problems.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the proposed study will be as under:

1. To identify the key challenges faced by women sarpanch in their roles.
2. To understand the impact of challenges on women sarpanch performance and effectiveness.
3. To study the impact of male dominance culture on the work performance of women sarpanch.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study adopts a qualitative approach and based on the secondary data collected by researcher various sources like books, Ph.D. thesis, articles in periodicals, government report, research papers, and journals. The research also includes perceptions from interviews and case studies

of women Sarpanches in Ahilyanagar District.

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN SARPANCH**

### **1. Sarpanch Pati Syndrome:**

Sarpanch Pati Syndrome is the prominent challenge faced by the women sarpanch. This proxy sarpanch is the key factor of socio-cultural barriers faced by women in India due to male dominance cultural. This includes the male family members or relative to control and take over the power of decision making and administration role instead of elected women sarpanch. The decision of women sarpanch number of time is influenced by the male family member. Male family members were the actual power behind the scene. This Sarpanch Pati Syndrome brings lack of authority to women sarpanch and all power and authority directed towards the male family members. Local government official and villager directly approach male relative for any kind of official work. It brings difficulties for women sarpanch to exercise their authority.

### **2. Caste Based and Intersectional Discrimination:**

Hierarchical caste system in India becomes a challenging factor for women Sarpanch from marginalized communities to work effectively and efficiently. According 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments Act (1992) there is 33% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institution and women from lower caste particularly from Dalit and Adivasi communities' faces severe intersectional discrimination. This caste intersects with gender to create multiple layers of discrimination and social exclusion. Dalit women sarpanch encounter opposition from upper caste people who refuses to acknowledge their authority and obstruct their decision making power. Dalit women sarpanch faces physical or sexual violence and verbal abuse by the dominant caste.

### **3. Recalcitrance Behaviour from Male Counterpart**

As Indian society is a male dominant society; the organisation are having male dominant organisational culture where women faces the resistance from male counterpart. These male counterparts may challenges and oppose the decision made by women sarpanch which make them difficult to perform their role and responsibilities. In extreme cases these women sarpanch also faces verbal abuse and harassment.

### **4. Lack of Proper Education and Training**

Panchayat Raj Institution covers rural area and a significant number of women sarpanch come from socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged background, which has a significant impact on the understanding the formal governance, official work and legal documentation. The knowledge gap makes women sarpanch depend on male relative. Due to the lack of education and knowledge the male family members overtake their decision making power. Lack the education, training and

awareness make women sarpanch difficult to understand the foundation of Panchayat Raj Institution, Panchayat Raj funding process, government schemes and legal and financial matters.

### **5. Societal Stereotypes**

The working women in every field have to face the societal stereotype and cultural biases. Indian society enforces a strict behavioural code on the women and even the women sarpanch will not escape this cultural norms. According to community member the first and foremost role of women sarpanch is to take the responsibility of household duties rather than the political responsibilities. This social stigma limit the freedom of women in decision making, avoid her to take the political participation and which has impact on the work performance.

### **6. Lack of Financial Independence**

Many women sarpanch faces lack of financial independence which is the major barriers to grassroots governance in India. Due to the proxy sarpanch phenomenon all the financial decision is control by male relative, they have the access of the public find and perform official work. These women sarpanch face the lack of funds for local development work and also deal with the administrative delay. The lack of economic resources and financial independence make difficult for women sarpanch to exercise their administrative and political authority.

## **CONCLUSION**

As women constitute a large portion of human resource of Indian economy, they play a significant role in the economic and socio development of the nation. The globalization and liberation have opened huge opportunities for women in each and every sector of economy. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment is the historical landmark in the history of making women empower and it has also changed the scenario of rural politics. It is important to create awareness about how important is the women's participation in Panchayats and also create a more enabling environment for women to participate in local governance for the development of the society at large. To become politically strong it is important for the women sarpanch to become socially and economically strong. The socio, economic and political status of women sarpanch is very crucially important as these three concepts are interconnected and if it is lack in the strength the women sarpanch will remain as proxy heads for their husbands or other male counterparts. Woman is the indispensable part of the family and plays a critical role in the upliftment and overall growth of the family. Their contribution to the welfare of a family is both social and economic. Women have to reconcile between both leadership and household duties.

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