

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 15 marks

Has the 73rd Constitutional Amendment empowered women in panchayats in India? Discuss

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** Art 243D reserves $\geq 1/3$ seats + chairperson posts → frame: has presence become power?
- R2** reservation = one of India's largest democratic transformations → but numbers alone ≠ power

Body flow

Art 243D reservation → scale: ~10 lakh women, 37%, Bihar 54% → first-time entry incl. SC/ST → presence → participation → **Buch** (regular attendance) → **Chattopadhyay & Duflo** (drinking water / public goods) → **Rao & Sanyal** (Gram Sabha questions local inequalities)

Counter-view

formal entry ≠ control → **Pai's** "Pati Panchayat" (husbands / male kin govern in her name) → **Mohanty** (household burden, weak training, official non-cooperation) → **Pande** (rotation blocks re-election)

Conclusion routes

- R1** **Fraser**: reservation = affirmative remedy (secures presence); transformative empowerment needs training, safety, devolution
- R2** real in representation, unfinished in substance → door opened, project incomplete

The 73rd Amendment 1992 did more than build a uniform Panchayati Raj structure. Through Article 243D it reserved not less than one-third of seats & chairperson posts for women. The question is whether this presence has become power.

The reservation produced one of India's largest democratic transformations. By the Ministry of Panchayati Raj's appraisal, nearly 10 lakh women sat in Panchayati Raj institutions, about 37% of all elected members, rising to 54% in Bihar.

In part, presence has become participation. Nirmala Buch views women members attend meetings more regularly than men. Raghobendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo show that women-headed Panchayats invest more in drinking water & public goods. Vijayendra Rao & Paromita Sanyal show the Gram Sabha lets poor women raise problems and question local inequalities.

But formal entry has not always meant control. Sudha Pai's "Pati Panchayat" captures how husbands and male relatives govern in a woman's name. Bidyut Mohanty points to household burdens, weak training and official non-cooperation, while Rohini Pande argues that rotating reserved seats blocks re-election.

Following Nancy Fraser, reservation is an affirmative remedy that secures presence; transformative empowerment, which alters power relations, still needs training, safety and devolution. The amendment has empowered women substantially in representation, but the deeper project remains unfinished.