

**Research Article****Backward Class Women Participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions – A Study of Hanmakonda District****Thela Pavani**

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The participation of Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) is a significant step towards strengthening of grassroots level democracy in India. The constitution of India mandates for 33% reservation of seats for the women in local governance. However, the extent of their effective participation and leadership varies across regions and social groups. "Telangana Panchayth Raj Act-2018" mandates 50% reservation for the women leadership in local governance. But yet, in India, the women is playing secondary role in governance and decision making. Even though women are being elected as representatives of local governance, due to patriarchal culture, women are the key factor in decision making. This study examines the nature, level, and challenges of women's participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Hanmakonda District of Telangana state..

**Keywords:** Women Participation, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Reservation, Local Governance, Hanmakonda District, Telangana

**1. Introduction:**

Political leadership is a crucial indicator of democratic participation and social inclusion. In India, women's participation in politics has historically been constrained by patriarchy, limited access to education, and socio-cultural norms. These constraints are further intensified for women from Backward Classes, who experience discrimination based on both gender and caste. Panchayati Raj Institutions form the foundation of democratic governance in India by ensuring people's participation at the grassroots level. The involvement of women in these institutions is crucial for inclusive development and social justice. Historically, women were largely excluded from political decision-making due to social, cultural, and economic barriers. The introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 marked a turning point by reserving one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. In states like Telangana, this provision has enabled a large number of women to enter local governance. Hanmakonda District, with its mix of rural and semi-urban areas, provides an important context to examine the real impact of women's participation in PRIs.

**Panchayat Raj Institutions and Women's Reservation**

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act which is came in 1992 is given the following priority for the Women Gender,

- Reservation of not less than one-third of seats for women in PRIs
- Reservation of chairperson positions for women
- Inclusion of women from Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes

**Telangana Panchayat Raj Act and Women's Reservation:**

In 2018, the government of Telangana brought another key act called Telangana Panchayat Raj Act-2018 for the governance of Panchayat Raj Institutions. This act mandates the 50% reservations for the women representatives in all the Social categories.

### **Backward Classes Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions:**

Backward Classes women leaders in Telangana state, generally originate from the agricultural based, artisan, and service-oriented communities. While political entry is often facilitated through reservation, leadership effectiveness is shaped by the following aspects which include: Educational background, Economic independence, Support from political parties and Family and community backing.

In General, in the patriarchal societies like India, the women are act as a symbolic heads, while the real power is exercised by male relatives, and the backward class women leadership is also facing issues with the proxy leadership. Despite this, some women gradually assert authority and gain confidence through exposure to governance processes.

### **Women's Participation in Hanmakonda District**

Women's entry into Panchayati Raj Institutions in Hanmakonda has increased mainly due to reservation policies. Most women representatives belong to rural and semi-rural backgrounds and come from agrarian or economically weaker sections. In Hanamakonda district there are totally 208 Gram Panchayats. Among them 70 (32%) of the Gram Panchayats are reserved for the backward castes category and in that 70, 35 (50%) of the Gram Panchayats are reserved exclusively for women as "Telangana Panchayat Raj Act-2018" allotted 50% of the local bodies reserved for the women.

Their participation is visible in:

- Gram Sabha meetings
- Implementation of government welfare schemes
- Issues related to drinking water, sanitation, health, and education

However, in many cases, women's roles remain limited to formal participation rather than active leadership.

### **2. Review of Literature:**

1. **Srinivasulu. K. in his article "Caste, class and political power in Andhra Pradesh" stated that, BC women face dual marginalization** due to caste and gender. Literature notes that while BC men have historically accessed local power structures, BC women's entry into governance is relatively recent and uneven.
2. **In her article "Political empowerment of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions: A study of Andhra Pradesh" Saraswathi.V. mentioned that Due to low levels of education, poverty, and domestic responsibilities** as major barriers for BC women representatives. In rural Telangana, BC women leaders often juggle agricultural labour, household work, and governance duties, reducing their capacity to engage fully in political processes.
3. Reddy, P. R., & Rani, S. research focusing on Andhra Pradesh and Telangana indicates a **rise in numerical representation of BC women** in PRIs due to reservation policies.

### **3. Objectives:**

1. To examine the level of BC women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Hanmakonda District.
2. To analyse the impact of reservation on BC women's political involvement.
3. To identify the socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by women representatives.
4. To assess the role of women leaders in local governance and development activities.

### **4. Methodology:**

The current study is based on both Primary and Secondary Data. The primary data is collected from the respondents who are the representatives of Panchayats as sarpanchs and Ward Members, and by using structured questionnaire and the secondary data is based on

government reports, census data, academic articles, and previous research studies on women's participation in PRIs. A total number of 30 political representatives have been interviewed. Descriptive and analytical methods are used to interpret the data.

**5. Data Analysis:**

**1. Educational Qualification of the Respondents:**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Uneducated	09	30%
SSC	12	40%
Intermediate	05	16.7%
Graduation and Above	04	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Study

The above table shows the Educational qualification of the respondents. Out of total 30 representatives. Among the total respondents 12 (40%) of the respondents are studied SSC, followed by 09(30%) of them are uneducated, 05 (16.7%) of them are completed their Intermediate and the remaining 04 (13.3%) of the respondents completed their Graduation and above.

**2. Political Awareness:**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No Awareness	17	56.7%
Partial Awareness	08	26.7%
Full Awareness	05	16.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above tables show the levels of political awareness of the local bodies representatives among the Backward Castes Women. Out of total 30 selected respondents, majority of the representatives 17 (56.7%) doesn't have any political awareness, followed by 08 (26.7%) of them having partial awareness and the remaining 05 (16.6%) of the having full awareness.

**3. Awareness on Government Initiatives:**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No Awareness	07	23.3%
Partial Awareness	12	40%
Full Awareness	11	36.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows the awareness of the elected women representatives of Backward Castes on government welfare schemes. Out of total 30 respondents, majority of the respondents 12(40%) are having partial awareness in government initiatives, followed by 11 (36.7%) of them are having full awareness and remaining 07 (23.3%) of them don't have any awareness.

**4. Male Domination in Decision making and Governance:**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	22	73.3%
No	08	26.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above tables show the response of selected respondents on decision making and governance. Among the total number of 30 respondents, majority of the respondents 22 (73.3%)

of them said their male relatives are involved in decision making and political governance, whereas 08 (26.7%) of them said they took decisions independently.

**5. Any Caste Based Discrimination:**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	11	36.7%
No	19	63.3%
Total	30	100%

The above table shows whether the selected respondents are facing caste based discrimination from the selected respondents. Among the total 30 respondents, majority of the respondents 19 (63.3%) are said they didn't face any caste based discrimination from other communities whereas 11 (36.7%) said they faced discrimination from other communities.

**6. Spent Enough Time for Public Service:**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	07	23.3%
No	23	76.7%
Total	30	100%

The above table shows the response of the elected PRI members who are belonging to Backward Castes. Out of 30, majority of them 23 (76.7%) accepted that they are unable to put enough time for the public service whereas lesser number of them 07 (23.3%) said they spent enough time for the public service.

**7. Opinion: 50% Reservations helpful in Women Empowerment:**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	70%
No	09	30%
Total	30	100%

The above table shows the respondents opinion whether the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act-2018 given reservations of 50% helpful in Women empowerment or not. 21 (70%) of the respondents felt that they are empowered with this and 09 (30%) of them said they didn't empowered with this reservations.

**6. Findings and Discussion:**

- 1. Education:** The Backward Classes Women leadership of Panchayat Raj Institutions got better educational opportunities. The data clearly proven that 70% of the selected respondents are educated.
- 2. Political Awareness:** However, the Backward Classes women are somewhat forwarded in education, they failed in gaining political awareness. Still 56.7% of the representatives are elected without having any political knowledge shows their backwardness in Knowledge.
- 3. Proxy Representation of Women and Patriarchal Attitudes:** The data clearly proven that the male family members control the decision making and governance in Panchayat Institutions, like wise all the women facing challenges, the Backward Castes women are also facing such challenges.
- 4. Awareness on Government Initiatives:** However, the majority of the BC women representatives don't have better political awareness; they are having awareness on government initiatives which is a positive sign.
- 5. Lesser Caste Discrimination:** The earlier researchers have proved that the BC women leaders are encountered from both ends i.e., Gender and Caste. The current filed data is clearly proven that the BC women leaders facing lesser discrimination due to their caste. High amount of BC population in the Villages is might be the main reasons for that.

6. **Lesser Time Spent:** Spending of time on public issues will enhance the leadership capacity of the leaders. Out of total 30 respondents, majority of the respondents felt that they failed in spending enough time towards public issues.
7. **50% reservations are helpful in Women Empowerment:** With 50% reservations for the women, the BC women felt that they are somewhat empowered.

#### **7. Conclusion:**

In India, the women are still backward in all the dimensions, politics are not excluded from it. To bring them into main stream, the governments brought many initiatives 50% reservations for them is one among them. But yet, with the 50% reservations also they are not empowered adequately. Likewise other Castes women, the Backward Castes Women are facing same challenges. In Hanmakonda, 70 Gram Panchayats reserved for Backward Castes and 35 among them are for Women. But yet, the proxy Administration taking place from their male family members. The awareness levels and patriarchy are the main reasons for that. Capacity Building Programmes for the Women, Political Awareness Campaigns will strengthen their leadership. The governments must focus on that dimension.

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