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POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN GUNTUR DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

The political participation of women and ultimately their political empowerment have gained lot of prominence after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This land-mark Act made a historical beginning in the direction of political empowerment of women by providing them with 33.33 per cent of reservations in the political offices in the local bodies, both rural and urban. This article try to find out the Political Knowledge and awareness of

women representatives of the Panchayati Raj in Guntur District and it would provide some of the suggestions to improve the knowledge levels of the respondents.

KEYWORDS

Political Knowledge , political empowerment , democratic institutions and decentralization .

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INTRODUCTION:

It is widely recognized that, democracy generally survives on the basis of the levels of political participation of different sections of the population of a given society. Unfortunately, women who constitute about half of the total population did not enjoy any political rights in the past in any society. They were never allowed to take part in the political process at any level. After the spread of democracy in several parts of the world and the concomitant introduction of universal adult franchise, establishment of democratic institutions and decentralization of power, women started taking part in politics to gain access to power atleast to a limited extent. Nevertheless, politics is regarded as highly competitive field where, women cannot compete with the male. Participation of at least a few women in politics fulfills the hopes and aspirations of the ordinary women, who have an overwhelming faith in the leadership of their own sex.

In the Indian context, the political participation of women and ultimately their political empowerment have gained lot of prominence after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This land-mark Act made a historical beginning in the direction of political empowerment of women by providing them with 33.33 per cent of reservations in the political offices in the local bodies, both rural and urban. It was conceived by those concerned that, the participation of women in politics at the grassroots level, would certainly result in a space for them in the orbit Of governance at the higher levels. It is hoped that, the entry of women into the politics at the grassroots definitely brings about several radical changes in their socio-economic conditions also. In fact, this Amendment Act resulted in the phenomenon of empowerment permeating almost every aspect of the present day society in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Analyzing the aims of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 Usha Narayana (1996) reflects that, the Act ensures the participation of women in the political process at the local level as voters, members of political parties and finally as the candidates in the elections help the local bodies. The women elected to the various Panchayati Raj Institutions are taking active part in the decision making and planning processes. Another finding of this study is that, the reservations in the local bodies for women are a guarantee for their empowerment in the political sphere Bhargava and others' (1996) study also came out with similar findings as they noted that the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 has increased the women's representation in the rural local bodies in Andhra Pradesh.

Snehalata Panda's (1996) pains taking study on the Village Panchayats in Orissa exposed that. the women entered into the arena of politics due to the mandatory provision of reservations incorporated in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. According to this study, the majority of the women Panchayati Raj leaders have no certain political background before they entered into the politics, but exhibited higher degree of maturity, enthusiasm, political consciousness and so on. In her another study conducted in 1996, Panda concluded that, there prevails a strange situation as the women belonging to the upper castes are not coming forward to contest the Panchayati Raj elections. This has provided a good opportunity to the women belonging to the lower castes to emerge as a potential force in the village politics.

Reflecting on the need for women empowerment Marino Pinto (1995) insisted upon the

involvement of women in the development process for attaining the goal of political empowerment of women along with their socio-economic development. The author also pleaded strongly that, the fruits of development should not only be passed on to the women, but also made them the partners of this process and such participation leads to their empowerment supported by economic independence. The author concluded that the empowerment of women is a *sin qua non* for creating an egalitarian society.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of the present study is:

To assess the extent of political knowledge, views and perceptions of these selected women leaders on various political issues for assessing their political awareness.

Sample Selection:

The present study is conducted in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. This district, is selected for several reasons. Women political functionaries working in the Panchayati Raj Bodies at the three levels i.e., Zilla Parishad, Mandal Parishads and Village Panchayats situated in this district, above said objectives were covered under the present study. The political executives of these bodies selected for the present study include the Sarpanches of Village Panchayats, the Presidents of Mandal Parishads, Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency Members. The number of the respondents selected from the each category of these political executives, is furnished below:

Table No-1.0

No of Sample Selected from Different Political Offices of the Panchayati Raj Bodies:

Political Functionary	Z.P.T.C. Members	Mandal Presidents	M.P.T.C. Members	Sarpanches of village Panchayats
Total Number of Women Functionaries	22	21	358	313
Number of sample respondents selected	9 (40.9)	9 (42.9)	150 (41.9)	132 (42.2)

Note: Figures given in the brackets indicate the percentage to the total sample.

The statistical technique stratified sample with propositional allocation adopted for picking up the sample from among the total number of elected women functionaries existing in each category of Political Office in the Panchayati Raj bodies is as follows:

1. Sarpanches of the Village Panchayats = $313/714 \times 300 = 131.6$
(132 members)
2. Presidents of Mandal Parishads = $21/714 \times 300 = 8.8$ (9 members)

3. Z.P.T.C. Members = $22/714 \times 300 = 9.2$ (9 members)
 4. M.P.T.C. Members = $358/714 \times 300 = 150.4$ (150 members)
- Total number of samples respondents = 300

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE OF DATA:

The present study is basically an empirically-oriented exercise and hence, the major part of the data was collected from the field by means of techniques of empirical research, such as: 1. Questionnaire 2. Interview 3. Observation. 4. Discussions. Apart from the primary data, necessary secondary data was also collected from various sources.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The present paper attempts an assessment of the political knowledge of the respondents on the important aspects of India the political system and its process. The exposure of the respondents to the political events are also noted in this paper. This chapter also focuses on the awareness and knowledge of respondents on different issues of Panchayati Raj System working in the Country.

Respondents' Awareness about the type of Political System of the Country:

Political awareness is a pre-requisite and deserving qualification of competent political leadership at any level. The political leaders should have thorough knowledge about the nature and working of political system existing in the country. In view of this, we have made an attempt to assess the political awareness of the sample respondents by way of posing them a series of relevant questions. At the very outset, the respondents were asked about the type of political system presently existing in the country. The responses of the respondents are presented in the following Table.

TABLE NO-1.1
RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS ABOUT THE TYPE OF POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE COUNTRY

S. NO	Position in PRI	Response									Total		
		Aware			Not Aware			Not Respond			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	38	28.8	47.5	24	18.2	31.6	70	53.0	48.6	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. & Z.P.T.C. Members	39	24.5	48.8	48	30.2	63.2	72	45.3	50.0	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	3	33.3	3.8	4	44.4	5.3	2	22.2	1.4	9	100	3.0
Total		80	26.7	100	76	25.3	100	144	48.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

A look at the above table reveals a disappointing trend that, a majority of the respondents are ignorant of the simplest fact that the system of democracy has been operating in the country since

independence. It is equally discouraging to note that, 48 per cent of the total respondents did not respond at all to this question, while 25.3 per cent of them admitted that, they do not know the type of political system in operation in the country. Thus, only 26.7 per cent of the respondents know that, democratic system has been working in the country. Almost the same trend prevails among the three categories of women leaders covered under this study. This is not at all a desirable trend and badly reflects on the quality of women leadership at the grass root level.

Respondents Awareness About the Constitution:

The next question posed to the respondents aims to ascertain whether the respondents know the fact that, a written Constitution was adopted immediately after independence for guiding and directing the governance of the country at all levels. Unlike the earlier question, the response of the respondents to this basic question provides a positive trend as the vast majority of the respondents gave a correct answer. This can be noticed from the following table.

TABLE NO- 1.2
RESPONDENTS AWARENESS ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Yes			No			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	84	63.6	39.3	48	36.4	55.8	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	122	76.7	57.0	37	23.3	43.0	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	8	88.9	3.7	1	11.1	1.2	9	100	3.0
Total		214	71.3	100	86	28.7	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As the above table depicts, an overwhelming majority of 71.3 per cent of the respondents disclosed that a written Constitution was adopted for the purpose of guiding and directing the activities of the government at all levels. They are aware of the fact that, the three branches of the Government should perform their respective functions strictly within the frame work of the Constitution. This fundamental knowledge is possessed by more member of Mandal Presidents (88.9%) when compared with the Sarpanches (63.6%) and Members of MPTCs and ZPTCS (76.7). On the whole, it is evident that the respondents possess the good knowledge about the governance of the Country. However, it is a not worthy fact that the number of respondents who lack even this basic knowledge is also considerable.

Respondents' knowledge About the Contents of the Constitution:

It is essential that, the political leaders should know thoroughly about the contents of the Constitution. Accordingly, the respondents of the present study were probed in this important aspect

and the outcome of this probe is presented in the following table.

TABLE NO-1.3
RESPONDENTS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response									Total		
		Not Respond			Aware			NotAware			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	48	36.4	55.8	7	5.3	63.6	77	58.3	37.9	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	37	23.3	43.0	4	2.5	36.4	118	74.2	58.1	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	1	11.1	1.2				8	88.9	3.9	9	100	3.0
Total		86	28.7	100.0	11	3.7	100	203	67.7	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As can be noted the above table a vast majority of the respondents accounting 67.7 per cent of the total respondents have no idea about the contents of the Indian Constitution or about its various Articles. These respondents frankly admitted they have never gone through the Constitution, while 28.7 per cent of them gave no response to this question. Thus, extremely minute number of 3.7 per cent of the respondents revealed that they have knowledge about the Constitution and its contents, as they have read the various Articles of the constitution. A similar trend prevails among the three categories of respondents, as can be seen from the above data. This table certainly discloses a disheartening fact about the political knowledge of the respondents of this study.

Respondents' knowledge about Parliamentary System working in the Country:

The next question posed to the respondents relates to their knowledge about the system of Government working in the country. The reply of the respondents to this question reveals that, the vast majority of them lack this fundamental also knowledge which is very essential for the political functionaries at any level. This can be noticed from the following table.

TABLE NO- 1.4
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM WORKING IN THE COUNTRY

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Having Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	56	42.4	39.2	76	57.6	48.4	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	79	49.7	55.2	80	50.3	51.0	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	8	88.9	5.6	1	11.1	.6	9	100	3.0
Total		143	47.7	100	157	52.3	100	300	100	100

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Field data computed

As the above table depicts a good majority of 52.3 per cent of the respondents appeared to be ignorant of the fact that, parliamentary type of government has been working in the country, while 47.7 per cent of them are aware of this fact. Here it needs to be emphasized that, the number of respondents who are totally ignorant of this vital feature of our political system is pretty considerable and this negative trend exists among the three categories of the respondents.

Respondents Knowledge About the Party System in India:

The political parties are indispensable for the working of Democracy. The knowledge of the sample respondents about the political parties in India is tested by way of asking them a series of questions. The response of the respondents to a very basic question in this respect is presented in the following table.

TABLE NO- 1.5
RESPONDENTS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

S.NO	Position in PRI							Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	118	89.4	43.2	14	10.6	51.9	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. & Z.P.T.C.Members	147	92.5	53.8	12	7.5	44.4	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	8	88.9	2.9	1	11.1	3.7	9	100	3.0
Total		273	91.0	100	27	9.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

A look at the above table reveals that, the highest majority of 91 per cent of the total respondents have sufficient knowledge about the party system operating in the country. However, they know only certain aspects of the political parties functioning in the country. The majority of the three categories of the respondents possess this knowledge as is evident from the above Table.

Respondents' Knowledge About the Ideology of Political Parties:

When the knowledge of the respondents about the ideology of various political parties is tested, a dismal trend is apparent as can be noticed from the table given below.

TABLE NO- 1.6
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE IDEOLOGY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	33	25.0	44.0	99	75.0	44.0	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	37	23.3	49.3	122	76.7	54.2	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	5	55.6	6.7	4	44.4	1.8	9	100	3.0
Total		75	25.0	100	225	75.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

The above table reflects that, an overwhelming majority of 75 per cent of the respondents admitted that they have absolutely no knowledge about the ideology of various political parties working functioning in the country. Nevertheless, the size of the respondents who have this knowledge is considerable as they constitute about 25 per cent of the total respondents among the three categories of the respondents. This knowledge is possessed by more number of the Presidents of the Mandal Parishads when compared with other respondents.

Respondents' Knowledge About the Political Parties in Andhra Pradesh:

It is also attempted to know from the respondents whether they know about the political parties functioning in Andhra Pradesh, in our state. Unlike the earlier situation a positive trend is evident in this aspect, as can be noticed from the following table.

TABLE NO-1.7
RESPONDENTS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	114	86.4	42.5	18	13.6	56.3	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	146	91.8	54.5	13	8.2	40.6	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	8	88.9	3.0	1	11.1	3.1	9	100	3.0
Total		268	89.3	100.0	32	10.7	100.0	300	100	100

Field data computed

The above table shows that, an extremely overwhelming majority of 89.3 per cent of the respondents revealed that, they have thorough knowledge about the various of political parties working in Andhra Pradesh. This knowledge is equally possessed by the three categories of the respondents covered under the study.

Respondents Knowledge About the Regional Parties in India:

Another question posed to the respondents relates to their awareness about the regional parties existing in different states in the country. The response of the respondents to this question also reveals an encouraging trends as the respondents seemed to have this knowledge as reflected by the following table.

TABLE NO- 1.8
RESPONDENTS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE REGIONAL PARTIES IN INDIA

S. NO	Position in PRI	Response							Total	
		Yes			No			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	105	79.5	42.2	27	20.5	52.9	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	135	84.9	54.2	24	15.1	47.1	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100.0	3.6				9	100	3.0
Total		249	83.0	100	51	17	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

It can be seen that, the highest majority of 83 percent of the respondents seemed to know about the regional parties functioning in different states in the country.

Respondents' Knowledge About the General Elections:

The next important question posed to the respondents aim at testing their knowledge about the frequency of elections held to the Parliament as well as State Assemblies. It is found that ,the vast majority of the respondents possess this knowledge as is evident from the data tabulated in the following table.

TABLE NO – 1.9
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE GENERAL ELECTION

S.N 0	Response	Position in PRI									Total		
		Sarpanch			M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members			President of the Mandal Parishad			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	No Response	7	70.0	5.3	3	30.0	1.9				10	100	3.3
2	Once in two years	1	100.0	.8							1	100	1.3
3	Once in three years	2	50.0	1.5	2	50.0	1.3				4	100	1.3
4	Once in four years	1	33.3	.8	2	66.7	1.3				3	100	94.0
5	once in five years	121	42.9	91.7	152	53.9	95.6	9	3.2	100	282	100	94.0
	Total	132	44.0	100	159	53.0	100	9	3.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

The above table reflects the desirable trend as the overwhelming majority of 94 per cent of the respondents are aware of the fact that elections to the Parliament and State Assemblies are held once in very five years .

Whether the Respondents are Voting in the Elections Regularly:

It is the Constitutional obligation of the citizens to exercise their franchise in the elections held to the Parliament and Assembly without fail. It is attempted to know from the respondents whether they are voting regularly in the elections held to the Parliament and State Elections. The responses of the respondents provides a very positive picture in this respect which can be seen from the following table.

TABLE NO- 1.10
WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS ARE VOTING IN THE ELECTIONS REGULARLY

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Yes			No			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row%	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	132	100	44.0				132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	159	100	53.0				159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100	3.0				9	100	3.0
	Total	300	100	100				300	100	100

Field data computed

As can be noted from the above table all the sample respondents without any exception are voting in the Parliament and Assembly elections regularly. This fact reveals that, the sample respondents are very conscious about discharging this important political duty.

Whether the Respondents Discuss Politics Regularly with friends and family members:

Discussing politics regularly with friends and family members are a sign of interesting politics and also political maturity. In fact, the understanding of the political situation at different levels is very essential for the political leaders to discharge their functions effectively which is gained through discussion with friends and family members. The position of the respondents of the study in this respect can be known from a look at the table given below.

TABLE NO- 1.11
WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS DISCUSS POLITICS REGULARLY

S.N 0	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Yes			No			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	91	68.9	40.3	41	31.1	55.4	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	127	79.9	56.2	32	20.1	43.2	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	8	88.9	3.5	1	11.1	1.4	9	100	3.0
Total		226	75.3	100.0	74	24.7	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As the above table reveals that, the highest number of respondents accounting for 75.3 per cent of the respondents told that, they discuss the political leaders and their activities and also the events, developments etc, taking place in the politics at different levels with friends and family members whenever they find time. This habit can be found almost equally among all the categories of respondents.

Respondent's Exposure to News Papers:

The habit of reading news papers daily is very essential for the political leaders as it enhances their understanding of the existing situation and also the problems and needs of the people. The position relating to this important habit of the respondents can be known from the following table.

TABLE NO 1.12
THE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO READ NEWS PAPERS

S.NO	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Yes			No			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	70	53.0	40.9	62	47.0	48.1	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	94	59.1	55.0	65	40.9	50.4	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	7	77.8	4.1	2	22.2	1.6	9	100	3.0
Total		171	57.0	100	129	43.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As the above table shows a good majority of the respondents accounting for 57 per cent of them total sample respondents reported that they read the news papers regularly which is a good sign. Nevertheless, it is very disappointing to note that, a sizable number of respondents accounting for 43 per cent of the respondents do not read news papers because most of these respondents are mostly illiterates and hence, could not read and write. It can also be noted that, the number of respondents who read the news papers is more among the Presidents of Mandal Parishad and MPTC and ZPTC members, while the number of readers and non-readers of news papers is equal in the case of Sarpanches, as indicated by the above table.

The Items in the News Papers on Which the Respondents Concentrate:

When it is ascertained from the respondents who read news papers on which item/items in the news paper they focus their attention. It was revealed that, the majority of them concentrate on various political issues reported in the news paper, while others focus on different other items. The exact position is reflected in the following table.

TABLE NO 1.13
THE ITEMS IN THE NEWS PAPERS ON WHICH THE RESPONDENTS CONCENTRATE

S. N O	Response	Position in PR									Total		
		Sarpanch			M.P.T.C. & Z.P.T.C. Members			President of the Mandal Parishad			Co unt	Row %	Co l %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	N0	62	48.1	47.0	65	50.4	40.9	2	1.6	22.2	129	100	43.0
2	Political events	56	42.1	42.4	70	52.6	44.0	7	5.3	77.8	133	100	44.3
3	Cultural Affaires	2	40.0	1.5	3	60.0	1.9				5	100	1.7
3	Cinema and Sports	3	75.0	2.3	1	25.0	.6				4	100	1.3
4	General events	9	31.0	6.8	20	69.0	12.6				29	100	9.7
Total		132	44.0	100	159	53.0	100	9	3.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As the above table shows that, a majority of the respondents constituting 44.3 per cent of the total respondents concentrate on the political affairs and issues while the next highest number of the respondents i.e., 9.7 per cent mostly read the general news items reported in the news papers. The remaining very few respondents are interested in the news relating to the games and sports, entertainment, cultural activities and other such items. It can be noted that, the presidents of Mandal parishads concentrate more on the political news when as the Sarpanches, members of MPTC and ZPTCs read non-political news with much interest.

Exposure of the Respondents to the Radio and TV:

Apart from reading News papers, exposure to various issues. The Radio and TV is also for essential for political leaders improving their knowledge on. Today, the Radio and TV have become very important means of promoting education and awareness about the society. In this aspect, the present study projects a positive trend as the highest majority of the respondents have the habit of watching TV or listening to Radio every day at one time or other. Conform this trend from the following table.

TABLE NO.-1.14
EXPOSURE OF THE RESPONDENTS TO THE RADIO AND TV

S.NO	Position in PRI							Total		
		Yes			No			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	121	91.7	44.0	11	8.3	44.0	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members	147	92.5	53.5	12	7.5	48.0	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	7	77.8	2.5	2	22.2	8.0	9	100	3.0
Total		275	91.7	100	25	8.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As the above table depicts, an overwhelming majority of 91.7 per cent of the respondents admitted that, they either listen to the radio or watch the TV regularly while the remaining 8.3 per cent of the respondents replied in negative. The number of listeners of Radio and number of viewers of TV are more among the members of MPTC and ZPTC when compared with Sarpanches and Presidents of Mandal Parishads.

The Type of Programmes Watched by the Respondents on TV:

The following table provides information about the programmes watched by those respondents on the TV.

TABLE NO. – 1.15
THE TYPE OF PROGRAMMES WATCHED BY THE RESPONDENTS ON TV

S.N O	Response	Position in PRI									Total		
		Sarpanch			M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Members			President of the Mandal Parishad			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Row %	Col %	Co unt	Row %	Col %			
1	No	11	44.0	8.3%	12	48.0	7.5	2	8.0	22.2	25	100	8.3
2	Political events and news	52	38.5	39.4	78	57.8	49.1	5	3.7	55.6	135	100	45.0
3	Serials and Entertainment Programmes	61	48.0	46.2	65	51.2	40.9	1	.8	11.1	127	100	42.3
4	Films	1	50.0	.8	1	50.0	.6				2	100	.7%
5	All categories of programmes	7	63.6	5.3	3	27.3	1.9	1	9.1	11.1	11	100	3.7
Total		132	44.0	100	159	53.0	100	9	3.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

The above table shows that, the sizeable number of 45 per cent of the total respondents disclosed that, they mainly watch political events and listen to the news related to the politics on TV while the 42.3 per cent watch the serials, and the .7 per cent of respondents watch films, and 3.7 per cent games and other entertainment programs. The majority of the respondents are belonging to the category of Presidents of Mandal Parishad view political programmes and news when compared with the Sarpanches and members of MPTC and ZPTCs.

Whether the Respondents know about Institutions Created Under 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. It is a well known fact that, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 created two new institutions for the effective functioning of the Panchayati Raj System. These institutions include the State Election Commission and State Finance Commission created for different purposes. But, it is disappointment to note from the present study that, the Panchayati Raj leaders who are covered under the present Study as sample are totally ignorant of these two institutions and the following table is a testimony to this discouraging trend.

TABLE NO. -1.16
WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS KNOW ABOUT INSTITUTIONS
CREATED UNDER 73RD CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	7	5.3	41.2	125	94.7	44.2	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C .Members	8	5.0	47.1	151	95.0	53.4	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	2	22.2	11.8	7	77.8	2.5	9	100	3.0
Total		17	5.7	100.0	283	94.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As can be noted from the above that, the vast size of respondents constituting only 94.3 per cent of the respondents are not aware of the fact that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act brought the above mentioned institutions into existence: one for conducting the elections to the Panchayati Raj Bodies and the second for suggesting the guidelines for distribution of funds to the Panchayati Raj bodies by the State Government. This speaks very low about the quality of Panchayati Raj leaders.

Respondents' knowledge about the Functions of Village Panchayat:

The functions entrusted to the Village Panchayats by the present Panchayati Raj Act are known to the extremely highest majority of the respondents if not to the total number of respondents (See-1.17).

TABLE No. – 1.17
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FUNCTIONS OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT

S.No	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	116	87.9	43.1	16	12.1	51.6	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C.&Z.P.T.C.Members	144	90.6	53.5	15	9.4	48.4	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100.0	3.3				9	100	3.0
Total		269	89.7	100	31	10.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

It is evident that, 89.7 per cent of the respondents know well the functions carried out by the Village Panchayats in the State. The above table also reveals that, the highest majority of the respondents of the three categories of the sample present the same picture in this regard.

Respondents' Knowledge about the Functions of Mandal Parishad:

Regarding the knowledge of the respondents about the functions entrusted to the Mandal Parishads, as the following table indicates an overwhelming majority of the respondents accounting for 71 per cent of the total respondents appear to possess this fundamental knowledge.

TABLE No. -1.18
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FUNCTIONS OF MANDAL PARISHAD

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	59	44.7	27.7	73	55.3	83.9	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C .Members	145	91.2	68.1	14	8.8	16.1	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100	4.2				9	100	3.0
Total		213	71.0	100	87	29.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

Even though the above table projects a very heartening trend regarding the knowledge of the respondents about the functions of Mandal Parishads. It also exposes a negative trend since the number of respondents who are ignorant of this important aspect is also sizeable as they account for as many as 29 per cent of the total respondents.

Respondents' Knowledge about the Functions of Zilla Parishad:

It can be noted from the Table-1.20 that, the knowledge about the functions of Zilla Parishad which is the highest tier in the Panchayati Raj System is possessed by the lesser number of the respondents, when compared with those who know about the functions of Village Panchayats and Mandal Parishads as shown by the previous two tables.

TABLE No. – 1.19
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FUNCTIONS OF ZILLA PARISHAD

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	43	32.6	35.0	89	67.4	50.3	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C.Me mbers	72	45.3	58.5	87	54.7	49.2	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	8	88.9	6.5	1	11.1	.6	9	100	3.0
Total		123	41.0	100	177	59.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As per the above table the number of respondents who do not know about the functions of Zilla Parishad for exceeds the number of the respondents who possess this knowledge as they constitute 59 per cent of the total number of respondents. These respondents are mostly MPTC and ZPTC members and Presidents of Mandal Parishads.

Respondents' Awareness about the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act:

The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 constitutes a land mark in the history of Panchayati Raj System as it brought about several far-reaching changes in this system including the reservation of certain number of seats for women in these bodies. Hence, thorough knowledge about this Act is very essential for all those who are connected with the Panchayati Raj System. Hence, the knowledge of the respondents of present study about this Act is proved by the means of questioning. The first question posed aims to know from the respondents whether they are aware of the enactment of this Amendment Act in 1992 by the Parliament, Their response is presented in the following table.

TABLE No. – 1.20
RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS ABOUT THE 73RD CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	36	27.3	39.6	96	72.7	45.9	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C .Members	49	30.8	53.8	110	69.2	52.6	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	6	66.7	6.6	3	33.3	1.4	9	10	3.0
Total		91	30.3	100	209	69.7	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

The above table shows that, the majority of 69.7 per cent of the total respondents admitted that they do not have any knowledge about this extremely important Act aimed at the revitalization of the Panchayati Raj System. Thus, only 1/3rd of the respondents are aware of this vital Act. Certainly, this is a depressing trend as it reflects the sorry state of affairs regarding the nature and quality of women leadership of the Panchayati Raj.

Respondents' awareness about the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act of 1994:

The Government of Andhra Pradesh enacted the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 in conformity with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. The working of the all the Panchayati Raj Bodies in state is governed by this Act. Hence, the knowledge about this Act is a must for all those involved in the running of these bodies. Unfortunately, the number of respondents who know about this Act is rather limited as exposed by the table given below.

TABLE No. -1.21
RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS ABOUT THE ANDHRA PRADESH PANCHAYATI RAJ ACT OF 1994

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	50	37.9	40.0	82	62.1	46.9	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C &Z.P.T. C.Members	68	42.8	54.4	91	57.2	52.0	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	7	77.8	5.6	2	22.2	1.1	9	100	3.0
Total		125	41.7	100	175	58.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As can be noted from the above table that, a vast majority of 58.3 per cent of the respondents frankly admitted that they have know nothing about the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 which is presently governing the functioning of the Panchayati Raj Bodies in the State at all the three levels. Thus, only 41.7 per cent of the respondents are aware of this Act and its provisions. The position is better in the case of Presidents of Mandal Parishad when compared with the Sarpanches and Members of MPTC and ZPTCs. On the whole, this discouraging situation cause of deep concern as it will have its own impact on performance of the respondents who happen to be the political leads of these bodies.

Respondents' knowledge about the Financial Structure of the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Another very important aspect of the Panchayati Raj bodies about which the respondents should possess thorough knowledge is the financial structure of these bodies. As they occupy the leadership positions they should have a clear idea about the income and expenditure pattern of the

Panchayati Raj bodies in the State. The sufficient knowledge about this vital aspects as can be noted from the table given below .

TABLE No. -1.22
RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Count	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Count	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	109	82.6	41.9	23	17.4	57.5	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C. Members	142	89.3	54.6	17	10.7	42.5	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100	3.5				9	100	3.0
Total		260	86.7	100	40	13.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As The above table reveals the highest majority of 86.7 per cent of the respondents disclosed they know well the various sources from which the different Panchayati Raj Bodies derive their income and also their expenditure on different items as per the concerned Act. It can be expected that, a comprehensive and thorough knowledge on the part of the political heads about the financial system of the Panchayati Raj Bodies would certainly contribute to the financial soundness of these bodies. This encouraging trend can be found equally among the three categories of respondents of this study.

Whether the Respondents Know the Purpose of Gram Sabha:

The next question posed to the respondents is intended to confirm whether they have any knowledge about purpose of the Gram Sabha which is a vital organ of the Village Panchayats. The response of the respondents presents a positive trend which is apparent from the following table.

TABLE No. -1.23
WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS KNOW THE PURPOSE OF GRAM SABHA

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Yes			No			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Ro w %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	119	90.2	43.3	13	9.8	52.0	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C. Members	147	92.5	53.5	12	7.5	48.0	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100	3.3				9	100	3.0
Total		275	91.7	100	25	8.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

The above table reveals that, the extremely highest majority of 91.7 per cent of the total respondents are fully aware of the aims and also the functions of the Gram Sabha under the existing Panchayati Raj Act. This trend is the same among the three categories of respondents.

Respondents' Knowledge about the Process of Conducting the Meetings of Deliberative Wings of the Panchayati Raj Institutions:

It is heartening to note from the following table that the highest majority of the respondents known the entire process involved in conducting of the meetings the deliberative wings of various Panchayati Raj Bodies as per the concerned Act.

TABLE No. -1.24
**RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PROCESS OF CONDUCTING THE MEETINGS OF
DELIBERATIVE WINGS OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS**

S.N O	Position in PRI	Response						Total		
		Have Knowledge			No Knowledge			Cou nt	Row %	Col %
		Count	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Row %	Col %			
1	Sarpanch	99	75.0	40.2	33	25.0	61.1	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T.C. &Z.P.T.C. Members	138	86.8	56.1	21	13.2	38.9	159	100	53.0
3	President of the Mandal Parishad	9	100	3.7				9	100	3.0
Total		246	82.0	100	54	18.0	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As can be noted from the above table that, the number of respondents have no knowledge about the above mentioned process is very limited as they constitute merely 18 per cent of the total respondents. The present study also reveals that, the majority of the three categories of respondents have this important knowledge. Certainly, this is a very desirable feature, as this knowledge is essential for those who are responsible for conducting the meetings of the Panchayati Raj Bodies.

Whether the Respondents aware the Aim Behind the Provision of Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:

Recently, it is widely realized that, political empowerment is an essential prerequisite for achieving the alround development of the women. In view of this the Constitutional Amendment Act rightly provides for the reservation of certain number of political positions in the Panchayati Raj bodies with the aim of securing the political empowerment of women at the grassroot level. It is attempted to ascertain whether, the respondents are aware of the aim of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which provides reservations for women in the Panchayati Raj Bodies. The trend emerged from this probe can be glimpsed from the table.

TABLE No. -1.25
WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS KNOW THE AIM BEHIND THE PROVISION FOR WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

S. N O	Position in PRI	Response												Total		
		participation of women in Local politics			Economic Development of women			To train the women in the art of Politics			Political Empowerment of Women			Co unt	Ro w %	Col %
		Cou nt	Row %	Col %	Co unt	Row %	Col %	Co unt	Row %	Col %	Cou nt	Ro w %	Col %			
1	Sarpan ch	99	75.0	44.8	13	9.8	48.1	3	2.3	33.3	17	12.9	39.5	132	100	44.0
2	M.P.T. C. & Z.P.T .C.Me mbers	114	71.	51.6	14	8.8	51.9	6	3.8	66.7	25	15.7	58.1	159	100	53.0
3	Preside nt of the Mandal Parisha d	8	88.9	3.6							1	11.1	2.3	9	100	3.0
Total		221	73.7	100	27	9.0	100	9	3.0	100	43	14.3	100	300	100	100

Field data computed

As can be noted from the above table all the respondents know the aim behind the provision of reservation of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj Bodies by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. About 73.7 per cent respondents stated that, participation of women in the exercise of political power and decision- making process at the grassroots is the main aim of the provision of women reservations in the Panchayati Raj Bodies while 14.3 per cent of the total respondents felt that, the reservations for women in the Panchayati Raj by the above Act aims at making them politically empowered. Economic development of women is the main aim behind these reservations for women was felt by a limited number of respondents accounting for 9 per cent, whereas a very negligible number of respondents i.e., 3 per cent stated the reservations were provided to women for training them in the art of politics.

CONCLUSION:

This chapter presents the political knowledge and awareness of the respondents. As the data in the chapter reveals the respondents have sound political knowledge, but the breadth and depth of such knowledge is poor. They know that there is a written constitution for the country but they have no knowledge about its contents. They also lack the very fundamental knowledge that the Parliamentary system of government has been working in India. The names of the main political parties in the country and also the major political parties in Andhra Pradesh. However, they are ignorant of the ideology of the various political parties. They do not know the details of coalition government formed at the center. In spite of lacking adequate political knowledge, the respondents are conscious of certain of their political rights and duties. They are voting regularly in all the elections held to various offices. They discuss politics frequently. They have exposure to the news papers, TV and Radio. But they are mainly interested in entertainment and cultural programmes and less interested in political news or events. The present study presents a mixed picture about the knowledge of the respondents on different issues of Panchayati Raj System with which they are closely associated as their political executive.

SUGGESTIONS:

On the basis of the present study certain suggestions can be made for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of the women leaders working Panchayati Raj bodies:

1. There is an imperative need for indepth and intensive research on various dimensions of political empowerment of women, a phenomenon which has already made its appearance in the political system of the Country. This research should be taken up both at the macro and micro levels. The knowledge gathered through this research would provide inputs to the policy makers, planners and development administrators to reorient their approach towards more effective political empowerment of women and other related issues and change the policies and programmes appropriate to reaching the designed Goal.
2. A suitable environment particularly, in the rural setting should be created for the effective functioning of the women political leadership which is still an emerging process. The families, political parties and their leaders, the social activists, women organizations etc., have a key role to play in the creation of such environment.

3. It may be suggested that ,the women should be educated so that, they can develop necessary political awareness for contesting various political offices in the Panchayati Raj bodies reserved for them.
4. It is also suggested that, the women leaders should be educated about the Acts, rules and regulations concerning the various Panchayati Raj bodies in which they hold different political positions. This knowledge and awareness are very essential to help them to discharge their roles more effectively.

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