

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
PANCHAYATI RAJ  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1420  
ANSWERED ON:01.12.2005  
EXERCISE OF POWERS BY WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT  
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**Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:**

(a) whether the Government is aware that approximately 10 lakhs women are elected representatives in Panchayat and their powers are being exercised by their male counterparts; and

(b) if so, the steps being taken/ proposed to be taken by the Government to ensure that the powers delegated to women should be exercised by them only?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a) No sir. As per available information, approximately 8,90,605 women are elected representatives in different levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions who are exercising powers as per law and their powers are not being exercised by their male counterparts.

(b) Does not arise. However, the Government supports capacity building training programmes for elected women representatives of Panchayats so that they can effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities as envisaged in the Constitution, to take an active role in the matters relating to their village and taluk.

In order to evolve the National Consensus on the measure to be taken to strengthen Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened Seven Round

Table of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj between July, 2004 and December, 2004. At the Round Tables around 150 points for action covering 18 dimensions of Panchayati Raj, were formulated by Consensus. Inter alia, these include points of action pertaining to both the Centre and the States that concern the active participation of women in PRIs and Gram Sabha. These might be summarised as below:

i) The provision of women Component Plans in the budgets of the PRIs;

ii) Harmonize linkages with Self Help Groups (SHGs);

iii) Adequate training and capacity building;

iv) Mahila Sabhas (or equivalent) to facilitate women's concerns and priorities being raised in meetings of Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas (or equivalent sub- Gram Sabha forums);

v) Separate quorum for women's participation in Gram Sabhas and sub-Gram Sabha forums.

The full text of the conclusions relating to women arrived at the Third Round Table Conference at Raipur, is annexed.

**ANNEXURE**

**THIRD ROUND TABLE OF MINISTERS IN-CHARGE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ - RAIPUR, 23-24 SEPTEMBER 2004**

Ministers in-charge of Panchayati Raj, and their representatives, bearing in mind the spirit of cooperative federalism which must inform the effective implementation of Panchayati Raj as set out in Part IX of the Constitution of India and related provisions, agreed to recommend to their respective Governments, for joint acceptance by the Centre and the States, the following points of action:

**II Reservations for Women**

(i) It is clear that women have been able to enlarge their representation beyond the minimum 33% prescribed by the Constitution. In Karnataka, 45% of the elected offices are occupied by women and in Uttar Pradesh, 54% of the Zilla Panchayats Presidents are women. Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, 36% seats of chairpersons of Gram Panchayats are occupied by women.

(ii) In promoting larger social objectives through PRIs, States may be sensitized to issues of gender empowerment so that the

unintended consequences of such policies is not to diminish the role of women in Panchayati Raj.

(iii) The Constitution does provide for the rotation of seats reserved for women but does not prescribe the number of terms for which seats may be reserved before rotation. Seats may be reserved for one term or two terms or more depending upon the provisions made by the State Legislature in the State Law. There are different practices being adopted in the different States and there are different practices under contemplation in several States. This being so, the option to reserve seats for more than one-term is open but it is for the State Legislature to decide the number of terms for which seats will remain reserved.

(iv) The empowerment of women through reservations in the panchayats is a necessary first step but needs to be reinforced by a number of other measures such as :

(a) the provision of Women Component Plans in the budgets of the PRIs;

(b) linkages with Self Help Groups (SHGs);

(c) adequate training and capacity building;

(d) encouragement to political parties to put up women candidates;

(e) the opportunity to women to serve a full term when they are elected to posts in the PR system;

(f) Mahila Sabhas (or equivalent) to facilitate women's concerns and priorities being raised in meetings of Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas (or equivalent sub-Gram Sabha forums);

(g) separate quorum for women's participation in Gram Sabhas and sub-Gram Sabha forums.

Reservations to the post of chairperson in the PR system has been challenged in the courts of law, calling for an appropriate defence of the provisions in the court and jurisprudential clarifications of the issues involved.