

**POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
IN THE NEW PANCHAYATS-A STUDY OF
MADHYA PRADESH**

*Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Submitted by:
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CERTIFICATE

I, Puja Rani, certify that the dissertation entitled "POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THE NEW PANCHAYATS-A STUDY OF MADHYA PRADESH" for the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY is my bonafide work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Dedicated to
My
Family & Elders

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost I would like to express my feelings to my family for their encouragement and inspiration to complete this work. My M.Phil supervisor, Prof. Sudha Pai, for her valuable guidance and careful supervision which enabled me to complete my M. Phil Dissertation. I am extremely grateful to Mrs. Nirmala Buch, without her help its very difficult to get data. I am always benefited from interaction with Dr. Ramesh Nayak, Institute of Social Science (ISS), New Delhi. In the course of my research I have received help from ISS Library. My special thanks to Mr. Vishal Chauhan and Payal Rani who deserves special mention. They have co-operate in the whole of my research. I am also thankful to my friends, Ruchi, Debjani, Himani, Ajay and Ashish.

July 31, 2003

PUJA RANI

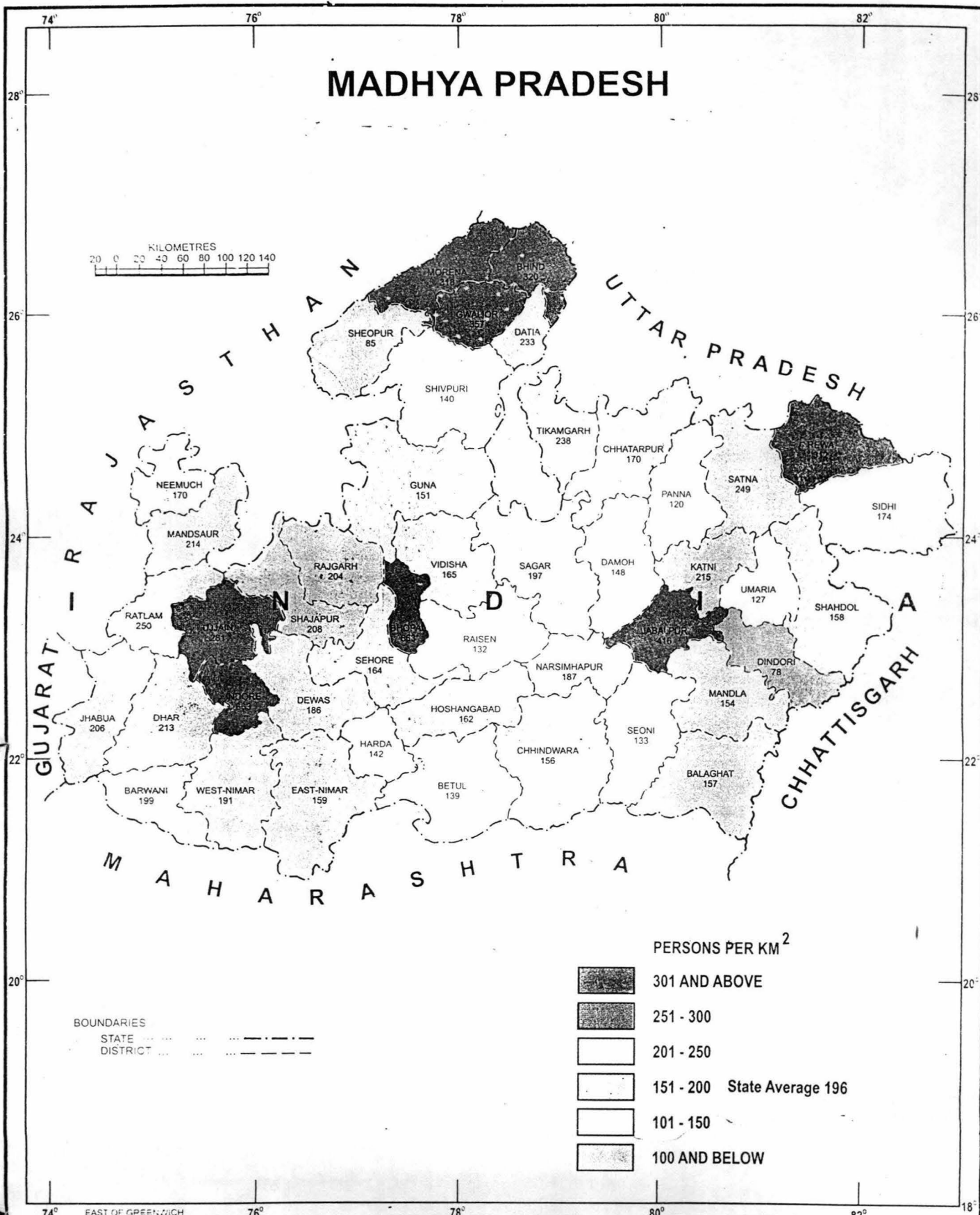
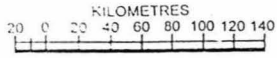
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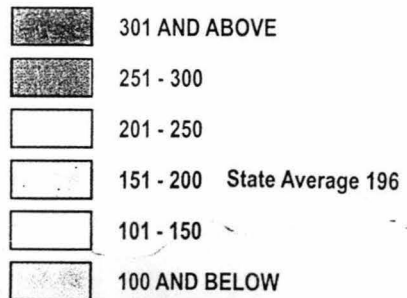
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MADHYA PRADESH



PERSONS PER KM²



BOUNDARIES
STATE - - - - -
DISTRICT - - - - -

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Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

'One of the task of nation building and development', writes Million J. Essman is to bring members of the national community into a network of relationships and institutions which enable them to participate actively in decisions affecting their individual and group welfare¹.'

Various countries have therefore started experimenting with different types of politico-administrative institutions which would provide opportunities to people to take part in nation building; the nature, character and scope of such institutions have varied depending upon the attitudes of their national elites and level of development of the country concerned. The planners in India began a search, for better structural alternatives. The appointment of a team in January 1957 by the Committee on Plan Projects was a clear indication of this concern of the national ruling elite. The committee was headed by, late Sri Balwant Rai Mehta. The team toured all over the country and submitted an exhaustive report. The team felt that the local institutions should have a representative character. To democratise the local institution – the team suggested a three tier system of rural local Government- the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad.

The Balwant Rai Mehta team offered two broad directional thrusts; first it argued that there should be administrative decentralisation for the

¹ Reddy, G, Ram (ed) 1977 'Pattern of Panchayati Raj in India; MacMilan, Delhi.

effective implementation of the development programme and that the decentralised administrative system should be under the control of local bodies. But "Development cannot progress without responsibility and power. Community development can be real only when the community understands its problem, realises its responsibilities, exercises the necessary powers through its chosen representatives and maintain a constant and intelligent vigilance on local administration. According to Balwant Rai Mehta Report, the meaning of democratic decentralization was in operational term. Secondly, the basic unit of democratic decentralisation should be located at the block/samiti level. Co-option to give representation to women, scheduled castes and persons possessing experience in administration and public life was also suggested by it².

In the framework suggested by the team, the Zilla Parishad should only be a co-ordinating body because the Panchayat Samiti will be a main executive agency. Within this broad framework, the states in India have enacted legislation giving shaping to pattern of Panchayati Raj; the first to implement the scheme of Panchayati Raj were the states of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

Panchayati Raj units of local self government, came as a state subject under the constitution and the states and union territories were free to design their structure, power and functions keeping in view their local resources. After the initial enthusiasm, following the creation of Panchayati

² Ibid

Raj Institution in 1959, the period of 1977 with the appointment of Asoka Mehta committee by the Janta Government at the Centre to revitalize the Panchayati Raj Institutions was a major step. The committee submitted its report in 1978 and due to political change at the centre, the report could not be implemented. The committee gave many suggestions. Among them the problem of what is called "the weaker section of society" has been looked upon as a product of existing social order in which two kinds of oppression and exploitation are mixed. The essential pre-condition for this is the unity of the overwhelming majority of the oppressed and exploited, belonging both to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward castes on the one hand and the "upper castes" on the other. So reservation for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward communities were suggested. Ashok Mehta report talk about the 20% reservation of the chairman's posts for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. However after 1983, non – Congress Governments made appreciable efforts to rejuvenate the Panchayati Raj Institutions in their respective states. This process led to the formation of series of steps which include the appointment of GVK Rao Committee (1985), L.M. Singhvi committee (1986) and the introduction of Sixty Fourth bill in 1989. The sixty fourth constitutional amendment bill had been passed by the Lok Sabha without much difficulty but unfortunately the bill failed in the Rajya Sabha Ultimately on December 22, 1992, the Lok Sabha passed the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution to provide a constitutional base to local government. The constitution (Seventy third amendment) Act, 1992 came into effect from 24th April 1993.

The major steps taken in seventy-third constitutional amendment were:

1. Panchayats will be considered political institutions in a truly decentralized structure.
2. The gram sabha shall be recognised as the life line of the panchayats. The voters the village or villagers will constitute its members. The panchayat shall be acocutable to the gram sabha.
3. There will be direct election in all the three tiers of governance: gram panchayat at the village level, taluka or block panchayat at the intermediate level and zilla panchayat or parishad at the district level.
4. In so far as the empowerment of women is concerned, the Act has provided that atleast one third of the total seats at all levels shall be reserved for women of from which one third shall be from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In this context it is important to note that at least one third of the total posts of the office bearers at all levels will also be reserved for women.
5. Each panchayat will have a tenure of five years and in case it is dissolved by the state government fresh election will be held within a period of six months.
6. The election to local bodies has to be conducted regularly.

7. There will be a separate Election Commission and also a Finance Commission for panchayats in every state
8. It is obligatory on the part of the centre as well as the state to provide adequate funds for the panchayats to enable them to function properly. In addition, the panchayats will have their own fund raising capacity on the basis of local resources.
9. Rajasthan, Haryana and Orissa have debarred candidates having more than two children from contesting the election with a view to controlling population growth. However, given the low average age of marriage of girls 19-they would have crossed the two child norm by the time they contested the elections. Hence, it will be difficult for the states to get suitable women candidates for the panchayat election. The sole purpose of empowering women may get defeated by this clause.

HYPOTHESIS

The constitutional amendment contributes women empowerment at the grass root level.

The aim of the present study is to understand the political empowerment of women following the granting of reservation by the seventy third Amendment. Secondly, this study focusses on the "political empowerment of women" which it argues encompasses the following three heads.

- a) Physical security, health and survival issues.
- b) Economic security and livelihood issues.
- c) Political security and participation in civil life.

EMPOWERMENT

What is empowerment? Many definitions have been offered on this concept. Richard Carver, managing director of the Coverdale Organisation, defines empowerment in terms of encouraging and allowing individuals to take personal responsibility for improving the way they do their job and contribute to common goals. It requires the creation of a culture which both encourages people at all levels to feel they can make a difference and help them to acquire the confidence and skills to do so³. Other definitions like "Empowerment is a process of getting the right environment and structure in which people can make a full contribution with the best of their skills".

Empowerment has become rather a buzzword for the 1990s. It was a word frequently heard at the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995 and at the world population conference in Cairo in 1999. Much use of the term has laid emphasis on economic and political empowerment. Since the word is built around the notion of power, so a brief idea of nature of power is necessary here.

³ Mishra, Anil Dutta, (ed) 1999 Gender Perspective, Radha Publication, New Delhi.

Power has been the focus of much debate within the social sciences. The dominant understanding has been of power as 'power over' where one person, or group of people, is able to control in some way the actions of another. This can be overt, such as through the use of physical coercion, or hidden, where psychological processes are influenced in such a way that it restrict the range of options perceived. Various writers have described the way in which a group of people who are systematically denied power and influence in the dominant society, will internalize the messages they receive about its supposed roles and capacities, and will come to believe the messages to be true. Thus for e.g. a women who is subjected to violent abuse when she express her own opinions may start to withhold her opinions and eventually come to believe that she has no opinions of her own. Many groups of people have controlled their own behaviour and sense of self in this way.

The development discourse, and the set of practices associated with it, have been very much in this mould. Empowerment within the development discourse, view that women should somehow be 'brought into development' and become empowered to participate within the economic and political decision making. But the difficulty with this view of 'empowerment' is that if it can be bestowed, it can just as easily be withdrawn, in other words it does not involve a structural change in power relations. It is therefore illusory. Women's empowerment, is in this sense an instrumentalist approach to achieving the economic growth of the developmentalist discourse, where the placing of emphasis on women becomes a means to a particular end.

A feminist model of power would be drawn on the thinking of Foucault (power as a mode of action upon actions). But would incorporate a gender analysis of power relations that includes an understanding of how internalised oppression places internal barriers to women's exercising of power, thereby contributing to the maintenance of inequality between men and women.

The term empowerment is widely used in the development literature to refer to a process by which marginalised groups recognise their powerlessness and address deprivation and discrimination in their individual capacities as well as through collective bargaining. When it is applied to women as a group, it implies the process by which women as a group confront and overcome subordination and discrimination in all spheres of life. Hence, the theoretical engagements concerning women's empowerment, deal with causes of subordination on one hand, and the structural and attitudinal changes through conscientisation, rights assertion and collective bargaining that can facilitate empowerment on the other. In practice, the causes of subordination may find a place only if conscientisation is one of the strategies adopted for empowerment. Otherwise the most visible forms of discrimination that threaten the general well being of women as individuals and livelihood issues that encumber them in performing their social roles are taken up for redressal. This is deliberate to minimise resistance from the larger society and maximise acceptance from individuals as age old traditions and values that ascribe a subordinate position to women are deeply ingrained in the collective memory and through gendered

socialisation it is ensured that individuals internalise this subordination. Hence practitioners often consider structural changes and attitudinal changes that are central to the process of empowerment as by products. Theoretically this approach has been thrashed out for its merits and demerits along with alternatives.

Nevertheless the dominant idea of empowerment is to address the most visible manifestations of discrimination in women's lives. This is evident from a cursory analysis of organization that have been working for the empowerment of women. The differences in approach should however, not deter or distort the fundamental spirit of the term. This is taken care of in practice by compartmentalizing the empowerment process to the different spheres of such as economic, social, cultural and political.

In order to provide greater opportunities to women to actively participate in the decision-making process, it is imperative to recognize the true nature of the social inequalities and disabilities that hamper them. This can best be achieved by providing them with special opportunities for participation in the representative structure of local government. The establishment of statutory women's Panchayats at the village level will break through the attitudes that inhibit most women from articulating their problems and participating actively in the existing local bodies.

STUDY AREA

Among the Indian States Madhya Pradesh has taken several steps forward in the direction of empowerment of women. The Human Development Report of Madhya Pradesh in 1995 has given greater emphasis on gender issues and empowerment of women. Human development as an objective is meant to embrace all sections of society. Women's work has always been excluded from the accounting schemes of male-dominated production process and male constructed development discourse. So we need not hold forth about the exclusion and marginalisation of women and their work, it must also be noted that human development as a concept is incomplete without an understanding of the way in which 'situations are gendered' whether at home, in work place or public sphere. Madhya Pradesh present a balance sheet of human development which states the scenario of gender differentials in Madhya Pradesh.

The state of Madhya Pradesh has taken several steps forward in the direction of empowerment of women. Also, several people's initiatives notably in Jhabua, Gwalior, Hoshangabad districts have been success stories which show both the cruciality and the feasibility of women's empowerment through education health support, income and enterprise development. The state government is in the light of these, preparing a women's policy, emulating and learning from the experiences of earlier efforts.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary and secondary. The primary source include government publications and various committee reports on Panchayati Raj. The secondary sources include the literature on Panchayati Raj, various journals and articles from newspapers were examined for getting the required information.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years much attention has been placed on Panchyati Raj, yet little attention has been given to the role of "women in Panchayats" and their empowerment. Some studies deal with Panchayati Raj all over the country, whereas others concentrate on the state, district and block level. However there are not many studies on the status of women in Panchayat .

Kaushik (1993) has presented a detailed overview of womens empowerment and their role in Panchayati Raj. The study also discusses the impact of information, training on women. Kaushik (1996) gives the picture, after the seventythird amendment whether, women got awareness.

The most detailed study on women in Panchayats by Buch (2000). Various debates on the participation of women, their leadership and development are covered. Buch (2001) describes the seventy-third constitutional amendment as a indelible mark in our federal structure. The pivotol role played by women not only in building a family, society and the world at large, but the role of Panchayats is also focussed.

Mohanty discusses the concept of 'Empowerment' she suggests 'strengthening of women's capacities' which she argues can be achieved through "full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and the well being of our societies". The study argues for the need for women to become empowered to be able to help themselves and breaking social, economics, cultural and psychological barriers to convert them from being "passive recipients of government programmes" to "active participants and managers of their own affairs".

The role of women in Panchayats has been discussed by Sharma (1999) and Datta (2001). Sharma present a study of women in Panchayat of Madhya Pradesh. Datta discusses the issue of women's participation in politics which assume importance since 1975, when the United Nations declared the decade of the 1970s as "Women Development Decade" leading to their empowerment. Joshi (1994), Sharma (1994) and Venkatesan (1994) discuss the working of Panchayati Raj in Madhya Pradesh.

The Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report (1995) noted that human development as a concept is incomplete without understanding Gender Issues and empowerment of women. The Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report (1998) attempts to fill the gaps left in the 1995 report. The 1998 report deal with some issues related to livelihoods and natural resources.

Mathew (1995) discusses as whether Reservation will ensure participation of women? Narayanan (1996) and Bhatia (1997) deal with the Gender issue, and how far Panchayats can make a difference. Som Kumar (2000) examines empowerment of women through Panchayati Raj institution in Madhya Pradesh.

Prasad, (1995) Jay Kumar, Chandra (1995), describe state acts on Panchayati Raj Institution in Madhya Pradesh. Mathew (1995) examines the reasons for the failure of Panchayati Raj in Nagaur.

Tremblay and Kumtakar's (1998) study in Madhya Pradesh provides details of structure and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions under the New Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam. Dutta (ed) 1998. This book is an in-depth study of attempts by women to carve out their own political within an existing male dominated political system. The Author studied the twelve all women Panchayats in Maharashtra.

Maurya (2000) discuss the Tribals and Panchayat in Madhya Pradesh. Chauhan (2001) examines the changing political role of tribal women in Madhya Pradesh. Singh (ed) 2000, presented a summary of the functioning of the new Panchayati Raj Institutions after the constitutional Amendment.

Afshar (1999), has tried to define and analyses the term empowerment and places it within its historical context. It focusses on the meaning and understanding of power and empowerment. It talks about Gender and

Development, where it is an approach concerned not simply with women's roles but with the dynamics and structures of gender relation.

UNIFEM (1995) discusses and putting "gender" on the agenda. This document contains a comprehensive set of strategies for advancing the status of women worldwide.

Mishra (1999), The issues of women's empowerment has been discussed, empowerment of women through Panchayati Raj Institutions, through political participation. Author talks about women and development. And lastly discuss about the women's participation in socio-economic and political process will bring quantitative and qualitative change and bring them into the mainstream.

Singh (2000) discuss about the status of women in India. The studies also dealt with the role of women's organisation towards the upliftment of women in the society. But on what extent these organisation were successful has not been analysed.

Narasimhan (1999) argues that the more vital inhibiting factors leading to disadvantaged position of women are their ignorance, powerlessness and vulnerability. The need for bringing about an attitudinal change among women as the important step towards empowerment.

Relevant references have been given in the succeeding chapters wherever deemed necessary.

CHAPTERISATION

The thesis has five chapters. In the first chapter the hypothesis, methodology, study area and review of literature has been provided.

The second chapter discusses the political empowerment of women problems and constraints.

The third chapter, focuses on the structure of Panchayati Raj in Madhya Pradesh. It describes the historical evolution of the present structure through various acts.

In the fourth chapter the study focuses on "Electoral Representation and Participation of women in Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj.

The fifth Chapter is the conclusion.

Chapter – 2

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN – PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For about two decades since the mid-1960s there was a plea to put 'Politics in Command' and accordingly growth models and development strategies were assessed. Even though there was no consensus as to the political criteria for evaluating development policies, still certain values such as freedom and equality were given emphasis. With the upsurge of the women's movement and other social movements the pursuit of freedom and justice was put in more concrete terms and on that basis the development was evaluated on the basis of such political parameters. It is in this process that the term 'empowerment' i.e. giving power to a certain unprivileged section of society¹

The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 6-12, 1995 where 'empowerment' was an objective. The Declaration Signed by the heads of the states and governments says the following: "We affirm that in both economic and social terms, the most productive policies

¹ Mohanty, Manoranjan 2000, Contemporary Indian Political Theory, Samskriti, New Delhi.

and investments are those which empower people to maximise their capacities, resources and opportunities".²

This is a bipronged statement where it describe empowerment in economic paradigm of production and investment and on the contrary stressed upon social parameter of empowerment. Recognize that empowering people particularly women to strengthen their capacities is a main objective of development and its principal resource. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decision determining the functioning and well-being of our societies.³

"Full participation of people" was the first commitment of the Declaration which talks about creating an enabling social, political, economic and legal environment. The heads of state and government announced their first Commitment thus "Provide a stable legal framework in accordance with our Constitutions laws which promotes equality and equity between men and women, elimination of all forms of discrimination, transparent and accountable governance and administration and rejuvenating organizations of civil society. There is further commitment to people's participation through "decentralization, open management of public institutions, strengthen of the abilities and opportunities of civil society of local communities to develop their own organization resources and activities.

² Point 7 in the Declaration of the World Summit for Social development (Geneva United nation March 10, 1995).

³ Point 3 Section O of the Declaration.

The governmental agencies have also picked term to establish programmes such as 'National Literacy Mission' or many women's development schemes or the Panchayati Raj aimed at 'empowering' the people especially women. In India several models of 'empowerment' are being popularized. Empowerment as an objective of development should be a welcome addition to the democratic discourse. After all, oppressed groups ranging from poor tribal people, dalits and women have been engaged in a struggle for power. Hence empowerment is a cherished goal.

Institutional Functioning is stressed as an essential and crucial component of democratic politics. The question is how to make institutional procedure positively contribute to substantive exercise of power. The concept of 'empowerment' puts excessive emphasis on formal institutional arrangement. Several efforts have been taken, among such is the 33 percent reservation in the Panchayats. The reservation for the Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe in the legislature and services. Though, they are minor but one such necessary measures taken for transforming the power structure in the society.

The constitutionally mandated Panchayats were visualized as institutions of self governance. The idea was that the states will devolve power to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and give them resources and responsibilities so that they emerge as institutions of self governance, instead of remaining as institutions for administering centrally sponsored development schemes and programmes. While the Indian federal

constitution provides major guidelines and sets the determining parameters, local self government is the direct responsibility of the sub-national govt. By the year 1994, 21 State governments had legislated their individual acts (four states have been kept out of the preview for the constitutional amendment).

The debates on decentralization of power, responsibilities and resources are very relevant questions where there is a discussion on women's participation in Panchayati Raj institution. Between 1990 and 1995 there have been downfall in the progressive state of Karnataka. Karnataka and West Bengal provided 25 percent representation for women in the 1983 Panchayat Act.

One third representation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions has not come about due to a sudden change of heart within a power structure but has a long history behind it. In 1974 the committee on the statues of women in India recommended the setting up of statutory women's Panchayats. The history of Panchayati Raj institutions clearly shows that in most of the states, these institutions have been dominated by elites and vested interests in rural areas. The provision of nominating one or two women did not in any way enhance women's participation in Panchayats. There has been a demand for the women's movement to give more voice to women in decision-making bodies. Despite the fact that the women's movement demand for reservation in parliament levels, they also fought strongly for reservation in local bodies. One third reservation for women is an

enabling provision and ushers. In what Dr. Mathew has called a Silent revolution.⁴

This provision will allow women not only to have a say in the Panchayati Raj institution but also in the local development planning and in allocation of local resources. Their active participation will also help in focussing attention on those issues which the predominantly male dominated Panchayats had never accorded priority. However, the effective implementation of such a provision requires a conducive environment within which these issues can be taken up and which permits women to grow and develop to their full potential.

1.2 FACTORS STIFLING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

There are several constraints whether it is economic, social, cultural and political which need to be addressed before dealing with political empowerment of women in Panchayati Raj. Another constraint is the women are less educated, have lower levels of awareness about rules and procedures, and have little or no access to information, all of which can hamper their efficacy in these bodies.

In the following discussion we argue though our study of Madhya Pradesh, that will reservation of seats for women necessarily translate into their empowerment. As Waylen points out, 'it is large the structure of formal

⁴ Mathew, George, (2003) Women's Political Empowerment day Celebration 10 year Journey of New Panchayat.

polities which inhibit the active participation of women in the political process". These structures range from the combative style and machismo... and more widespread discrimination against women. It seems there is a direct relationship between the state discourse and organisation of state bureaucratic and political structures and gender relations. Unless and until one addresses the issue of the embedded patriarchal discourse and political structures, the benefits of any constitutional provisions of representational quotas will be minimal for women particularly those who are illiterate and come from lower classes and castes. The unique distinction of the 73rd Amendment is 33 percent reservation for women at all levels. This policy is intended to empower women and equip them for their new role in the exercise of effective leadership. Madhya Pradesh Government has also realized in making the democratic institutions equitable in terms of representation of women particularly from the backward section of the society.

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An appropriate question which one may pose here is: Can one expect empowerment of women through legal and constitutional measures in a system where both the state structure and the institution of civil society are feudal and patriarchal? Although legal measures are the most effective ways of undoing the injustices of the society, one need to recognize that law and constitutional measures are embedded, both historically and philosophically. Our study of Panchayat confirm this way of assessment what we need to recognize the persistent patterns of dominance and subordinate which parallel power relation between men and women.

academics most address the issue of patriarchal discourse underlying the state structure as well as formulate legal and constitutional provisions for equity. One without the other does not achieve the objective of the state committed to the goals of equitable representation and empowerment of the women. Hence political empowerment of women as conceptualized in the seventy third Amendment is likely to achieve only limited results given the feudal and patriarchal structures of the Indian society. From this example, we can make out, how the attitude of males is major hindrance for empowering women. Some women Panchayat member from Himachal Pradesh Complained in one of the meetings that the men had told them.

“you are here by the grace of the government because they have introduced this amendment and given you one-third representation. After five years, you won't be here you donot know the procedures and all the complexities, so it is better that you keep quiet.”⁵

In many states men attend meetings by proxy and they try to intervene on behalf of women members. On the other hand there have been instances where women have been very articulate in the Panchayat meetings and been able to take up women's issues. However there are several constraints which need to be addressed before the kind of change that is being visualized in the existing power equation within traditional male dominated village society can come about.

⁵ Women and Political Empowerment, ISS Occasional Series, ISS Pub.

1.3 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The subordinate status of women signifies a lack of empowerment in the sense that they are unable to take part in the decision making processes on an equal footing with men, either within the household or in the society at large. This lack of empowerment is manifested, inter alia, in the relative weakness of their bargaining power in situation characterized by cooperative conflict i.e. situation (in which it is in the interest of both men & women to cooperate, but) in which a conflict of interest is also involved. Most intra – household decision, including those relating to the allocation of household resources, involves such co-operative conflicts⁶. In situations like these superior bargaining powers can influence the outcome of the co-operation effort in their own favour. The inferior bargaining power of women, entailed by their lack of empowerment, thus biases the allocation of scarce household resources such as food and healthcare against them, resulting in inferior nutritional status and poorer survival chances of women relative to men. That's why, it's said that women's lack of empowerment emanates to a large extent from their relative lack of participation in the so-called 'gainful' economic activities. It is generally believed that their increased participation in the economic sphere will lead to, or at least facilitate, their empowerment (e.g Borerup 1970)⁷. This means that if the income earning activities of

⁶ Afshar, Haleh, 1998, *Women and Empowerment*, Macmillan.

⁷ Borerup E (1970) *Women's role in economic development*. New York : St martin press. 2nd edition 1986, Aldershot: Gomes.

women can in some way improve their bargaining power then there is a good chance to improve their position.

In the nineties, major changes have taken place in macro-economic politics. These have sharpened the inherent contradictions between the macro-economic perspective and local economic issues and entrust of the disadvantaged of women in a necessary precondition for achieving social and political goal. In Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh several elected women member have emphasized the need for creating a village fund or some kind of a revolving fond to meet their needs. They did not want to ask the men in their family to support their travel and other minor expenses for attending meetings.

Table 2.1⁸ indicates the female work participation ratio (FWPR) in the district of undivided Madhya Pradesh. FWPR figures have improved in 1991 from their levels in 1981. The FWPR according to the census of 1991 was 32.7%, which is higher than the all India average of 22.3%. FWPR is 39.3% in rural areas, and drops to 10.2% for urban area. The lower rates are formed in Bhind (4.2%), Morena (14.6%), Gwalior (18.6%) and Guna (24.9%). The highest rates are recorded in region of Chhatisgarh and in other tribal districts. The gender ratio and FWPR are lowest in the northern district, and higher in the tribal dominated southern and south east districts. There are also regional variations in this overall conformity between district trends in sex ratio and the rates of women's participation in the work force.

⁸ Madhya Pradesh, HDR, 1995.

2.1 WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION RATIO (WPR) IN MADHYA PRADESH

District	Female Main Workers 1991			Female Marginal Workers 1991			Worker Participation Ratio Females 1991			
	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	Rank by All
Morena	53075	49164	3911	42645	40753	1892	12.4%	14.6%	3.7%	43
Bhind	12116	9446	2670	10692	10062	630	4.2%	4.5%	2.9%	45
Gwalior	40871	21077	19794	29825	27743	2082	11.0%	18.6%	5.8%	44
Datia	17879	15881	1998	19284	18352	932	20.4%	24.4%	7.1%	40
Shivpuri	80029	76052	3977	77955	76264	1691	30.4%	34.5%	7.2%	25
Guna	58200	49570	8630	67234	65737	1497	20.5%	23.4%	8.5%	39
Tikamgarh	76628	68137	8491	67991	65410	2581	33.0%	36.8%	14.8%	22
Chhatarpur	80903	71531	9372	71851	68440	3411	28.6%	32.5%	12.4%	29
Panna	53173	49357	3816	40054	38634	1420	28.7%	31.0%	12.6%	28
Sagar	134246	104100	30146	68192	61097	7095	26.2%	30.2%	16.6%	33
Damoh	77687	67985	9702	42513	39571	2942	28.2%	30.7%	16.4%	31
Satna	152207	136151	16056	57951	54343	3608	30.0%	33.6%	14.6%	27
Rewa	159091	146219	12872	54728	51870	2858	28.5%	30.9%	14.4%	30
Shahdol	180467	169930	10537	94609	90751	3858	32.5%	38.7%	8.4%	23
Sidhi	134564	132478	2086	87889	87715	174	33.8%	35.5%	5.9%	20
Mandsaur	222021	202024	19997	67126	62957	4169	38.3%	45.5%	14.0%	13
Ratlam	118230	105184	13046	55034	52228	2806	36.6%	48.6%	10.6%	17
Ujjain	130906	109886	21020	43865	41873	1992	26.2%	37.5%	8.8%	32
Shajapur	110879	102387	8492	60854	58618	2236	34.7%	39.5%	12.3%	18
Dewas	108241	96716	11525	42096	39335	2761	30.3%	36.8%	11.3%	26
Jhabua	137810	132920	4890	151542	148720	2822	51.8%	55.0%	16.4%	1
Dhar	199316	188697	10619	69042	67795	1247	40.3%	44.1%	14.0%	9
Indore	120497	72314	48183	20330	17460	2870	16.1%	33.4%	8.5%	41
West Nimar	273800	257780	16020	111745	109852	1893	39.0%	43.7%	12.3%	11
East Nimar	181573	165975	15598	51931	49832	2099	33.7%	42.9%	9.3%	21
Rajgarh	90045	82769	7276	92584	90877	1707	38.3%	43.7%	11.3%	12
Vidisha	55922	50138	5784	38209	37172	1037	20.8%	24.2%	7.5%	38
Bhopal	66281	23072	43209	19618	17015	2603	13.5%	31.8%	9.0%	42
Sehore	84354	78640	5714	44524	43528	996	32.4%	37.4%	9.5%	24
Raisen	60404	54760	5644	29757	28785	972	22.0%	24.1%	10.4%	37
Betul	181110	174230	6880	50169	49515	654	39.8%	47.0%	7.2%	10
Hoshangabad	90625	80940	9685	44821	43346	1475	22.6%	28.4%	6.9%	36
Jabalpur	213256	170751	42505	78409	72052	6357	23.0%	34.7%	8.6%	35
Narsimhapur	70368	65828	4540	25018	24391	627	25.4%	28.2%	9.4%	34
Mandla	245246	239936	5310	56283	55392	891	47.0%	49.7%	13.0%	4
Chhindwara	173050	157668	15382	88621	85856	2765	34.2%	41.1%	10.5%	19
Seoni	143541	140117	3424	73244	72442	802	43.9%	47.4%	9.3%	6
Balaghat	223049	215575	7474	87702	86582	1120	45.5%	48.7%	13.7%	5
Sarguja	155390	150345	5045	228769	227743	1026	37.7%	41.9%	5.2%	14
Bilaspur	567223	533701	33522	136288	131733	4555	37.5%	42.5%	12.3%	15
Raigarh	194376	186964	7412	154777	152706	2071	40.5%	43.4%	12.1%	8
Rajnandgaon	326724	307260	19464	35871	33912	1959	50.1%	55.7%	19.2%	2
Durg	403352	364592	38760	31233	27270	3963	36.9%	50.2%	10.7%	16
Raipur	679033	630082	48951	116973	112669	4304	40.9%	47.2%	14.2%	7
Bastar	345599	336642	8957	207685	206304	1381	48.7%	51.3%	13.2%	3
Madhya Pradesh	7283357	6644971	638386	3147533	3044702	102831	32.7%	39.3%	10.2%	

Females are undervalued by society in the northern district because they are not economically productive, hence they face neglect, and hence their morality rates are higher than males. The enumeration of women as main workers in censuses reflected in FWPR indicates the level of women's employment in more formal or more visible activities. The importance of women's economic independence for their overall dignity and even survival is brought out in the fact that there is a standing correlation between the sex ratio figures and the figures for women's work participation.

The 1991 census reveals that 33% of all women in the state are workers i.e. are formally recognised as contributing to the public production process. Over 88% are in the agricultural sector, 51% are cultivators works on family farm and 37% are agricultural labourers. Other major categories employing women in Madhya Pradesh in 1991 were other services (4.3%) and household manufacturing (3%). The high dependence on agricultural and household manufacturing shows both the very traditional forms of female employment and lack of any variety in their employment.

In Madhya Pradesh, as elsewhere in the country, most important factor affecting women's situation in agricultural is the gender gap and command over property. Few women own land and fewer still control it. Since land is the most important collateral in securing productive loans, this affects women's access to credit as well. The women's policy being enunciated by the state government is addressing this issue.

While women are vital and productive workers in the state's economy, this is largely unrecognised and unrewarded. The poorer the family, the greater its dependence on women's economic productivity. Women's earnings not only increase the aggregate income levels of these poor households but Indian women contribute a much larger share of their earnings to basic family maintenance than men do.

In spite of this, women lack access to the resources which could increase their productivity and they receive a smaller share of what society produces. Women are less endowed than men with education, health care and productive assets that could increase their returns to labour. The disparity between male and female literacy and enrollment rates is vast. More than 90% of rural women workers in Madhya Pradesh are unskilled. Social attitudes which always view women as only supplementary income earners even show that contribute 50-100 percent of the family income restrict them to low paid occupations. Around 90 percent of women workers are engaged in the non-formal unorganised sector and of these around 80 percent are in agriculture. Wage rates in agriculture are on average 30-50 percent less than for men. Women also generally lack the bureaucratic know-how that most men are able to acquire to make the system work for them. Women have little access to land as collateral largely excludes them from institutional credit, rendering them unable to secure capital and tools for self-employment.

1.4 SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Gender analysis has led to a more detailed questioning of aspects of development, which affect women. The logic for going beyond income parameters was the fact income was not only the one way of reflecting the hindrance of empowerment. There are other obstacles like women's physical security, health and survival rates, low level of educational participation.

The first parameter of physical security is that of demography. Survival rates for women in Madhya Pradesh is historically been low. The recent figures, shows that, the expectancy of life at birth for females in 1986-91 is 54.7 years as against the male figure of 56.2 years.⁹ The national figures in their respect are 59.1 and 58.1. If we analysis sex ratio figures, then it is clearer, why there is higher risk of death. In 1991 Madhya Pradesh has a gender/sex ratio of 931 females to 1000 males, the national figure being 929 females per thousand males¹⁰. In 1901, at the beginning of the century, the sex ratio in the territories, that later went on to constitute Madhya Pradesh was 990. This means that the state has lost 69 women in every 1000 population since the beginning of the century. Even in the decade 1981 to 1991, the gender ratio went down from 941 to 931 **Table 2.2**¹¹ shows a significant regional variation in the sex ratio among the districts of the undivided state. The lowest figures are recorded in the

⁹ Madhya Pradesh, HDR, 1995.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Source, Madhya Pradesh, HDR, 1995

2.2. GENDER RATIO, 1981 AND 1991

District	Gender Ratio	Gender Ratio	Decline in	Gender Ratio	Gender Ratio	Decline	Gender Ratio	Gender Ratio	Decline
	1981 Total	1991 Total	Ratio Total	1981 Rural	1991 Rural	in Ratio Rural	1981 Urban	1991 Urban	in Ratio Urban
Morena	834	826	-8	835	826	-9	827	826	-1
Bhind	827	816	-11	829	813	-16	820	827	7
Gwalior	845	833	-12	818	818	0	867	843	-24
Datia	853	847	-6	848	840	-8	876	873	-2
Shivpuri	855	849	-6	856	848	-8	848	853	4
Guna	882	875	-7	882	875	-7	882	876	-7
Tikamgarh	883	871	-11	882	868	-14	886	887	0
Chhatarpur	864	856	-8	866	855	-11	854	862	8
Panna	913	897	-17	918	901	-17	858	869	11
Sagar	891	881	-11	899	884	-16	871	874	3
Damoh	925	905	-20	931	908	-23	894	895	1
Satna	936	918	-18	953	929	-24	853	875	22
Rewa	969	932	-37	992	946	-46	833	858	25
Shahdol	948	940	-8	969	9961	-8	858	868	10
Sidhi	951	922	-29	956	934	-22	738	767	29
Mandsaur	941	945	5	947	951	4	917	928	11
Ratlam	948	948	1	956	956	0	928	932	3
Ujjain	926	929	3	941	936	-5	902	918	16
Shajapur	929	918	-11	934	920	-14	904	910	6
Dewas	929	924	-5	936	933	-4	897	899	1
Jhabua	985	977	-8	994	983	-11	893	920	1
Dhar	966	951	-16	974	960	-14	915	892	-23
Indore	898	906	7	930	919	-10	883	900	17
West Nimar	954	950	-4	962	956	-6	907	917	9
East Nimar	939	938	-2	943	940	-3	928	931	3
Rajgarh	931	923	-8	935	927	-8	908	906	-2
Vidisha	881	874	-7	883	872	-11	869	881	12
Bhopal	874	889	16	886	873	-13	870	894	24
Sehore	907	898	-9	913	901	-12	871	884	13
Raisen	908	879	-28	912	884	-29	866	855	-11
Betul	873	966	97	996	981	-15	855	903	48
Hoshangabad	908	899	-9	921	904	-17	869	885	17
Jabalpur	914	915	2	963	939	-25	856	888	32
Narsimhapur	930	913	-18	935	915	-20	898	897	-1
Mandla	1003	988	-15	1009	993	-16	927	930	3
Chhindwara	965	953	-12	984	967	-17	899	906	8
Seoni	982	974	-9	990	980	-10	899	920	22
Balaghat	1006	1002	-4	1015	1009	-6	917	937	20
Sarguja	962	956	-6	973	969	-3	862	865	3
Bilaspur	993	978	-14	1006	990	-15	915	922	7
Raigarh	1006	1000	-5	1016	1009	-7	899	919	20
Rajnandgaon	1020	1012	-8	1031	11021	-10	945	966	22
Durg	980	967	-13	11029	1010	-18	883	891	9
Raipur	1009	993	-16	1025	1007	-18	937	941	4
Bastar	1002	1002	0	1009	1007	-1	910	938	27

northern districts such as Bhind and Morena. However Bastar (1002), Rajnandgaon (1012), Balaghat (1002) have sex ratio (now in Chattisgarh) above Parity (1000). Gwalior and Chambal region have low gender ratios. Bhind is the lowest with a gender ratio of 816, followed by Morena (826), Gwalior (833), Datia (847), and Shivpuri (849). In all 15 districts have a gender ratio below 900.

Low gender ratios in the state are found in districts that have a social character of discrimination against women, and a high degree of male domination, while better ratio are seen in districts with a high population of tribals. Gender ratios in the state in 1991 amongst tribals was 985 amongst the scheduled castes it was 915, and amongst non scheduled castes and non scheduled tribes it was 916, almost the same as scheduled castes.

GENDER RATIOS IN MP

	All	SC	ST	Others
Rural	943	919	989	927
Urban	893	900	902	891
Total	931	915	985	916

Source: MP HDR 1995.

Low gender ratios in the northern districts of the state have social consequences apart from the reasons for low gender ratio itself, that reflect

the health status of women and the status of the girl child in a family low gender ratio has an impact on fertility and gives rise to social tensions. **Table 2.2** indicates variation in sex ratios across districts and the changes in the sex ratios between the 1981 and the 1991 census.

According to survey estimates by the National Female Health Survey 1992, the levels of infant and child mortality rate for the state are 85 and 130 respectively. **Table 2.3**¹² indicates the inter district comparisons of fertility rates across the districts of Madhya Pradesh. The fertility rate for 1984-90 shows a low of 3.6 for Indore, followed by Bhopal (3.8). The highest fertility rates are in Morena, Sehore, Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh all with gender ratio below 900, Sidhi and Jhabwa. Twenty six districts had a fertility rate between 5 and 6. The National Family Health Survey 1992, estimated the fertility rate of the state at 3.9 compared to the desired fertility rate for the state of 3.1.

Health facilities are far from adequate in terms of per capita availability. Health and disease are closely related to environmental, social, cultural, political and economic factors. The empowerment of women, for instance, is one of the most important determinants of health. In Madhya Pradesh there is one doctor for a population of 7,829 as against the national average of 2,393. The per capita expenditure on public health is Rs. 19.15 as against the national average of Rs. 32.85. The physical distance of the target populace from the service facility means that the matrix of social

¹² Ibid.

2.3. FERTILITY RATE IN DISTRICTS OF MADHYA PRADESH

District	Total Fertility Rate			
	1981	1981 Ranks	1984-90	1990 Rank
Morena	6.8	43	6.0	39
Bhind	6.1	32	5.8	34
Gwalior	5.8	26	4.7	12
Datia	6.1	32	5.8	34
Shivpuri	6.4	38	6.3	42
Guna	6.3	36	5.9	37
Tikamgarh	7.0	45	6.1	41
Chhatarpur	6.8	43	6.6	43
Panna	6.7	42	5.9	37
Sagar	6.4	38	5.5	30
Damoh	6.2	34	5.3	22
Satna	5.9	28	5.7	33
Rewa	5.8	26	5.8	34
Shahdol	4.9	10	5.3	22
Sidhi	5.7	21	6.7	44
Mandsaur	5.3	15	4.1	3
Ratlam	5.3	15	4.6	9
Ujjain	5.3	15	4.2	4
Shajapur	5.7	21	5.1	19
Dewas	5.5	19	5.0	13
Jhabua	6.3	36	7.0	45
Dhar	5.7	21	5.1	19
Indore	4.5	3	3.6	1
West Nimar	5.9	28	5.3	22
East Nimar	5.7	21	5.2	21
Rajgarh	5.7	21	5.3	22
Vidisha	6.5	41	5.6	31
Bhopal	5.1	13	3.8	2
Sehore	6.2	34	6.0	39
Raisen	6.4	38	5.3	22
Betul	6.0	30	5.6	31
Hoshangabad	6.0	30	5.4	29
Jabalpur	5.3	15	4.2	4
Narsimhapur	5.5	19	4.6	9
Mandla	4.5	3	5.0	13
Chhindwara	5.2	14	5.3	22
Seoni	5.0	11	5.0	13
Balaghat	4.6	6	4.2	4
Surguja	4.4	2	5.3	22
Bilaspur	4.7	7	5.0	13
Raigarh	3.8	1	4.3	8
Rajnandgaon	5.0	11	5.0	13
Durg	4.5	3	4.2	4
Raipur	4.7	7	4.6	9
Bastar	4.7	7	5.0	13

inequality determine access. So women's health issues tend to be confined within the domestic sphere. Diagnostic and curative facilities acquire a gender bias in terms of use. In education, too women and girl child tend to get marginalized due their health issue.

Interms of educational participation gender inequalities persist. A comparison between male and female literacy in **Table 2.4**¹³ indicates the gaps between male and female literacy in the districts of Madhya Pradesh. Female literacy is at the low figure of 28.8 percent with female literacy in rural areas at 19.7 percent. Male literacy is nearly double. Lowest female literacy is found in the districts of Bastar, Sarguja (now in Chhatisgarh). Jhabua, Sidhi and Shivpuri. Except for Bhopal and Indore the ratio of male literacy to female literacy is over 1.5.

Figure for school enrolment in higher education are given **Table 2.5**.

2.5 Educational Participation Madhya Pradesh 1989-90

Students	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher
Girls	2.00	0.76	0.25	0.07
Boys	4.79	1.76	0.76	0.16
Total	7.75	2.25	1.01	0.23

Source: HDR, Madhya Pradesh, 1995.

¹³ Madhya Pradesh, HDR, 1995.

2-4 FEMALE AND MALE LITERACY IN MADHYA PRADESH

District	Literacy Rate			Female Literacy			Male Literacy			Gap in Male and Female Literacy			Ratio of Male to Female Literacy
	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	
Morena	41.3%	36.1%	61.0%	20.8%	14.9%	43.2%	58.0%	53.4%	75.4%	37.2%	38.5%	32.2%	2.8
Bhind	49.2%	45.7%	62.7%	28.2%	23.5%	45.7%	66.2%	63.5%	76.6%	38.0%	39.9%	30.9%	2.3
Gwalior	57.7%	37.9%	71.0%	41.7%	16.5%	58.4%	70.8%	55.1%	81.6%	29.1%	38.6%	23.3%	1.7
Datia	43.6%	37.9%	63.0%	23.7%	16.1%	49.0%	60.2%	55.9%	75.2%	36.5%	39.8%	26.2%	2.5
Shivpuri	33.0%	27.1%	65.1%	15.6%	9.4%	49.6%	47.5%	41.9%	78.1%	31.9%	32.5%	28.5%	3.0
Guna	34.6%	27.2%	64.1%	18.0%	10.1%	49.6%	48.9%	41.9%	76.6%	30.9%	31.8%	27.0%	2.7
Tikamgarh	34.8%	30.6%	55.4%	20.0%	15.4%	41.9%	47.5%	43.5%	67.2%	27.6%	28.1%	25.4%	2.4
Chhatarpur	35.2%	28.3%	63.4%	21.3%	14.1%	50.5%	46.9%	40.1%	74.5%	25.5%	26.0%	24.0%	2.2
Panna	33.7%	29.3%	62.3%	19.4%	14.9%	49.7%	46.3%	42.1%	73.1%	26.9%	27.2%	23.5%	2.4
Sagar	53.4%	44.0%	75.5%	37.8%	26.8%	63.5%	67.0%	59.0%	85.8%	29.2%	32.1%	22.2%	1.8
Damoh	46.3%	40.0%	73.8%	30.5%	23.5%	61.3%	60.5%	54.9%	84.8%	30.0%	31.4%	23.6%	2.0
Satna	44.7%	39.5%	65.0%	27.8%	22.2%	50.9%	60.0%	55.5%	77.3%	32.2%	33.4%	26.4%	2.2
Rewa	44.4%	40.5%	65.0%	26.9%	22.8%	50.1%	60.7%	57.3%	77.5%	33.8%	34.5%	27.4%	2.3
Shahdol	34.8%	27.2%	62.7%	20.1%	12.9%	48.5%	48.4%	40.9%	74.7%	28.3%	28.1%	26.2%	2.4
Sidhi	29.1%	26.5%	66.4%	13.6%	11.4%	49.6%	43.2%	40.5%	78.6%	29.6%	29.1%	29.1%	3.2
Mandsaur	48.7%	41.9%	70.8%	28.3%	19.9%	56.2%	67.9%	62.8%	84.4%	39.6%	42.9%	28.1%	2.4
Ratlam	44.2%	30.6%	72.1%	29.1%	13.9%	60.8%	58.4%	46.4%	82.6%	29.2%	32.5%	21.8%	2.0
Ujjain	49.1%	33.5%	72.1%	32.6%	13.8%	60.9%	64.3%	51.9%	82.4%	31.6%	38.1%	21.5%	2.0
Shajapur	39.2%	33.7%	64.4%	19.8%	13.6%	48.4%	57.0%	52.2%	78.8%	37.2%	38.6%	30.4%	2.9
Dewas	44.1%	35.9%	67.0%	25.6%	16.2%	52.5%	61.1%	54.3%	80.0%	35.6%	38.1%	27.5%	2.4
Jhabua	19.0%	13.7%	70.0%	11.5%	6.8%	58.4%	26.3%	20.5%	80.7%	14.8%	13.7%	22.3%	2.3
Dhar	34.5%	29.4%	67.4%	20.7%	15.6%	54.3%	47.6%	42.5%	78.9%	26.9%	26.8%	24.6%	2.3
Indore	66.3%	43.7%	75.9%	53.3%	22.5%	66.6%	78.0%	63.0%	84.3%	24.6%	40.5%	17.7%	1.5
West Nimar	36.0%	30.1%	66.9%	23.2%	17.6%	53.9%	48.0%	42.1%	78.6%	24.8%	24.5%	24.7%	2.1
East Nimar	45.5%	36.4%	68.4%	31.5%	21.0%	58.1%	58.5%	50.8%	77.9%	27.0%	29.8%	19.8%	1.9
Rajgarh	31.8%	25.7%	62.0%	15.6%	9.5%	46.3%	46.7%	40.6%	76.1%	31.1%	31.2%	29.9%	3.0
Vidisha	44.1%	37.2%	70.2%	27.8%	19.5%	59.1%	58.0%	52.3%	80.0%	30.2%	32.8%	20.9%	2.1
Bhopal	64.3%	33.1%	71.5%	54.2%	15.2%	63.1%	73.1%	48.5%	79.0%	19.0%	33.4%	15.8%	1.4
Sehore	40.4%	34.7%	65.8%	22.0%	15.1%	53.2%	56.9%	52.4%	76.7%	34.9%	37.3%	23.4%	2.6
Raisen	40.8%	36.1%	65.1%	25.5%	20.5%	52.4%	54.0%	49.8%	75.8%	28.6%	29.4%	23.3%	2.1
Betul	45.9%	38.8%	76.3%	33.9%	26.7%	66.2%	57.4%	50.6%	85.2%	23.5%	23.9%	19.0%	1.7
Hoshangabad	52.5%	42.5%	78.0%	37.6%	26.3%	66.7%	65.8%	57.1%	87.8%	28.2%	30.7%	21.1%	1.7
Jabalpur	59.1%	43.6%	76.8%	45.0%	26.1%	67.4%	71.9%	60.0%	85.0%	26.9%	34.0%	17.6%	1.6
Narsimhapur	55.6%	51.4%	79.3%	41.6%	36.5%	69.7%	68.4%	64.9%	87.9%	26.9%	28.3%	18.1%	1.6
Mandla	37.3%	33.8%	76.9%	22.2%	18.6%	65.9%	52.2%	49.1%	87.0%	30.0%	30.5%	21.2%	2.3
Chhindwara	44.9%	36.2%	72.5%	32.5%	23.6%	62.0%	56.6%	48.5%	81.8%	24.1%	24.9%	19.8%	1.7
Seoni	44.5%	40.8%	78.7%	31.1%	27.1%	69.1%	57.5%	54.1%	87.4%	26.4%	27.0%	18.3%	1.8
Balaghat	53.2%	50.8%	75.7%	38.9%	36.3%	64.8%	67.6%	65.6%	85.9%	28.7%	29.3%	21.1%	1.7
Surguja	30.1%	24.9%	67.2%	17.4%	12.5%	54.8%	42.1%	36.8%	77.8%	24.7%	24.3%	23.0%	2.4
Bilaspur	45.3%	39.7%	71.6%	27.3%	20.9%	58.4%	62.9%	58.3%	83.7%	35.6%	37.4%	25.2%	2.3
Raigarh	41.2%	38.2%	70.0%	26.5%	23.5%	56.3%	56.0%	53.1%	82.4%	29.6%	29.6%	26.1%	2.1
Rajnandgaon	44.4%	39.3%	70.7%	27.8%	22.2%	57.5%	61.3%	56.8%	83.5%	33.4%	34.6%	26.0%	2.2
Durg	58.7%	50.4%	73.5%	42.8%	33.0%	61.5%	74.1%	68.0%	84.1%	31.3%	35.0%	22.6%	1.7
Raipur	48.1%	42.4%	70.6%	31.0%	24.4%	58.4%	65.1%	60.6%	82.0%	34.0%	36.2%	23.6%	2.1
Bastar	24.9%	21.1%	71.3%	15.3%	11.8%	60.6%	34.5%	30.6%	81.3%	19.2%	18.8%	20.7%	2.3
Madhya Pradesh	44.2%	35.9%	70.8%	28.8%	19.7%	58.9%	58.4%	51.0%	81.3%	29.6%	31.3%	22.4%	2.0

Girls have a long way to go to achieve equitable participation. Girls also have a much higher dropout rate of each stage than boys. This can be seen from **Table 2.6**.

2.6 School Drop out Rates in Madhya Pradesh

	Primary in 1988-89	Middle in 1986-87
Girls	42.64	69.79
Boys	39.32	51.77
Total	40.62	58.07

Source: HDR, Madhya Pradesh, 1995.

Gender discrimination in its various facts is at work in pulling girls out of school before they are to leave. The balance sheet of the girl child is in the diminishing right from the outside from the primary level onwards. This deprivation is a blockage for women's access to human development in three ways.

Firstly the high attrition rates for girl students mean that their representation at the higher level of education is automatically curtailed. As a result women's access to employment tends to be limited and biased.

Secondly the second impact of female attrition in access to education is the lowering of the levels of 'awareness' on issues such as better health strategies, importance of education as a tool of empowerment and better

likelihood for women. Women constitute an important audience for the provision of most human development strategies, especially the service strategies. Denial of access to education to them means a closure of this channel of communication.

Thirdly, gender, attrition in education has implication for women's awareness of their legal and political rights. In terms of political empowerment the awareness that women constitute a 33% reservation through seventy third Amendment in Panchayati Raj is sometime critical for women active participation in the political process. Women education is also necessary to be aware to their legal rights. Awareness through education empowers women to breach the confines of the domestic sphere, and even within it. Education has long been one of the most decisive of our life chances, the key to equal opportunity and the ladder to advancement since men first learned that literacy and communication in the hand of a few means and power, government and the control of the many. Without education, and especially without equal educational experiences or skills and qualification, men and women alike of certain classes and social groups have over the years been condemned to inferior lines in their personal development, in their choice of work as citizens and in their power to influence government, leadership and the national decisions which affect their local lives.

The deprivation of women is much more pronounced when there are stronger cultural and social barriers to women's equality.

1.5 CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT

The values norms, attitudes ideals and symbols infusion each society translate the physical underpinnings of sexual distinctions into the socially relevant categories of feminine and masculine. Being born female or male endows on individual with unalterable biological make up, but the definition of what it means to be female or male is given by the culture. In some cultures femininity has been deemed compatible with a wide range of economic, social and political roles whereas in other femininity is associated almost entirely with domestic functions.

Several aspects of the culture are particularly important in determining the nature and scope of the roles that women assume: the image of women, the differences perceived between men and women, the definition of the kinds of relationship possible and desirable between men and women and norms regarding the division of labour. The image of women has many relevant dimensions, among, the sexual, intellectual and managerial. However, women's opportunity for greater social and political participation have had to await because of rigidity of the culture. As a result of these deeply entrenched social attitudes and practices, women by and large have not been independent decision-makers in the country. Their decisions in most cases have been influenced by the wishes and dictates of the male family members. They are guided by a patriarchal social system and, therefore, are discriminated against in terms of access to food and health care. Caste relations also need to be taken into account while discussing the

subject of women. Traditionally, lower-caste women always depended on high-caste both economically and in social terms. This kind of discrimination against women cuts across caste and class lines. When women are socially, culturally weak, the resistance to women's representation will be high. Violence against women is as well as of violence from outside the family. The social status of women within the family is very complex.

1.6 POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

The question of women's participation in politics began to assume special importance only since 1975 when the United Nations declared the decade as the "Women Development Decade" and adopted some resolutions for empowerment of women.¹⁴ The Nairobi conference held in 1985 called on the participating countries to take steps for ensuring women's participation in politics through reservation of 35 percent seats in all elections.

The question of women's participation in Panchayats in India had merited attention of the committee on the status of women in India (1974). But the concept of statutory all women Panchayats which it suggested has not been very effective. The committee pleaded for women in all rural local self governing bodies at all levels. Of the constitution may be regarded as a watershed in the history of the state initiatives in regard to political Empowerment of rural women. It had indicated a noticeable shift in the approach of the Indian state towards women, earlier women were generally

¹⁴ Kurukshetra. Dec. 2001.

viewed as objects of development only. This amendment made women the subjects of development, an indispensable part of the decision making process. However provides for reservation 'not less than one third' of the seats for women in all Panchayat bodies. It also provided for reservation of one third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at all levels for women including women from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who also benefit from the provision for reservation of seats. The Amendment spoke of mandatory rotation of the reserved position of chairpersons, but apparently not of the posts of members. All the state legislations have however rotation of members as well as chairpersons positions.

Reservations created a space for women's needs within the structural framework of politics and has "legitimized" women's issues. A study of women in Panchayats in Madhya Pradesh noted positive responses of 82 percent women about their participation in the Panchayat meeting but it is also observed that in most cases they were not given opportunity to speak or to express themselves.¹⁵ A report from rural Orissa in Garjam district after reservation of positive pattern of emerging women's leadership even in a predominantly traditional setting with male dominance in the family.¹⁶ A study of twelve all women Panchayats in Maharashtra documented male family members support for women's coming into Panchayats but such

¹⁵ Buch, Nirmala, 2001 April, Kurukshetra: Author source Janodhar Samarthan and Action Aid, 1996, A study JPRJ in M.P, (Mimeo).

¹⁶ Snehlata Panda, 1996 "Emerging Pattern of Workship among Rural women in Orissa" in Indian Journal of Public Adm, Vol. XLII, No 4 Oct. Dec. pp 720-728.

supports were tentative and exposed in such comments as “who will make the chapattis and so long as you mind the kids”¹⁷

Can one expect empowerment, through legal and constitutional measures, in a system where both the state structures and institutions of civil society are feudal and patriarchal. What one need to recognize that law and constitutional measures are embedded in a patriarchal discourse. Policy makers interested in equity issues have avoided asking development policies, empowerment of women role of state in a gendered hierarchy. The state needs to be viewed as both reflection the society and at the same time constructing, modifying and maintain gender, there its legal and constitutional approach.

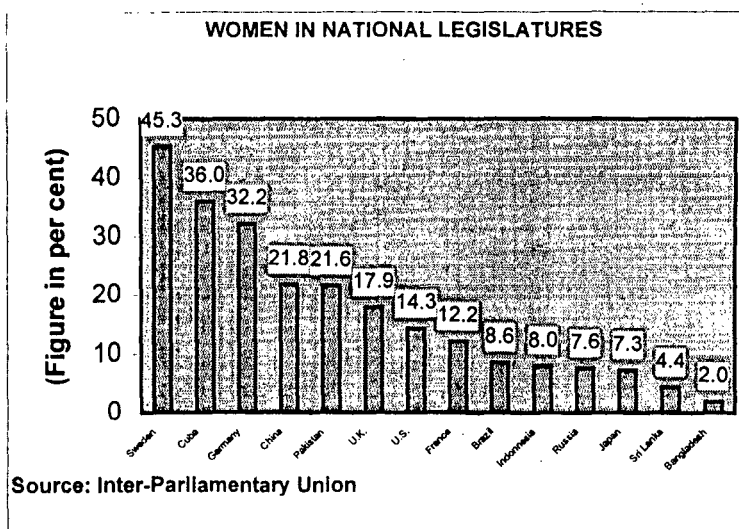
But inspite of severe social and political constraints social inequality caste system, particularly feudal setting, illiteracy, uneven development, within which it had to function there are several aspects we can be proud of. After the ten years of Journey, we can see where does it stand?

The last ten years have witnessed a steady progress as for as inclusion of excluded section of our population in the decision making process. Undoubtedly the reservation for women in Panchayat on the whole have been a very positive experience because for the first time all through the country large section of women have been introduced to the political process, “Said Brinda Karat, general secretary of the AIDWA today women

¹⁷ Bisakha Datta (ed) 1998 and who will make the Chhaptis? A study of all women Panchyats in Maharashtra, stree, Calcutta,

have got the maximum mileage. More than 10 lakh women¹⁸ are elected to these bodies every five years and more than three times that number are contesting election. This is no mean achievement in a hierarchical and male dominated society like ours. The common refrain that is the men folk in the families who control the women elected members may be partly true, but the situation is changing 1/3rd of all the Panchayats at various levels have women president.

While a significant step has been taken many tasks remain incomplete. At the level of parliamentary and legislative representation the role played by women is still small. This is far below the average of other countries.



Source: *The Hindu Sunday* May 18, 2003.

The "Progress of the World's women 2002" report of the United Nations Development Fund for women (UNIFEM) released May 1, 2003,

¹⁸ Mathew, George, (2003) Women's pol. empowerment day celebration 10 year Journey of new Panchayat

categorically states that "at least thirteen countries in the sub Saharan region have higher rates of women's parliamentary participation than developed countries such as France, Japan and the U.S. Another telling statistics brought out by the biennial UNIEFM report pertains to the long pending goal of 30% representation for women in legislatures. Women account for about 12 % of the legislators the world over and only 11 countries had reached the 30% benchmark: Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Iceland, The Netherlands, South Africa, Costa Rica, Argentina.

Significantly all these countries have some form of quota. And many of them where political parties opted for the quota system primarily because the women's movement mounted sustained pressure on the organisations to make space for them. Though the more up-dated data base of the Inter-parliamentary union March 23, 2003 puts the world average of women in legislatures at 15.2 % and sees Cuba and Austria enter the 30 plus league, these statistics further substantiate the UNIFEM conclusion that substantial growth in women's representation in legislation mechanisms has taken place in countries with quotas for them.

For a nation born out of a struggle in which women marched shoulder to shoulder with men the Indian parliament and state legislatures do not reject this historical fact. It has taken 55 year and the percentage of women members in the house to more up painfully from a mere 4.4 % in 1952 to 8.8 % now. India, by electing 48 women to the Lok Sabha in 1999 stands 88th in the commity of Nations league- (Fig. 2.7)

2.7 LOK SABHA

Year	Total Number of seats	Number of women MPs
1952	499	22
1957	500	27
1962	503	34
1967	523	31
1971	521	22
1977	544	19
1980	544	28
1984	544	44
1989	517	27
1991	544	39
1996	543	39

RAJYA SABHA

Year	Total Number of seats	Number of women MPs
1952	219	16
1957	237	18
1962	238	18
1967	240	20
1971	243	17
1977	244	25
1980	244	24
1984	244	28
1989	245	24
1991	245	38
1996	223	20

Source: the Hindu Sunday May 18, 2003.

Nevertheless it is a positive sign that parties whose combined strength constitute more than two-thirds of the total strength of Parliament do actively support women's reservation. At least on record their position is that

they will issue whips to their MPs to vote in favour of the bill when the situation comes. But the question is will it?

Barring some exceptions, even parties supporting women's reservations have a poor record in giving women positions in the party structure. For seven years now spread over three Lok Sabhas from 1996 onwards the charade of introducing the women's reservation bill has been played out with regularity. The Gujral government did it, the Deve Gowda government did it and then put the bill on the shelf, and then the Vajpayee government swore to have it passed, but we all saw what happened on May 6th 2003. Each time the bill met the expected fact – members have torn it up, others have snatched it –MPs have created unprecedented scenes of chaos. A couple of weeks ago a bunch of MPs from the opposition as well as the ruling benches used foul language which had to be expunged even as some of them rushed to Lok Sabha to present even a discussion on the issue. However the positive aspect is that the issue is now firmly on the national political agenda. Political parties know that sooner or later something will have to be done.

The legislation giving women. 33 % reservation in all Panchayats and local bodies was passed as a constitutional amendment during the Narasimha Rao government's house in 1992. It was Rajiv Gandhi initiative which had failed to make it in the Rajya Sabha during his government teem. Since then the issue of extending this reservation for women to state Assemblies and the Lok Sabha has been on the table. For more than ten

years, the experiment has succeeded at the grassroot level despite many problem.

Today almost all parties even those opposed to it do agree that it would be desirable to see increased representation of women in legislature. Besides direct reservation there are several other proposals around, all intended to increase women's presence in legislatures. There is Election Commission proposal that it be made mandatory for political parties to select a minimum percentage of women candidates or face de-registration and de-recognition, entailing loss of symbol. There is the view that one third seats in the legislatures could be declared "dual membership constituencies" to be represented by two members, one of them a women. The agreement is that men will lose nothing, women will gain.

Women in India have been able to break the gender bias barrier in many professions. Women have been able to open the doors to top corporate jobs, to the civil services, journalism and a whole range of other fields considered exclusive male bastions.

Women cannot, must not and will not be kept away from politics with or without direct reservation. And political parties need to understand that. Despite many a party having women at the fore front be it the congress which has had five women presidents in its 118 year long history, the Samata Party which had a women president is Jaya Jaitley, the BSP and AIADMK where the merit of Mayawati and Jayalathitha respectively, or the Peoples Democratic Party where Mehbooba Mufti is the driving force.

Besides some women who have reached at the high level some are still at the bottom lines. Even 33% reservation for women has not translated into action. However Brinda Karat who walked out of the party congress in 1998 protesting against the reduced presence of women in the panel drawn up for electing the next central committee.

At present, 15 % offices in local and district level are occupied by women. It was observed that the women who have elected in Panchayats are due to reservation of seat. Block of Indore district has 22 women as Sarpanches and 179 women as Panches¹⁹ women outnumbered men in attendance, expression, improvement in their planning strategy, concern for the deprived and depressed. Prior to this reservation women had been relegated to the periphery as far as governance was concerned and have largely remained voiceless, passive and almost invisible citizen. Women autonomy is an important corollary of development in the widest sense of enlarging women's choices and in the attainment of full personhood (Nussbaum and Grover, 1995). Women autonomy denotes independence that women have in their functioning and takes into account the activities that women engage in and the power they exercise as consequence of their status. Status on the other hand denotes women's position (Das. 2002.).

In an attempt to enhance women's autonomy seventy third amendment aims at involving women at local level institution through allotting one-third reservation of seats to women at different levels. They provide

¹⁹ Kurukshetra, March, 1999.

them an opportunity to actively take part in governance of rural areas and assume:

- Shared perception of justice, deprivation and oppression.
- Shared experience of marginalisation vis-à-vis power structure.
- Collective empowerment through representation and democratic process will give their voice a feeling of solidarity and democratize politics.
- Affirmative action will build a critical mass of local leadership from such group who will be active participant in the strategic decision-making process.

This amendment was introduced to enable participation in the preparation and implementation of developmental plans and to strengthen the democratic institution at the grassroot levels. The question arises: Does women leadership has assumed great significance in the context of 73rd constitutional amendment?

Chatper-3

STRUCTURE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN MADHYA PRADESH : A BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focusses on the organisational structure of Panchayats in Madhya Pradesh. It describes the historical evolution of the present structure through various acts leading to the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Act 1993. As our primary concern is the participation of women the second part of the chapter discusses the various attempts made to provide representation and whether these have succeeded in providing women participation in local bodies

The state of Madhya Pradesh was created on Nov.1, 1956 out of five units: Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Bhopal, Sironj Subdivision and Mahakoshal (the old Central Province). When the new state of Madhya Pradesh came into being in 1956, Mahakoshal and Madhya Bharat had their own Panchayat System, even prior to independence. While in the Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh parts it was initiated only in 1948 as per the Central Government's Gram Panchayat ordinance of that year. Since other parts, Sironj subdivision was part of small and medium sized princely states, Panchayat institution although initiated had not taken proper shape. It is only

the Panchayats in Mahakoshal and Madhya Bharat that require our attention¹.

TRADITIONAL PANCHAYATS

MAHAKOSHAL

Mahakoshal was a part of the old central province and Berar. In this region Panchayat institutions traditionally had a two tier system Gram Panchayats at the village level and Janpad Sabhas at the tehsil level. Acting on the Government of India's recommendations, in 1920 the state legislature passed the Central provinces and Berar local self Government Act. In 1946 a new central province and Berar Panchayat Act was enacted. This act was implemented from 1947, and the Gram Panchayats under this act were entrusted with civic functions while the Nyaya Panchayats established under it had judicial function. The act had a special provision for the constitution of tribal Panchayats. Government took powers to exempt tribal majority areas from the normal Constitution of Panchayats and to establish a special structure of tribal Panchayat and Pargana Panchayats in such tribal areas. Tribal Panchayats had elected members but government nominated sarpanches².

¹ Status of Panchayat Raj in the State of India 1994, ISS

² Status of Panchayati Raj 2000 (ISS)

MADHYA BHARAT

The state of Madhya Bharat was formed by merging a number of princely states, which had a Panchayat System. Holkar was the first state to have enacted a Panchayat legislation in 1920. Gwalior and Indore and some smaller states had formulated. Panchayat Act in 1929, while the new states of Madhya Bharat had also paid special attention to the development of Panchayats. In order to bring about uniformity, the state had, in 1949 enacted the Madhya Bharat Panchayati Raj Act. The noteworthy feature of this act was the provision for the creation of a three tier system, that is, the Gram Panchayat at the village level, Kendriya Panchayat at the Block level and Mandal Panchyat at the district level. A Nyaya Panchayat was established for every Gram Sewak Circle, that is, the area within the working jurisdiction of the Gram Sewak, a functionary in the department of Agriculture operating at the village level. Originally, there were ten Gram Sewaks in every block. A system of Panchayats in the region, being three tier since 1999, was more organised than in the other regions of the composite state. An important feature of the system was that the development funds for certain important works were transferred to Mandal Panchayats for implementation and completion of the schemes. Mandal Panchayats had been provided with a good infrastructure and equipment to become effective development institutions.

BHOPAL

In the state of Bhopal, Gram Panchayats were first established in 1947 with a Royal Farman (order). A Gram Panchayat was constituted for a population of 1000 in one or more village but had very limited scope of work. When Bhopal became a *part C*³ state in 1950, it extended the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Act 1947, by a notification of 10th September 1951. It later enacted Bhopal State Panchayati Raj Act 1953, which was substantially fashioned after the Uttar Pradesh enactment. It included provisions for assigning number of seats to Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes in the first election in proportion to their population in the Gram Sabha area. The Gram Panchayat was conceived as an executive of the Gram Sabha and to have members between sixteen to thirty.

VINDHYA PRADESH

The state of Vindya Pradesh started its Panchyat system with the Village Panchayats Ordinance of May 1949 which became effective only in October 1951. Village Panchayats were established for every Patwari Circle. In November 1956, this region had 1,745 such Village Panchayats besides the 61 earlier established in the selected Villages and 585 A Nyaya Panchayats serving the entire rural population of Vindhya Pradesh.

³ Part C – Madhya Pradesh Comprises five regions – Madhya Bharat Vindhya Pradesh and Bhopal first part B states Indian constitution make Bhopal part C state.

Sironj Sub-Division

Sironj was a part of Rajasthan in which Rajasthan Panchayat Raj Ordinance promulgated in 1948 was applicable. The Rajasthan Panchayat Act which came into force in 1954 provided for a Village Panchayat for a population of 3000 to 5000 generally including eight to twelve villages. The B Panchayat also functional as judicial bodies. There was a tehsil Panchayat for each tehsil to supervise and control the Gram Panchayats. It also acted as an appellate court over the Gram Panchayats.

A Uniform Pattern

After the formation of the new state, the state government felt the need for a uniform system of Panchayats in all the merging regions. It appointed a local self government Committee headed by Kashi Prasad Pande in 1957 to suggest a suitable pattern. The committee, taking note of the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee and keeping in mind the existing three-tier system of Panchayat in the Madhya Bharat region, recommended by similar region. Consequently, in 1962, the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act was put on the statute book. The Act of 1962 provided for Gram Panchayats at the village level, jan pad Panchayats at the block level and Zilla Panchayats at the district level.

Gram Panchayat covered a population of the one thousand and consisted of ten wards. One hundred eligible voters elected one members

known as the Panch to the Gram Panchyat⁴. The chairpersons or Sarpanches of the Gram Panchyat along with some co-opted members, constituted the Janpad Panchyats at the block level.

The first Gram Panchayat elections were held in 1965, to be followed by elections in 1970, 1978, 1983, 1989 on a regular basis. In 1978, the minimum age for the franchise was reduced to eighteen years through an amendment of the 1962 Act. In 1981 a new Panchayat Act called the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Act, 1981 was passed by the legislative Assembly. It was amended in 1988 to provide for reservation for the SCs, STs and women in the Gram Panchayats. Another Panchayat Act known as Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Act, 1990 was adopted two years later.

Gram Sabha – The 1990 Act provided for a gram Sabha, Coterminus with a Patwari circle, which could be one village or a group of villages. The voters in the area covered by the Gram Sabha were its members. A meeting of the gram Sabha was to be called atleast once a year to acquaint the members with the development work.

Gram Panchayat – There was a Gram Panchayat for every Gram sabha which was a corporate body. Every gram Panchayat had elected panches and Sarpanches and co-opted members.

Janpad Panchayat – The janpad panchayats were constituted in 1971, after many years of delay. Every Janpad Panchayat was composed

⁴ Status of Panchayati Raj In the States of India 1994.

of (a) the adhyaksh, (b) the Sarpanches of the gram panchayats within the block; (c) the co-opted members, (d) a representative each from the municipal corporation, municipal committee, notified area committee and the special area development authority in the block, and (e) all the members of the legislative assembly representing the constituencies of which block was a part. If the janpad panchayat members did not include a member of the *mandi*⁵ committee in the block, the committee would elect from its members a representative to the janpad panchayat.

Zilla Panchayat

Zilla Panchayats were constituted only in 1984, although they had been provided under the 1962 Act. Every Zilla Panchayat Consisted: (1) the Pradhan of the Zilla Panchayat (2) the adhyakshas of the Janpad Panchayat of the district; (3) a representative each from the municipal corporations, municipal committees and the notified area committees in the district, (4) all the members of the Lok Sabha representing parliamentary constituencies which were wholly or partly included in the district; (5) all the members of the Rajya Sabha who had been returned from the state and were ordinarily residing in the district; (6) all the members of the Legislative Assembly representing assembly constituencies which wholly or partly formed part of the district. If a Zilla Parishad did not have a SC/ST member, it was to co-opt

⁵ *Mandi*-mean a market place where farmers bring their crops for sale. The management of the market is entrusted to an elected committee of representatives from the farmers and the merchants.

a member of the SC/ST provided the member was a voter of any Grams Sabha of the district.

Twenty percent of the wards of Gram Panchayats were reserved for women, the minimum member bring two, with 10 percent of the seats of Sarpanches in a block, janpad adhyakshas (with a minimum of one) in a district and Zilla Pradhan in the state also being reserved from women.

PANCHAYATS IN TRIBAL AREAS

Madhya Pradesh which covered a substantial tribal areas. By and large the tribal communities in India particularly till the attainment of independence have remained comparatively isolated. This enabeld them to maintain an uninterrupted long tradition of a well knit – cohesive social structure and value system. The traditional tribal bodies-tribal councils or tribal Panchyats are one of the oldest known institutions of a local self government nature.

The central province and Berar panchayat Act of 1946 had taken note of the special needs of tribal areas by the amendment of 1950. Chapter six of this act provided for setting up of tribal and pargana panchayats in the tribal majority areas. Section 156 of this amended act stipulated that if the state government was of the opinion that standard panchayat structure was unsuitable for any tribal majority area, it could set up alternative tribal and pargana panchayats. The act of 1962 included 90 on the lines of this earlier act for setting up of tribal and pargana panchayats, (later named kshetra

panchayats) in tribal majority areas of the state. The state used this power and set up such panchayats in Bastar district and Jashpur sub-division of Raigarh district. Later, however it was reversed and the normal provisions were made applicable in 1972.

The Panchayat Acts of 1981, 1990 & 1993 did not make any exception for the tribal areas. The major gain from the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam, 1993 accruing to the tribal people was in the field of reservation of seats for their representation in all the three tiers of the panchayats⁶. The quota of reserved seats for the scheduled tribes was to be in proportion to their strength in the population of the tiers of gram panchayats, janpad panchayats and zilla panchayats⁷.

Though the 73rd. constitutional amendments Act & the Madhya Pradesh Panchyati Raj Adhiniyam, 1993 which was modelled on the lines suggested by the 73rd amendment Act, provided respectable spaces to the tribal people in the working of the panchayati raj system such legislation could not make the tribal communities the sole masters of their socio-political destinies in their homelands. The need was always felt that the institutional structures within the scheduled areas were to be in consonance with the tribal needs, ethos & tribal communities with which people were familiar for ages (Purohit 2002)⁸.

⁶ Singh (Yatindra) Economic and Political Weekly, Oct. 5,2002.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Singh (Yatindra) Economic and Political Weekly, Oct. 5, 2002.

As a result of such needs of the tribal communities, a committee of parliamentarians and experts was appointed in June 1944 by the government of India under the chairmanship of Dileep Singh Bhuria. The purpose of the high-level committee was "to discuss and examine the issues relating to extension of the provision of part IX of the Constitution to the Scheduled areas and to make recommendations on the salient features of the laws for extending the provisions of their part of the constitution to the scheduled areas". When adopted, many of the principal recommendation of the Bhuria committee were accepted by the Union government and the legislation was passed, to be known as Panchayat Act 1996.

The Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam (Dwitiya sansodhan) 1997 was enacted by the state assembly. The Adhiniyam received the governor's assent on Dec 2 1997 and was promulgated on Dec 5, 1997. While redefining the powers of panchayati raj institutions, the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam 1997 adds chapter XIV. which delineates the constitution of gram sabhas, gram panchayats and prescribes the made of reservation of seats for them along with the powers and functions of these bodies/ institutions of the scheduled areas.

Under section 7 of the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam Act 1997, the gram sabhas of scheduled areas have special powers and function and distinctive characteristics in comparison to the general panchayat Raj institutions. These are: to safeguard and preserve the traditions and custom of the people, their cultural identity and community

resources, to manage natural resources including land, water and forests within the area of the village in accordance with its tradition and in harmony with the provision of the constitution and with due regard to the spirit of other relevant laws in force, to control local plans, resources and expenditure for such plans including tribal sub-plans and to perform and exercise such other powers and functions as the state government may confer on or entrust under any law for the time being in force. This catalogue of powers of scheduled area panchayats shows that they have been equipped with special powers for the preservation of tribal identities.

The most significant aspect of the amendment package is the recognition of the need to safeguard & preserve the tradition and customs of the tribal people. So we can say that, the panchayats of scheduled areas in Madhya Pradesh will on the one hand, have the first taste of democratic decentralization and on the other, will be able to protect and safeguard their cultural identity, cultural tradition & customs.

Secondly, the history of tribal societies during the past years would show that people of scheduled tribes have lost their rights over land, water and forest. The resource basis of the tribal people were snatched away from them by the outsiders and the tribal societies were dispossessed by laws such as land Alienation Act, Mining Laws, Forest Act and Wildlife Act. Tribal Societies after the passing of the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam (Dwitiya sanshodhan) Act, 1997 should now feel compensated as section 129-C (iii) empowers the gram sabha in scheduled areas "to

manage natural resources, including land, water and forests within the area of the village with its traditions". This would be like regaining "the lost horizon" for the tribal people.

In scheduled areas of Madhya Pradesh, the village level situation is different from the provisions in the amendment. At the state level efforts have been made to empower the people at grass roots level but the people at large are in different and uninformed about this change. They are not even aware of such an amendment and its provisions (sisodia 2002). The panchayat raj institutions in scheduled areas are specially empowered to work as units of self governance. But it has been observed that the level of awareness and exposure among panchayat raj representations is very low.

MADHYA PRADESH PANCHAYATI RAJ ADHINIYAM

Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam 1994 received the governor's assent on 24 Jan 1994, was published on 25th Jan and came into force with immediate effect. It is a new enactment and repeals the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam of 1993. It has 132 sections divided into XV chapters and has 4 schedules⁹. The Act does not lay down any time frame for holding the first election after it came into force. Panchayat elections, however, have already been completed within six months of the act coming into force.

⁹ Panchayati Raj Institution and Institution of Self Government, A study of 11 state Acts. Aug. 1994, ISS.

Chapter II of the act provides for a Gram Sabha, but it meets compulsorily only once in a year (section 6) Certain matters are placed before it and the Gram sabha's function is limited to discussing them. The Act says that the Gram panchayat shall consider the suggestion if any, made by the gram sabha Obviously the Gram Sabha is a body and it can achieve little by meeting only once in a year. This reduces the potential of the entire system.

Character of a panchayat depends on its power and whether it has the resources to do what is expected of it, and how free it is to do so. Chapter VI, of the at Act deal with functions and powers, chapter VII with funds, chapter VIII with establishment and budget, IX with takes etc, and X with control and some other provision dealing with supervisory aspects¹⁰.

Section 49 of the act lists 29 functions with several sub-divisions mainly relating to sanitation, conservancy, village lighting, construction and maintenance of utility items etc. but the entire provision is circumscribed by the governing clause that the Gram Panchayat shall perform those functions, "so far as Gram Panchayat Fund" allows. Section 50 of the Act also opens with a similar clause. Functions listed in this are integrated rural development, agriculture, social forestry animal husbandry, health adult education and so on.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Section 73 of the act deals with budget but it says little. Almost everything is left to the rule making authority of the government. It says:

- i) Every panchayat shall prepare in such form and in such manner and by such date, as may be prescribed budget estimates for the next year.
- ii) The budget estimates prepared under sub-section (i) shall be approved by such authorities and in such manner as may be prescribed
- iii) The annual accounts and reports of administration by panchayats shall be presented to the prescribed authority in the prescribed manner.

The state government or the prescribed authority appoints the secretary to a Gram Panchayat and the state government appoints the chief executive officer for the janpad panchayat and the secretary of Zilla Parishad (section 69). Panchayats may appoint other officers and servants as they may consider necessary, but only with the "previous approval of the prescribed authority" and the salaries service conditions, methods of recruitment and disciplinary control on them have to be such as "may be prescribed (section 70). The state government has the power to depute officers and staff as it considers necessary and the terms of deputation has to be such as may be time to time. Functions of the chief executive officer of panchayats at different levels also remain to be prescribed. Most of the

matter relating to personnel are to be prescribed by the state. They will have little choice in the matter.

Chapter X deals with control. The state government can hold enquiry into any matter concerning a panchayat (section 88). A panchayat can be inspected by an officer duly authorized by the state government. Resolution of a panchayat can be suspended on certain grounds by the state government or the prescribed authority. A panchayat may be directed to execute any work, in public interest by the state government or the prescribed authority. Finally, for reasons of default in performance of duties or abuse of authority, or failure to comply with government's directions, a panchayat may also be dissolved after such enquiry as may be considered fit.

Section 93 of the act empowers the state government to delegate to any officer subordinate to it or to any panchayat any of the power it has under the act except the power relating to framing of rules¹¹.

MLAs are members of the Janpad Panchayat and MLAs, MPs are members of Zilla Parishad. Chairman of District Cooperative Bank and District Cooperative Development Bank are also members of the Zilla parishad. If at all necessary, chairman of local Banks can come as invitees.

Such as omnibus provision without any demarcation of area among different layers of panchayat will create enormous difficulties in planning and

¹¹ Ibid.

implementation. Who is responsible for what? Each of the subject, listed in section 50 (1) is of such immediate interest that no panchayati institution can be kept aloof and if all have to participate and share responsibilities it is only necessary that the operational area of panchayats of village, janpad and district level is meticulously demarcated to facilitate smooth functioning and ensure accountability

The Janpad panchayat is to control and supervise the administration of community development and tribal development Blocks but this is to be done in accordance with the instructions issued by the state government from time to time (section 50 (2)). The state government may assign certain functions to the Janpad Panchayat, but where assignment is done, the janpad panchayat is to "act as an agent of the state government" (section 51 (2)).

Duty of the Zila Panchayat is again described in general terms in section 52. It is clear that the District Rural Development Agency will continue functioning and the schemes assigned to it, are to be implemented under "the Superintendence, direction and control of Zilla Panchayat in accordance with the instructions issued by the state government from time to time.

Article 243 (G) of the constitution left it to the state legislature to endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to functions as institutions of self government "and it was for the state legislature to empower the panchayats with respect to the

preparation of plan for economic development and social justice. State legislation has, instead empowered the government to entrust the panchayat by general or special order with such powers. The subjects mentioned in the XIth schedule of the constitution are enumerated in the IVth schedule of Madhya Pradesh Act and section 59 leave it to the government to do as it thinks fit. There may be addition to functions and the state government may also "withdraw the functions and duties entrusted" to them.

The act gives Gram Panchayat certain regulatory functions relating to conservancy, sanitation, removal of encroachment etc. and some such powers have also been given to the Janpad Panchayats. Their powers by themselves do not enhance their stature.

Panchayats do not emerge as anything better than as agents of the state government to execute certain schemes as may be entrusted to them from time to time. Madhya Pradesh government has decided to allocate Rs 20 lakhs to each MLA for area development (1994)¹². This may be on the pattern of MP's area Development Scheme. Such large sums set apart and to be spent on schemes (though it is part of district plan) will put other members to disadvantage. It will distort the planning process in the district and is bound to diminish local initiative and thereby weaken Panchayati Raj institutions.

¹² Panchayati Raj in India Status Report of 1999. Taskforce on Panchayati Raj Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi.

The state government has no doubt been prompt in holding elections and this is welcome. But the act as such does not give the Panchayati Raj institutions the scope, resources and functional independence to grow as self governing institutions.

WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT

In independent India, the constitution after guaranteeing equality to women in all spheres, left their political representation to their own williness, opportunity and support even while providing for reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Parliament and States legislature. As far as the Panchayats are concerned the constitution only provided in Article 40 that the state should endeavour to organise village Panchayats and 'endow them with powers and authority as may be necessary for them to function as units of self government.

The Balwant Rai Mehta study team also suggested a 'co-option of two members who are interested in work among women and children. It also suggested similar co-option in the village Panchayat. The rural local self government set up by Madhya Pradesh in 1957 echoed the view of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee and recommended that each Panchayat have nine to eighteen members including three nominated members. For representation of women, the committee said, "we are in favour of representation by means of nomination in view of the need to encourage women in rural areas". There was also inclusion of a women by nomination when recommending the minimum number of panches for a Panchayats. In

Janpad panchayats if no woman or a member of SC or ST was elected such members should be co-opted.

When the Asoka Mehta Committee reviewed the Panchayati Raj system in 1978, it also continued women's token representation but it suggested that if no women were elected, two women who would get the highest number of votes in the Zilla Parishad elections, should be made members. In the event of no women coming forward for election, two women might be co-opted. In the mean time, the committee on the status of women in India was set up in 1971 to look into all aspects of women's status including political participation.

The whole affair of co-option and nomination of women in the local bodies, it was believed would lead to their greater participation in the local political processes and thereby promote empowerment. Though the experiment had not proved totally satisfactory. In most cases rather than the elected women in local level bodies, their male relatives and male counterparts would wield power on their behalf. The philosophy of participation in this regard failed to promote socio-economic and political advancement which should be cardinal feature until women do not acquire decision making power whole notion of participatory management will be a failure. Recent policies have concentrated on bringing women to every fold of decision making bodies but their participation cannot be fruitful until they are empowered. Empowerment should precede participation rather than succeeding it. The state is still stressing upon 'how much' they are

empowered rather than "for what they are empowered". We still believe "holding the stick" for their development rather than handing over the stick to them. But handing over the stick signifies the dismantling of the patriarchal power structure which will definitely not be appreciated by their counter gender. This can only be done by authentic participation in every walk of life where the voice of the women should be heard and which should pave the way to greater independence and self sufficiency.

Through election women have managed to enter panchayats in some cases, take charge of the local level bodies. However empowerment does not mean merely getting reservation, above all they should be able to attend to their needs by themselves. The seventy third constitutional amendment for the first time provide 33.3 percent reservation for women in local bodies, and enables participation in the decision making process. Hence representation of women in the local bodies, assumes an added significance.

The United Nations Human development report 1991 says that the empowerment of women has multiple benefits not only for the environment but for humanity as a whole. Ensuring sustainable development requires women's empowerment and their full, equal beneficial involvement in the decision making process. But the question arises, after contesting election, who are these women are they literate, or illiterate, party workers or non party workers, or they are proxies for male members and what sort of participation, are they actual participating in the decision making bodies. Participation has two dimensions quantitative and qualitative. Women participation in terms of mere numbers in the Panchayat Raj Institution had

no meaning. Women need a qualitative participation in Panchayati Raj institutions. In a study of Panchayats and women in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the late 90's (Buch 1999) it was reported that women who were elected to the Panchayats showed a wider representation from social and economic groups. They were predominantly young, married, illiterate or literate. In Madhya Pradesh almost 75% were below 45 years of age, 58% chairpersons and 64.5% members were from below poverty line families (Status Report 1999). Contrary to the general perception about rural women in Panchayats having low levels awareness, low participation, women's. Proxism and namesake membership. A good number were found to have good awareness and participation levels when seen on the indicators of regular attendance, time devoted, petitions received and attended, efforts made to carry their view point and to overcome difficulties in Panchayat work. But it is also noted that they generally only register their presence and in most cases they are never given opportunities to speak or to express themselves. Fear, tradition and lack of awareness were seen as major constraints. In most cases even if issues are opposed by women they are not taken seriously and are ignored.

Again the outcome of election is in question. How much power do women, who are sharing platform with their male counterpart wield in the administration. The major factor which really influences the degree of their participation lies in their socio-economic background. Until they are not socially and economically empowered their political manifestation in any sphere of democracy cannot bring any good to society. Pradeep Narayanan advocates that their participation in democracy is not only beneficial for them but also for the society. But logic of participation cannot bring any fair result. If few

selected heads are being elected to any democratic body it does not signify the actual participation of the suffering community as a whole. Again empowerment has a crucial role to play. Until and unless they are not socio-economic empower their participation in any decision making bodies will not be productive. For their empowerment state has to play a major role providing education, health and job opportunities in social sphere. In a way it has to go against the present power. Structure because here the difference of 'we' and 'they' is still deep rooted. Until the society does not offer similar plank in every sphere to women the whole philosophy of participation and election will be of no use.

Panchayats have had a long history in the country. The roots of local self government can be traced from early Medieval period (800 AD) and were taken forward in the colonial period.

As far as the traditional Panchayat are concerned they had their own local mechanism. After independence and formation of new states in 1956, further dynamic changes have been introduced to traditional structures. A uniformity has been introduced to multichromatic local systems. But as an exception few tribal areas were still continuing with their old mechanism. After the seventy third amendment Act they were also brought into the mainstream. The Madhya Pradesh government has introduced the Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam 1993 with the Cardinal principle of women's reservation after forty-three year of independence. State government has realised the need to facilitate the suffering gender. But still it has a long way to go. Reservation and participation are still high sounding words with little substance.

These efforts cannot be fruitful until the suffering gender has not been empowered to contend on a similar plank with their counter gender. This empowerment can only be done by the socio-economic upliftment of the suffering gender. For this we have to contend with the present power patriarchal and political structure. It will not be a pleasant experience for the counter gender to share the decision making bodies with so called weaker sex.

Chapter-4

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MADHYA PRADESH PANCHAYATI RAJ

INTRODUCTION

Most of the approaches aimed at increasing the participation of people in development, assume that this will uniformly lead to empowerment of the marginalised sections¹. The programmes administered by the government view women as 'object' of development and make provisions for 'what they can' rather than what women need. The need for understanding local realities saw gradual emergence of the concept of 'Empowerment through participation of women. Basically participation is presented as the rightful claim of excluded sections². But the question is how effective or authentic the participation is?

The aim of participatory approach is to give voice to excluded sections whose voices are ignored or not heard. If in the long run participation achieves this aim and promotes a profound change in socio-economic political institutions beneficial to the marginalised people, it can safely be termed as authentic. However, if participation leads to reproduction of power relationship, identical or similar or perpetuates the dependency relationship in all spheres like from decision making to power holding, it

¹ Narayanan, Pradeep, 2003, Economic and Political Weekly, June 21.

² Ibid.

cannot be construed as real participation³. Giving 33% reservation aim to facilitate women's empowerment so that they can analyse and content with the problems. This means that articulation of issues by elected representatives, belonging to the excluded sections in Panchayati Raj. Their participation is bound to broaden the agenda of the Panchayati Raj by including women oriented issues like education, health etc. However, local government elections with reservations for women who have been suppressed and Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribes who have been subjugated for long time have been given a new platform.

Electoral representation in 1994 and 2000 Panchayat elections.

Madhya Pradesh was the first state to hold Panchayat election after the Seventy third Amendment. The Chief Minister Mr. Digvijay Singh stated that election for the Panchayats in the state would be held before the end of June 1994. Panchayat election in Madhya Pradesh will be held on non-party basis. Mr. Digvijay Singh stated that his aim was to keep Panchayat elections away from party politics and to eliminating enmity among villagers. Panchayat election in Madhya Pradesh was held in three phases, the first on May 23, May 30 and June 7, 1999. In a massive electoral exercise in rural Madhya Pradesh, around 3.08 crore voters elected 4,45,879 Panches, 31,126 Sarpanches, 9097 members of the Janpad Panchayats and 946 members of the district Panchayats⁴.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Panchayati Raj State News 1999 ISS Publications.

The state has a total of 31126 village Panchayats, 459 Janpad Panchayats and 45 district Panchayats. See table 4.1⁵

Table 4.1
Panchayati Raj Institution in Madhya Pradesh at a Glance 1994

1. Total number of	
(i) Gram Panchayats	31126
(ii) Janpad Panchayats	459
(iii) Zilla Panchayats	45
2. Number of	
(i) Panches of Gram Panchayat	4,45,879
(ii) Sarpanches of Gram Panchayat	31126
(iii) Janpad Panchayat member	9097
(iv) Zilla Panchayat member	947
3. Number of	
(i) Voters	30,80,000

State Election Commission finalised the model code of conduct for the panchayat polls on 23 April 1994. For example during the election process candidates are disallowed from sanctioning grants and they should not incur expenses on election meetings etc.

In Table 4.2⁶, Reservation of Seats, 1994 election Madhya Pradesh is given. In Table 4.3⁷ results of women representatives in Panchayat elections 1994 is given.

⁵ Panchayati Raj State news 1999 ISS Publications.

⁶ Source-State Election Commission, M.P

⁷ Ibid

Table 4.2: Reservation of seats, 1994 elections Madhya Pradesh*

Level of Panchayat & post	TOTAL SEATS	SC			ST			OBC			GENERAL			Total		
		M/F	F	TOTAL	M/F	F	TOTAL	M/F	F	TOTAL	M/F	F	TOTAL	M/F	F	TOTAL
GRAM PANCHAYAT																
(i)Panch	445879	42842	22288	65130	87620	44864	132848	48840	26347	75187	113707	56921	170628	293009	150420	443427
(ii)Sarpanch	31126	2997	1506	4503	6039	2990	9029	3584	1791	5375	8146	3869	12015	20766	10156	30922
Janpad Panchayat																
Member	9097	882	433	1315	1819	918	2737	1037	540	1577	2340	1128	3468	6078	3019	9097
ZILA PANCHAYAT																
Member	946	92	51	143	182	88	269	115	56	171	241	122	363	630	316	946

* Undivided

Source: State Election Commission, MP

Table 4.3 : Panchayat Representatives in M.P.* Panchayat Elections 1994

Panchayat Level/Post	Total Place	WOMEN				
		Total	SC	ST	OBC	General
Zila Panchayat Adhyaksh	45	15	2	4	4	5
Member	946	319	51	89	56	123
Janpad Panchayat Adhyaksh	459	162	20	49	30	63
Member	9097	3109	436	942	527	1204
Gram Panchayat Sarpanch	31126	10519	1514	3078	1855	4072
Panch	445879	150990	22467	45132	26453	56938
Total	487048	164937 (33.86)	24468 (14.89)	49241 (29.86)	28891 (17.51)	62337 (37.79)

* Undivided MP Source: State Directorate of Panchayats.

Note: 1. As ZP/JP Presidents are included in the elected members, their number not included in the Grand Total.

2. Figures in brackets are percentages.

In the elections in 1994, of the total numbers of Gram Panchayats 63.12 percent were elected without contest. Women who got reservation and in the general category contested and getting elected on unreserved seats⁸. 15 women became presidents of Zilla Panchayats against 45 posts, 2 SC candidates, 4 ST candidates, 4 OBC and 5 general. In Janpad Panchayat

⁸ Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India 2000.

162 women got elected against 459 post 20 SC candidates, 49 ST candidates, 30 other Backward class and 'general 63 candidates. In gram Panchayat total post was 31126; 10519 women got elected. Among SC candidate was 1514, ST candidate was 3078, OBC candidate was 1855 and General candidate was 4072. All total 48,7078 post were there, the total women who got elected was 164937 which shows (33.86%) among SC 24468 (14.89%), ST 4924 (29.86) OBC 28891 (17.51) and general category 62337 (37.79)⁹.

It is mandatory that every five years elections will be held, but election was not conducted in 1999. The second Panchayat elections was held on 28th January and 1st February 2000. Table 1.4¹⁰

Table 4.4

PANCHYATI RAJ IN MADHYA PRADESH 2000

1. Total number of	
(i) Gram Panchayats	30967
(ii) Janpad Panchayats	30967
(iii) Zilla Panchayats	9105
2. Number of	
(i) Panches of Gram Panchayat	4,43,793
(ii) Sarpanches of Gram Panchayat	30,967
(iii) Janpad Panchayat members	30,967
(iv) Zilla Panchayt members	9105

⁹ Source State Election Commission, M.P.

¹⁰ Ibid.

In Table 4.5 reservation of seats 1999-2000 election in Madhya Pradesh (Present M.P and Chhattisgarh) is shown. In Table 4.6 reserved posts and elected representative of Zilla/Janpad and Gram Panchayat, 1999-2000 Bifurcated Madhya Pradesh is shown. In Zilla Panchayat 17 post were reserved for women, 3 from SC, 3 from ST, 5 from OBC and 6 from General category, but 20 women got elected which shows that 4 from SC 4 from ST, 5 from OBC and 7 from general category. In Janpad Panchayat 111 seats were reserved for women, 13 for SC, 41 for ST, 24 for OBC and 33 for general category. Only in Scheduled Tribes 2 women post are not filled because of bifurcation of Madhya Pradesh. In General category 33 seats are reserved only 25 women got elected. In Gram Panchayat 7384 post were reserved for the Sarpanch, 7382 have been elected. If see the percentage of total women elected is 33.48, SC 15.80 ST 27.23 OBC 24.13, General 32.7.

Table 4.5: Reservation of seats 1999-2000 elections, Madhya Pradesh (Present MP + Chhattisgarh)

LEVEL OF PANCHAYAT & POST	Total no. of seats	SC			ST			OBC			General			Total		
		M/F	F	Total	M/F	F	Total	M/F	F	Total	M/F	F	Total	M/F	F	Total
Gram Panchayat																
(i)Panch	443793	22323	42785	65108	47497	91226	138723	25809	48841	74650	55006	110306	165312	150635	293158	443793
(ii)Sarpanch	30967	1337	2640	3977	4093	8222	12315	1762	3439	5201	3165	6309	9474	10357	20610	30967
Janpad Panchayaat Member	30967	1337	2640	3977	4093	8222	12315	1762	3439	5201	3165	6309	9474	10357	20610	30967
Zila Panchayat Members	9105	429	886	1315	948	1849	2797	571	1096	1667	1097	2229	3329	3045	6060	9105

Source: State Election Commission, M.P.

Table 4.6: Reserved posts and elected representatives of Zila / Janpad and Gram Panchayat, 1999-2000, Madhya Pradesh*

Panchayat	Designation		Total sites	SC	ST	OBC	Un-reserved	Women				
								Total Women	SC	ST	OBC	Un-reserved
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Zila Panchayat	Adhyaksh	Reserved	45	7	8	18	17	17	3	3	5	6
		Elected	45	7	8	17	13	20	4	4	5	7
	Member	Reserved	734	120	184	156	274	248	42	62	52	92
		Elected	730	114	186	211	218	265	48	62	84	7
2. Janpad Panchayat	Adhyaksh	Reserved	313	40	115	61	97	111	13	41	24	33
		Elected	312	40	115	80	77	111	13	39	34	25
	Member	Reserved	6456	1066	1722	1264	2464	2159	324	583	243	809
		Elected	6399	1025	1712	1706	1956	2245	351	613	616	665
3. Gram Panchayat	Sarpanch	Reserved	22029	3171	7343	4095	7420	7384	1053	2461	1384	2486
		Elected	21721	3172	7299	5222	6028	7382	1083	2488	1778	2033
	Panch	Reserved	314847	49448	85639	57008	122752	106491	16863	29181	19707	40740
		Elected	300384	48368	81541	71793	98880	100347	15943	26848	24121	33435

Source: State Election Commission, M.P.

* Bifurcated M.P.

After comparing the 1994 and 2000 data, it can be said that women's are being elected according to the reservation policy. But the question is what sort of participation it is and who is participating. There are large number of cases where the male relatives of women Sarpanches become the real headmen.

Exercising power by the male relative is that most common form of proxy rule. It's a real tough job to delineate the male counter part from their previous positions. Government has introduced reservation but reservation policy also short of expectation. Females who are coming forward for elections are the relatives of previous sarpanch or local leaders. The old brigade handling the affair from the back seat. Hence nobody felt the need to harness leadership ability in females because ultimately their male counter part will yield the power. Candidates from backward communities and women field their nominations for general seats. Owing to the rotation of reserved seats, many women members who were interested in Panchayat work could not file their nominations as their husbands and other family members themselves wanted to contest the elections. After the declaration of reservation policy few of the seats were exclusively reserved for female candidates but still they had to face a stiff resistance from their male counterpart. For example a Dalit women from Bamari village field her nomination for sarpanch¹¹. She had to face many proxy candidates supported by upper caste male counter parts. They could not do much harm

¹¹ Panchayati Raj State News 1999 ISS Pub.

to Basanti bai ¹² and she sailed through. But after being elected what power did she exercise? Just a ceremonial head. In fact she was left in oblivion and the whole election became a mockery. Election in the specific case of reserved seats for SC, ST women met with the worst fate.

Women of this strata were not only deprived of their social status but they were also denied of their political rights. How one can think of exercising political power without being given the social status. Casteism is still deeply entrenched in grass root level. So expecting any miracle from elections is highly unpragmatic. For instance Phoolwati¹³ a women sarpanch of Bamari Gram Panchayat (Hostangabad distt MP) is unaware any of her rights and duties because she has never been to the office for which she has elected. She has won the election because seat was reserved for SC women. The Rajput have formed the majority power group there and have up-sarpanch of their clan. They never allowed Phoolwati to step inside the office. She use to give her thumb impression where ever regarded. This is the only form of participation she is subjected to, rest of the affairs are handled smoothly by the upsarpanch. One can easily make out who is enjoying the power. So what is the efficacy of election when they are not being empowered to contend with existing power structure. How can we expect them to curb the steed of real power when they are not even empowered to elect somebody of their choice. Even their mandate are being dominated and influenced by their male counterpart be it father, brother son

¹² Panchayati Raj update 2000 ISS Pub.

¹³ Panchayati Raj State News 2000 ISS Pub.

or husband. Their economic dependency, illiteracy and the existing patriarchal system impedes them at every step. Government has definitely given them a weapon (in the form of reservation) to fight for their cause but they have been deprived of the skill to use the weapon. Here empowerment come into play it should precede participation. Without empowerment participation is impractical. For instance females who have been elected first time are usually illiterate, few have studied till fifth standard. The illiteracy is as high as 87% in Mhow block of Indore district¹⁴. All females of this area want to participate in local affairs of Panchayats but their illiteracy is the biggest hurdle. Who ever has come forward for election is being suppressed because of their lack of education. Their participation could not be of much use until they can at least handle a bit of paper work. For example Gundibai¹⁵ is a ST women's thrown into the local politics by her husband as the seat was reserved for ST women. (in Pipra Gram Panchayat). But her participation remained symbolic. Her illiteracy is the major handicap for active participation. She could not fight with the persisting customs convention until she knew her right and duties. For this she has to be educated as she can practically yield the power. Women are no doubt participating in the local sphere but such symbolic participation can not do any good to womanhood.

The major thrust of participation should be the cultivation of decision making ability in the marginal groups, which can not be done without

¹⁴ Kurukshetra Dec. 2001

¹⁵ Panchayat Raj State News 2000 ISS pub.

dismantling the old hierarchies of power structure and without strengthening the women in every walk of life. Here we should consider the fact that participation can be a remedy for deprived groups only when they have been empowered (at least nominally if not completely) to contend on the similar platform. Participation can be achieved only if people are liberated from the influence of the unequal power relationship. The use of participatory tools in themselves falls short of bringing about real participation. As, instead of challenging the power relationship, it promotes participation in the existing power structure. The state led participatory approaches may provide institutions and mechanism of participation, but their effectiveness depends on the understanding of local level problems. Unless, the women are empowered, their productive participation cannot be ensured and sustained.

There are three main indicators to assess the political status of women:

Firstly, participation as voters and candidates in elections.

Secondly, political attitudes such as awareness, involvement in politics and autonomy in political action and behaviour.

Thirdly, their impact on the political process.

Women have reached the first stage, i.e. participation as voters and candidates. But their authenticity of participation is in question? Of course, tools given by government have some flaws they have to be modified. They should be supplemented with mobilization of women to install awareness

and confidence in them. Therefore, it means without empowerment participation is less productive.

Reservation of seats for women will not bring a qualitative change in the functioning of Panchyati Raj. To achieve these objective some efforts are:

- (a) Strategy should be to strike at ignorance by dissemination of information and raising general as well as political awareness among rural women. Methods should be evolved to make the women acquainted with their own needs like health, legal right etc. They should be politically enlightened about the working of democratic institutions, concept and relevance of Panchayati Raj Act.
- (b) There is need for comprehensive and meaningful training for rural women for performing their constitutional duties and responsibilities as a member of a Panchayat. Training should aim at generating self confidence development of communication skills, forming opinion and articulating. The same to deal with the power structure.
- (c) The necessity is to organize rural women for breaking the cognitive attitude, barriers of inequality, indivisibility, powerlessness on the one hand and broadening the base for participatory development at grass roots level on the other.

However there is a ray of hope and the situation is not entirely grim. Some of the women have started playing a significant role for the upliftment

of the fellow being. They are showing keen interest in education and other developmental programmes. Given some more time, the women will definitely gain greater political maturity and wisdom to tackle any situation. The National Institute of Rural Development report states that the principal of reservation has done well in providing political opportunities to the women there are associated problems at the grassroot level such as women's diffidence to speak at meetings of the Gram Panchayat and Janpad panchayat levels, particularly for women who belong to the "lower" social and economic groups and those women who are not literate¹⁶.

Rural leadership has assumed significance in ten years. We can't say is altogether disappointing. The seventy third amendment did open the gate of Panchayati Raj for women to take part in the political process in an effective manner. The seventy third amendment is a looking step forward, where we can see the increased participation of women in the public sphere. As far as political representation is concerned, a beginning has been made in the right direction. Many tasks still remain incomplete in handing over effective political power to women. A decade is a short journey. The analysis made about the nature of participation by the women in Madhya Pradesh brought out in the NIRD study highlights this point.

"The Madhya Pradesh situation, represents broadly the situation as it exists all over the country, with the usual exception of Kerala and

¹⁶ India Panchayat Raj Report; Four decades of decentralized governance in Rural India, vol. 1 NIRD: Hyderabad 2001.

to a far lesser degree one or two other states". While some might as usual plead that ten years is too short a period to bring about changes, it is equally important to realize that a situation like this shows that ground realities are alarming and call for a speedy and massive responses¹⁷.

We are zeroing down up on the need of empowerment. Here our basic thrust is the realization of the efficacy of empowerment for the marginalised group. This state can provide legal, legislative and constitutional apparatus for the empowerment of women but here are several constraints still operating in different sphere where women are not allowed to develop their full potential.

¹⁷ India Panchayat Raj Report; Four decades of decentralized governance in Rural India, Vol. 1 NIRD: Hyderabad 2001.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment of marginalised, groups is *sin-quo-non* of democracy. Democracy, as a public institution will be a hollow sphere if it doesnot address the question of empowerment. Power should be equally shared by the different native groups irrespective of their caste, class, race and gender. Unfortunately this concept of democracy and power is very much limited to theoretical discourses. Practically every society is stratified into privileged and marginal groups. To achieve the real shape of democracy state has to work for the upliftment of marginal groups. This cannot be done untill and unless the state doesnot address the problem of empowerment in every field vis political, cultural and socio-economic sphere etc. It is a tough sphere of life task to contend with the existing power structure. Where ' power and knowledge has already setup a discourse. This cannot be dismantled easily. Marginalised groups has to carve their own niche to gain 'the say' in democracy. For this advancement only one weapon can help them and that is empowerment. Empowerment is a modern phenomenon which makes you realise your powerlessness deprivation, discrimination in your own capacity. It helps you to contend with all the maladies of life. It strengthen you to overcome subordination and discrimination of every kind. Marginalised group is a broad term which encapsulate many sections of society.

My study concentrates upon one of the most marginalised sections of society, that is women. It concentrats on Madhya Pradesh. As I have mentioned empowerment is a broad term which encapsulates many

fragments vis-à-vis social empowerment, political empowerment, economic empowerment cultural empowerment etc. As it is not conducive to address all the forms of empowerment simultaneously, my work is focussed on political empowerment of women in Panchayats. Why Panchayats? because development as a phenomenon can not be measured by a few glaring examples. Few of the females are doing exceptionally well in national politics but that sample cannot be taken for study because sample should be random. India is a developing country where 60% of the population still lives in villages. So for measuring actual level of participation (of females) in political sphere we have to zero down upon the grass root level. Panchayat as a local sphere of participation offers us a unique model to gauge the empowerment of women. Offcourse political manifestation can not solely be considered as a paradigm of empowerment but it will certainly work as is a indicator of development in very basic of society. Panchayat is not a novice phenomenon. History of Panchayat institution is very deep. It has been equipped and modified according to the need of present society. The watermark in this regard has been introduced by 73rd amendment. Madhya Pradesh is the first state that introduced reservation for woman in elections to Panchayats which was the cardinal feature of 73rd amendment.

In the same vein if we test the efficacy of political manifestation as a indicator of women empowerment it further unfolds many new vistas. Empowerment is very much related to the cultivation of decision making ability among marginalised groups. Women as a deprive section have always being subjected to subordination and subjugation. Our patriarchal

and feudal set up is still impeding the decision making capability of women. Definitely government has strengthened them with new reforms but how far they are effective that we have to see. So we can further incorporate new changes for the empowerment of women in every sphere of life.

Even after 55 years of independence women are suffering. They are still not being adequately represented in decision making bodies. Problems are chronic but we have to search some alternate to overpower them. Women are discriminated and deprived in every walk of life from social to economical to cultural and political. There are many constraints which form hurdles in the path to empowerment.

In the economic sphere their economic dependency is the biggest hassle. They are solely dependent on their male counterpart for every need. In spite of the fact that they are contributing efficiently in village economy. Being a developing nation still agriculture or primary sector contributes maximum in G.D.P. in agricultural economy it is inevitable to overlook women working force. They are working in the fields with their counter gender and also look after the home affairs. But they are either not paid or less paid in comparison to the male counterparts. This discrimination not only hamper their productivity but also give a negative impact on their psyche. In spite of the fact that female working population is high in villages and specially higher in tribal areas but their economic condition is still deplorable. They are busy in less productive and more visible activities which hardly earn them anything substantial. Economic independence is

necessary for empowerment because until they are not economically independent they can not pragmatically participate in decision making bodies.

The root cause of their deplorable condition lies in the social fabric. Even in this modern age females are the victim of Patriarchal setup. The Feudal mentality of their counter gender makes them realise their position in social hierarchy. Women are still looking towards their male counterparts for physical security. Social ethos, customs, value are working tooth and nail to make them realise their position. In every social sphere they are intentionally being treated as the weaker gender. On one hand they are being tagged as the weaker sex and on the other their male counter part pronounce themselves 'strong' automatically. Women are always subjected to discrimination from early childhood, she has to sacrifice herself for her male counterpart whether he is her brother, husband or son or who so ever. Their vulnerable health condition and their access to health facility are the indicator of their position in social fabric. High infant mortality rate, low fertility and low gender ratio are enough glaring indicators of persistent discrimination in society.

In this modern world where illiteracy is the greatest evil, women are the most vulnerable target. Either they are not being send to school because of household work or she has to sacrifice herself for her male counter part. The illiteracy ratio is as high as 80% in most of the villages. Here the nexus of power and knowledge come into play. No knowledge no question. It will

be easy to subjugate them in the existing power structure. In the same vein the social fabric is being cemented by the culture. From the very beginning they have to imbibe the distinction of masculine and feminine. They always have to find asylum in their male counter parts. They have been taught in every sphere of life that they are the weaker Sex. Certain occupation are reserved for males only, many do's of don'ts are imposed on them. They are always being subjected to security and they have to repay that security in the form of subjugation.

As it is in this background we are talking of their empowerment and political manifestation one should pragmatically feel the intensity of efforts needed for the empowerment of women. It is very easy to formulate a policy but it a real tough task to implement it. This task become toughest when you have to break the existing patriarchal structure to carve your own place. One has to understand the problems and dynamics of empowerment at the grass root level. State and Government both are trying hard to equip women with constitutional legislation and to gain their deserved position in the social fabric. Some legislation has been brought out in this regard. Major watershed was achieved by the 73rd amendment where women were redressed with 33% reservation in local bodies. Prior to this Balwant Rai Mehta and Ashok Mehta had suggested the methods of co-option and nomination to facilitate women in the political arena. In a similar vein Ashok Mehta had gone a step further and advocated the option of election, rather than co-option and nomination in 1978. Further this voice has been echoed by the 73rd amendment where 1/3 reservation has been introduced.

In the late 90s surveys were conducted to check the nature of participation and the background of candidates who have been elected to local bodies. These surveys revealed many lacunas of local politics. They also throw a light upon the qualitative and quantitative participation of females in local sphere. They reveal the extent of participation and also surfaced many inherent obstacles in the path of developing leadership quality. In a nutshell they question the basic argument of empowerment and election or any other form of participation. What role does empowerment play in carving leadership ability if it could not precede election? Virtually nothing because empowerment is *sin-quo-non* for every marginalised group who is aspiring for the basic participatory rights. In the specific case of women the basic philosophy of participation has received a set back because it has been unable to promote socioeconomic and political advancement. Until and unless women acquire decision making power the whole notion of participatory management will breed no success. Henceforth empowerment should precede participation, then only marginalised groups can contend with their counterparts on the similar plank.

One more stark feature has surfaced in due course of time. Legislation and government policies have definitely induced change. There is a remarkable increase in the number of female Sarpanch and other ranks. But unfortunately all these changes are quantitative rather than qualitative. Women who have been elected to local bodies are being ostracized from any actual decision making body. Again the major constraint lies in the socio-economic setup. One cannot expect any good result until and unless they make their mark in the socio-economy sphere. Which can only be done

by empowerment. We have to analyze the actual situation which cannot be realised from a distant plain. Here state has a vital role to play. It has to provide socio economic infrastructure so that women can calibrate herself according to the need of present scenario. At present their representation in local bodies is more symbolic. Usually they are elected on the reserved seats as the protégé of their male counter parts. The policy of reservation has definitely paved the way to panchayat office but still they are not equipped with the desired tools to fight with the existing power structure. Still proxy rules is the most common evil in panchayats. Male counter parts handle all the affairs. They are only used as a rubber stamp. A recent survey has brought many glaring examples of such proxy rules. In few of the cases women sarpanch have not even been allowed to visit the panchayat office. Condition is more deplorable in the villages where seats are reserved for SC or ST women. They have to face bpronged challenge one from their social status and another of being a women. As usual realities are bitter it is very easy to float any such change in the society but its hard to accept it in true senses.

Government and NGOs are working in this direction. They are both are trying hand to overhaul the whole infrastructure from education to health facilities from economic to political sphere and from social to cultural affairs. Many agencies are fighting tooth and nail for the upliftment of marginalised groups. But still many more problem are there to be addressed. Offcourse development, empowerment, participation etc are high sounding words but still people are trying their level best to achieve the basic tenets of Equality, Democracy, Fraternity and Social Justice.

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APPENDIX

MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh, Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam 1994 received governor's assent on 24 January, 1994 : was published on 25th January and came into force with immediate effect.

2. It is a new enactment and repeals Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam of 1990. It has 132 sections divided into XV chapters and has 4 shedules.
3. The Act does not lay down any time frame for holding the first election after the Act has come into force. Panchayat Elections, however, have already been completed – well- within six months of the Act coming into force.
4. **Gram Sabha:** Chapter II of the Act provides for a Gram Sabha, but it meets compulsorily only once in a year (Section 6). Certain matters are placed before it and the Gram Sabha's function is limited to 'discuss' them. The Act says that 'the Gram Panchayat shall consider the suggestion, if any, made by the Gram Sabha". Obviously, the Gram Sabha is a very weak body. It can achieve little by meeting only once in a year. This reduces the potential of the entire system.

5. Functions: Character of a Panchayat depends on:

- i) What it can do?
- ii) Whether it has the resources to do what is expected of it, and
- iii) How free it is to do so ?

Chapter VI, dealing with functions and powers, VII with funds. VIII with establishment and budget, IX with taxes etc, and X with control and some other provisions dealing with supervisory aspects have important bearing on these aspects.

Section 49 of the Act lists 29 functions with several sub-divisions mainly relating to sanitation, conservancy, village lighting, construction & maintenance of utility items etc. But the entire provision is circumscribed by the governing clause that the Gram Panchayat shall perform those functions, "So far as the Gram Panchayat Fund" allows. Section 50 of the Act also opens with a similar clause. Functions listed in this are sweeping – integrated rural development, agriculture, social forestry, animal husbandry, health, adult education and so on.

Such an omnibus provision without any demarcation of area among different layers of Panchayat will create enormous difficulties in planning and implementation. Who is responsible for what? Each of the subject listed in section 50(1)(a) as mentioned above, is of such

immediate interest that no Panchayati institution can be kept aloof and if all have to participate and share responsibilities it is only necessary that the operational area of Panchayats at village, Janpad and district level is meticulously demarcated to facilitate smooth functioning and ensure accountability.

The Janpad Panchayat is to control and supervise the administration of community development and tribal development Blocks, but this is to be done in accordance with the instructions issued by the state government from time to time (Section 50(2)). The state government may assign certain functions to the Janpad Panchayat, but where such assignment is done, the Janpad Panchayat is to "act as an agent of the state government" (Section 51(2)).

Duty of the Zila Panchayat is again described in general terms in Section 52. It is clear that the District Rural Development Agency will continue functioning and the schemes assigned to it, is to be implemented under "the superintendence, direction and control of Zila Panchayat, in accordance with the instructions issued by the state government from time to time."

Article 243 (G) of the Constitution left it to the state legislature "to endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self government" and it was for the state legislature to empower the

Panchayats with respect to the preparation development and social justice. State Leg empowered the government to entrust the Panchayats with such powers. The subjects mentioned in the Xth Schedule of the Constitution are enumerated in the 11th Schedule of the Panchayats (Extension of Functions and Powers) Act and Section 59 leaves it to the government to do as it thinks fit. There may be addition to functions and the state government may also "withdraw the functions and duties entrusted" to them.

The Act gives Gram Panchayat certain regulatory functions relating to conservancy, sanitation, removal of encroachment etc and some such powers have also been given to the Janpad panchayats. These powers by themselves do not enhance their stature.

Panchayats do not emerge as anything better than as agents of the state government to execute certain schemes as may be entrusted to them from time to time.

6. **Budget:** Section 73 of the Act deals with budget, but it says little. Almost everything is left to the rule-making authority of the government.

"1) Every Panchayat shall prepare in such form and in such manner and by such date, as may be prescribed budget estimates for the next year.

ii) The budget estimates prepared under sub-section (1) shall be approved by such authorities and in such manner as may be prescribed.

iv) The annual accounts and reports of administration by Panchayats shall be presented to the prescribed authority in the prescribed manner.”

Budget is too important a matter to be dealt with in this manner.

7. **Personnel:** The state government or the prescribed authority appoints the Secretary to a Gram Panchayat and the state government appoints the Chief Executive Officer of the Janpad Panchayat and the Secretary of Zila Parishad (Section 69).

8. Panchayats may appoint other officers and servants as they may consider necessary, but only with the “previous approval of the prescribed authority” and the salaries, service conditions, methods of recruitment and disciplinary control on them have to be such as “may be prescribed” (Section 70).

The state government has the power to depute officers and staff as it considers necessary and the terms of deputation has to be such as may be prescribed by the government from time to time.

Functions of the Chief Executive Officer of Panchayats at different levels also remain to be prescribed.

Most of the matters relating to personnel are to be prescribed by the state. The panchayats will have little choice in the matter.

9. **Control:** Chapter X deals with control. The state government can hold enquiry into any matter concerning a panchayat (Section 88).

A Panchayat can be inspected by an officer duly authorised by the state government.

Resolution of a Panchayat can be suspended on certain grounds by the state government or the prescribed authority. A Panchayat may be directed to execute any work, in public interest by the state government or the prescribed authority. Finally, for reasons of default in performance of duties or abuse of authority, or failure to comply with government's directions, a panchayat may also be dissolved after such enquiry as may be considered fit.

10. **Delegation:** Section 93 of the Act empowers the state government to delegate to any officer subordinate to it or to any Panchayat any of the power it has under the Act except the power relating to framing of rules.

Power to delegate is excessive and liable to be misused.

15. MLAs are members of the Janpad Panchayat and MLAs, MPs are members of Zilla Parishad. Chairman of District Cooperative Bank and District Cooperative Development Bank are also members of the Zila Parishad. If at all necessary, Chairman of Banks should have come as invitees.

16. It is learnt that M.P. government has decided to allocate Rs 20 lakhs to each MLA for area development. This may be on the pattern of M.P's Area Development Scheme. Such large sums set apart and to be spent on schemes (though part of the district plan) will put other members to disadvantage. It will distort the planning process in the district and is bound to diminish local initiative and thereby weaken Panchayati Raj institutions.

17. M.P. Act does not inspire. The state government has no doubt been prompt in holding elections and this is welcome. But the Act as such does not give the Panchayati Raj Institutions the scope, resources and functional independence to grow as self-governing institutions.

