

## Examining the role of Women's Participation in Gaon Panchayats: An analysis of the Dibrugarh District

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**Abstract:** As half of the world's population is female, any development activity can succeed if women are actively involved. The Raj Panchayat has a special responsibility to ensure public participation in the decision-making process. The Panchayati Raj institutions shall always be taken into consideration as a means of good governance. People directly involved in processes of governance, decision making, and policy formulation and implementation are very important if sustainable economic and rural development is to take place across countries. This report will examine the role of women at the grassroots level and their participation in the Gaon Panchayat. Rural development, as defined by the 1992 Constitutional Amendment (73rd Act), has been a key objective of rural development, and this provision led to democracy practice at the grassroots level with active citizens' involvement. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act provides a good opportunity for females, with 33% of local government seats allocated to women; this number is currently up to 50%. Additionally, the Assam Government has allocated 50% of local government seats to women, which is bringing new hope for India's democracy.

**Keywords:** Women, Role, Grass-root, Participation, Panchayat.



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### Introduction:

Women benefit from the Panchayat system because it gives them opportunities and political influence. By joining the local Panchayat, women play a crucial part in the system. Involving women in the system was the primary goal of their inclusion in the National Administration and Development.

The 73rd constitutional amendment was made with the intention of enhancing governance and giving political space to the underprivileged segments of society, including women, schedule castes, and schedule tribes. Panchayat institutions have long been thought of as a means of guaranteeing good government. The purpose of this study was to determine the number of females elected officials in Panchayats and the difficulties they encounter.

In India, women are changing governance. Due to constitutional amendments requiring the reservation of seats in local governments, women are elected to local councils for the first time in

India's history. The impact of the PRI's introduction of so many women into India's political system has been enormous. The proportion of women in politics has changed significantly, from 4–5% of the population before to the constitutional amendment to 25–40%. But there is also a notable qualitative difference. These women are contributing their knowledge of civil society governance. By doing this, they are bringing gender inequality and poverty into the forefront of the state's consciousness.

**Objective:**

The present study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Studies on women's involvement in the PRI Gaon panchayat as a whole.
2. Studies on the difficulties female representatives encounter in doing this task.

**Methodology:**

The Dibrugarh district was the site of this investigation. The district of Dibrugarh has ninety-three Gaon Panchayats. Only seven of the 93 Gaon Panchayats were chosen for this investigation. There are seven blocks in the Dibrugarh district. Each block elects seven Gaon Panchayats for this purpose. These seven Gaon Panchayats represent 42 women in total. For the purposes of the study, 33 women are chosen from each of these Gaon Panchayats. The sample was chosen from a variety of Gaon Panchayats using purposive sampling approaches. The required information was gathered through focus group discussions and the interview schedule.

**Result and Discussion:**

The purpose of this study was to look into the "Participation of Women in Gaon Panchayat." The study's aims guided the collection of data.

**Respondent Profile:**

Of the 43 responders, 32 are in the middle age range, which is between thirty and forty-five. An elderly person (over 60 years old) was among the responders. In the 2018 Panchayat Elections, the responder was re-elected. The age element is undoubtedly a significant influence at this point. The opinions of mature people are pretty rational and in line with the wants and desires that the situation demands. Of the majority (via, 32), 4 respondents were widows and had higher education (Graduate-10, HR-Sec 10); 28 respondents were married. Ten of the thirty-three responders are between the ages of forty-six and sixty, and only two of them have a college degree; the others just have a secondary one.

**Table 1: Respondent Profile (N=43)**

Age (in years)	No	Marital Status		Education			
		Widow	Married	Illiterate	Low	Middle	High
30-45	32	4	28	4	-	10	10
46-60	10	-	9	1	-	7	2
60 and above	01	1	-	1	-	-	-

Table 1 demonstrates that younger and middle-aged people often participate to a greater extent than older people. It should be noted that the data gathered from the detailed survey supports the idea that the middle-aged population has the requisite educational background, participates appropriately, and becomes significantly involved in the Panchayat's activities.

Table 2: Political Profile of the respondent (N=43)

In the most recent Assam Panchayat election, which took place in 2025, the majority (43) of the respondents were elected. Ten candidates ran for reserved seats, eight from schedule tribes, and two (2) from schedule castes, whereas the majority of responders (33) ran as general candidates.

Twenty-seven of the women who responded were Village Development Committee members. Members of local organizations such as Mahila Samiti comprised seven of the responses. Twelve respondents supported one or more political parties, with eight of them belonging to the congressional party and four to the non-congress party.

**Table 2: Political profile of respondent (N=43)**

Category		Member of organization		Political Party	
General	Reserve	Mahila Samiti	Village Dev. Committee	Congress	Non-Congress
33	10 SC/2 ST/8	07	27	8	4

However, support from any party does not necessarily indicate that the individual is an active party member. Political party affiliation and primary membership have been seen to increase in activity and eloquence. It should be mentioned that after winning an election, some respondents look to join a political party. But occasionally, the responders also benefited from the help and endorsement of a political party.

Nearly half of the female heads of Panchayats are members of one or more political parties. Few stated that they ran as independent candidates and had no political connection.

Because seats are reserved for female candidates, there is a greater level of female engagement in Panchayati Raj institutions.

Reason for contesting Elections:

The majority of respondents (43) wanted to work for the development of the village in question and assist members of the community. Ten respondents said that their families, particularly their husbands and relatives, put pressure on them. Eight respondents entered Panchayats to assert their authority and identity; political parties encouraged eight of them, and several of them stated that they ran for office because no other female member was available. (Table 3)

**Table 3: Reason for contesting elections (N=43)**

Reason	Frequency
Hold power	08
Help people in society	22
Pressure from family members	10
Pressure from party	03
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

Issues that Women Representatives Face:

Issues that WERs encounter from their peers, 15 of the respondents said that they encounter issues from other Panchayat members because of their self-motivation. Members of the panchayat were solely directed by their own interests. On the other hand, 08 respondents claimed that their main reason for not cooperating is gender discrimination. Therefore, even though they made appropriate and pertinent points, the women's representative felt offended that they had not been heard or supported. When 06 respondents voiced their opinions for the area's development, their male counterparts even used derogatory language. Only 03 respondent disclosed that even her female coworkers did not support her due to their personal opinions and differences.

**Table 4: Issues that Women Representatives Face (N=43)**

Problem	Frequency
Self motive of Panchayat members	15
Lack of support from male members	08
Abusive language	06
Lack of support from female members	03
Interference	07
Inhibitions in speaking in from of elders	04
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

Methods to overcome constraints:

WER uses a variety of strategies to get around limitations. According to an average of fifteen respondents, they inspired the Panchayat members to foster a favorable attitude toward the region's general interests. According to three respondents, they developed the self-assurance necessary to deal with such circumstances and resolve disagreements amicably. Fifteen respondents stated that they frequently attended the meetings to stay informed, while ten respondents stated that they avoided the problem because they believed it was pointless to pursue the issue further.

**Table 05: Methods to overcome constraints (N=43)**

To overcome constraints	Frequency
By motivating Panchayat members	15
Build confidence	03
Regularly attend meetings to keep themselves update	15
Avoid the situation	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

**Conclusion:**

All citizens, regardless of their class or economic background, are guaranteed equal rights under the Indian Constitution. Women in our nation are in a far worse situation than men, not only when it comes to the sex ratio, literacy rate, life expectancy, and work force participation, but also when it comes to their evaluation of the power structure that directs and regulates a society's development initiatives. Discrimination in this area wastes women's skill and efficiency, which are essential for the overall growth of society, since access to political possibilities and involvement in political decision-making are crucial aspects of competence and autonomy. As a result, the Indian government passed the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, respectively, requiring a one-third reserve of seats for women in all elected bodies at the village, block, and district levels. The WER's seven blocks in the Dibrugarh District were interviewed in order to gather data for a critical analysis of the role played by female Panchayat members in the political decision-making process. The goal of the current study, "Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institution," is to determine the level of women's involvement in decision-making as well as the challenges that they face in their separate roles.

In conclusion, it could be stated that in order to empower women, progress can be made by coordinating various facets of society, including male gentry, religious leaders, and political figures. These individuals should come forward and show their interpersonal interest in order to recognize and value women as equally significant members of society as men. to improve the socioeconomic structure and make women and men equal coworkers in order to reform society. It is useful for introducing a fresh perspective on society's future.

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**Suggestions:**

1. In order to truly empower rural women, it is imperative that both men and women modify their attitudes. The belief that women are only suited for taking care of the home and raising children needs to be changed to one that views men and women as equal partners. In order to instill this, kids should get education aimed at raising their political and social consciousness.
2. Research on women in politics has shown how exposure to the outside world increases women's awareness and participation in the political process.
3. The women ought to be inspired to band together as well. The village's Mahila Samiti might be a useful tool for organizing people for this cause. Certain effective women's organizations can also serve as catalysts to promote women's involvement in political and social activities.
4. Both print and electronic media can be very helpful in raising awareness in rural communities. It can serve as a political socialization tool to instill the ideals of gender justice and equality.

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