



Issue of Pradhan Pati in Panchayats

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

A panel constituted by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** in 2023 has submitted its report, *Transforming Women's Representation and Roles in Panchayati Raj Systems and Institutions: Eliminating Efforts for Proxy Participation, recommending "exemplary penalties"* to curb the practice of **'Pradhan Pati'**.

- The report suggests policy reforms, training, and technology-driven solutions to empower women leaders.

What are the Key Reforms Suggested by the Committee?

- **Strict Penalties for Proxy Leadership:** Enforcement of 'exemplary penalties' for proven cases of **male relatives acting as proxies for elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.
- **Structural and Policy Reforms:** The committee recommends **gender-exclusive quotas** in panchayat subject and ward-level committees (like Kerala's model), **annual 'Anti-Pradhan Pati' awards** to recognize efforts against proxy leadership.
 - Proposes **appointment of women's ombudspersons** to handle related complaints. It also suggests **public swearing-in ceremonies** in Gram Sabhas to reinforce women pradhans' authority.
 - Suggests creation of a **federation of women panchayat leaders** for peer support and collective decision-making.
- **Technological Interventions:** The committee proposes **Virtual reality (VR) simulation training** to enhance governance skills, **Artificial intelligence (AI) powered query-driven guidance** in vernacular languages for real-time legal and governance support
 - **WhatsApp groups** linking **Women Elected Representatives (WERs)** with officials for issue resolution.
 - Additionally, the **Panchayat Nirnay Portal** will enable citizens to track pradhans' participation, ensuring transparency and accountability.
 - The committee suggests **collaborating with prominent educational institutions** and international agencies for leadership programs.

What is the Issue of Pradhan Pati in PRIs?

- **Pradhan Pati:** Also known as **'Sarpanch Pati'** or **'Mukhiya Pati,'** this practice involves the husbands of elected women panchayat leaders exercising power on their behalf.
 - As a result, many WERs serve as **mere figureheads**, undermining their autonomy and leadership. It reinforces **patriarchy** and weakens the intent of the **73rd Constitutional Amendment**.
- **Menace of Pradhan Pati:** India has about **2.63 lakh panchayats** across three levels (Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad). Women make up **46.6% (15.03 lakh)** of **32.29 lakh** elected panchayat representatives.

- However, their **effective participation remains low**, especially in northern states like **UP, Bihar, Haryana, and Rajasthan**, where **male relatives often control decision-making**.
- **Challenges in Addressing Pradhan Pati: Patriarchal norms and bureaucratic neglect** undermine **women's authority**, often reducing them to figureheads.
 - **Threats, violence, and social pressure** discourage women from actively participating in governance.
 - The committee cautions that strict penalties may push the issue underground instead of addressing root causes like patriarchy.

Read more: [SC Calls for Reform to Empower Women Leaders](#)

Governance of PRIs

- **State Subject:** Local governance falls under the jurisdiction of state governments, with PRIs operating as per respective **State Panchayati Raj Acts**.
- **Constitutional Framework:**
 - **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992)** established a **three-tiered Panchayat system** and mandated **1/3rd reservation for women**, later increased to **50% in 21 states and 2 UTs**.
 - **Article 243D** provides for reservation for **Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes** in PRIs.
 - **Article 40** of the Constitution, a **Directive Principle of State Policy**, mandates the State to establish **village panchayats** and grant them the necessary **powers and authority** to function as **self-governing units**.
- The **Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996**, grants **Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas** special powers to **manage natural resources** and protect **tribal culture and livelihoods**.

Drishhti Mains Question:

How does the practice of 'Pradhan Pati' undermine the objectives of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment? Suggest measures to strengthen women's leadership in PRIs.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question

Mains

Q.1 What are the continued challenges for Women in India against time and space? **(2019)**

Q.2 Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity and inclusiveness. **(2021)**