

# Panchayati Raj and Empowerment of women A Case Study of Gohpur Subdivision in Biswanath district of Assam (India)

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**ABSTRACT:** Panchayati Raj Institution have been recognized as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation of rural India. They are the grass root unit of self –government playing a pivotal role in bringing changes in power, structure, and functions of both male and women members in the rural communities. Development impact on women and men are different , and the past few decades of development have been an alarming degree of feminization of poverty. Development in many cases has had negative impacts on a large proportion of women in general and rural women in particular. Gohpur is a Sub-division of Sonitpur District. Gohpur sub-division is divided into two blocks, Pub chaiduar and Pashimchaiduar. There are 34 Gaon Panchayat here, 33% of seats are reserved for women. Women in India are victims of a multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. Though women need to be empowered in all the areas, it is essential to make them economically independent. This paper try to focus the increasing tendency of women participation in PRIs. The present study also shows that education empowers women to participate in the PRIs.

**Key Words:** Women, Empowerment, Panchayati Raj, Education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Panchayati Raj Institution have been recognized as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation of rural India. They are the grass root unit of self –government playing a pivotal role in bringing changes in power, structure, and functions of both male and women members in the rural communities. Reservation of seats and authority positions for women have brought a large number of women to panchayats as members and presidents. [1] The enhanced quota for women and the category wise reservation also brought into panchayats a large proportion of first generation elected representatives. Though this should be construed as a welcome development, in some quarters doubts are being expressed about the

ability of women members to actually deliver the goods in the political space which is considered alien to them. A good deal of literatures has emerged decrying “the larger than the life size role “assigned to women in local governance. Indeed, bashing women members and presidents on this point has become fashionable in many circles even to the point of creating some myths about women’s participation in the local governance system. The purpose of this note is to objectively evaluate the real imaginary positions taken on the issue of women’s representation in grass root level.

## THE PROBLEM

Women are the source and resource of the nation. Their contribution to development cannot be set aside without due consideration. Even after five decades of planned development in India, women are compelled to fight for their right. There is cross discrimination against women and they are deprived from enjoying many benefits. Under this situation, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution provide that women form one-third of all representation in local bodies. Now many question arises out of the prevailing conditions in the panchayati Raj Institutions. Did they properly reserve the seats of women? Did they give due importance and equal in planning and implementing welfare programmes? The present study is an attempt to find answers to the above questions.

## Objectives

1. To know the socio-economic condition of the women participating in the PRLS.
2. To study the factors inducing women to participate in the PRLS.
3. To make possible suggestions to the identified problems.

## Methodology

For the present study, both primary and secondary data are collected. Primary data

collected by direct personal investigation, indirect oral investigation, by schedules and quaternaries and by local reports. Secondary data collected from various published and unpublished sources and official records. Sample survey techniques are used in collection of primary data. Here, simple random sampling is used

**Study Area**

Gohpur sub-Division is situated in the north bank of river Brahmaputra. It occupies an area of 609sq km. It is bounded in the east by Lakhimpur district of Assam, on the west by BiswanathChariali sub-division of Sonitpur District, on the north by Arunachal Pradesh and on the south by river Brahmaputra. The area extended from hawajan to river Buroi. The total population of Gohpur sub-division is 241,987(2001) of which 1,29,217 are males and 1,17,770 are females.

**II. DISCUSSION:**

**Socio-Economic Background**

It is essential to look into the Socio-Economic conditions of the women participants in the PRLs since they are act as inducing preventing factors in various social activities.

**Family Conditions**

Women are the managers of their family. The family size and its composition are influencing much the decision of women, whether to contest and participate in PRLs elections or not. If their family size is larger and include babies and elder people no women will have enough time to manage the house and participate in social activities of PRLs.

**Table 1.1:** Sex-wise and family size-wise distribution

Family size	WP family			WWP family			Grand Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
4	12	8	20	4	4	8	16	12	28
			5			2			7
5	15	10	25	13	17	30	28	27	55
			5			6			11
6	-	-	-	3	3	6	3	3	6
						1			1
7	-	-	-	3	4	7	3	4	7
						1			1
Total	27	18	45 (10)	23	28	51 (10)	50	46	96 (20)

Source: Survey data

Table 1.1 indicates that out of 20 families 7(35%) are having four members in their family. 11(55%) families are having 5 members and 2(10%) families are having six and seven members. The sex ratio remains at 3:2 and 6:7 in the two categories. Of the 10 women president only one is having a baby. All the selected respondents are in the age group of 29-50 years.

**Educational Status**

Education empowers women. Only educated people can understand the rules and regulations, and the systems to be followed while planning and implementing various welfare programs and projects. They can easily know the felt needs of the people and fight for more fund which are scarce in the panchayats.

**Table 1.2:** Educational status of sample respondents

SL No	education	W.P.	W.W.M.	Tptal
1	Primary	--	1	1
				5
2	Middle	3	4	7
				35
3	High School	1	1	2
				10
4	HSC	2	3	5

				25
5	Degree	2	--	2
				10
	Total	10 (50)	10 (50)	20

Source: Survey data

Table 1.2 indicates that 60% of the respondent are having S.S.L.C. and above level of education and the remaining 40% are having lower level of education.

### Employment and Income

Employment and Income status of family members are contribution much to the participation of women in PRLs. Education and the village in which they are living put the heads of the families in different employments.

**Table !.3:** status-wise distribution of sample respondents

SL No	category	WP	WWM	Total
1	Wife of former president	2	1	3
				15
2	Daughter of former president	1	--	1
				5
3	Party compulsion	1	--	1
				5
4	Social worker	4	2	6
				30
5	Economic soundness	2	--	2
				10
6	Others	--	7	7
				35
	Total	10 (50)	10 (50)	20 (100)

Source: Survey data

### III. SUMMARY OF FINDING

1. All the selected respondents are in the age group of 29-50years.
2. 60% of the respondent are having S.S.L.C. and above level of education and the remaining 40% are having lower level of education.
3. There is a active participation by women representatives in planning and implementation of various schemes.
4. Most of the respondents revealed their difficulties in allocating more time for panchayat development activities ignoring their duties as mother.

### IV. SUGGESTIONS

1. To impart education regarding PRIs. The rules and regulations and also duties of panchayat presidents and ward members should be included in the school and colleges.
2. Most of the people in the rural areas are of the opinion that women should be allowed to

contest and participate in PRIs more than one-third seats if time and situation permits them.

3. NGOs may be better used to create social awareness among the rural population, especially rural women regarding PRIs.

### V. CONCLUSION

The present study clearly shows that education empowers women to participate in the PRIs to do well for the socio-economic emancipation of rural population.

The present study explains the pattern of rural women leadership that has emerged in Gohpur subdivision of sonitpurDistrict . To sum up, the present study has identified the emerging pattern of rural women Leadership as Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Situational leaders. The emergence of rural women leadership at the grass roots level of democracy has, as per the present study, come into being with support base of ascribed status. Leadership will be a reality when it emerges largely through the achieved status of the

leaders. With this view in mind, the family members of the rural women in particular and the society in general have to ensure women equal participation in the decision making process, the control over resources and the mechanisms for

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