



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

PRIA

occasional paper

February, 2019

Women's Political Leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions- Challenges & Prospects

By

Shobha Sylvia Veigas

Table of Contents

Sl. No.	Content	Page No.
1.	Abstract	03
2.	Introduction	04
3.	History of Women's Representation in PRIs	05
4.	Women's Political Journey in Panchayati Raj Institutions after the Amendment	09
5.	Can women exercise leadership?	12
6.	Women leadership –challenges and prospects	14
7.	Conclusion and Recommendation	15
8.	Reference	16

Abstract

The introduction of reservation policy for women and other marginalized section like Dalits and, Adivasis in Panchayati Raj Institution is considered to be one of the significant constitutional amendments. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act gave political status to women by reserving 1/3rd of the seats to women. This 1/3rd reservation policy for women is widely accepted in many states and in fact, 19 states have introduced 50 percent reservation for women.

Although, such reservation policy led to political consciousness and empowerment of women, one of the critical assessments is, whether elected women representative are able to execute their powers and responsibilities independently. Women's political participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions is not just only about the number of women participation but also, how women's political leadership has contributed to the social and economic development. The social, economic and political conditions need to be created to encourage women to empower and act as leaders in real sense.

This paper aims to explore the journey of women's leadership in 25 years, issues, challenges faced by women elected leaders in PRIs. This conceptual paper based on review of literature and on own observation from the field work experiences.

Keywords: Women's participation, reservation, CSO, capacity building, women's leadership

Introduction

Panchayat Raj Institutions have completed 25 years as constitutional bodies in 2018. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 through its reservation policy brought more than one million women to the fore as members and chairpersons of local bodies. There have been many remarkable changes in the society under the leadership of a woman. For instance, there has been improvement in the public distribution system and liberation of almost 700 women through education in one of the interior district of Odisha, Ganjam district under the leadership of Arati Devi. Arati Devi, who was a former investment officer of IDBI bank and a MBA graduate, became the Sarapanch of Dhunkapada gram Panchayat of Ganjam district where between 2012-17; she became a role model for many women attempting to enter grass root level politics.

In another instance- Chaavi Rajawat, an MBA graduate from Soda village of Jaipur district, Rajasthan is serving as the Sarapanch since 2010. Her focus is on addressing environmental, social and economic challenges in Soda, and she has invited global agencies to help meet the needs of her village, including providing safe drinking water and equal access to education for girls in Soda¹.

Such kinds of inspiring stories are endless in this country. In each state, we can find such women as elected leaders at the panchayat levels who have done enormous contributions to the development. The impact of the 73rd amendments of Panchayati Raj Act cannot be understated, as it gave social and political recognition to women and underscored their ability to make a significant contribution to society.

25 years have passed since the Constitutional Amendment Act came into force. Most of the states have fourth or fifth generation of panchayats in place. The stories of achievement of women in PRIs imply a gradual acceptance for reservation of women in Panchayat and found that women too are accepted as leaders at the grass root level. Women are now gradually showing interest in development outside their traditional roles within the family.

This journey was impossible unless there was a struggle of bringing reservation for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

¹ Tina Das , India Today , 2018

History of Women's Representation in PRIs

In 1957, a historic development in establishing Panchayati Raj was passed through the report of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. The Committee recommended that two women should be co-opted in all the three- tier system of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. This was the first time when women were able to have a role in Panchayati Raj.

In 1974, the National Committee on the Status of Women recommended the establishment of statutory women's Panchayats at the village level to ensure greater participation of women in political process. In 1977, the Ashok Mehta Committee was set up to study the scope for strengthening the Panchayati Raj System, including the measures that were necessary to involve women in the local bodies. The Committee recommended that the two women who would get the highest number of votes in the Zilla Parishad elections would be automatically coopted to the Zilla Parishad even if they failed to be elected. The Committee also suggested that in cases where no women candidates had contested the elections, two women should be co-opted from district concerned. The committee recommended a similar provision for the Mandal Panchayats as well.

The status of women representation in the Panchayati raj bodies during 1977 was very low as indicated by Table.1 which details the status of women's representation in following states. A quick glance suggests that states in India, on paper at least, followed the recommendations but none of the states put their efforts to bring more women under the fold of Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Sl.No	State	GP	PS	ZP
1	Andhra Pradesh	2-4	2	2
2	Assam	2	1	N.A
3	Bihar	0	2	2
4	Gujarat	2	2-3	3-5
5	Haryana	1	2	N.A
6	Himachal Pradesh	1-2	2	2
7	Kerala	1	N.A	N.A
8	Karnataka	1-2	2	1
9	Madhya Pradesh	2	2	N.A
10	Maharashtra	2	1	1
11	Orissa	0	1	N.A
12	Panjab	2	2	4
13	Rajasthan	2	2	2
14	Tamil Nadu	1	3	0
15	Uttara Pradesh	0	5	3-5
16	West Bengal	2	2	2

However, these gradual changes did begin to increase women's representation in some of the states, as states like Karnataka (1985) introduced 25% reservation for women in the Mandal Panchayat. Andhra Pradesh in 1986 provided 20-25 percent reservation for women for the gram panchayat to be co-opted in the Panchayat Samitis, in addition to the elected women members³.

In 1989 nine villages in the western state of Maharashtra had elected all-women *gram panchayats* reportedly as an outcome of the campaign of an independent farmer's organization, *Shetkari Sanghatana (CBPS report)*. An all-woman *panchayat* was also elected in Andhra Pradesh in the seventies and another in the eighties (Mumtaz, 2005). After the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, West Bengal also got its all women GP in May 1993.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act created a revolutionary transformation in democratic decentralization in India. The Act mandated reserving 1/3rd of the total seats for women, including among those seats reserved for members of the Dalit and

² Santha E.K (1999): Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj, Institute of Social Sciences. New Delhi

³ Dr.Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Kurukhetra July 2018

Adivasi communities in the three –tier Panchayat Raj Institutions. The Act also mandated 1/3^d of the positions of chairperson in all the three tires of PRIs to be reserved for women. With the provisions of the 73rd Amendment, a quantum leap in women’s representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions took place. Table-2 indicates the percentage of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in January 1996 in 10 states. Karnataka showed highest percentage 43.38% by virtue of the introduction of 25% reservation in 1985. By setting a precedent for higher women representation, a higher number of women were motivated to contest in the election due to one decade of history. Whereas others followed the reservation norms of 33% as prescribed in the Act, except for the states of Punjab and Rajasthan. Despite such setbacks, it was evident that there had been a major shift in the way grass root level governance conducted itself.

Sl.No	State	GP	PS	ZP	Overall %
1	Gujarat	21351(64052) 33.3	1275(3765) 33.9	254(764) 33.2	33.36
2	Haryana	17928(544159)33.1	807(2418)33.4	101(303) 33.3	33.12
3	Karnataka	37689(80627) 46.7	1343(3340) 40.2	335(919) 33.3	43.38
4	Kerala	39544(10685) 37.0	64(3340) 36.6	105(300) 35.0	36.90
5	Madhya Pradesh	1844000(484394) 38.0	2881(9097) 32.9	315(942) 33.4	37.88
6	Panjab	23832(78983) 30.2	326(2441) 13.44	89(274) 32.6	29.68
7	Rajasthan	33566(103712) 32.2	1740(5257) 33.0	331(997)33.1	32.41
8	Tripura	1809(5427) 33.3	67(196)34.2	24(70)34.3	33.7
9	Uttara Pradesh	12059(406895) 29.6	18880(52417) 36.0	793(2127) 37.4	30.4
10	West Bengal	22014(62139)35.4	3202(9516)33.7	227 (664)34.1	35.18

Over the period there were many discussions and debates held at the state and national level to bring gender equality at the PRI level. These efforts eventually culminated in the introduction of the One Hundred and Tenth Amendment Bill, 2009

⁴ Santha E.K (1999): Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj, Institute of Social Sciences. New Delhi

in the Lok Sabha by then Minister of Panchayati Raj, Shri C.P. Joshi to amend Article 243 D of the Constitution of India. The Bill sought to amend the article to enhance the proportion of reservation for women from one-third to half of the total seats in the Panchayat (Manoj Rai 2013). There are many states which already provided 50% reservation for women in Panchayats by amending their Panchayati Raj Acts at the state level. Once again, we see a big leap to enable more women to enter the political arena.

Table -3 shows that 14 states provided 50% reservation for women in 2016. But the recent MoPR report stated that only 19 states had actually implemented this reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Jharkhand had the highest percentage of women in PRIs followed by Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh.

Reservation for Women in Gram Panchayats				
Sl.No	Name of the State	Total representatives	Women representatives	Actual % in Representation
1	Andhra Pradesh	156049	78025	50
2	Arunachal Pradesh	9356	3094	33
3	Assam	26844	13422	50
4	Bihar	136325	70400	52
5	Chhattisgarh	158776	87549	55
6	Dadar Nagar Haveli	136	47	35
7	Daman & Diu	97	28	29
8	Goa	1559	514	33
9	Gujarat	132726	43670	33
10	Haryana	68152	24876	37
11	Himachal Pradesh	27832	13947	50
12	Jammu And Kashmir	33282	11169	34
13	Jharkhand	51327	30373	59
14	Karnataka	95307	50892	53
15	Kerala	19089	9897	52
16	Madhya Pradesh	396819	198409	50

- ⁵ Source: Ministry of statistics and programme implementation. Link: <http://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/women-and-men-india-2017>

17	Maharashtra	203203	101466	50
18	Manipur	1784	868	49
19	Odisha	100791	49697	49
20	Punjab	97180	33609	35
21	Rajasthan	121008	70531	58
22	Sikkim	1099	549	50
23	Tamil Nadu	119399	39975	33
24	Telangana	103468	46702	45
25	Tripura	10939	3930	36
26	Uttar Pradesh	718667	297235	41
27	Uttarakhand	61451	35537	58
28	West Bengal	59296	29579	50
	Total	2911961	1345990	46
Source: Ministry of statistics and programme implementation. Link: http://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/women-and-men-india-2017				

Women's Political Journey in Panchayati Raj Institutions after the Amendment

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act brought many women to the political forefront as members and chairpersons of local governance. As many women entered the political arena for the first time, the creation of a political space to be able to voice their needs, concerns and priorities was inevitable. However on the other end, there were still many of them who were trying to grapple with power and authority thrust upon them⁶.

For the first time, women were exposed to the challenges of the political field. Large numbers of women got elected to the political seats for the first time ever with no precedent or role models. 'Governance' was new to them. As elected representatives, women still lacked some of the knowledge, skills and capacities required to effectively govern. The family members, especially the male members, took over and provided "guidance" on governance-related matters. (*Martha Farrell and Mandakini Pant*⁷) As a result, women stepped back and behaved as mere token representatives (dummies), not finding the space or opportunity to make their voices and opinions heard. (PRIA 1999).

As women came entered the political arena, capacity building was the first priority of the various State Governments. Understanding the gravity of the task ahead, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was established in 2004 to provide support from the Centre

⁶ Women Leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions- An Analysis of Six States- PRIA -1999

⁷ Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership: Pedagogical Challenges- *Martha Farrell and Mandakini Pant*

to help build the capacities of the large number of women elected representatives. The willingness for women to come to the public sphere and men to accept women's leadership was not an easy task due to the Indian societal structure.

NGOs in India played a significant role during this period to create spaces for women to participate in the political sphere. A network of organisations, called the 'Regional Support Organisations, was formed which composed of different organisations working in the field across the country popularly known as NCRSOs. It was formed to strengthen local governance and bolster women representation. Initially eight organisations developed the strategy to work on this issue in 10 states.⁸ Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) based in New Delhi with the help of their partner organisations built the capacities of the elected women representatives in 22 states. Several organisations produced IEC materials in a pictorial form for women to understand their roles and responsibilities. The pictorial form of training materials was prepared as many of the women elected representatives were illiterate.

Several studies took place during this period. Participatory Research in Asia published "Women leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions –An analysis of six states" in 1999. SEARCH, an organisation based in Bangalore conducted a study of the achievements and constraints of women elected members in Karnataka (1999). Santha E.K (1999) from Institute of Social Sciences wrote a book based on the study on "Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj". These are a few examples of research which specifically focused on women elected representatives of PRIs. . These studies revealed lots of interesting trends. It was found that:

- Many women stood for elections because the seat was reserved for a female candidate.
- Most of them were unaware of the roles and responsibilities of the post they contested.
- The decision to contest the elections was largely influenced by husbands or male members of the family.
- Husband and male member of the family were the most important and trusted sources of information.
- Most women have not fully understood the roles and responsibilities of their posts, and therefore, the amount of time they spent on non-household work was minimal.

Even with limited experiences, few women elected leaders were able to contribute for development. Study of PRIA (1999) explains several success stories. The case study of Chailo Devi, the Pradhan of Kand Bagiyara, Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh, drew the attention of Chief Minister's to the fact that her village needed a road and certain other amenities and succeeded. Kailoshobai, the Chairperson of Nahad

⁸ Capacity building for strengthening local governance (1995-1999), PRIA

Panchayat Samiti, had to fight a land grabbing group that was taking over *panchayat* land. She received threats to her life, but continued the war unabated and has been successful in reclaiming the land (PRIA, 1999). Several such examples were found in India where strong and capable women elected leaders emerged out of reservation.

By the second round of elections after the Act was passed, the community had largely accepted the reality of women occupying leadership roles. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government were more prepared with training programmes for WERs (Women Elected Representatives) on the functioning of the PRIs from day one (Martha Farrell and Mandakini Pant⁹). Pre-election awareness campaigns (PEVAC) were held in most states to sensitize the citizens about various aspects of elections such as importance of identity proof, voting rights and the correct way to stamp the ballot paper as well as promoting candidature of women and Dalits. Large groups of NGOs, academia, CBOs, media and other like-minded organisations were involved in this process (PRIA, PEVAC 2001). The continuous capacity building continued to support women elected members. As a result women elected leaders began to address issues like drinking water, children's education, health, road etc. They also brought alcohol abuse and domestic violence on to the agenda of political campaigns (Nambiar and Bandyopadhyay 2004). It was not all smooth sailing however, as there were also numerous cases of threat, harassment, and exploitation on women during their performances.

By the third term, visibility and participation of women in PRIs had exponentially increased. Women were now adequately exposed to the political system and governance.¹⁰ So far, nearly five elections had been held in most of the states. In most of the states where elections were held after the confirmation of 50% reservation, the percentage of elected women representatives was more than the stipulated fifty percent (Ref. Table-3). The quantitative figures may raise the eyebrows of people as the states known for incidents of gender discrimination such as Jharkand, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh also displayed high percentages (Table -3).

However, it remains to be seen whether these number truly represent the ground realities of PRIs in India. Continuous studies will need to be conducted to truly understand how far women have succeeded in exercising their leadership as well as finding strategies to empower women in decentralised governance.

⁹ Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership: Pedagogical Challenges- Martha Farrell and Mandakini Pant

¹⁰ Manoj Rai

Can women exercise leadership?

There are evidences from the beginning of PRI elections in the country which have proven that women leaders have undoubtedly contributed to the development of their panchayats. In the first term of election after the Amendment, Shanti, Sarpanch of Madhopur Panchayat, Kushinagar district, who belonged to the Other Backward Community category in a village predominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Caste category managed to get back the Panchayat land which was encroached upon by Nehru Yuvak Kendra (PRIA study 1999). Several case studies like Shanti were documented during this period across the country. Stephen F. and Rajeshkaran N (2001) published a study titled "Sheep and lambs: an empirical study of women in local self-governance in Karnataka" which provided an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the impact of the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka and several achievements of women leaders in PRIs.

There are examples where women Sarapanchas/chairpersons have been especially effective in raising women centric issues that the male panchayats tended to ignore or overlook. Issues like female foeticide and infanticide, child marriage, increased access to schooling and day care along with the so called panchayat works like water, sanitation, road etc were brought into the limelight. In fact, as a result of being exposed to the public life, many women tend to participate in the political leadership at the grassroot level than the urban women.

The participation in leadership positions or as member of the Panchayat had a very positive impact on the lives of rural women. More women attended meetings and accessed public spaces, which was brought about, in part, because of the rapid growth in self-esteem of women. Their role as chairpersons enabled them to overcome barriers like gunghat, sitting with men, talking in the public etc. The interactions also helped them to network at the national level. The Hunger Project, an international organisation conducts conventions every year in various states, where women elected leaders get an opportunity to exchange their achievements, constraints and views and network themselves

Sushma Bhadu ¹¹ sparked a revolution in the village of Dhani Miyan Khan, of Haryana, when she stopped covering her face with a ghunghat. The 32-year-old mother of three informed her husband that the piece of fabric, obligatory for every Haryanvi bahu (bride), was hindering her work. A week after lifting it, on July 22, 2012, she publicly discarded the "infernal" veil at a conference of women panchayat members, girl students and anganwadi workers from 25 neighbouring villages. She

¹¹ <https://www.indiatoday.in/lifestyle/people/story/these-female-sarpanchs-are-changing-how-indian-villages-look-1222228-2018-04-28>

dropped out of school in Class 7, but her efforts have resulted in her village winning many awards for its good sanitary conditions, zero dropout rates and the best sex ratio among all villages in Haryana.

There have also emerged examples of women from a highly educated background, affluent families or from higher castes who had moved to their villages to contest and serve as Sarpanch or Panch to their villages. At the same time lack of a political background, belonging to a lower caste, or being from a poor or illiterate background has not stopped women to contest elections and use their power to try and improve the lives of others. However these affirmative actions did not automatically materialize. These women, who had the inner motive to strive for development in turn, gave other women the strength to contribute despite the constraint of patriarchal norms and caste systems. Yet, these examples are too far and few in between, when compared to the 1.3 million women elected representatives in the country.

The participation of women in the PRI in the real sense is still sadly, lacking when compared to the number of women elected representatives in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The opportunity for leadership and participation in public forum has not provided women a base to participate effectively (*Martha Farrell and Mandakini Pant*). On the ground realities proved yet again that a large number of women are merely proxies for their menfolk.

Participatory Research in Asia, an organisation based in New Delhi has been working with 104 Gram Panchayat from Govindgarh (45) and Banswara (59) blocks of Rajasthan. The field experiences show that most of the women Sarpanchas are still not aware of their roles and responsibilities. Women are still in the era of wearing gunghat and not showing their face to men. Patriarchal norms like this still exist in the country and it is a major challenge for a lot of women to overcome these hurdles. Thus, women's political participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions is not just about the numbers. It is also important to see how political leadership has influenced empowerment of women and contributed to the social and economic development. Unless the challenges of women are not addressed in a realistic manner these issues will still remain and women leaders will continue to be remain vulnerable in political decision making.

Women leadership –challenges and prospects

Nearly five elections for PRIs have been held in most of the States since the implementation of PRIs where around 46% of the elected members in the PRIs are women. (MoPR, 2016). Whether these women are truly representatives even after 25 years is up for critical examination. There are many examples for their achievements. But these are a miniscule percentage when compared to the large percentage of women's representation. In a patriarchal set up, women's participation in PRIs is layered with several constraints. These constraints are both social and institutional in nature¹². Socio-economic factors become very important elements of the nature of women's leadership in PRIs. The obvious obstacles are traditional and cultural barriers and the social norms and attitudes against women as leaders and decision makers which still exist in Indian society. Individual women have to overcome these obstacles with great support. As a result, their contribution has been beneficial to society at large. But the large number of women elected members need opportunities, not just in terms of reservation but support from family and society is still required for women to emerge as true leaders.

The robust party influence at the grass root level continues to make women voiceless. In a party meeting the leaders at the local level decide, based on the party and caste, how women's husbands can be the supporters for the party. Most of the time it is the party that decides who should contest in the election including at the gram panchayat level (though not directly). Male members at the family level are generally instrumental for women to contest in the election. These women are generally always projected as someone's wife, mother, daughter or sister and women mostly do not have any say in this regard. Thus they are considered as proxy candidates from the beginning.

Class, Caste and gender plays a very important role in exclusion of women from the decision making space. Dalit and tribal women are excluded mainly due to their marginalised status. At the same time, the upper caste women find it difficult to assert their voices due to class and caste-based restrictions. Norms like Purdah is strict in the upper caste communities which further act as a hindrance for women to effectively participate in panchayat.

A recent study conducted by Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (2015) again proves that the EWRs were comparatively less educated, assert less, economically dependent on their male kin and politically unaware of the functions and political space that a panchayat offers (CBPS study Impact of women GP Adhyakshas on delivery of services and democratic processes in Karnataka)

¹² CBPS

The mere reservation of seats is not enough though it does help in representation. The capacity building efforts have to go beyond merely iterative, information based training, and be designed around collective action and transformative experiences in order to convert the reservation into a real vehicle of social and political change.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The process of decentralization has provided representation but representation does not necessarily lead to participation. Representation alone cannot be the sufficient mechanism for women to exercise their roles. Women leaders need information, knowledge and skills, to articulate their concerns and influence the decision making as per their concerns. At the policy level, a longer and fixed term for their position as chairperson or vice chairperson is essential for them to get accustomed to the political space and to get a better sense of their roles and responsibilities. The possibility of being re-elected as chairperson would provide an opportunity to execute their plans in a proper manner, if they gain experience in the previous term. The robust qualitative and quantitative capacity building initiatives need to be stressed more and more with handholding and providing follow-up support. Knowledge and expertise of CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) need to be identified by the government to create a scope for disseminating knowledge and building the capacities of the women elected representatives which in turn, could help make women leaders, better performers. Strengthening women's collectives and networks at regional, state and national level provide space to gain mutual support. The academic institutions like universities could support at the regional level to build the knowledge and skills of women elected members.

To conclude, 25 years has passed since the Constitutional Amendment Act came into force. Most of the states have fourth or fifth generation of panchayats in place. A gradual acceptance for reservation of women in Panchayat is established. However at the practical level women still face challenges. The numerical figures of capacity building are not really helping women to build qualitative skills in decision making. The ground level realities need to be understood, analyzed and with that in mind, the capacity building strategies must be chosen and implemented. Capacity building trainings should be conducted with follow up activities and sustained hand holding to the women elected representatives in the field. Universities under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, adopt women headed Panchayats and provide support in capacity building at the field level. The time they definitely are a changing, but a larger level social change is required to consistently challenge the patriarchal norms.

References

- Women leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions – An analysis of six states by Participatory Research in Asia (1999)
- Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership: Pedagogical Challenges, Martha Farrell and Mandakini Pant
- Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership : Learnings; National Report, Participatory Research in Asia (2008-09)
- Why Women’s political Empowerment and Leadership – Handbook – Participatory Research in Asia
- Economic Survey 207-18
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj Reports
- http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/statistical_publication/social_statistics/WM16Chapter5.pdf
- Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sinha (2018), Kurukshetra
- Study report of Impact of Women GP Adhyakshas on Delivery of Services and Democratic Process (2014), Centre for Budget and Policy studies

© 2019 PRIA. The text may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes, provided credit is given to PRIA. To obtain permission for uses beyond those outlined in the Creative Commons license, please contact PRIA Library at library@pria.org. Please use the following citation:

Veigas, Shobha Sylvia (2019). Women’s Political Leadership in Panchayats Raj Institutions- Challenges & Prospects



Participatory Research in Asia
 42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi-110062
 Ph.: +91-011-29960931/32/33
 Web: www.pria.org