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# A Sociological Study of Human Rights Awareness Among Women: Comparative Study of Panchayat Samities Near and Far Away from Jaipur City

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**ABSTRACT:** Spread awareness among the Panchayats for identifying and addressing different forms of discrimination against women and girls. Invoke Panchayats to commit to end all types of gender-based violence faced by women and girls in public and private spaces. Motivate panchayats to address harmful practices like gender-biased sex-selection, child, early and forced marriages, witch-hunting, etc. Ensure that panchayats resolve to promote full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership by women and girls in political, economic and social life. Enhance capacities of Panchayats to effectively enforce all laws, policies and programmes for the empowerment of women and girls in places near and far from Jaipur city.

**KEYWORDS-** Panchayat samiti, women, human rights, empowerment, awareness, Jaipur

## I.INTRODUCTION

Making gender inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Plans, ensuring gender justice and promoting gender equality would help address discriminatory social norms and practices at the family and community level thereby enhancing the value of women and girls. Thereby help realize the Vision of the Sustainable Development Goals in places near and far from Jaipur city.

Promote action for tackling discriminatory norms and structures. Enable the organization of Mahila Sabhas in order to promote women's participation and understand their needs and concerns. Ensure the preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans with the involvement of women and girls. Initiate community level actions to ensure improved value of women and girls. Integrate gender in the constitution and functioning of Gram Panchayat level Standing Committees. Facilitate convergence with existing structures at the village level such as Self-Help Groups and National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) to empower women and increase their autonomy, in places near and far from Jaipur city.[1,2,3]

SDG Goal 5.1- Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Promoting equal opportunities and rights for girls across sectors (Health, Education, Nutrition, Skill building, etc.). Mobilising families and community to celebrate birth of a girl child through innovative means. Undertaking campaigns to inform community about illegality of sex selection. Ensure that families of pregnant women are counselled and given information about illegality of sex-selection by frontline functionaries. Mapping sonography centres in the area and ensuring they are compliant as per the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act. Ensuring regular inspection of sonography centers in the area by the designated Appropriate Authority. Ensure constitution and functioning of Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committees in the area to address health, immunisation, nutrition of girls, in places near and far from Jaipur city

SDG Goal 5.2- Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Create and maintain safe habitations for women and girls by undertaking safety audits and ensure compliance on issues as part of the audits, for e.g. lighting of villages, etc. Mobilise community vigilance committees like-Mahila Shakti Samooh (in Rajasthan), Shaurya Dal (in Madhya Pradesh), Navyuvak Mandals, etc. to play an active role in preventing violence against women and girls. Involve CSOs to work with collectives of men and boys around issues of positive masculinities and gender equality.



Create awareness on rights, entitlements, laws for women and girls and availability of Protection mechanisms. Develop Panchayats to become Violence free. Blacklist and Boycott perpetrators of violence against women and girls from development benefits, in places near and far from Jaipur city

SDG Goal 5.3- Eliminate all harmful practices against women and girls Address reasons for school dropout- Transportation, toilets, women teachers Ensure access of girls to livelihoods and Invest in building vocational skills of girls so that they can negotiate to delay early and forced marriages. Undertake campaigns around importance of investing in development and well being of women and girls. Ensure designation and access to Child Marriage Prohibition Officer and constitution and functioning of Village Child Protection Committees Pledge-taking in every Bal Sabha, Mahila Sabha, Ward Sabha and Gram Sabha for ending child, forced and early marriage. Create dowry free villages by community oath-taking in Ward Sabha, Gram Sabha. Spread awareness against these social evils by organising awareness rallies, speech and essay competitions in schools and mobilizing the youth to boycott these malpractices. Organise monthly legal literacy camps for women and girls at Aanganwadi Centres to spread awareness on gender related laws, in places near and far from Jaipur city[4,5,6]

SDG Goal 5.4- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through provision of public services Facilitate community appreciation of daily time-investment pattern of women and men in domestic work by conducting activity-mapping exercise of average time spent on household chores in Ward Sabha/Gram Sabha. Encourage men and boys to share the household work responsibilities with women and girls to reduce their domestic work burden Develop community support infrastructure and services to lessen the work burden of women, such as: Old age homes/day care centres for the elderly Creche/child care facilities animal grazing farms/animal hostels taps to supply water to every house to reduce women's daily drudgery for collection of water for their family. fuelwood and fodder plantations on farm- boundaries for easy access to these daily required resources to reduce work-drudgery of women in fetching them from a distance Promote clean and renewable energy sources, such as-solar energy, etc. to facilitate smokeless cooking environment for women and reduce respiratory distress from their lives, in places near and far from Jaipur city

In a country as large and diverse as India, local village councils play a key role in ensuring pressing community issues are appropriately considered and that the basic needs of residents are addressed. By law, 33% of all seats in the local governance systems at the village level (panchayat) have to be occupied by women through electoral processes. This is an opportunity to raise women's voices in local governance but, despite being enshrined in law, many elected women representatives are silenced in practice and are not the actual power holders. Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in local governance bodies face many social and structural challenges in engaging in political spaces because of their gender identities and assumed leadership skills. These include gender stereotyping, inadequate education, lack of financial independence, and opposition stemming from entrenched patriarchal views, by families, members of their communities, and leaders of institutions.

In order to support EWRs to fully exercise their rights as women leaders who can themselves build an environment where all women and girls live free of violence, stigma, and discrimination, CREA developed a series of trainings under the Meri Panchayat, Meri Shakti (My Local Governance, My Strength) program to foster feminist leadership at the community-level. The strengthened feminist leadership amongst EWRs in turn builds confidence among women leaders to raise their voices around issues of women and girls in both their panchayat and communities in places near and far from Jaipur city[7,8,9]

## **II.DISCUSSION**

The community-based program, led by CREA, is co-implemented with 11 community-based partner organizations in three Hindi-speaking states — starting first in Jharkhand and expanding to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. MPMS builds the capacity and knowledge of EWRs, women collectives, young girls groups, family members of EWRs, other panchayat members, and community-based partner organizations on political systems, gender-based discrimination, rights and violence and the importance of actual power exercise by these EWRs. Since 2013, the MPMS program has built the capacity of over 2000 EWRs and 3000 women members from women collectives to function effectively as agents of change in local governance, local institutions, and at the community level. These feminist leaders have been able to move beyond tokenistic participation in local governance that is mandated through reservation and have created an environment that upholds the principles of feminist leadership, decision-making, and effective local governance. The impact study of the program provides evidence on attributes of greater leadership and agency of EWRs so that they not



only have the information to participate in local governance, but also the skills and confidence to negotiate at an individual, societal and systemic level along with an ability to establish themselves as feminist leaders for the community.

In 2021, CREA integrated its MPMS program into its new global South-led Women Gaining Ground (WGG) consortium, which builds the capacity and transformative leadership of young women and girls, and women with disabilities (WWDs) to lead political and social transformation to redefine, prevent and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence. CREA's MPMS program allows the consortium to establish its strategies for improving political participation in existing work with EWRs and create spaces for structurally silenced voices in institutional spaces, especially those of women with disabilities and young girls. WGG's focus on disability has led to a deeper integration of disability within MPMS with EWRs leading conversations on disability and working with women with disabilities in village assemblies and planning processes.

Over the last few years, MPMS has shown a great impact in strengthening and fostering feminist leadership at the local level. The program has led to a greater awareness among panchayat members of women and girl's development and empowerment schemes, deepened the panchayat's focus on the rights of persons structurally excluded from accessing their rights, and supported EWRS in negotiating rights and leadership space for themselves. MPMS has and continues to uphold actual power for those who are its authorized power holders.[10,11,12]

Sub Goal 5.5 Women's full and effective participation in political, economic and public life Ensure active participation of women elected representatives in Panchayats by providing appropriate training, information, guidance and mentoring support. Reduce the participation of male relatives of women elected leaders by not allowing them to proxy for the elected women. Promote organisation of Mahila Sabhas to understand development needs of women for GDPDP Ensure women and girl children enjoy property-ownership rights in family inheritance of property, Undertake community campaigns on joint registration of property in name of spouses. Link women-SHG (Self Help Groups), and self-employed women with financial services of Bank-Credit, Insurance etc. Encourage girl-child education, ensure scholarships and recognition through awards for good performance in places near and far from Jaipur city

SDG Goal 5. 6-Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights Ensure availability and access to sexual and reproductive health services for women. Promote gender and rights issues in uptake of contraceptives – availability of a basket of contraceptives, availability of quality services, informed choice , consent, counselling. Encourage male responsibility in contraceptive use.

Sub Goal 5a- Give women equal rights to economic resources Encourage equal ownership rights to women in agricultural land by giving joint title (Pattas) of ownership of farm-land to the husband and wife. Encourage giving daughters equal succession rights at par with sons, in ancestral property. Ensure equal wages to women, at par with men, in farm-work, construction work and other labour-work of daily-wages. Promote financial support from Banks for Women-Self-Help Groups and self-employed women. Enable women's participation in getting access to Bank Accounts, by providing facility for zero-balance accounts to be opened for them. Promote women's participation in Natural Resource Management through their membership in Common Property Resource Management Committee, Joint Forest Management Committee, Watershed Management and Water Management Committees, Bio-Diversity Management Committee, etc in places near and far from Jaipur city

Sub Goal 5b- Enhance use of enabling technology, to empower women To reduce the work-burden of women, promote enabling technology like solar energy, mechanical gadgets, tap and electricity connection for every house, digital and computer skills Use information and communication technology for empowerment of women and girls[13,14,15]

Sub Goal 5c- Adopt and Strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women Promote the enforcement of national and state policies, programmes, schemes and laws made for women and girls in the panchayat and also build public-awareness about them through publicity and IEC-efforts, through use of Information and Communications Technology, in places near and far from Jaipur city



### III.RESULTS

Area of UNFPA operation Rajasthan- Sawai Madhopur Madhya Pradesh- Chhatarpur Odisha- Dhenkanal Bihar-Sheikhpura

Ballika Friendly Panchayats- Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan Capacity Building of various stakeholders on gender and empowerment of women and girls. Sustained mentoring support to the selected Panchayats after training; for developing a girl friendly work-culture. Constituting a supportive Core Group comprising of Sarpanch, Ward Panches, Aanganwari Worker, School Teachers, Religious Leaders, other influential community leaders and their orientation on gender and addressing harmful practices Organisation of monthly meetings for concurrent monitoring of the annual workplans of the Gram Panchayat to ensure issues related to women and girls are included and addressed. Undertaking a range of innovative activities in each of the Gram Panchayat like: Addressing the issue of child and early marriages; Ensuring girls continue to be retained in school, by addressing reasons for school drop-out like availability of safe transport, toilets for girls in schools, women teachers, etc.; Setting up 'Meena Manch' in schools for the empowerment of girls by transacting messages around life skills; Sending congratulatory messages from the Panchayat to families where a girl child is born; Creating awareness on schemes and entitlements for girls through various media like- slogan painting on village walls and public buildings, mobilising community and Organising regular interactions around supporting girls' education, health and nutrition, etc

Addressing Gender Based Violence- Chhatarpur, MP Undertaking safety Audits Engaging with women's collectives through Mahila Mudda Chaupals to understand and address their safety concerns Ensuring Protection officers and Service Providers under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act are designated and functioning Capacity building of frontline functionaries like Anganwari Workers, ANMs and ASHAs are trained to identify and respond to survivors of violence.[16,17]

Pre election voter awareness campaign- Sheikhpura, Bihar Updation of voter list with focus on women and girls Awareness campaign on voting rights Nurturing young leadership through training and capacity building Nomination help camps for women contestants Development pact- Interaction of contestant candidates with community to understand specific needs of women and girls.

Requesting good practices from your States Challenging discriminatory norms and practices Addressing unwantedness of girls and Gender Biased Sex Selection Addressing Child Marriage Addressing harmful practices like witch hunting Improving women's access to livelihoods

Women consist of half the population of our country, so there should be nearly half of women as well in the political sector. That is why we must encourage women as India is the largest democracy in the world, and we must act like it. Women are supposed to be given their status in society, in which NGOs and universities play a massive role in it. This gives women the opportunity to have more control over the management and other women can benefit from it. As India has a population consisting of 50% women, they have to be competing equally well in the local politics to forward the gender equality agendas. Women in politics can speak up for other problems faced by other fellow women and come up with measures for the betterment of other women.

Role of women in Panchayat Raj institutions

Panchayat is the backbone of many Indian villages since the beginning. Mahatma Gandhi was always in the support of Panchayat Raj and his dream came into reality with the 73rd amendment act, also known as the Panchayati Raj Act. This act provides a total of one-third of seats to the women including the reserved seats for the SC's and ST's. It also gave one-third of the total number of offices of chairperson reserved for the women.

The role of women in the panchayat are:

- Participation in election
- Participation in rural development

- Participation in decision-making
- Agent of social revolution
- Reducing corruption
- Reducing violence against women
- Practising participatory democracy
- Reduction of violence against Dalits

Difficulties faced by women to represent in Panchayat Raj institutions are-

- Political intervention present in the panchayats
- Women are made to act as proxies for men
- Husband takes the intervention of the elected women and operates on her behalf
- Women in rural areas lack the awareness of the political; rights they possess
- All the negative public opinions
- Lack of education of women in the rural areas
- Lack of training courses for the women
- Violence against women to suppress them from acting their rights

Women empowerment in Panchayat Raj institution

So, under the 73rd amendment act, one-third of the seat is reserved for general, scheduled, backward caste women in the village panchayat. People have to volunteer to accept this reservation made for women and respect the status of women in society which is no lesser than that of the males. New policies should be made to further our conquest to equality between males and females and participation in activities in mutual understandings.

Initiatives that have been taken for active participation of women in Panchayat Raj institution are-

1. Steps have been taken to enhance the participation of women in higher numbers.
2. All the elected leaders should have a minimum of literacy to carry out guidelines and to educate the villagers about the PR-Act.
3. Literacy is a very major part to educate women about governance and increasing the higher participation of women in these sectors.
4. To develop women's leadership and communication skills for enhancing travelling.
5. Train them to speak up and find means to interface with the local self-governance to claim panchayat entitlements.
6. To educate women on the facilities and programs of the state and central government have done for them.
7. To empower and motivate them to achieve big things by breaking all cultural barriers.[18]

Article Panchayat Raj one-third reservation to women

Clause (3) of article 243D ensures women's participation in Panchayat Raj institution by compulsory one-third reservations of women. As of now, 20 states in India have made the reservations for women to 50% ( the 20 states are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal).

After the establishment of the Panchayat Raj institution, women have been getting better opportunities and also living up to the responsibilities given to them. This act has been a great opportunity for women to come out and participate in the administration in the field of politics. It gives them a platform to raise their voices and be heard.

#### **IV.CONCLUSION**

Organisation of a National Workshop for State Institutes of Rural Development to discuss how gender can be integrated as part of ongoing programs. Compilation of a good practice document capturing efforts of PRIs on



empowering women and girls and addressing discriminatory social norms and practices. Capacity building of PRIs in the focus States and Districts where UNFPA has been working[19]

Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are viewed as solution to all the problems of rural development and is linked to empowerment of the marginalized section of society, especially women. This paper presents a thematic review on the empowerment of women representatives in PRIs with reference to decentralisation process and the 73rd constitutional amendment in India covering the level of awareness among representatives about panchayat functioning, capacity to take self-decision, participation in community activities, changes in their socio-economic conditions, decision making power at panchayat level and their political participation. The participation of women representatives including members from weaker sections appears to have increased substantially over the years mainly on account of affirmative action. Various studies indicate that women leaders are less corrupt, are able to provide more public goods of equal quality at effective price and consider women's preferences to improve overall governance. On the contrary, studies have also found that women representatives are illiterate; depend on husbands and male officials, especially in taking decisions with regard to village development programmes. The review suggests that the political journey is not smooth for women in a patriarchal and caste-ridden society on account of which women members face a lot of problems in the village panchayat. Women representatives are not comfortable to work at the panchayat level due to dominance of male representatives and they take a longer time to prove their capacity as compared to male representatives. Moreover, it was found that male representatives spend more time on political activities while, women spend more time in carrying out household chores. Overall, affirmative action through 73rd amendment has given women and the marginalised communities a sense of empowerment though they are yet to reach an equilibrium level. As assumed by many researchers, in the next decade or so the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women are bound to make further progress in their social status, leadership role, economic position, educational level and, political awareness and attainment.[20]

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