

**EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL
WOMEN: A HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

By

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment has been one of the most important items in the agenda of national development. Out of 146 countries, India ranked 118th in the Human Development Index in 2007 and in Gender related index it ranked 118th. The aggravations of the human development gap by gender disparities illustrate the need to empower women with information and knowledge and allow them to emerge as leaders with confidence to guide their own destinies. The urge for empowering women through effective training and, extension services also arises from the gradual decrease in availability of arable land increasing population pressure and growing environmental degradations which have far reaching implications for good and nutritional security in future.

Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision making the goals of equality, development and pace cannot be achieved. Despite the wide spread movement towards demoralization in most countries, women are largely under-represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target of 30 percent women in positions at decision-making levels. The Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment provided reservation of seats for women and this has raised new hopes and all the states are in the process of making the elected bodies at the grassroots level to take up the new challenges.

What is meant by Empowerment?

Empowerment means to let women live their own life in a way they think appropriate on the basis of their conditions, family circumstances, qualities and capabilities of which they themselves are the best judges. Demand for empowering is not a demand for equality or superiority. It is the demand to let them realize their own true self, which shouldn't be denied to them on any basis whatsoever, anywhere, anytime and any place. To realize this ideal an appropriate environment should be created which is not an easy task. For this, efforts will have to be made at every level and in every sphere. The following are a few important areas in which women to be provided sufficient room for their progress.

Political Empowerment of Women

The question of women's political participation is now on the international agenda, and permeating many regional and national plans of action. Much hope has been invested in the United Nations and it has consistently been the engine for keeping the gender issues on the global agenda. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) in 1952. Since 1975 four international

conferences on women have been held under its auspices. All the conferences have emphasized women's political empowerment as a key concern.

The issue of women's political empowerment, while attracting considerable attention earlier, actually came to the forefront of the global debate for women's rights at the time of the Fourth World Conference on women's rights held at Beijing in 1995.

Women's Empowerment and Panchayati Raj: A Conceptualization

Empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, their own communities and in their own society by acting on issues that they describe as important. Above all, empowerment is a result of participation in decision-makingⁱⁱ.

Then, women's empowerment refers to the process by which women acquire due recognition on a par with men, to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignityⁱⁱⁱ. So, why is empowerment through Panchayati Raj? According to the Document on Women's Development (1985) women's role in the political process has virtually remained unchanged since independence. Broad-based political participation of women has been severely limited due to various traditional factors such as caste, religion, feudal attitude and family status^{iv}. As a result, women have been left on the periphery of political life. Observing this dark picture, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came to provide them an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and to take active part in decision-making process in the local level.

With the passage of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, India is at a crucial structure in the evaluation of Panchayati Raj Institutions the Indian brand of rural local-self government. It has envisioned people's participation in the process of planning, decision-making, Implementation and delivery system. The Panchayat Acts of State governments have subsequently been amended to incorporate the stipulations of the central Acts thus the constitutional mandate has heralded uniform pattern throughout Indian states.

Policy Analysis

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has created space for women in political participation and decision-making at the grass-root level by providing that 1/3rd of the seats are reserved in all over the country. 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 says.

It provides reservations for women in PRIs set up in two ways for the office of the members and for that of the chairpersons. As per the clause (2) and (3) of Article 243(d), not less than one third of the seats meant for direct election of members at each tier of the Panchayats are to be reserved for the women.

About the Present Study

There are instances in olden days that women ruled big and small territories and participated in political activities. But such cases were a few. Women participated in the freedom struggle, peasant wars and liberation struggles. Representation of women in political institutions was never accepted as an issue of gender justice. The committee on the status of women in India in its report (1976) recommended women's representation at the grass-root level as an immediate necessity as the representation of women in parliament was in a declining trend. The National Perspective Plan for Women suggested that a 30 percent quota for women be introduced at all levels of elected bodies. The Constitution Amendment Act of 73rd and 74th provided a 30 percent reservation to women in rural as well as urban local bodies. According to Article 243 (d) Clause 2 & 3 of 73rd Constitution Amendment, one third of the seats for the three tier Panchayati Raj are reserved for direct election of women members. The study enables to find-out whether the human resource is equally utilized as decision-makers confirming the values of democratic justice.

As far as Indian condition is concerned, it is a known fact that women's access to political life depends on their family background. Even if they got elected under reservation, they may not rule on their own because they are guided and governed by some male member of their family such as husband, brother, son and others depending upon the situation. The applicability of this theory of male domination over women in ruling is not an encouraging factor. It is rather an interesting factor to find out whether the women representatives are wholeheartedly participating in policy making issues to improve the status of other women folk in rural areas. Are there any social barriers like caste, creed and religion which play a dominant role in their decision-making process? Whether the reservations made for women in political field are yielding good results? Whether the objectives of reservations are achieved? If 'not', Why? What are the barriers? Whether the reservations made for women are received by men? Whether the Women are involved in politics because certain seats are reserved for them or they really welcomed reservations allocated for them. With the reservation, are the women really empowered? All these questions need a thorough analysis of issues. The study of this nature certainly brings out how the SC women representatives are really empowered in the right perspective. Warangal district, being a backward district of Telangana region has been selected to study thoroughly. It is against the above back drop the present study on "Empowerment of Women in Andhra Pradesh : A Case Study of SC Women Sarpanches in Warangal District" has been undertaken with the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic and political background of SC Women Sarpanches.
2. To examine the process of political empowerment of women being concentrated against the present political scenario.
3. To evaluate the role of women in politics in Warangal district.
4. To critically examine the validity of reservation made for women under 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts.
5. To gauge the Citizen's Perception on political empowerment of SC Women.
6. To offer valuable suggestions for the empowerment of SC Women in local politics.

Hypotheses

- Though women are elected against the reservation, they are unable to exercise their decision-making powers by themselves because they are influenced by male, and upper caste people.
- Genuine political empowerment of women justifies the aspiration of half of women population in the country.

Methodology

The data required for the completion of present study has been collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data has been collected through the interactions with the concerned persons and interviews with the officials and non-officials of the study area. A structured questionnaire has been administered to 300 persons drawn from 5 revenue divisions, 51 mandals, from which 56 S.C. women reserved grampanchayats have been selected for the study. With a view to elicit people's perceptions regarding political empowerment of rural SC women, 300 respondents were picked up on the basis of random sampling from each selected grampanchayat and how far the purpose of reservations is achieved. On the other hand 56 SC women elected representatives were also administered a separate unstructured questionnaire to record their opinion on their functioning. A ratified random sampling technique has been followed for the identification of respondents. Secondary data has been collected from books, published material, administrative reports, official records, files, brochures etc. The researcher's rich experience is also added to strengthen the study.

Scope of the Study

There is a lot scope to understand the prevailing conditions of the women representatives from dalit communities. And also how the spirit of local governance and reservational representative democracy being implemented to the study findings may also be made applicable to other areas to strengthen the political Empowerment of Women.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is confined to cover only the representatives of S.C. women reserved category restricted to 56 grampanchats only. Though

the researcher has picked up 300 respondents for the analysis of the nature of implementation of women empowerment, the opinion and perceptions of the respondents were confined to only the reserved grampanchayats which do not comprehensively cover the general understanding of women empowerment. Moreover, the respondents' perceptions were elicited keeping only the last years of developmental programmes and activities.

Chapterization

The present study on “**Empowerment of Women : A study of SC Women Sarpanches in Warangal District**” has been divided into Six chapters.

Chapter-I: “Introduction” the introductory chapter outlines the subject, historical legacy about women empowerment and the participation of women in different movements. Law and empowerment of women, the place of women in the constitution of India, empowerment of women through safeguarding their human rights etc., have been discussed in this chapter. Meaning of empowerment, political empowerment are also presented in this chapter. The Introductory chapter, further contain the review of literature, significance of the study, objectives of the study, hypotheses set for the study, methodology adopted for the collection of data, scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter-II: “Empowerment of Rural Women: A Historical Perspective” This chapter highlights the genesis of political empowerment of rural women. The discussion has been initiated right from the inception of Panchayati Raj system in the country. The perspectives of Balwantrai Mehta Committee, Asoka Mehta Committee over the status of women, role of women in politics have been discussed. Similarly, National perspective plan for women also discussed. Likewise, reservation of seats and practices were also presented in this chapter. Parliamentary initiatives against the empowerment of women have been discussed at length. Gender perspective in Five Year Plans also figured in the presentation. This chapter highlights different aspects of political empowerment of rural women like; (a) Village Panchayat and empowerment of women, (b) Women in National Power politics, (c) Different strategies adopted for enhancing political participation of women, (d) Different bills introduced in Parliament for political empowerment of women, (e) The Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment and implementation and impact.

Chapter-III: Women Empowerment Through Local Bodies: An Overview

This chapter focuses on women leadership in Warangal district and the role they have to play in ruling successfully in rural areas in general the importance of S.C. women leadership in local bodies in particular. It also discusses pertaining to the problems of S.C. women as representatives in local bodies. It emphasised that the S.C.women leadership plays a significant role in spite of male domination and upper caste people in rural politics. In this chapter an attempt is made to assess the S.C. women leadership in Warangal district.

Chapter–IV: Profile and performance of SC Women sarpanches in Warangal District This chapter explains a brief profile of Warangal district which contains historical background, status of demographic figures, land use patterns, agriculture, tour spots have been discussed. Further, the profile of SC women sarpanches and their performance as a public representatives and their role in decision making has been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter–V: People’s Perceptions on SC Women local leadership: This chapter highlights the people’s perceptions on political empowerment of SC women. A structured questionnaire was administered to 300 respondents identifying from 56 S.C. women reserved grampanchats in 51 mandal covering 5 revenue divisions in the district. Stratified random sampling technique has been used to identify the respondents. This chapter contains the gender, age, caste, educational qualifications, occupations of the respondents. Respondents opinion on political awareness, usage of adult franchise, awareness about reservations, necessity of reservations, difference in the functioning of male and female representatives has been analysed. Importance of women empowerment, political empowerment of women and its repercussions have been presented in this chapter. Lastly, suggestions offered by the respondents also incorporated in this chapter. Few case studies where women elected representatives are functioning, have also been presented in this chapter to highlight their experiences on political empowerment of SC women.

Chapter – VI: Findings and Conclusions: This chapter presents the gist of all preceding chapters along with the findings of the study and the suggestions were also made for the strengthening of political empowerment of rural S.C. women.

Concluding Observations

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act provided a new constitutional platform which ensures the representation of one-third women in the PRIs. This legislation accelerated the process of the participation of S.C. women in the policy making bodies. In many areas of social and political development. Women are accorded more and more importance now a days. It might be regarded as a traditional, benevolent point of view to state that S.C. women promote value codes and encourage in their own way a humane society, no matter whether this perspective can be taken at face value. It also has to be emphasized that S.C. women equally with men, implement democracy as a way of life and generate economic resources. Hardly any country in the world has yet succeeded in fully implementing the equality of women and men. In India, S.C. women are the first and most to suffer from poverty and illiteracy, oppression and violence and from disasters and the infringement of human rights. Over and above, the same Indian women have proved on many occasions that they can be more accountable, equally skilled and less corrupt than men. Confronted with all possible social and political problems, they have

demonstrated their social competence and their own income generating capacity.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act marks a watershed in the field of advancement of Indian women in general S.C. women in particular as they ensure one-third of total seats in all elected bodies of PRIs. This provides an opportunity to about one million rural women to enter as leaders and decision-makers at the grass-root level and public life through the existing 0.25 million bodies-rural and urban. Of these 75,000 will be chairpersons at the village, block and district levels. The participation of often illiterate rural S.C. women in the process of grassroots democracy has attracted both positive and negative views. The allegations are that these institutions are being misused by the predominantly male political structure which keeps women away from meetings, take their signature at their residence well before the meetings and operate through dummy candidates. Nevertheless, even the worst critics have acknowledged that this has caused some activity among rural women who were so far dormant. The fear that S.C. women's participation would not automatically lead to greater decision-making powers in the PRIs is not justified. This is manifested in the elections to the PRIs held in different states especially in the northern part of India.

To make the participation of S.C. women in the PRIs really meaningful, it would be desirable that the percentage of reservation has to be raised to the proportion of women's population. Further, conferment of judicial and police powers would go a long way in elevating the status and authority of the PRIs. Lack of education in the rural areas, social and family barriers and preoccupation with house hold duties prevent S.C. women from actively participating in the political process. However, it appears that true women's participation in grassroots democracy will make its mark on the democratic structure of the nation sooner rather than later. The most significant aspect of women's participation in the decision-making process at the grassroots level is that it would throw up a trained younger leadership for the political mainstream, which has hitherto been restricted to men and a few elite women.

The experience of the working of the PRIs in various states during the last one decade shows that very few states have transferred all the powers given in the 11th schedule to the PRIs. Even the powers that have been transferred, in reality, continue to be exercised by the functionaries under the supervision of the state government. The recommendations of the State Finance Commissions have also not been fully implemented in most of the states. The PRIs have also been reluctant to raise the resources of their own by using the powers of taxation given to them. In this context it is generally argued that this has happened because of the loopholes in the provisions of the Constitution in which the word 'may' has been given instead of 'shall' in the Article 243G. This has left it to the discretion of the states to devolve or not the 29 functions given in the 11th schedule.

This is why it is argued that the word 'may' should be replaced by 'shall' by amending the Constitution. It has also been argued that in addition to the Union, state and concurrent lists, a list on the powers of the PRIs has to be inserted in the Constitution to ensure unambiguously the devolution of the functions on the PRIs. In this context, it should be obligatory for the state governments to accept the recommendations of the SFCs within 6 months of the submission of their reports. Further the state should earmark 50% of their budgetary allocation for the PRIs. Moreover the distribution of the resources among centre, states and the PRIs should be made on the recommendations of the Finance Commission appointed by the President instead of leaving it for the SFC to recommend the distribution of the resources between the states and the PRIs. Over and above, the PRIs can neither really be empowered through the amendments in the Constitution nor by the statues enacted by the state legislatures and notification issued by the state governments.

PRIs can be genuinely empowered only after the rural masses and the elected leaders in the PRIs themselves put strong pressure on the central and state governments for implementing the aforesaid subjects. For this, they will have to sink petty political differences and unite, organize and struggle for a common cause. To conclude, it is expected that the present United Progressive Alliance government initiates some concrete steps towards enabling panchayat leaders in becoming proficient riders and performing their role effectively by getting adequate skill, knowledge and attitudes for local governance, planning and development on priority basis. It is hoped that carving out a separate ministry of Panchayati Raj from the Rural Development and the recently held conferences of the Chief Ministers and State Ministers on RD and PR on the theme of poverty alleviation and rural prosperity through PR held in New Delhi may be a strategic and innovative step towards this direction.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- It is only after the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act some awareness about the reservation of seats for women in politics is known. Hence, there is a need to create awareness about the reservations made for S.C. women in politics, especially among illiterates and women voters.
- In rural areas, the S.C. people (both male and female) are suppressed by their respective leaders because of prevalence of illiteracy. If women are given a chance for electing themselves as public representatives, there will be a scope to solve their problems and meet their demands. Reservation of seats for S.C. Women has further widened such scope. Especially women are able to solve their problems through their representatives.
- S.C. Women elected representatives should not become proxies. Proxies suffer from some negative characteristics which affect the functioning of leaders and demoralize them.

- It is noted that S.C. women elected representatives are not taking the decisions on their own. In fact their life-partners or relatives and upper caste people are influencing over their decisions. Hence, it is suggested that S.C. women elected representatives should take decisions on their own by analyzing the situation and should not be influenced by others ideas and presence.
- The empowerment given to S.C women by the constitution should be used by themselves alone. As far as possible, S.C. women representatives should keep away their husbands, sons, daughters for that matter all other relatives from their official meetings, discussions and decisions.
- S.C. Women representatives should be in a position to organize public meetings and address the gatherings to convey their messages to the people and canvass the Government policies and programmes.
- Caste plays an important role at grass-roots politics. The elected S.C. women leader belongs to down trodden community. The upper caste people at village level always try to dominate her. Hence, this method of suppressing S.C. women leaders should be banned.
- It is the duty of concerned officials to cooperate with the elected representatives irrespective of their party affiliation, gender & caste. It is observed that such cooperation is lacking in the case of S.C. women leaders. Hence, the officials should be instructed to extend cooperation with S.C. women leadership.
- It has been observed that male elected counterparts are not cooperative with S.C. women leaders. In the interest of overall development of jurisdiction, they should extend all types of support and help to S.C. women leaders. On the other hand, S.C. women leaders too should seek co-operation from their male elected counterparts.
- It is observed that S.C. women representative are not showing interest in the redressal of grievances of common public. She should come out from themselves and discuss with the concerned official to sort out the problems of public. If necessary she can approach the top level political officials for getting things done.
- While listening to problems of public, S.C. women leader should give top priority to the problems pertaining to women. It is against the spirit of the very reservation policy not to have helped the women as whole. Hence, the S.C. women leadership should focus more on helping the general public in view of the fact that S.C. women leader is also the leader of all in a village.
- Since S.C. women leaders are new to politics, there is an acute need to train them in the subject. As soon as they are elected, they must be trained in a reputed training centre about the characteristics and nature

of politics, methods of convincing bureaucracy, addressing the gathering etc.

- Further, they should be trained in identifying the problems, nature of problems, specific requirements of particular constituency and how to deal with the public whenever they approach with grievances.
- With the blessings of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, S.C. women have become the part and parcel of elected representatives at grass-root level. Certain seats exclusively for S.C. women have been reserved with an objective to solve women oriented problems. Hence, S.C. women leaders should concentrate more on women oriented problems while giving importance to other problems.
- It is a fact that after the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, awareness, particularly political awareness has been increased among women folk. The constitution has opened a channel for women to participate in elections and to become as deciding factor of Indian politics.
- S.C. Women representatives should have the capacity to convince the bureaucracy and higher officials while taking steps to fulfill the demands of the public.
- Political empowerment of S.C. women is really a boost awarded to women folk by the Government and by the Constitution. Since, this is the transition period, S.C. women elected representatives are in need of some sort of assistance from over a period of time, after getting experience, this sort of assistance may not be required. It is hoped that in due course of time real political empowerment of S.C. women can be seen and real purpose of 73rd Constitutional Amendment can be achieved.
- Government and NGO's Proper Training on administrative skills should be provided to elected women centers by HRD institutes.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, Woman is a companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutes details of the activities of man; and she has the same right to freedom and liberation as of man. The implication of the observation of Gandhi not only holds good for the previous century but also for the present 21st century since there has been no marked improvement over the status of women. During the Vedic period, women in India had held equal positions on a par with men, inheriting and possessing properties and participating in cultural activities and state functions.

Poverty has remained the biggest challenge in India's development efforts to bring about a perceptible change in the quality of life of its teeming millions^v. India, being a developing a country majority of its population suffers from malnutrition, unemployment and poor health care. This is true in the case of four main weaker sections of society, viz., women, children, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In rural India, the high rate of illiteracy and low economic status of women underline the need for increasing their earning power by providing the income generating assets. Provision of employment opportunities and income to rural women is one way to improve their nutrition, health, education and social status. In India, continuous efforts are being made by the union and state governments to improve the status of rural women, especially those living below the poverty line through various schemes of rural development.

Women empowerment has been one of the most important items in the agenda of national development. Out of 146 countries, India ranked 118th in the Human Development Index in 2007 and in Gender related index it ranked 118^{thvi}. The aggravations of the human development gap by gender disparities illustrate the need to empower women with information and knowledge and allow them to emerge as leaders with confidence to guide their own destinies. The urge for empowering women through effective training and, extension services also arises from the gradual decrease in availability of arable land increasing population pressure and growing environmental degradations which have far reaching implications for good and nutritional security in future.

In view of the importance and increasing recognition by the planners and policy makers in our country that empowerment of women is

indispensable for rapid transformation of our economy, society and for protection of environment and regeneration of natural resources.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that every one has the right to take part in the Government of his / her country. The United Nations Economics and Social Council endorsed a target of 30 percent of women in all levels of decision-making by 1995^{vii}. In spite of this women constitute only ten percent of legislative bodies and less in Parliamentary positions globally. Women's participation in the political process is critical both to the strengthening of democratic traditions and to their struggle against oppression. Political activism for women, as for other underprivileged groups, is integral to social transformation. Oppositional politics by itself will define effectively the limitations and constraints of existing political process, and in the process outline alternative democratic structures that will transform existing social relations.

In India, the post-independence period has seen many positive steps to improve the socio-economic status of women. Women themselves have become keenly aware of their rights and are spearheading movements across the country against all sorts of social evils. This consciousness is largely due to an increase in women's literacy although they have miles and miles to go. The most significant landmark in the journey is the historic 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1992 by the Center and its ratification by the states. These Constitution Amendment Acts reserved one third seats for women in the Panchayati Raj and Municipal Bodies. This not only bestowed a right of participation of women in the decision-making process, both at the rural and urban local bodies of the country but also helped to facilitate the emergence of a cadre of young and talented leadership for active participation in the political process.

Political empowerment of women is critical to the socio-economic progress of the community and bringing women into the mainstream of national development has been a major concern of the Government. The empowerment of rural women is crucial for the development of rural India. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable governments and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life^{viii}. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.

Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision making the goals of equality, development and pace cannot be achieved. Despite the wide spread movement towards demoralization in most countries, women are largely under-represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target of 30 percent women in positions at decision-making levels. The Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment provided reservation of seats for women and this has raised new hopes and all the states are in the process of making the elected bodies at the grassroots level to take up the new challenges.

In this historical context an attempt has been made here to examine the multi-dimensional facets of the women empowerment in India.

Historical Legacy

In the Vedic period, women were relatively more independent and were allowed to participate in the socio-economic and political activities. Later on, towards the end of the early Vedic period and the beginning of the later Vedic period their position began to decline. This situation continued for centuries and further deteriorated in the medieval period. The name of Darma Shastras women were not allowed to be educated and were confined any to the four wall of the house. Child marriage system and Sati were in practise widows were considered inauspicious. Social reformers started a powerful movement to improve the position of women. Several reform societies and religious organisations worked hard to educate women encourage widow re-marriage, to prevent child marriage and Sathi etc.

The movement for the liberation of women received a great stimulus from the rise of the nationalist movement in the Twentieth century. Their participation in the freedom movement generated sense of optimism among them. They realized their own strength and organizational ability. They began to organize several associations to preserve and protect their basic rights-such as Women's Indian Association, National Council for Women, All India Women's Conference, etc. The Indian National Congress at its Karachi session in 1931 adopted a Fundamental Rights Resolution granting absolute equality to women, regardless of their status and qualifications. The Government of India Act 1935 provided voting right to women subject to the fulfilment of

the conditions of property and education. It shows that the sentiments in favour of women being active in politics are nothing new. Women's right to equal political participation, including their right to vote, was accepted very gracefully in India much earlier than most Western societies conceded to this demand. Indian women did not even have to fight for this right unlike their Western counterparts.

The story of how women in India came to be first represented in legislatures in the 1920's is in itself quite instructive. In response to the Indian agitation for representative government, the British government set up a Committee headed by Montague and Chelmsford in 1919 to work out a proposal for representation before the committee. Among the many delegations that met this committee, Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins led a small delegation of women in Western countries as it had still not granted women the same rights of representation in legislatures as men. The British government predictably thought this demand was quite preposterous because women in Western countries had still not been given the right to vote, despite a protracted struggle. The Southborough Committee stated that "the extension of the vote of women would be premature in a society which continued to enforce *pardah* and prohibitions against female education. However instead of taking on themselves the onus of rejecting the demand outrightly, the British simply skirted the issue by leaving it upto each of the individual provincial legislatures that they had just set up in India to grant or refuse the franchise to women. Their assumption was that since Indians were so backward they would never accept the idea of equal political rights for women.

But despite the fact that at this time there was no mass based women's suffrage movement in India. Each of the Indian provincial legislatures voted to make it possible within a short span of time for women to be represented on a par with men without much fuss. But later in 1930 when a meeting of representative women organisations drafted a memorandum demanding immediate acceptance of adult franchise without gender discrimination, it was turned down by the British government. The same demand received a totally different response from the Indian leaders. As cited earlier, the very next year in 1931 the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress took the historic decision committing itself to the political equality of women, regardless of their status and qualifications. This proposal met with virtually no opposition.

Mahatma Gandhi played a crucial role in creating a favourable atmosphere for women's participation in the freedom struggle by insisting that the struggle for women's equality was an integral part of the movement for *Swaraj*. His choice of non-violent satyagraha as the mode of

struggle also allowed women to play a far more active and creative role than is possible in more masculine-oriented movements based on violence. This galvanized huge numbers of women into action. He worked consciously to feminize the freedom movement. By picking on salt as a symbol of a countrywide *satyagraha*, he brought the movement into every home and kitchen.

Annie Besant became the President of the Congress as early as 1919. Sarojini Naidu was Gandhi's choice for President of the Congress in 1925. Starting with that kind of a high profile role, women's participation in politics enhanced dramatically in the 1930s and 1940s. However the decades following independence witnessed a remarkable decline in women's involvement in politics. This began in the heyday of Nehru's era, even though most of the women leaders believed him to be an outstanding champion of women's rights.

For instance in the 1952 elections the Congress Party had only 14 women members elected to Parliament. In the first Lok Sabha, women constituted no more than 4.4 percent of the total strength. This was at a time when there were thousands of outstanding women all over the country with the experience of the freedom movement behind them. Their long years of involvement in social and political work, running educational institutions and so on would have given them the requisite training and experience to be effective parliamentarians. But they were systematically ignored and bypassed. Even within the Congress Party women found very little room in the decision-making bodies. In this context, it has to be kept in mind that societies which have less of tradition of public acceptance of women's political mobilization have witnessed an increasing participation of women in politics, India's history has taken a surprising turn. In the five decades after independence women have become marginalized in politics as compared to the earlier decades. During the 1930s and 1940s there were more women leaders at all levels in the Congress party alone than are found today in all parties put together.

Empowerment of Women and Law

Our country, the India was known as country of Goddesses, warriors & freedom fighters and we are all proud of them. We worship women as several deities even today, Goddess Laxmi, Sarawsati, Durga are worshipped for wealth, prosperity, education and powers. They are the fountain of all kinds of peace enjoyment and prosperity, on the other hand we cite the stories of various heroines like Jeejabai, Jodhabai, Laxmibai etc. In this country where women occupy such a distinct and honorable place, we are pained to listen their plight. We note with humanity the atrocities being committed on them every day. Their plight is a day news item and *Masala* item for several newspapers.

At this juncture we are constrained to take a look on all the happenings around and think seriously about the problem. The Government has declared the year 2001 to be the year of Women Empowerment.

Crime against the women can be described as under two heads:

- (a) Crime in relation to women's property which include criminal breach of trust misappropriation, robbery and murder etc.
- (b) Crime involving sex or economic gains, relates to wrongful confinement dowry death, prostitution, outrageous to the modesty of women, use of criminal force abduction, rape and adultery etc.

Empowerment of Women

Empowerment of women is an input which is intended to eliminate their subordination and establish equality. Empowerment is a positive concept. It requires affirmative state of action in support of those who are to be empowered. The law can create such empowerment by way of conferring Rights directly on the person whom it intend to empower by imposing liability on other persons towards the persons to be empowered. For empowerment of women in India, certain existing laws have been amended and modified according to need of time by creating penal sanction against certain type of behaviour, which infringe, deprive or derogates the dignity of women.

Women and Constitution of India

The Indian constitution is prominently a social document and it is goal oriented. This document puts women on a par with men and fulfills the cherished goal of equality in matter of civil, political and economic rights. The political right of franchise has also been given to Indian women under the constitution. Beside they have also been given right to vote and participate in election process by which they can hold office of highest post in public office i.e. President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the House of Parliament.

The following provisions of constitution make women on a par with men:

- (a) Article 14 of constitution guarantees to all equal protection of laws and equality before law. Both these expressions have also been used in "Universal Declaration of Human Right". The equality before law is guaranteed to all, without regard to sex, race, colour or nationality.
- (b) Article 15(3) has been empowered to make special provisions for women, Women requires special treatment due to their very nature.

Women's physical structure and the performance of material function place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence and her physical well being becomes an object.

The constitutional mandate of equality of sexes and special protection provided under 15(3) has been enforced by the Supreme Court in case of *Air India vs. Nargish Mirza*, *CB Muthamma vs. Union of India*, *Maya Deve Vs the State* where unequal provisions were quashed against women and in some cases favoured for giving special protection to women.

- (c) Article 16(2) lays down the rule that no citizen can be discriminated for any employment under the State on ground only on religion, race, caste, or sex.
- (d) Article 21 Supreme Court has laid down some special provisions for women by way of compensation to rape victims and prevention of sexual harassment. Compensation for rape victims has been awarded in "*Delhi Domestic working women's forum vs. Union of India*" and rules for prevention of sexual harassment of working women has been laid down in *Vishakha vs. State of Rajasthan*.
- (e) Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 Article 243 D provides that in every Panchayat, State shall be reserved for SC & ST and not less than 1/3 seats shall be reserved for women, and office of the chairperson in the Panchayat at village shall be reserved in such manner as the legislature of the State may by law provide.
- (f) Constitutional 74th Amendment Act, 1992 Article 243 T provides that 1/3 seats in Municipal Corporations shall be served for women. Such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the Municipality.

Empowering women through safeguarding their human rights

Human rights are crystallization of values that are the common heritage of human kind and human rights of women are judged in context of the type of society we envision. We envision a society in which we can act on our own behalf with dignity and freedom recognizing that we have both, the right and obligation to develop our full potential and to support the development of others. It has been observed time and again that women are human beings like men and their rights are human rights and feminism cannot be delinked from human rights. If one wants to know how developed or modern a particular society or nation is, one should try to look at the status of women in that particular society or nation as their status is the only true reflection of a country culture and civilization.

Women comprise half the population of the world but their rights are violated virtually in every society, developed or developing, Eastern or Western and rich or poor. Hence, nowadays greater emphasis is being put on empowering them so that they can develop and realize their full potential and contribute to the development of society and nation as well. This cannot happen until and unless their human rights are protected and their effective implementation is ensured. Empowering women basically means to provide them opportunities to live and work “with dignity”, the core principle of all human rights.

What is meant by Empowerment?

Empowerment means to let women live their own life in a way they think appropriate on the basis of their conditions, family circumstances, qualities and capabilities of which they themselves are the best judges. Demand for empowering is not a demand for equality or superiority. It is the demand to let them realize their own true self, which shouldn't be denied to them on any basis whatsoever, anywhere, anytime and any place. To realize this ideal an appropriate environment should be created which is not an easy task. For this, efforts will have to be made at every level and in every sphere. The following are a few important areas in which women to be provided sufficient room for their progress.

1. Medical

Medically, women should be provided good and easily approachable medical facilities specially during pregnancy (both prenatal and postnatal) and infancy to ensure their life and health.

They have a “right to be born” which is being snatched away from them with the aid of science through sonography which is being used as sex-determination test.

2. Education

Educationally, women would be armed with the tool of proper education which awakens them and makes them conscious of their rights and equal status in society. This will be in the greater of the society at large and will have far reaching and lasting impact, because women as mothers are called the first educators of their children.

3. Society

Socially, in most of the places, at least in practices, if not formally women have only secondary status to man. Social norms and values will have to be transformed to ensure that women are not discriminated against only on the basis of sex.

4. Political

Women's participation in politics has to be ensured at every level to make them politically strong so they can facilitate proper legislation for protecting rights of women. This can be done through "Progressive Reservation Policy".

5. Legal

Women should be given adequate legal education to make them capable of defending their own rights, than, their legislative dues. This is essential as without legal knowledge and activism all the formal constitutional arrangements made by the state become redundant.

6. Psychological, Moral and Cultural Aspect

In some cultures women are brought up in a way that they accept their "secondary status" automatically as "natural" without raising any questions. In such a situation one cannot even imagine that they will ever fight for their status or rights. Their mindset is so conditioned that they do not even think of protesting against inhuman discrimination on any grounds.

If they are unable even to realize the secondary status bestowed upon them by the society, it is hard to imagine how they will think of protesting against such practices. This is the most difficult hurdle in the path of their empowerment and will have to be fought out at every level and for a long time to come.

Empowering from within

Efforts in all the above mentioned directions can only help their nature and potential, their inherent qualities but still significance of these efforts cannot be minimized or underrated. If we really want to empower women, we will have to ensure that in none of these fields there is any hindrance at any level, which often happens in practically all the societies. By developing all these aspects one can create an appropriate environment in which their rights, status and dignity will be ensured or to put it in other words they will be "empowered".

Political Empowerment of Women

The question of women's political participation is now on the international agenda, and permeating many regional and national plans of action. Much hope has been invested in the United Nations and it has consistently been the engine for keeping the gender issues on the global agenda. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) in 1952. Since 1975 four international conferences on women have been held under its auspices. All the

conferences have emphasized women's political empowerment as a key concern.

The issue of women's political empowerment, while attracting considerable attention earlier, actually came to the forefront of the global debate for women's rights at the time of the Fourth World Conference on women's rights held at Beijing in 1995.

Henceforth, the issues continued to hold centre-stage of all discussions on gender justice and equality. Women's equal access to, and full participation in decision-making was emphasized in the platform for action, as one of the critical areas of concern. It unequivocally declared, "women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. A detailed set of recommendations were issued therein to all governmental and non-governmental communities, nationally and internationally to enhance women's political participation and decision-making. It further urges for the governmental commitment to gender balance in all spheres, reform of electoral systems, monitoring and evaluation of progress in women's representation, revamping of party structures to remove barriers to women's political participation, incorporation of gender issues and initiatives in the agenda of political parties, affirmative action, create & strengthen mechanisms to monitor women's access to senior levels of decision-making among others. It also affirmed that women should have at least a 30 per cent share of decision-making positions. However, recommendations are exactly that, they rarely, if ever can be enforced with full authority and extent of law.

All these efforts notwithstanding, the Beijing Review (2000) clearly revealed that many of the agendas of the Beijing Platform for Action still remain as agendas for the future-yet to be heeded by many countries. The Outcome Document adopted by the UN General Assembly, recognized that "Despite general acceptance of the need for a gender balance in decision-making bodies at all levels, a gap between de jure and de facto equality has persisted. Notwithstanding substantial improvements of de jure equality between women and men, the actual participation decision-making has not significantly changed since Beijing 1995 and gross under-representation of women in decision-making bodies in all areas, including inter alia politics, conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, the economy, the environment and the media hinders the inclusion of a gender perspective in these critical spheres of influence.

Women continue to be underrepresented at the legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels”.

The issue has also repeatedly come up in the NGO Meetings of South Asia Watch (SAW), Asia Pacific Women’s Watch (APWW) as a priority issue and more categorically at the recently held Regional Meet on Commemorating Beijing III organized by the UNIFEM.

Women’s political participation was equally focused upon at the Asia Pacific Regional NGO Symposium (1999) held in Thailand on the theme “Asia Pacific Women 2000: Gender Equality Development and Peace for the Twenty First Century” too focused on women’s political participation as one of the critical areas of concern.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has also been focusing on women’s political participation as evidenced by the fact that it was the sole agenda of its conference, entitled ‘Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics’ in New Delhi (14-18 February, 1997). The New Delhi Declaration recognized the need to increase the presence and participation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels. While looking at various facets of women’s political engagement, it defined the critical areas of concern in relation to women’s political participation, which broadly speaking are : political parties, education, affirmative action measures, changing attitudes, training, parliaments, national commissions of women, international bodies, and directories of information.

The issue attracted equal attention at the United Development Nations Programme (UNDP) International Conference in New York on Governance and Sustainable Equity (28-30 July, 1997). The agenda of this conference included women’s political participation within the cadre of a larger theme of Governance and Sustainable Equity. The conference recommendations centered on equalizing (increasing upto 50 per cent) women’s representation at all levels of decision-making institutions, while increasing the allocation of international resources for capacity-building to that effect. *Women’s Political Participation : 21st Century Challenges* was also the theme for a Meet organized by UNDP in New Delhi from March 24-26, 1999. This meet engaged women politicians and representatives of civil society from all regions covered by UNDP in a dialogue to promote the sharing of experience and to build alliances. It concluded that until gender parity is reached in governance, women cannot reach full equality with men in any sphere.

The Common Wealth, likewise has also been addressing the issues and has taken a number of initiatives for the purpose of enhancing Women’s representation. At their 1995 Meeting, Common Wealth Heads

of Government endorsed the Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which urged member countries to take action to increase women's participation in political decision-making at all levels. At their 1996 Meeting, Common Wealth Ministers of Women's Affairs recommended that member countries achieve a target of no less than 30 percent of women in the political, public and private sectors by the year 2005, and those countries already close to achieving this target were urged to strive for gender parity. The need to increase women participation in political decision-making and peace processes in the common wealth was also part of the agenda of the common wealth ministers responsible for women's affairs, sixth meeting held in New Delhi from April 16-19, 2000.

This brief review reveals that women's political empowerment is at the centre stage of all discourse on women's issues at the international level. Corresponding to these international efforts, various initiatives have been / are being taken for the purpose at the national level too.

Women's Empowerment and Panchayati Raj: A Conceptualization

Empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, their own communities and in their own society by acting on issues that they describe as important. Above all, empowerment is a result of participation in decision-making^{ix}.

Then, women's empowerment refers to the process by which women acquire due recognition on a par with men, to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignity^x. So, why is empowerment through Panchayati Raj? According to the Document on Women's Development (1985) women's role in the political process has virtually remained unchanged since independence. Broad-based political participation of women has been severely limited due to various traditional factors such as caste, religion, feudal attitude and family status^{xi}. As a result, women have been left on the periphery of political life. Observing this dark picture, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came to provide them an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and to take active part in decision-making process in the local level.

With the passage of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, India is at a crucial structure in the evaluation of Panchayati Raj Institutions the Indian brand of rural local-self government. It has envisioned people's participation in the process of planning, decision-making, Implementation and delivery system. The Panchayat Acts of State governments have

subsequently been amended to incorporate the stipulations of the central Acts thus the constitutional mandate has heralded uniform pattern throughout Indian states.

Policy Analysis

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has created space for women in political participation and decision-making at the grass-root level by providing that 1/3rd of the seats are reserved in all over the country. 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 says.

It provides reservations for women in PRIs set up in two ways for the office of the members and for that of the chairpersons. As per the clause (2) and (3) of Article 243(d), not less than one third of the seats meant for direct election of members at each tier of the Panchayats are to be reserved for the women.

Chapter 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

BOOKS

Geeta Chaturvedi, Women Administrators of India , RBSA Publishers, Jaipur, 1985.

The present study is a pioneering empirical analysis of the socio-economic background and attitudes of women administrators of India. The focus is on the senior bureaucrats holding important administrative positions in different departments of the Government of Rajasthan and the senior level of administrators heading educational institutions in the state. Besides providing a comparative perspective of these two distinct categories of women administrators. Dr. Chaturvedi has perceptively analysed the attitudes and orientations of women administrators towards various dimensions of political modernization variegated facets of social change and diverse aspects of economic development in India.

Taking her analyses further, the author has looked at the specific problems that women administrators face as women at home as well as in office. In this process Dr. Chaturvedi uses certain psycho-social variables to support her findings.

Manikymba, P., Women in Panchayat Structure, Gain Publications, New Delhi, 1989.

In this book states that the makers of Panchayati Raj system desired rural women should not only become a beneficiary of development, but more importantly contributors to it. Analyzing the Balawantraï Mehta Committee she states that Mehta Committee considered the condition of the rural women at length and felt that they should be assisted to find ways to increase their incomes and improve the condition of their children. The committee was particular that woman should find representation in the rural political institutions. Then Ashok Mehta Committee according to her laid special emphasis on the need to recognize and strengthen women's constructive decision-makings and managerial rule.

Shoma, A., Chaterji, The Indian Woman in Perspective, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1993.

This book is an attempt to study the Indian Women vis-à-vis her own cultural and historical background, and also in comparison with her counterparts elsewhere in the world in general and USA in particular. The American particularization stems from the fact that this is the country which offers a vast amount of researched work as women's studies. The

author feels that women should not be presented purely from the news-value point of view just because hot copy. It is essential to study women because they have not been studied in their visible and invisible contributions to the historical, sociological, economic revolution and evolution to the Indian race. This book presents seven dimensions of the Indian woman to make the study as intensive as possible. It is just one step forward to further understand what the Indian woman is all about. It is one step further from those who have earlier laid the foundation of women's studies in India.

Subha, K., Women in Local Government, RBSA Publishers, Jaipur, 1994.

Of late, an awareness of the problems of women from all walks of life, their changing roles, their emancipation and the studies on this new status of women has risen. It was realized that equality in all spheres is inseparable from active political participation. This means not just using the right to vote, but to share power and be a part of decision-making at all levels of the government. Though metropolitan cities have drawn considerable attention of the researchers and the academicians, urban government in Karnataka is to attract the attention of political scientists. And even less is the apprehension of these people about the role of women in urban bodies.

Hence, this study focuses on the working of the Bangalore Municipal Corporation since its inception in 1949 and evaluates the role of women councilors in policy-making, administration and the extent of which it has met with the requirements of women, thereby holding the empowerment of women in proper perspective. This study, thus, attempts to highlight the potentialities and attributes of women who are at the helm of affairs in this urban body. The author, here, attempts some practical suggestions for the cause of the development of women at the grass-roots and their effective participation in political mobilization.

Bhargava, B.S., & Bhaskar, Manu, Women in Grassroots Democracy a study of Kerala, University of Kerala, ICSS, New Delhi, 1996.

In this book it was to improve women's representation that the policy of reservation was introduced. According to them, reserving seats for women in the political institutions will provide them an opportunity to raise their grievances and other related social and economic problems in a formal forum, a political process necessary to ensure the improvement for all women in all sphere of life.

Jayalakshmi, K., Women and Politics A Study in Political Participation, Book Link Corporation, Hyderabad, 1997.

In this book she discussed about Andhra Pradesh based on the field study conducted in the Nalgonda district states that reservation in Panchayat ensures entry for all sections and thus visualizes as the harbinger of equality and social justice. Further, it is found that reservation has merely brought in a quantitative change in the gender participation rather than ushering a qualitative developmental efforts.

Gupta, A.K., Empowering Women, Abhishek Publications, Chandigarh, 2002.

The constitution of India has explicitly conferred on women equal rights and opportunities i.e., the political, educational, social and education equal to men. But, because of superstitions, exploitation and oppressive traditions a great majority of Indian women are not allowed to enjoy the facilities, rights and opportunities bestowed upon them. Now women are becoming more and more conscious of their constitutional as well as social rights. This consciousness has awakened in them sense of urgency in experiencing equality and social justice. However, in view of the need to implement the socio-economic objective of development and advancement of women, due consideration should be given to the role of private enterprises. To feel the equal rights and status, Government should seek appropriate ways and means to ensure that public and private enterprises share the responsibilities.

The present book answers all the above questions in detail and will be of immense importance for economists, sociologists, scholars and students involved in social sciences and women studies.

Evelin Hust, Women's Political Representation and Empowerment in India: A Million India Now? Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2004.

In this book scrutinizes the processes that have been set in motion through the demand for a 33 per cent reservation of women in rural local governments in India. Taking up the proposition that women will also lead to their empowerment, the author developed an analytical framework based on recent theoretical literature on quotas in politics and the concept of empowerment as well as on studies on women in the Panchayati Raj.

Among the major issues discussed in this book is the socio-economic composition of the new Panchayati Raj, the question whether the women are really present and active in the local bodies, whether they have gained any power and how they deal with corruption. A further

chapter assesses how far the women have become empowered individually, in terms of having gained confidence, and in how for the quota empowers women as a group.

Ambedkar. S.N. & Shailaja Nagendra, Women Empowerment and Panchayati Raj, ABD Publishers, Jaipur, 2005.

The empowerment of Rural Women is crucial for the development of Rural Bharat. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple Justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition of women's interests to be taken into account. With the active participation of women and the incorporation of women perspective at all levels of decision-making the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. Despite the wide spread movement toward democratization in most countries women are largely under represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target of 30 percent women in positions at decision-making levels.

The book tries to analyze the perceptions and orientations of the women leaders manning the decentralized democracies on various issues pertaining to the new Panchayati Raj System in Rural India. The book is useful for the policy makers, administrators, scholars and students of political science, public administration, sociology, women studies and rural development and all those connected with the Panchayati Raj system in the country.

Indira Kumari, Y., & Sambasiva Rao, B., Empowerment of Women and Rural Development, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Gender inequality is now receiving greater attention. Women and children constitute nearly 67% of the Country's total population. Women, better known as half of the humanity, have long been neglected in their role as beneficiaries in the process of development. Though they contribute 2/3rd of the World's work hours, they earn only 1/3rd of the total income and own less than 1/10th of the World's resources. The Governments are keen to ensure that women are empowered both economically and socially and they become equal partners in national development along with men. This book on Empowerment of Women is useful to the policy makers, academicians, researchers and activities in designing the policy for the betterment of Women in India.

Biju, M.R., Women's Empowerment: Politics and Policies, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2006.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. The United Nations Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of 30 percent women at all levels of decision-making by 1995. In spite of this, globally women constitute only ten percent of legislative bodies and less in parliamentary positions.

In India, the post-independence period has seen many positive steps to improve the socio-economic status of women. Women themselves have become keenly aware of their rights and are spearheading movements across the country against all sorts of social evils. This consciousness is largely due to an increase in women's literacy although they have miles and miles to go. The most significant landmark in the journey is the historic 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts 1992 by the Centre and its ratification by the states. These Constitution Amendment Acts reserved one-third seats for women in the Panchayati Raj and Municipal Bodies.

Against this background, this collection of sixteen articles contributed by renewed academicians and experienced administrators embodies critical analysis of various aspects of women's empowerment both in practical and theoretical terms and makes valuable suggestions for uplifting their socio-political-economic conditions. The volume contains in-depth and illuminating discussions on wide ranging issues and areas of women's empowerment viz., politics of women's reservation in India, success stories on manipulative mechanisms, women's reservation bill, women and grass-root politics, women in panchayati raj institutions, political empowerment through capacity building, political participation of women in South Asian Association Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region, gender issues of tribal women, socio-economic life of tribal women, empowerment of women and law, rural 'credit and empowerment of women under self-help groups, Islam and sexual equality, gender learning perspectives of computer related attitudes, empowering women by safeguarding their human rights based on international standards and India law, women in grass-roots participatory governance, role of women in the decentralized governance of educational sector and the role of Information Technology (IT) for women's empowerment.

Rameshwari Pandya (ed.), Women in India: Issues, Perspectives and Solutions, New Century Publications, New Delhi, 2007.

Gender equality is a constituent as well as an instrument of development. No country can be deemed developed if half of its

population is severely disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood options, access to knowledge and political voice. Gender equality is an instrument of development because without it national goals will be difficult to achieve as, for example, poverty alleviation, population planning, family welfare and environmental sustainability. Over the years, efforts have been made to empower women socially, economically and politically. However, due to lack of synergy and coordination, the outcomes are not satisfactory. It is imperative that an integrated policy and strategy be formulated that addresses economic, social and political empowerment of women along with the requisite programmes and schemes. Though the constitutional commitments to women have been translated through the planning processes, legislation, policies and programmes over the last six decades yet the economic status of women reflects less than satisfactory achievements in almost all important human development indicators.

The present book contains twenty theoretical and research contributions related to women issues. The book has addressed various aspects of women's welfare in India like health, economic status, education, governance and political participation. It presents a comprehensive and systematic account of issues, activities and programmes, projects and experiences from different parts of India.

Radhakrishnan, L., Empowerment of Women through Entrepreneurship, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2008.

Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship is a collection of 31 papers, which presents a new and fundamental way of bringing empowerment through different entrepreneurial activities. It covers broad range of entrepreneurial activities ranging from agriculture, non-agriculture manufacturing, and service sectors. The edited volume brings the fact that women are independent and significantly contribute to family and society in terms of measurable economic activities. The dynamism, innovation, self-confidence are described in this book. All facts and figures are supported by various authenticated reports and published documents. This book may act as compendium of women entrepreneurship issues and their solutions.

ARTICLES AND JOURNALS

Devaki Jain, Women: New Vision of Leadership : a Presentation at Global Forum, Dublin, July, 9-12, 1992.

In her analysis of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Devaki Jain writes that the main intention of the policy makers behind this reservation is two-fold. One is the democratic justice and second is resource utilization (human). She further states that as the half of the population are

women. The country development cannot achieve without the proper participation of women.

Snehalatha Panda, Emerging Pattern of Leadership among Rural Women in Orissa, Indian Journal of Public Administration, New Delhi, Vol. 42, No.3-4, 1996.

In her study of village Panchayat in Orissa Snehalatha Panda found that women entered into politics due to mandatory provision of reservation. Most of the women are from non-political background and entered into politics due to persuasion by their family members or pressure from the village community. The important aspect of her study is that the women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibility. In another study in 1999, Panda brought out an interesting point in her field study. There prevails strong caste feelings and women belonging to upper caste have not come forward to representing the Panchayati. This has provided an opportunity to the women from the labour and lower caste to emerge as a potential force in village politics.

Usha Naryan, Women in Panchayats : The Path Ahead, Mainstream, November, 16, 1996.

In this article she confirms that the main position of 73rd Constitutional Amendment involves the participation of women as voter, women as members of political parties, women as candidates, women elected members of Panchayati Raj Institutions taking part in decision making, planning implementation and evaluation. She stressed that reservation provisions are providing be a guarantee for their empowerment.

Gowada, S and Others, Developmental Role of Women Members of Panchayati Raj Institutions : A study in Karnataka, Journal of Rural Development, Vol. 15(2), pp. 249-259, NIRD, Hyderabad, 1996.

In this article their study of Karnataka women elected as panchayat leader they found that the women members of developed taluks were found to play a better developmental role that their counterparts in the backward taluks. The study reveals that among the socio-economic attributes such as age, education, caste, annual household income and land holding of women leaders, only education and annual household income had a highly significant and positive relationship with their developmental role performance. The findings of the study states that women members of the Panchayat Raj Institution could play an effective developmental role if they are given adequate recognition and encouragement.

Bhora, O.P, Women in Decentralised Democracy, Journal of Rural Development, National Institute Rural Development, Hyderabad, Vol 6(4), pp. 637-683, 1997.

In this article 73rd Amendment Act, mainly aimed at decentralizing the power and also removing the gender imbalances and bias in the institutions of local self government. He justifies the rationale to provide reservations for following reasons, what is the actual intention of our policy makers. Seventy third constitutional amendments actual aims for shared perception of justice, deprivation and oppression. Shared experience of marginalization vis-à-vis power structure. Collective empowerment through representation and democratic process will give them voice, feelings of solidarity and democratic politics. Affirmative action will build a critical mass of local leadership of such groups will be active participants in the strategic decision-making.

Krishna Sudhir, Women and Panchayati Raj: The Law, Programme and Practices, Journal of Rural Development, Vol. 16(4), NIRD, Hyderabad, pp. 651-662, 1997.

In this article mentioning the aim behind 73rd Constitutional Amendment states that 73rd Amendment was made to provide not less than one-third seats including the offices of chairpersons for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions at all levels and role of women in development programmes.

Arun Rashmi, Role of Women in Panchayati Raj, Administrator, Vol. xii, April-June, 1997.

In this article a case study of Madhya Pradesh found that in most of the cases women are housewives, first time entrants into politics and most of them are illiterate or educated upto primary level.

Nirmala, Buch, Panchayatis and Women Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, 2000.

She states that earlier studies of women representatives in Panchayat before the 73rd constitutional amendment noted the major presence of women from the dominant sections. From Maratha families women are owning more than twenty acres of land in Maharashtra and Lingayats and Vokkalings in Karnataka. But the profile of the new women in post 73rd constitutional amendment panchayats showed that majorities were illiterate and large percentages were from families in the lower socio-economic strata. They were comparatively younger than the earlier entrants and were predominantly first generation entrants to the public political life. She further expressed that, a study of twelve all women panchayats in Maharashtra documented male female member's support form

women's coming into panchayats, but such supports were tentative and interspersed with typical anxieties expressed in such comments as who will make the chapattis?

As we found from previous studies, though women comprises about half of the Indian population they have been subjected to discriminatory social ethos resulting in denial of equality of status and opportunities in social, economic and political spheres. Ten years after the amendment was introduced and the first term of PRIs is over in many states, there is need to go back to the history and analyse the reason for the government to give this space and its workability. Though, previous analysis is revealing various issues on participation and development at grass root level, they do not touch still many issues. Last but not the least to write here is, over all development of a nation requires maximum utilization of human resources without any discrimination. A more development society is a more participant one. So the participation of women in political process is a major step towards inclusive politics.

Mohanty Biduyt, 73rd Constitutional Amendment and Women, Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay, December, 30, 1995.

In her article states that empowerment has been defined here as the change of self-perception through knowledge. She clarifies that by providing reservation, our policy makers intention was not only to improve only the number of elected leaders but also to improve their economic independence, access to resources as well as to education so by examining their socio-economic situation we can derive the conclusion whether woman are really 'empowered'. However Dr. Mohanty suggests that the conditional steps for empowerment area clear beginning in this direction.

About the Present Study

There are instances in olden days that women ruled big and small territories and participated in political activities. But such cases were a few. Women participated in the freedom struggle, peasant wars and liberation struggles. Representation of women in political institutions was never accepted as an issue of gender justice. The committee on the status of women in India in its report (1976) recommended women's representation at the grass-root level as an immediate necessity as the representation of women in parliament was in a declining trend. The National Perspective Plan for Women suggested that a 30 percent quota for women be introduced at all levels of elected bodies. The Constitution Amendment Act of 73rd and 74th provided a 30 percent reservation to women in rural as well as urban local bodies. According to Article 243 (d) Clause 2 & 3 of 73rd Constitution Amendment, one third of the seats for the three tier Panchayati Raj are reserved for direct election of women

members. The study enables to find-out whether the human resource is equally utilized as decision-makers confirming the values of democratic justice.

As far as Indian condition is concerned, it is a known fact that women's access to political life depends on their family background. Even if they got elected under reservation, they may not rule on their own because they are guided and governed by some male member of their family such as husband, brother, son and others depending upon the situation. The applicability of this theory of male domination over women in ruling is not an encouraging factor. It is rather an interesting factor to find out whether the women representatives are wholeheartedly participating in policy making issues to improve the status of other women folk in rural areas. Are there any social barriers like caste, creed and religion which play a dominant role in their decision-making process? Whether the reservations made for women in political field are yielding good results? Whether the objectives of reservations are achieved? If 'not', Why? What are the barriers? Whether the reservations made for women are received by men? Whether the Women are involved in politics because certain seats are reserved for them or they really welcomed reservations allocated for them. With the reservation, are the women really empowered? All these questions need a thorough analysis of issues. The study of this nature certainly brings out how the SC women representatives are really empowered in the right perspective. Warangal district, being a backward district of Telangana region has been selected to study thoroughly. It is against the above back drop the present study on "Empowerment of Women in Andhra Pradesh : A Case Study of SC Women Sarpanches in Warangal District" has been undertaken with the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

7. To examine the socio-economic and political background of SC Women Sarpanches.
8. To examine the process of political empowerment of women being concentrated against the present political scenario.
9. To evaluate the role of women in politics in Warangal district.
10. To critically examine the validity of reservation made for women under 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts.
11. To gauge the Citizen's Perception on political empowerment of SC Women.
12. To offer valuable suggestions for the empowerment of SC Women in local politics.

Hypotheses

- Though women are elected against the reservation, they are unable to exercise their decision-making powers by themselves because they are influenced by male, and upper caste people.
- Genuine political empowerment of women justifies the aspiration of half of women population in the country.

Methodology

The data required for the completion of present study has been collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data has been collected through the interactions with the concerned persons and interviews with the officials and non-officials of the study area. A structured questionnaire has been administered to 300 persons drawn from 5 revenue divisions, 51 mandals, from which 56 S.C. women reserved grampanchayats have been selected for the study. With a view to elicit people's perceptions regarding political empowerment of rural SC women, 300 respondents were picked up on the basis of random sampling from each selected grampanchayat and how far the purpose of reservations is achieved. On the other hand 56 SC women elected representatives were also administered a separate unstructured questionnaire to record their opinion on their functioning. A ratified random sampling technique has been followed for the identification of respondents. Secondary data has been collected from books, published material, administrative reports, official records, files, brochures etc. The researcher's rich experience is also added to strengthen the study.

Scope of the Study

There is a lot scope to understand the prevailing conditions of the women representatives from dalit communities. And also how the spirit of local governance and reservational representative democracy being implemented to the study findings may also be made applicable to other areas to strengthen the political Empowerment of Women.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is confined to cover only the representatives of S.C. women reserved category restricted to 56 grampanchats only. Though the researcher has picked up 300 respondents for the analysis of the nature of implementation of women empowerment, the opinion and perceptions of the respondents were confined to only the reserved grampanchayats which do not comprehensively cover the general understanding of women empowerment. Moreover, the respondents' perceptions were elicited keeping only the last years of developmental programmes and activities.

Chapterization

The present study on “**Empowerment of Women : A study of SC Women Sarpanches in Warangal District**” has been divided into Six chapters.

Chapter-I: “Introduction” the introductory chapter outlines the subject, historical legacy about women empowerment and the participation of women in different movements. Law and empowerment of women, the place of women in the constitution of India, empowerment of women through safeguarding their human rights etc., have been discussed in this chapter. Meaning of empowerment, political empowerment are also presented in this chapter. The Introductory chapter, further contain the review of literature, significance of the study, objectives of the study, hypotheses set for the study, methodology adopted for the collection of data, scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter-II: “Empowerment of Rural Women: A Historical Perspective” This chapter highlights the genesis of political empowerment of rural women. The discussion has been initiated right from the inception of Panchayati Raj system in the country. The perspectives of Balwantrai Mehta Committee, Asoka Mehta Committee over the status of women, role of women in politics have been discussed. Similarly, National perspective plan for women also discussed. Likewise, reservation of seats and practices were also presented in this chapter. Parliamentary initiatives against the empowerment of women have been discussed at length. Gender perspective in Five Year Plans also figured in the presentation. This chapter highlights different aspects of political empowerment of rural women like; (a) Village Panchayat and empowerment of women, (b) Women in National Power politics, (c) Different strategies adopted for enhancing political participation of women, (d) Different bills introduced in Parliament for political empowerment of women, (e) The Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment and implementation and impact.

Chapter-III: Women Empowerment Through Local Bodies: An Overview This chapter focuses on women leadership in Warangal district and the role they have to play in ruling successfully in rural areas in general the importance of S.C. women leadership in local bodies in particular. It also discusses pertaining to the problems of S.C. women as representatives in local bodies. It emphasised that the S.C.women leadership plays a significant role in spite of male domination and upper caste people in rural politics. In this chapter an attempt is made to assess the S.C. women leadership in Warangal district.

Chapter–IV: Profile and performance of SC Women sarpanches in Warangal District This chapter explains a brief profile of Warangal district which contains historical background, status of demographic figures, land use patterns, agriculture, tour spots have been discussed. Further, the profile of SC women sarpanches and their performance as a public representatives and their role in decision making has been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter–V: People’s Perceptions on SC Women local leadership: This chapter highlights the people’s perceptions on political empowerment of SC women. A structured questionnaire was administered to 300 respondents identifying from 56 S.C. women reserved grampanchats in 51 mandal covering 5 revenue divisions in the district. Stratified random sampling technique has been used to identify the respondents. This chapter contains the gender, age, caste, educational qualifications, occupations of the respondents. Respondents opinion on political awareness, usage of adult franchise, awareness about reservations, necessity of reservations, difference in the functioning of male and female representatives has been analysed. Importance of women empowerment, political empowerment of women and its repercussions have been presented in this chapter. Lastly, suggestions offered by the respondents also incorporated in this chapter. Few case studies where women elected representatives are functioning, have also been presented in this chapter to highlight their experiences on political empowerment of SC women.

Chapter – VI: Findings and Conclusions: This chapter presents the gist of all preceding chapters along with the findings of the study and the suggestions were also made for the strengthening of political empowerment of rural S.C. women.

References:

In the Indian Sub-continent this Panchayat unit of village government and its process of governance had existed for many centuries. But panchayats in the past, as Hugh Tinker reminds us, panchayats were rarely representatives of the village as a whole. They might have drawn from the members of the ‘funding’ families or from Bramhins and superior cultivators. The colonial rulers began to establish vested interest in village self-government from the second half of the eighteenth century. India witnessed the rise of a vast network of rural local bodies during those days but these institutions did not grow adequately because of a number of factors. During the days of the struggle for independence, the nationalist leaders had promised to give the people of independent India a vibrant panchayat system which would reflect their voice. Gandhiji felt that “the greater is the power of panchayats, the better it is for the people”. According to Article 40 of the Constitution of India included in the chapter

on Directive Principles of State Policy in difference to the wishes of Gandhiji says: “The states shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government”. Since independence, there have been three major phases in the evolution of the panchayats in India dominated by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee report in 1950s, the Asoka Mehta Committee report in 1970s, and the seventy-third amendment of the Constitution in 1990s. These phases are marked by three kinds of concepts, non-political panchayats, political panchayats and constitutional panchayats.

The Balwantrai Mehta Committee

It was the Balwantrai Mehta Committee which recommended the introduction of three-tier panchayat in India in 1957. The committee looked at Panchayat Raj system as a means of involving people and their representatives in implementation of development programmes of the government, the lack of which was responsible for the failure of the first rural development programmes in post-colonial India called community development programme. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee conceptualized panchayats primarily as instruments of rural development. Interestingly, the committee was not influenced by conceptualization of panchayats in Article 40 of the Constitution. Following the recommendations of the committee which were accepted by the National Development Council, the country witnessed a spate of legislation. The journey of the first generation of non-political panchayats started. But the institutions of the Panchayati Raj did not grow or as Jain observes, They were killed before they were truly born^{xii} due to a number of factors such as political neglect, the socio-economic structure in the countryside, bureaucracy’s manoeuvring etc. Social and economic inequality in the countryside facilitated the capture of these bodies by the upper castes and landed rich who acted as ‘gate keepers’ to the flow of benefits to the poor. Political and bureaucratic neglect resulted in the postponement of elections, creation of new bureaucratic institutions for the channelisation of funds for rural development etc. The PR bodies started stagnating and ‘became moribund’ to use the words of the L.M. Singhvi Committee.

The Asoka Mehta Committee

The Asoka Mehta Committee was set up by the Janata government in 1978 to look into the working of panchayats in various states and to make recommendations for strengthening the panchayat system. The committee identified three distinct phases in the evolution of panchayati raj in India since 1959 namely, the phase of ascendancy (1959-64), the phase of stagnation (1965-69), the phase of decline (1969-onwards), The committee observed that in general there had been disappointment and disillusionment with its working. It became an exclusive privilege of

dominant groups and facilitated “the emergence of oligarchic forces yielding no benefit to weaker sections”. It was also observed that: “the lukewarm attitude of the political elite at higher levels towards strengthening of the democratic process at the grassroots were generally the crux of the matter^{xiii}. Added to it was the role of the bureaucracy in dissociating panchayats from the processes of rural development programmes administration.

The Asoka Mehta Committee perceived the role of the panchayat system a bit differently. According to the committee, Panchayat Raj system was not only meant for decentralization of power and people’s participation, but it was also an instrument for supporting rural development programme implementation and strengthening the planning process at the micro-level. The major recommendations of the committee included introduction of two tier PR system consisting of Zilla parishad and mandal panchayats, reorganization of zilla parishad and its membership, open participation of political parties in Panchayat Raj elections, constitutional protection for further decentralization of power etc. The advocacy for open participation of political parties in Panchayat Raj elections was a departure from the prevalent practices in the country and the Gandhian conceptualization of local self-government. A few of the recommendations were put into practice by some states but most of the recommendations were not implemented.

The Asoka Mehta Committee gave birth to the second generation panchayats in India and the states which made some progress in this regard were Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal. Karnataka under Hegde’s regime started with a remarkably progressive piece of legislation but the social background of the elected members remained almost unaltered. Kerala under the leftist rule had made significant strides both in terms of devolution of powers and the participation of the down-and-out, but the scenario underwent a change after the installation of the Congress government which took away powers of the panchayats instead of superseding them^{xiv}. West Bengal, though once lagged behind Karnataka in terms of devolution of powers, have been figuring brilliantly on the country’s map of panchayat system since 1978 by holding election to these bodies at regular intervals and paving the road for the rise of the poor to the panchayat bodies by creating effective objective basis through land reforms and by taking the institutions to the door-steps of the people to ensure fruitful participation of the people in administration.

Amending the Constitution of Rajiv Gandhi

The government constituted a committee under the chairmanship of L.M. Singhvi to prepare a concept paper on panchayats. The committee observed that “the institutions of panchayati raj have become moribund....(and) they have been denuded of their promise and vitality”. The committee felt that the institutions of panchayati raj “have to be viewed as institutions of self-government which would naturally facilitate the participation of the people in the process of planning and development flowing from and as a part of the concept of self government^{xv}. This committee reiterated the conceptualization of panchayats embodied in Article 40 of the Constitution. The committee recommended that “local self-government should be constitutionally reconginsed, protected, preserved by the inclusion of a new chapter in the Constitution”. Thus while the Balwantray Mehta had favoured non-political panchayats, Asoka Mehta Committee stood for political panchayats and taking the cue from the Asoka Mehta Committee, the LM.Singhvi Committee strongly pleaded for constitutionalisation of panchayats, Again, while the first two committees, had largely conceived panchayat bodies primarily as instruments of rural development, the third committee emphasized the need for development panchayat bodies primarily as units of self government. It is in line with the suggestion of the Singhvi Committee that the Constitution has now been amended giving the panchayats a constitutional status and providing for reservation of seats and posts of chairpersons in panchayat bodies for women.

Political Empowerment of Women

Women constitute roughly half of the world’s population. But they almost invariably constitute a small minority of those holding elected office^{xvi}. In 1980, they made up of just over 10 percent of the worlds’ parliamentarians and less than 4 percent of national cabinets. In 1993, only six countries had women as heads of government^{xvii}. This low level of political participation by women has been attributed by many researchers to the subordinate social and economic positions that women typically hold in most societies^{xviii}. The statement of the United Nations after declaring 1976-86 as the Decade for Women Development observed that women perform two-thirds of the world’s work receive only 10 percent of the world’s income and only one percent of the means of production^{xix}. Women are thus the “world’s largest excluded category”. The UN Report on women observes:

The scales of world’s equality are out of balance. The side marked ‘women’ is weighted down with responsibility, while the side marked ‘men’ rides high with power. Tilting first under rules that say women must do all domestic work, the scales are tipped further by men’s greater

opportunities to earn wages. Advantage builds on advantage until today they are tilted so steeply that almost all of the world's wealth is on men's side, while most of the work is on women's.

In many industrial countries the female human development index is only around 80 percent of males. Women participate inadequately in employment and in some industrial countries women's earnings are less than half those of men. Many developing countries exclude women from both political participation and productive work. In the countries for which data are available female human development index is only 60 percent that of males. Indeed for decades, life has changed very little for 500 million rural women in the developing world.

The question of women's participation in politics began to assume importance only in the twentieth century. The global concern for women's participation, at least in words, was noticed in 1975 when the United Nations declared the decade as the women development decade and adopted some resolutions for it. This was followed by the Nairobi conference in 1985 which called on the participating countries to take steps for ensuring women's participation in politics through reservation of 35 percent seats in all elections. In the developing countries women continue to face a variety of cultural, institutional and legal constraints that circumscribe their involvement in their respective societies and limit their participation in government.^{xx} The awful absence of women from the political processes has generated doubts about how to identify and integrate women's social and economic needs and priorities in the process of development. Women play a significant role in rural economy but there has been no effort to take into account their concern and skill while designing and implementing rural development programmes. There is no doubt that long-term goal of social equity and full participation of women required increased political empowerment programmes. There is no doubt that long-term goal of social equity and full participation of women required increased political empowerment of women. Political empowerment means acquisition of the capacity as well as the adoption of needed strategies by women in order to exercise their powers more effectively and profitably for their own development and the development of the society.

The Indian Scene

The question of political empowerment of women in rural India has assumed considerable significance recently because of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The amendment requires reservation of seats and posts of chairpersons for women in all grass-root democratic institutions in the countryside known as the panchayats. This is a historic

step of far-reaching implications and significant repercussions on the political processes in rural India.

Approach of Balwantrai Mehta Committee to the Role of Women

The Balwantrai Mehta Committee while recommending a three-tier panchayati raj system for the country, did not consider women's participation as an issue of considerable significance. In fact, its genesis and terms of reference gave it no scope to consider the question seriously. The committee, however, considered the conditions of rural women at length, and argued that they should be assisted to find ways to increase their incomes and improve the conditions of their children. There was a section in the report dealing with the measures to be taken for this purpose. It had also recommended for the appointment of *gram sevikas* and women social extension officers to facilitate effective implementation of women's welfare programmes and co-option of two women in the panchayat bodies at the block and district levels. It seemed to have considered the women's participation in panchayat primarily for implementation of women and children development programmes. They were interested in making improvement of the house-keeping functions of the women. Clearly they had taken a conservative attitude to women. Women as participants in the decision-making process did not draw adequate attention of the committee.

Following the recommendations of the committee, women joined panchayats in the same status as co-opted members. But the result was not encouraging. The cooption as a principle is highly objectionable in theory as it smacks of protectionism based on the view of women as being weak and incapable of fighting elections. In practice it resulted in sheer patronage of dominant socio-economic and political groups and co-opted women owed allegiance to them. They were not aware of their roles and responsibilities. They had no political experience. They failed to actively participate in the proceedings of panchayats. They were neither able to play an important role in the decision-making process in general nor in matters pertaining to women and children. Women's representation became one of what may be called tokenism.

The Committee on the Status of Women

The question of women's participation in panchayats created the attention of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974). It favoured establishment of statutory all-women panchayats at the village level with autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration of women and children development programmes. It was conceived as a transitional measure to break through the traditional attitudes that inhibited most women in articulating their problems or participating actively in the local bodies. Like other members of panchayats, women would be directly elected to these bodies, and should

have the right to send their representatives to the panchayat samitis and or zilla parishads. To ensure viable relationship between existing gram panchayats and the proposed women's panchayats the chairman and secretary of both these bodies should be ex-officio members. The idea of all women panchayats, as Susheela Kaushik observes, is no longer projected as a statutory provision. "While its emergence so far has been only coincidental, and not always too complimentary, it may also lead to marginalization of women"^{xxi}. She argues that this recommendation brings out the deficiencies in the working of panchayats, their patriarchal domination and negligence of issues concerning women.

The Asoka Mehta Committee perspective

The Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions headed by Asoka Mehta (1978) laid stress on the need for recognising and strengthening women's role in the decision-making processes of panchayats. To quote it 'Greater representation of women in the panchayati raj bodies and participation in the elective process are in a way related'. This measure is likely to influence both the directional and implementational level. The committee recommended reservation of two seats for women in panchayats and co-opt women, in case they did not come through elections. With regard to women's participation in elections, the committee felt that the idea of in the Punjab Panchayat Samities and Zilla Parishads Act, 1961 would be relevant. The Act provides that two women securing the highest number of votes among the women candidates in the election. This is a method of co-option by election. The committee suggested that these seats would be in addition to the general seats which they might win by a majority in the normal course. The committee had also felt that the need for an institutional arrangement in the form of a committee with all women members of the mandal panchayat represented on it^{xxii}. It would ensure that decisions were taken by 'women themselves on priorities and choices in welfare and development programmes specially meant for women and children'. The committee recommended the promotion of women's role in rural industrialization as a means of providing employment for women. It laid stress on effective organisation of Mahila Mandals as important component in the rural development programmes. The rural women should have full access to development resources and services. The Asoka Mehta Committee had acknowledged the need for associating women with the processes of decision-making, but could not give a clear direction. This had resulted in cumbersome proposal about the participation of women in panchayats. But the fact remains as usual without a progress.

The National Perspective Plan

The National Perspective Plan (1988) for women dealt with the question of political participation of women in the grass-roots democratic institutions. The core group set up by the Government of India pointed out that political power, and access to position of decision making and authority are critical prerequisites for women's equality in the process of nation building. The recommendations of the committee were as follow:

- (a) There should be reservation of 30 per cent of seats for women in all rural local self-governing bodies at all levels from the village panchayats to the zilla parishads.
- (b) There should also be reservation of 30 percent of the executive heads of all bodies from Gram Panchayats to Zilla Parishads for women.
- (c) A more effective step would be to declare a certain percentage of constituencies in the lower tiers of panchayats as exclusively women's constituencies and all executive positions in a certain number of territorial jurisdictions reserved for women candidates.

One of the members of the National Committee for Perspective Plan for Women, Nirmala Deshpande refused to accept the reservation as an appropriate method for tackling the problem of women's participation in panchayats^{xxiii}. She argued that the reservation implied that women were inferior and needed some kind of protection. She suggested:

General awareness should be strengthened and spiritual and moral values of our country should be highlighted. An atmosphere has to be created where these values are given due importance. Then women will naturally come up.

It is, however, difficult to agree with the view of Deshpande. We should not miss the point that women on their own have not come out to participate in panchayat bodies. In rural areas, they get socialized in such a way that they feel that the household work is their principal and often only work. Added test is the unfavourable attitude of males. Such a situation calls for special provision like reservation of seats.

Reservation of Seats and Practices

Many states had introduced reservation of seats for women through legislative changes before the Seventy-Third Constitution Amendment Act came into being although the percentage varies from states to state, the range of variation being 10 percent as in Madhya Pradesh to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ percent as in West Bengal. After the 73rd constitutional amendment came into being the states have started changing their legislations to meet requirements of the amendment. Elections have also

been held in some states. The reservation of seats for women in panchayats is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, the end being more and more involvement of women who constitute nearly 50 percent of the total population in the country, with the decision-making processes in rural India and political empowerment of women.

It is evident that the question of effective and genuine participation of women in panchayats in India cannot be ensured simply by amending the Constitution of India. The constitutional amendment will definitely bring in stipulated percentage of women in the panchayats. The amendment of the Constitution providing reservation of seats is a step forward, and needs to be followed up by necessary changes in living conditions, through land reforms, progressive women's movement and creation of a new culture in tune with democracy at the grassroots level. The Third Five Year Plan advocated the recruitment of women to family planning programmes. From the Sixth Five Year Plan changed national priorities including the need for population control and international compulsions led to greater emphasis on women's economic role. But "the image of women that emerges in the Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans still remains that of mother and unpaid household servant and is in no sense and empowering one"^{xxiv}.

It cannot, however, be denied that policy debates during 1975-85 marked a shift in terms of viewing women as targets of social welfare measures to that of participants in progress of development^{xxv}. But as, Aparna Mahanta argues that the underlying patriarchal assumptions remain unchanged not only in the actual thrust of programmes but also in the rhetoric of the national leaders^{xxvi}. This attitude of the state is a standing threat to political empowerment of women.

India is placed in a different kind of situation wherein capitalism co-exists with feudalism and nourishes patriarchal values. There are still certain significant silver linings. Women have started articulating their demands and becoming careful and vigilant about their rights. The experience of one of the backward states, Orissa is worth recalling. Orissa celebrated what was called. 'Panchayati Raj Diwas' on 5 March, 1993. Mathew writes "The upsurge of women's power was visible at the Bhubaneswar Meet"^{xxvii}. The women representatives demanded more powers, more resources. They blamed the government for not taking adequate steps in this regard. The UMA survey in the Timur district of Karnataka which has a total of 1693 women revealed that in case reservation was withdrawn the women would compete with the men and fight for their rights and for the re-introduction of reservation^{xxviii}. Thus new consciousness is dawning on the minds of women in India.

It needs to be stressed that women empowerment through panchayats would largely depend on the breaking of the hegemony of the rural rich over villagers or in other words feudalism. Gupta opines “With reservation of seats for women becoming statutory the affluent landowners cannot directly resist the entry of women in politics. But there is little doubt that they will go to great lengths to retain their control over villages”^{xxix}. The feudal-patriarchal structure has to be attacked. And for this purpose land reform should receive the highest priority. Women empowerment through panchayat requires to be supported by a sustained campaign and vigorous efforts for creating awareness about their rights and duties for organizing women and for increasing educational facilities for women. Reservation of seats in local bodies has given opportunity to women to play an important role in the decision-making processes. This is a challenge to women. It is to be always remembered that reservation is not an end in itself but a means to an end-end being women empowerment.

Parliamentary Initiatives

The Parliament of India over the decades has grown increasingly sensitive to the issue of empowerment of women and has been working towards a strategy for the increasing representation of women in the legislative bodies. In fact, on March 8, 1996, that is, on the International Women’s Day, a Resolution was adopted unanimously by the House wherein the need for providing adequate reservation of seats for women in the State Legislatures and Parliament was stated. Further, in order to achieve the objective and to monitor the progress and also to suggest ways and means to implement the policies and projects meant for improving the status of women, constitution of a Standing Committee of both houses was suggested. In this pursuance of this resolution a Joint Standing Committee for improving the status of women was constituted. It was inaugurated on May 6, 1997. While speaking at the inaugural meeting of the Committee Najma Heptulla said:

In order to secure for women equality, status and dignity in all fields there is an urgent and continuing need for changing societal attitude and elimination of all forms of gender based discrimination in the mind of men and women in the society. Unless women acquire equal status and dignity in all spheres, the development and advancement of any society or country cannot be considered complete. No society can progress without women’s equality, status and development. To achieve the broader objective of equality, there is a need for translation of a *jure* equality or women into *de facto* equality, participation of women in all spheres of life, sharing of responsibilities between women and men, affirmative action wherever necessary.

The Committee on Empowerment of Women has the mandate to examine among others, the measures taken by the Union Government to secure for women's equality of status and dignity in all matters. It also examines policies for their comprehensive education and adequate representation in legislative bodies and other fields. Till date the Committee has presented nine reports on varied issues like developmental schemes for rural women, functioning of National and State Commissions for women violence against women during riots and training and empowerment of women in local bodies. To further deepen and broaden the participation of women in panchayat bodies the Committee in its 8th Report strongly recommended for expanding the opportunities for women's participation in the executive committee and other committees of the local representative bodies. It is well known that under the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of the Constitution one-third of the seats in the panchayat bodies have been reserved for women. However, it has been noticed that in the executive committees and other committees which carry out the functions of panchayats, the representation of women is not sufficient. Therefore, the Committee on Empowerment of Women recommended that women representation in the Committees should be at least one-third, i.e., it is proportion to their strength in the local bodies. The Committee felt that would encourage women and inculcate a sense of responsibility if provision is made to appoint a woman as the vice-chairperson if the chairperson is the man and *vice-versa*. It is apparent that Parliament through its Committee is making in-depth analysis of the issue and giving valuable suggestions for women's empowerment.

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Independence in August 1997 Parliament held a special session in which a resolution was adopted by Rajya Sabha wherein also the issue of empowerment of women features. It was stated in the resolution "that gender justice be established in the spirit of the Declaration and Platform for Action of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and be practiced as a way of life.

- On the occasion of the International Women's Day in 1999, a Resolution was proposed which was adopted unanimously by the House. While referring to similar Resolutions adopted earlier it was suggested that attention may be focused on the following issues.
- Adequate reservation for women in both the Houses of Parliament to be made so as to give representation to all sections of society.
- Given the vital role that parliamentarians can play in the process of social change and the critical importance attached to accountability to legislature in Platform for Action, it is important

to build their capacities, strengthen their networks and equip them with resources.

- Women's voices should be promoted in decision-making process including the macro planning processes.
- The fulfilment of the Ninth Plan objective of Empowerment of Women and the strategy of sectoral women's component plans needs to be closely monitored and women's voices and perspective should be a part of this monitoring.
- There should be an ongoing process of gender mainstreaming including the strengthening of the government machinery and the National Commission for Women.
- Gender sensitization of enforcement mechanisms, judiciary and central and state ministries are to be a priority and need to be matched with resources.
- The reform of laws to address issues of gender based violence should be closely monitored.
- Additional resources both financial and technical need to be committed to combat increasing gender-based violence, to provide legal literacy and to correct media portrayal of women.
- The engendering of census and data gathering systems should be a priority.
- There is need for enhanced UN system support for efforts at securing gender equality and development.

It is important to note that the Department related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development is currently focusing attention on the issue of making our budgetary processes more sensitive to women's issues. In this context, the Committee is aiming to stress on the need for greater availability of micro-credit facilities to the women's Self-Help Groups spread over large parts of the country for their economic well being and empowerment.

Equality of men and women must begin at home. In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a small book for school children wherein he conveyed this point in the simplest of manner. The name of the book was "Balpathi" which he gave a challenging vision of society where men and women would share household work. The text of the book contained a small paragraph of household work and in the form of imaginary dialogue between a mother, her son and her daughter. Mahatma Gandhi had articulated the grand vision of a society based on gender equality. When the book was published, some of Mahatma Gandhi's associates took objection to it on the ground that it would bring about a rebellion in the family. To that query Mahatma Gandhi conveyed that his book would help in building a new society which would guarantee equal rights to men and

women. In the story, the little girl expresses her desire to study and play just like her brother. But the little boy going by the prevailing social custom tells her to engage in household work and help her mother. But she counters him by arguing that she has every right to study and play. Her brother with a mindset of a male chauvinist insists that she has to do housework as well. The mother hearing the argument tells her little son to change his attitude towards women and to share by both of them. This focus of Mahatma Gandhi to ensure gender equality in society is a path breaking work done by him way back in 1921. It is worth mentioning that in 2002, Shabana Azmi while participating in the discussion on the International Women's Day spoke about this issue. She quotes

All over the world, Sir, it has now been accepted that empowerment of women is the true yardstick of a society's progress. Men and women are different and this difference needs to be celebrated. I am convinced that when women get truly empowered, they will change the whole notion of power itself, not as one group wielding power on the other but both sharing of power. It has been recognized that education is one of the strongest tools of empowerment. I would like to take this opportunity to bring to his notice one thing. I was looking at some textbooks for First standard children. There is a question which repeatedly appears. The question is, where is mother? The reply is that mother is in the kitchen. Where is father? The reply is that he is at office. My question is why it cannot be that when it is asked where is mother? The reply is that mother is at office. And where is father? The reply is in the kitchen. Why it cannot be that both mother and father are in the kitchen or both are in office? We fill our children with this kind of role playing through the medium of books which needs to be removed. Because often education merely reinforces gender divide.

Thus, what we are seeking today is a complete overhauling of the social attitudes, beliefs and notions *vis-à-vis* the role of women in society and public life. Such a change constitutes the first step towards empowerment of women. Generally, the political model is based on the idea of 'winners and losers', competition and confrontation, rather than on mutual respect, collaboration and consensus building. Advent of women in public life and their effective empowerment have the potentiality of changing the aforesaid political model.

Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicized clichéd concept of the 21st Century. The media talks about it, the local politicians talk about it, national leaders talk about it, policy makers talk about it, the international community talks about it. Yet women are nowhere near to being full and equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. This lack of adequate political participation in decision-making bodies has far-reaching consequences. It deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizens, their viewpoints and perspectives tend to remain unheard or under-represented and in some instances ignored while taking key decisions on national budgets and while setting up priorities for the Government. There was a widespread perception that with the improvements in social indicators, education and growing number of women in the various employment sectors, women would automatically gain space in the decision-making bodies. However, this does not appear to be happening and there is a growing opinion that an affirmative action to increase the number of women in representative bodies is required.

Gender Perspective in Five Year Plans

In India, values encouraging political participation of women co-exists with the notions of traditional role of women *vis-à-vis* the family and society. The Five-Year Plans of the executive reflected this notion in the first Five Plans. The issue of women and their development was viewed primarily from the welfare point of view. The First Five Year Plan set up Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 to undertake welfare activities through voluntary sector. The Second Five Year Plan hoped for development from grassroots through Mahila Mandals and the third, fourth and the interim plans planned for education of women, material and child care services, etc. In the Fifth Plan there was a shift from the welfare to the developmental approach and it was only in the Sixth Plan that women's upliftment and their role as agents of development received priority attention. In fact, in the Sixth Plan document a separate Chapter on Women and Development was incorporated. Multi-disciplinary approach with three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment was suggested. In the Seventh Plan, the objective was clearly stated to bring the women into the mainstream of national development. And in the eighth Plan for the first time the shift was made from development to empowerment and the need for flow of benefits to women in the core sectors of education, health and employment. The 9th Plan states empowerment of women as a strategic objective. The Approach Paper called for women's component plan as a part of the plan of each sector to identify the impact of plans and programmes on women. The Plan assures that at least 30 percent of funds/benefits from all development sector flow to women. The Tenth Plan approach aims at empowering women by

translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into an action.

The strain of lamentation about insufficient representation of women in our legislatures continue to agitate the conscience of our leaders even after 50 years of the functioning of our Parliament. It found articulation on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Parliament when the Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat while addressing the International Parliamentary Conference expressed concern that many deprived and neglected sections of society, particularly women, do not have enough space in political life. Taking note of the fact, that share of women in representative bodies in the world has not gone beyond 14 per cent he recalled the profound statement made by Mahatma Gandhi in 1925 that, stating that the “Indian experience in this regard could be relevant” he referred to the provision in our Constitution under which 33 per cent of the seats for women at the grassroots representative bodies like panchayats and municipalities have been reserved. Mentioning that such steps have enabled about a million women to occupy seats in such bodies, he drew attention to the Bill pending before Parliament for providing 33 percent reservation for women at the national and state levels. Possibly affirmative action at the grassroots level democratic institutions constitutes exemplary action for women’s empowerment which can be replicated at the national level. Movements launched by women themselves for greater access to the public life and decision-making bodies are distinguishing features of the larger trend for deepening democracy and regenerating our inclusive society and polity. Attempts to reserve 33 percent of seats for women in legislative bodies at the national and state levels and the wider acceptability of this idea by people generate hope for their empowerment.

Chapter 3 Political Empowerment of Rural Women

With the grant of constitutional gender-equality in free India came legal support through a series of legislations. While dealing with gender issues, it is important to mention that the Constitution of India has guaranteed equality before law and equal protection of law (Article 14 and prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex alone and it has empowered the State to make special provisions for women and children in Article 15). It has made provisions to prohibit traffic in human beings and to provide for just and humane conditions of work along with maternity relief (Article 23 and Article 42). It is a constitutional duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51A). In this respect, India's Constitution has a place of distinction among the comity of nations.

The Indian constitution made a deliberate radical departure from the age-old poor social status of women by granting them equal, social and political status. Constitutional equal status means that every adult female, whatever be her social position or accomplishments, has now the opportunity to function as a citizen and individual partner in the task of nation building.

In view of the constitutional obligations, during the post-independent era, women have been recognised as a separate target group and the government has directed its efforts towards mainstreaming of women into the national developmental process. This period has witnessed far-reaching changes in almost all spheres-political, economic and social. In terms of constitutional, legal and administrative measures, many commendable initiatives have been taken. Prominent among them are the Constitutional provisions for gender equality and justice, enactment of new laws and amendment of existing laws to protect and promote the interests of women, setting up of women-specific administrative and economic structures, such as Women and Child Development Department at the Union and State Government levels, formation of National Commission for women in several states, State Women Development Corporations, orienting plan strategy to include women specific and women related programmes, launching of special schemes like *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Indira Mahila Yojana, etc.*

Village Panchayat and Empowerment of Women

The 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution passed by the Parliament in 1992 and ratified in 1993 provide for 33 percent reservation among elected representatives to the local governments. This has been

hailed as a watershed achievement in empowerment of women, as over one million rural women have joined village panchayat in the past as *sarpanch* or *adhyakasha* or members of community administration. According to Majumdar, a feminist author, this legislation brought about the ‘political dynamism’ of female voters, leading her to conclude, “It is time for India to try out some new experiments in achieving real democracy”^{xxx}.

The kind of political empowerment is unprecedented even from the Western standard. For the first time in the history of this country, low caste people are substantially represented in statutory *panchayats*. Although most *panchayat* women are illiterate and poor and belong to the category of other backward classes, and yet, many of them have proved their mettle and won acclaim as able administrators. For instance, Fatima Bee of Kalva village in Andhra Pradesh, who is unlettered and had never seen a city, became sarpanch of the village through reservations under the panchayat legislation, and flew to New York in 1998 to receive the “UNDP Race Against Poverty” award from the Secretary General for her work relating to the programme of poverty alleviation.

In terms of percentages, women’s representation in different bodies may not seem significant, but statistics do not always reflect on the reality of changing perceptions at the community level. Quite recently, in Andhra Pradesh, for instance, about 25,000 rural women turned up for *Mahasabha* gatherings and passed resolutions demanding their rights as citizens despite the fact that they were very poor and illiterate. It is a political awareness rather than conventional schooling or education in terms of degrees or number of years of schooling that makes a real difference.

The thirty three percent reservation for women in *pachayat* elections has made a significant beginning. However, experiences of women elected as members have been both positive and also disheartening. The fact that about one million women came into the public arena for the first time is expected to create ripples in a tradition bound Indian society, but then the quality of participation in the *panchayat* bodies may not be so effective in the beginning. But at the same time, it is also true that most elected women have no idea, as to what being an elected member really means, and just do what the men (as brother, father, father-in-law and husband) tell them to do. Illiterate women cannot take autonomous decision. They are bound to be dictated by educated and crafty male members of their family in the background. Mrs. Rabri Devi, the present Chief Minister of Bihar, is a glaring case in point. Like her, illiterate women in politics have to remain proxy political figures.

The elected women themselves, however, are not yet seeing them as empowered for want of education and, therefore, lack the required confidence in asserting themselves. Some do not assert themselves, because they do not know what their rights as village administrators are – the issue being one of the awareness. The other point is that community does not perceive the women as capable or worthy of leadership. The attitude of rural people towards women as political leaders is yet to undergo sufficient change. Besides being a votary of political empowerment of women, I really wonder whether empowerment in such a situation would really make much difference in the life of illiterate women. However, in the long run, political empowerment may help them gain social acceptance and they would be quite effective and autonomous in the decision-making process.

Women in National Power Politics

From a minimum of 37 percent in 1952, women voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections reached an all-time high of 68.2 percent in 1984. However within the Parliament, the presence of female parliamentarians has been poor. The percentage of female parliamentarians has at no time exceeded 10 in the *Lok Sabha*. The highest was in the 8th *Lok Sabha* (1985-90) with eight per cent of total number of 544. Though under the Constitution and under ordinary laws, women enjoy same political rights as men, enabling them to take part effectively in the administration of the country, why is it that even today, there is no adequate representation of women in the political sphere? Very few women dare to venture in this field, except those who come from politicians' families and have necessary political exposure. The lists of candidates over the years show that most of them belong to influential or political families. Such candidates are generally shy of taking a stand that is likely to embarrass their party, jeopardize their own interest or that of their male patrons.

The presence of a few women in active politics may not make much difference in the structural set-up. A study on women in public life, carried out by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), also argues that only a critical mass of women allows female politicians to bring different values to public life. The 73rd and 74th Amendments are a laudable step towards achieving this 'critical mass'. However, there is need to extend this affirmative action from *panchayat* level to the state and national level.

As corruption in public life has become an order of the day, lots of sensible citizens have developed abhorrence for politics. In view of this fact, many people contend that participation of women in politics should be encouraged to cope with the ever-increasing means of corruption. They

believe that women are much less corrupt than men^{xxx}. I also hold a similar view, but when I am reminded of Mrs. Gandhi, I feel shaky about my opinion, as it was she who raped Indian democracy and was described as a kingpin of corruption in Indian politics by numerous politicians and journalists, and ever since then it has been flourishing as a big business in Indian politics without any sign of diminution. Nevertheless, it must be candidly admitted that she was neither an epitome of corruption nor of the Indian women in general.

Despite constitutional and socio-economic changes, the participation of women in political process has so far been negligible. It becomes quite obvious if we consider the percentages of women in state legislatures and Parliament. Women's marginal political presence is often attributed to their apathy and unwillingness, the influence of patriarchal culture, the negative female response to increasing criminalization of politics or the general stigma associated with women politicians. But such a simplistic interpretation needs to be explored empirically.

Strategies for Enhancing Political Participation of Women

In addition to those stated above, there are some other factors too. In the empowerment route, participation of women, at different levels, have many obstacles as follows: (1) Relatively short historical tradition of women's political participation (especially during the freedom struggle) (2) Prevailing negative attitudes towards women's active participation in public life (3) Difficulty in combining a poonjugal role of women; (4) Economic dependency on male or lack of financial means (5) Poor female education and lack of awareness of their rights. Illiteracy happens to be an important stumbling block towards empowerment; and, (6) Women's reluctance for power games or indifference to political participation due to the system of *purdah*.

Political empowerment of women is not to be viewed in isolation. Structural changes in the formal power institution, economic, independence, increasing awareness through education and gender equality in the social and cultural ethos are important prerequisites for political empowerment of women. The political participation of women generally suffers from on the two grounds firstly, because the society as a whole is impoverished, and secondly, because they are women.

The strategy should be to empower a still greater number of women in the decision-making process. Governments, political parties and other organisations should encourage women's participation in politics and in the exercise of political responsibilities. The women's organizations should exert pressure on political parties to open up opportunities to

women as candidates for elections and encourage female functionaries in political parties.

In addition, political parties need to express clearly their commitment to end discriminations against women and to ensure women's development as an integral component of their policies of national development and as their party ideology. As a supplementary measure, political parties need to encourage women at all decision-making levels, if necessary, by providing affirmative measures to strengthen and consolidate women's presence at various organizational and decision-making levels. Alternatively, they can also form their own political party and try to capture power through political socialization and mobilization of women. There is no need to depend on male dominated political organisations for graceful and rightful political participation of women.

Lack of education and political awareness partly accounts for deprivation of women. In such a situation, the main objective of women's education should be on mainstream gender issues and strengthening the capability of women to make them aware of their rights so that they are able to face the challenges in securing gender equality.

Women's Bill and Political Empowerment

There is nothing wrong with increasing political participation of women, but the moot question here is this: Is the passing of pending bill for reservation for women in legislative bodies most essential at this juncture? Is it the only effective option for empowerment of women in the India context at the moment? If the purpose of empowerment is to attain equality with men or to cope with gender-based discriminations, there is, in fact, some other effective option too. The protagonists of women liberation movement should also think other option, in fact more seriously, than mere reservation of seats in state legislatures and parliament.

Female protagonists of reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies are terribly worried over such a fate of the bill. Making a strong reaction to it, they often say that the bill is pending because it is against the established values of a male dominated society. However, the charge is frivolous because the bill was not moved by a female-headed or dominated government. It is also said that the low female representation in the decision-making organizations is because the political parties harbour very conservative view about women. Different parties champion the cause of women in their manifestos, but during election time they give tickets mostly to men. All political parties do have a women's wing, but the access to the inner ring of the party, which is the

core of the power structure of the party, is not very easy for women for various reasons. Increasing lumpenisation and use of muscle power in political game keep the women away. The criterion for political parties for their selection of contestants in the 'winnability factor' rather than their identity in the constituency. Some political parties deny tickets to women on the ground of non-winnability factor.

There is strong apprehension about the necessity of reservation for women in the highest legislative body at this juncture. Many people, even those who are strong votary of gender equality, feel that it would be premature to initiate affirmative action for women through passing the women's bill. The level of literacy for women is quite low and the country is way behind in matters of development compared to most developing countries, leave the developed world aside, India democracy has not really come to the stage for such an action. There is no need to caricature or emulate blindly what is seen in some developed countries. India should wait and watch for some more time and assess the effectiveness or success of reservation for women at the local level government.

Need to Enhance Political Awareness on Empowerment and Participation

Different political parties, however, are opposed to the passing of the bill for some other reasons. The political parties, which stand for the cause of backwards, minorities and other socially and economically under-privileged sections of society, apprehend that through reservation for women the political interests of the under-privileged would suffer. At that time, the journalist Rajshekhar rightly held that the bid to introduce the women's bill on gender quota was an upper caste ploy to stem the rising tide of lower caste men in legislative bodies^{xxxii}. This was one of the important reasons why most leaders of the Rashtriya Janata Dal, Janata Dal (U), Samata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajvadi Party and other parties and politicians with socialist leaning opposed introduction of the bill in the Lok Sabha. In a similar vein, on the contrary, the feminists outside the Parliament support the bill in no uncertain terms because they mostly belong to the elite sections of upper castes with strong vested interests in their political career.

Due to low level of political awareness and education and widespread poverty, these women from disadvantaged sections of society would not match the relatively developed women from upper castes and upper echelons of society in electoral race and thus the causes of *dalits* and Other Backward Classes along with those of minorities would ultimately suffer because of consequent decline in representation in legislative bodies. The issue of reservation for women is supported quite

vociferously, mostly by those who belong to the cities from upper castes, because they know that they would instantly benefit from the women's bill. This would not help larger sections, of women from lower strata of society, who are mostly illiterate and hard-pressed from poverty. This would also help those women whose husbands or other close kind are in politics. Thus, in ultimate analysis the political gains of women community in general would result in redundancy of the bill. Furthermore, the Indian politics has become so dirty that women's involvement in politics would merely make them corrupt and criminal along with their husbands.

The feminists who are critical of men's attitude towards women in politics, believe that women's increased involvement would help improve the lot of women in general. Such scholars should try to assess the performance of Mrs. Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, who ruled the country for about 17 years – a period longer than that of any male Prime Minister, including her own father, Jawaharlal Nehru. Similarly how far female Chief Ministers, like Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu and Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh did for women or what Rabri Devi was able to do for the women in Bihar as a Chief Minister also deserve analysis by feminist scholars, especially when they feel that the male politicians are biased against women.

Most middle class urban women are virtually crazy about the ideas put forth by intellectual Marxist women from the Western world. What they see the women doing in the US, Germany, Norway, UK or some other Western countries through media or through personal experience, they try to emulate the same in India, without giving any thought to their necessity or relevance in the Indian context. They fail to recognize that India is ahead of most developed countries in granting equal rights and privileges to women in politics. To be objective, the level of economic development of India is comparable to the 19th Century Western world, and the position of women in the 19th Century Western world was relatively much worse in many respects. Spain, for instance, being a developed country, gave equal civil rights to women as late as 1978.

Indisputably, India is committed to the cause of empowerment of women. However, the journey towards progress is long and arduous. In a world of challenge and competition, both the State and the society have to constantly attune themselves to the changing needs. It is recognised that the development of the country is not possible if women, comprising half of the human resource, as labour force and citizens, stay away from the national development process. Women's participation in the political process of development is of crucial importance from the consideration of both equity and development.

India has witnessed great changes in the last two decades. Age-old prejudices and gender-based biases are giving way to gender equality and harmonious development. Women of today are no longer content to remain peripheral actors, and want to play their rightful role in all spheres of life. Political emancipation and social empowerment will act as main catalytic in achieving the empowerment of women to a large extent. However, in the present circumstances, empowerment of women is possible more effectively through economic empowerment rather than through reservation or some seats in Parliament or state legislatures.

At the broad societal level, both sexes share a common humanity, which is the basis for the notion of equal human rights and freedom if any section of society—men, women, children, caste or class—is denied dignity and respect than this must be restored to them. India has heralded the new millennium by pronouncing the year 2001 as *Women's Empowerment Year*. In terms of political empowerment, nearly seven lakh women occupy positions as members and chairpersons of grassroots democratic institutions in India following reservation of one-third seats at village and municipal level for women. In fact, right from the days of freedom struggle the Indian women have been consistently encouraged to take part in active politics. But due to the vitiated political milieu, resulting from increasing politicization and criminalization of politics, the level of political participation of women has been adversely affected despite the fact that there has been a marked increase in the level of literacy and political awareness of women.

Strategies for Empowerment of Rural Women

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) – the grass-roots units of self-government have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation in rural India. Effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on active involvement, contribution and participation of its citizens both male and female. Various studies refer to the fact of marginalization of women in all sectors including political one, despite the proclamation of gender equality in various legal and Constitutional provisions. The presence and participation of women in formal democratic process is woefully inadequate at all the levels – Centres, State and local/grass roots. Consequently, women-oriented policies and programmes are neither formulated nor implemented with the desired women's perspective. Women in general and rural women in particular continue to constitute the single largest group of backward citizens in India who neither have access to power structure nor any other effective methods to overcome their age-old inequality and sub-ordination. The Declaration of the World Conference of UN held in Nairobi in 1985

also affirmed 'women by virtue of their gender, experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to power structure that controls society and determines development issues and peace initiative'.

For true equality to become a reality for women, the sharing of power on equal terms with men should be the major strategy so that they can play an effective role in decision-making process especially in areas where various policies have direct bearing on their well-being. This realization has led to constant search for evolving a set of strategies for participation of women in decision-making positions at all levels in rural areas, and for capacitating and empowering them to play their role effectively in rural politics.

The Flashback

The recent debate on Panchayati Raj has been revolving around adequate participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions though the issue was *brought in focus* in Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report (1957) which recommended induction of two women members in Panchayats to carry on the specific programmes for women and children. Those two women members were to be co-opted in case they did not get themselves elected.

Following the recommendations of this Committee, women joined PRIs in many States, as adopted members rather than elected ones. The principle of cooption/ nomination did not produce the desired results. It resulted in sheer patronage of dominant socio-economic and political groups and co-opted women members owed allegiance to them. They were neither aware of their roles, their rights and duties, nor did they know much about the functioning of PRIs. They had virtually no political experience to actively participate in proceedings of PRIs or taking up issues or specific problems of women and children. Thus their contribution in decision-making process has been inconsequential. They have seldom been able to articulate and represent the interest of their gender.

Realising the futility of cooption/nomination, some States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, etc., resorted to reservation to ensure adequate representation of women in PRIs. Since then there had been persistent demand for reservation for women in adequate proportion in local bodies. Orthodox rural society, patriarchal and feudal forces, illiteracy resulting in lack of access to information and media, poor exposure to outside world make rural women extremely weak and vulnerable than the women in urban areas. Adequate reservation/quota is probably the only answer to ensure their representation in PRIs. The Committee on 'Status of Women in India' not only recommended

representation of women in PRIs but also establishment of Statutory. All Women Panchayats at village level as a transitional measure for managing the programmes for women and children. This recommendation has never been adopted though such All Women Panchayats have emerged in some States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

The Seventy-Third Amendment

Empowerment of women for effective participation at various levels in PRIs has been discussed and debated in different forums particularly from 1957 onwards (Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report). First concrete measure to give constitutional sanction to it was taken by Rajiv Gandhi's government by introducing the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill on local government on 15th May, 1989. The Bill aimed to revitalize Panchayati Raj Institutions, by bringing changes in their powers, structures and functions. It was defeated with a small margin in Rajya Sabha. Narsimha Rao's government has been successful in enacting the Constitution (Seventy-Third) Amendment Act, 1992 which includes various provisions for strengthening Panchayats at all levels.

The Act provides for a compulsory three-tier system in all the States except where the population does not exceed 20 lakhs, a fixed term of five years with the provision for election to be held within a period of six months in the event of dissolution of Panchayat, direct election of all members of Panchayats at all levels, indirect election of Chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads while the election of Chairpersons of Panchayats have been left to the discretion of State governments. In addition to this, State governments have been directed to authorize Panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate suitable local taxes and to receive grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of the State; appointment of Finance Commission every five years to review the financial position of Panchayats and make suitable recommendations to the State on distribution of funds between the State and local bodies. The Act is extremely important for political empowerment of women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Not less than one-third of the total membership of Panchayat bodies has been reserved for women (including that of SCs and STs) and these seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. Similar reservations have been made in respect of office of Chairpersons too. The idea behind this move is to enable more women to enter the political stream and create 'critical mass'. If applied in letter and spirit, as many as eight lakh women including those belonging to the SCs and the STs will become Panches and Sarpanches. The induction of women in sizeable number into new Panchayats as a matter of right and not as a favour, could bring radical and significant changes in the functioning of grass roots democracy.

The policy of reservation raises certain very pertinent issues – Will one-third reservation of electoral seats in the Panchayat bodies ensure greater and meaningful participation/involvement and contribution of women in grass-root institutions and their decision-making process? Will they be able to act as agents of the socio-economic change in rural India? The traditional and conservative attitudes of rural community, social forces, economic structure and existing political milieu place obstructions in their effective participation. These are not insurmountable barriers as despite these barricades we have some encouraging experiences of seat reservation in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, etc. Elected women members have proved their worth by their excellent work in construction of school buildings and biogas plants, supply of protected water, provision of self-employment opportunities, books and scholarships for needy students and 100 percent tax collection.

Therefore, what we need is the will to strengthen the political empowerment conferred on women by this Act. For promoting women's empowered role, a combination of multiple strategies and programmes have to be evolved which would enable them to overcome the obstacles placed by socio-political and economic structure on the one hand and redeem their own weaknesses and deficiencies on the other hand.

Awareness Generation

A large number of rural women are illiterate due to lack of ignorant and poorly informed about ongoing issues, debates and reforms concerning the society in general and women in particular. Therefore, the first strategy should aim at striking at ignorance by dissemination of information and raising general as well as political awareness among the toiling rural women. They should be helped to attain knowledge and awareness of their own self personal needs, health issues, legal right and society at large. The realization of their capabilities, potentialities and the role in society would strengthen their self-image and would foster them with confidence to take action in life. Besides, general awareness, women need to be enlightened politically, not only about their rights and duties, but also the nature of our Constitution, democratic processes and values, working of democratic institutions, concept and relevance of Panchayati Raj particularly the message of present Panchayati Raj Act and one-third of reservation of seats for women, various poverty alleviation programmes and policies for women and weaker sections.

The Government should take the lead in this matter by introducing a component of political awareness in all the on going programmes like National Literacy Mission, DWCRA Training Programme, the Mahila Samakhya Programme, CSWB Awareness Generation camps, legal

literacy camps, sponsored by Department of Women and Children, CAPARTOB Programme, Rajasthan's Women and Development Programme, etc.

The NGOs, women's organisations and movements can adopt various strategies for educating women on issues and problems concerning women and need to participate in grass roots democracy. Mock Panchayats, puppetry, songs, street poster exhibitions, informal group discussion, canvassing and other indigenous cultural forums like Haridatha would go a long way in awareness generation. Already many women's organisations like Stree Adhar Kendra (Bombay), Sampark Samiti (Maharashtra) Vimochana (Bangalore), The Forum for Women and Politics (Delhi), Aware (Andhra Pradesh), Samta (Mysore), etc., are working in this direction. Many groups in Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Pune have prepared women's manifestos and have conducted voters' education campaign and exposure programmes on vote fearlessly and consciously for those candidates who would place women's issues and problems at centre while formulating various programmes and policies. Such kinds of exposure programmes not only educate the women but also make them realize the value of their vote which they must exercise to make election a reality by participating in it in sizeable number. It also capacitates them to be a part of wider, articulate and powerful movement. It also enables them to create a platform for making their voices heard and give direction and visibility to women specific issues. But considering the size of the Nation and the number of ignorant and illiterate women their number is too small. More over they are confined primarily to the metropolitan cities and not to remote rural areas where the need for such organisations is more acute.

Mass media can play a vital role in awareness generation. Women can be motivated and inspired to think, discuss and act politically with the help of documentaries, television and radio sports on women's rights, achievements of All Women Panchayats in Maharashtra like transfer of land rights to women in Vitner Village (Jalgaon District), reduction in working hours of women by providing facilities like installation of taps for drinking water, gobar gas plants in Metikheda Village (Yavatmal District), construction of toilets for women, health centres, schools, etc., advantages of participation of women in PRIs, facilitation and depiction of successful stories of women members of Panchayat bodies in different parts of the country. Audio, visual and print media can help in formulating positive public opinion and creating a sympathetic atmosphere by dissemination of information on women's issues which in the long run may result in society's recognition of women's equality with men.

Gender Sensitization

While it is extremely important to bring women to the position of power for social transformation it is equally necessary to sensitize those in power about the issues of women's development and rights. Attitudinal reorientation of administrative machinery at village, block and district levels is of crucial significance as they are totally opposed to strengthening the position of women. In Maharashtra, in the 1989 Village Gram Panchayat elections, when All Women Panel got elected in Matikhada, Vitner (District Jalgaon), Arandgaon (District Amravati) and in two Gram Panchayats in Chanarapur, the village and block level bureaucracy instead of the being cooperative placed a lot of hurdles in their effective functioning. Hence, to bring about attitudinal change in them, training workshop should be organized where site officials get opportunity to interact with women's groups, legal activist as well as women members of Panchayat bodies. Frequent interaction with them will bring attitudinal change in them.

Police administration and legal system should be sensitized on women's issues. National Law School in Bangalore has taken a lead in organizing legal training programmes with contextualization of women specific dimensions to ensure gender justice.

Political Training

There is a need for comprehensive and meaningful training programme for rural women for performing their Constitutional duties and responsibilities as members of PRIs. They are ill-informed about powers, procedures and functioning of these bodies, the kind of role they have to play and the problems they are likely to face in a male dominated political institution. In Maharashtra, in Vidharba and most of the remote rural areas women did demand a training programme for effective participation in these bodies.

The National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, State Institutes of Rural Development, All India Institute of Local Self Government, Bombay, Kerala Institute of Local Government, State Institute of Panchayats in West Bengal can be entrusted with the responsibility of developing and preparing a training module for training the elected members of PRIs with special emphasis on women's rights, development programmes for women and children and the provisions of New Panchayati Raj Act. It should also include the training programmes for trainers/NGOs who have to undertake the training of officials and non-officials of PRIs.

There cannot be a centralized training programme. Module and content of training programme should be specific to the needs of a State. Besides, it should be different for different levels, i.e., Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Village Panchayat. Women members in Zilla Parishad are more aware, enlightened and articulate as compared to women in Panchayat Samities and Village Panchayats. Therefore, same training programme cannot be suitable for all the levels.

Training should aim at bringing about hidden qualities, generating self-confidence, self-pride, development of communication skills and effective convincing power for public interaction, forming opinion and articulating the same, raising an issue, use of data and above all the leadership qualities to deal with powerful forces and vested interests.

A training programme must bring within its fold both men and women to change the patriarchal orientation in men and male institutions. Awareness generation that is women specific will at best have limited impact and may even run the risk of gender conflict. Not only this, gender perspective must be built into all training programmes. Various studies have confirmed that elected / nominated or co-opted women members to institution of Panchayati Raj usually belong to dominant classes and castes. They have rarely been able to articulate, represent or project the interest of their gender. This is not to say that women representatives on Panchayati Raj must be trained to take up only gender specific issues. Such an orientation will divide and alienate. The more effective approach is one which women are trained to take up all kinds of developmental issues and integrate gender perspective issues wherever required.

In view of family responsibilities women in rural areas – particularly from weaker section – cannot take time off to attend training programmes. Training by mobile team coming closer to them, rather than their going to headquarters, will be more beneficial. Moreover, their participation in training programmes is usually at the cost of daily wage and not attending to their daily chores in their house-holds. There is need to think creative ways of training these women who work under time constraints. One could think of stipends, compensation, wages and other incentives to be given to these women to facilitate their participation in training. If they are not enabled to participate, there is every likelihood of these positions in Panchayat bodies to be cornered by rural elite. The very purpose of one-third reservation of total seats for women will be defeated.

We lack infrastructure for providing training to such a large number of PRIs/ functionaries who will be elected under the new Act. Neither are there sufficient number of NGOs nor government institutions

to undertake this gigantic task. Therefore more NGOs committed to this task have to be identified and encouraged.

Departments of Rural Development and the Women and Child Development should allocate funds for undertaking political awareness and training camps on the lines of awareness generation and legal literacy camps. Additional allocations should be provided for spreading political literacy and for preparing and developing training modules and manuals. It is heartening to note that the Rural Development Ministry has been asked to draw up a Plan in consultation with the Information and Broadcasting Ministry for publicity, spread of awareness and dissemination of information on Panchayati Raj.

Role of Catalyst Organisation

Women do not constitute a homogeneous group. They are divided among different economic classes, castes, religions and regions. The need of the hour is to organize women particularly from poorer households for breaking the barriers of inequality, invisibility and powerlessness on the one hand and broadening the base for participatory development at grass roots level on the other hand. Local women's groups are the basic units where they get an opportunity to interact with each other, articulate their views and form opinion on various issues, policies and development perspectives for change. They provide training ground for meetings, discussions, public speakings, voicing organized demands for their development. Small group-meetings are ideal forums for their development. Small group-meetings are ideal forums not only for developing collective strength, unity, bargaining capacity, support and confidence but also for socio-economic, political and legal advancement of rural poor women through women's efforts. All kinds of women's organisations like Mahila Mandals, Mahila Sangams, Mahila Samajams should be promoted at grass roots level. The GOs, NGOs, Women's Studies Centre, the Agriculture Extension Institutions, Agricultural Universities should act as facilitators and catalysts and play an active and positive role in providing information skill and resources for evolving and establishing grass roots women's organisations.

But, for enabling women to become an effective pressure group and leveler of power networking and pooling of resources of different women's organisation is of crucial importance. Mahila Milap, Sampark Samiti, Forum for Women in Politics, Samakaya in Gujarat, Women and Development in Rajasthan are successful examples of networking. A network helps the process of strengthening women's influence on development policy, enhancing political participation of women and highlighting women's concern in decision-making bodies and strengthening women's movement.

Support Services

In addition to these, it is necessary to provide certain support services to women members of Panchayats for strengthening their political empowerment. In the existing political milieu money and muscle power plays a very vital role over local electoral politics making elections extremely expensive, violent and corrupt. Women being most numerous of deprived and weakest groups, will require greater assistance for canvassing, traveling to different villages and mobilizing political support for themselves. As PRIs elections are being increasingly fought on party lines, political parties should create a special fund for women, candidates. Alternatively, local Mahila Mandal,s Women's organisations should raise resources to enable women candidates to contest and win elections.

Resource Centre

Information and access to information underpins the process of empowerment. There is an urgent need for resource centre which should be equipped with educative and informative material on various issues. It will not only be a common meeting place for women for interaction and articulation of their views on women specific issues and problems but will also add to general awareness, sustained political education and training for exercising political empowerment effectively.

To strengthen women's empowerment, female literacy has to be promoted. Education plays a vital role in enabling the castes and classes to gain entry into these bodies. Panchayat structure gives opportunity to the educated elite among backward classes to function on equal plane with representatives holding traditional high castes, status and influence. Empowerment should be supported by the economic independence. A crucial component to achieving economic independence is control on productive resources, particularly land. Control over land through land titles to women would only change power equations in favour of poor rural women, thereby positively, contributing towards their empowerment. All these strategies would go a long way in strengthening political empowerment of women in PR bodies. But the most crucial factor for capacitating the PRIs and making these bodies' vibrant institutions of local self-government is the political will. Evidence suggests that the political will to revitalize these bodies have been weakened by bureaucracy, the vested interests and the traditional male-centered political power system.

In the existing political milieu and prevailing socio-economic structure, PRIs cannot act as an agent of social transformation unless government, NGOs and people themselves are completely involved and

committed to it and are in a position to curb the growth of obstructionist and retrograde forces.

References:

This chapter focuses on women leadership scenario in general S.C. women leadership in particular in Warangal district and the role they have to play in administration successfully in the rural areas. The importance of S.C. women leadership, especially local bodies and its place at the top of rural administration. Side by side, male leadership dominates all over the jurisdiction of Panchayati Raj. Whereas there are certain areas where women leadership brings about good results, especially, where the need of raising the problems pertaining to rural women arises, the S.C. women leadership plays significant role. In spite of male domination, the women leadership proved successful by sustaining in this challenging role. In the light of above importance, in this chapter an attempt is made to assess the S.C. women leadership scenario in Warangal district.

Historical Legacy:

The concept of Panchayats in India is as old as Indian civilization. Historical evidences have been in existence in our country in one form or the other right from the Vedic ages. Thus, the Panchayati Raj is an ancient concept which has a long history in India. In this way Panchayats are the oldest administrative institutions at village level. The tradition of having Panchayats has been one of the fundamental concepts of Indian culture. If we go into the historical context of Panchayati Raj system, we will find the system has been existing in India since the ancient Vedic periods. In the Vedic age, the village was looked after by a person who is known as Gramini.

Historically the system of panchayats and district were found during Mouryas and Guptas dynasties. Even during the Mughal administration, Panchayats used to play crucial role in the rural in the spheres of administration social and economic development. By the time of British rule in India, Panchayats had practically lost their importance and identity. The first attempt made by the British Government to establish Local Self Government was in 1800.

At the time of colonial period the true spirit of local government can first be traced to Lord Morley's Resolution of 1870. Later, Lord Ripon's resolution of 1882 stressed importance of Local Government. The next important piece of legislation was the Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1920. Under this Act, the Panchayats were constituted through an elected body. In due course of time, the Hatch committee was appointed in

1925 to consider the position of Village Panchayats. As a result of the recommendations of the Hatch Committee, the Bombay Village Panchayat Act 1930 empowered the village Panchayats to take up various activities. Gandhiji had dreams of democracy commencing from the villages. He believed that democratic freedom have to be founded in institutions of Panchayats in every village of India. Jawaharlal Nehru preferred the term Panchayati Raj to democratic decentralization because it conveyed the essential message to the people of rural areas. He established the institutions of Panchayati Raj as the primary instrument for bringing development to the doorsteps of rural India.

After the attainment of Indian independence, our political leadership was eager to have effective decentralization of power through Panchayati Raj Institutions so that the people at large could effectively participate in nation building. After independence several developments have taken place in the field of Panchayati Raj. Village was conceived as an economic as well as administrative unit at the grass-root level^{xxxiii}.

The spirit of local governance inculcated by our forefathers of Indian Institutions were established in accordance with Article 40 of the Indian Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy which states that "The state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of local self-government"^{xxxiv}. Approximately thirty percent of the rural population is estimated to live below the poverty line^{xxxv} as against a much lower percentage in urban areas. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) were established in India with a lot of excitement and euphoria in 1959 based on the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report.

Here, it is essential to discuss about the scene of acceptance of Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report since it has political domination and the impact of leadership. The political elite, under the dynamic leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, extended its support to the concept of democratic decentralization. Even Rebindranath Tagore emphasized the importance of rural reconstruction and wished to draw the attention of the people towards the poor and backward masses^{xxxvi}. The towering personality of Nehru did everything possible to silence the dissidents. The administrative elite came under the influence of Nehruvian Vision, and played a constructive role in formulating proactive strategy to implement Balwant Roy Mehta committee Report. As a result, the Panchayati Raj system saw a glorious era. The State Governments were quick enough to equip the Panchayati Raj system with statutory and executive measures to provide sound

authority base, satisfactory working conditions and a good package of financial resources.

The political developments of post-Nehruvian era have brought the downward trend. Wilful neglect, deliberate efforts to weaken the Panchayati Raj system became a common feature of all the states. The National as well as state leadership did not want to accord constitutional status to PRIs and they are against the emergence of political leadership at grass-roots levels. Powers were withdrawn and functions of Panchayati Raj institutions were reduced. A new crop of bureaucratic organizations emerged on the rural scene. As a result the Panchayati Raj system got a de-emphasized role. During post 1970s era the Panchayat became an object of raw deal.

At a later stage, the Ashok Mehta Committee has tried to strengthen the system of Panchayati Raj. It gave a new orientation to PRIs^{xxxvii}. They were seen as political institutions with a goal to ensure local self-government. However, its concept and its scheme of restructuring failed to create any impact. Although, West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have tried to derive benefit from Ashok Mehta scheme, by and large, the two tier structure which was recommended by Ashok Mehta failed to attract the nation's attention. The G.V.K. Rao Committee which was setup by the Planning Commission brought 'the problem of irregular elections' to limelight.

73rd Constitutional Amendment

The proposal of Balwant Roy Mehta Committee regarding local self-government slowly receded to the background for want of political support, finance and operational autonomy. During this period the PRIs could not get the support from the respective state leaderships for the local leadership to emerge. The state wanted to keep all the powers, including political power in their own hands. By the 80's Panchayati Raj bodies were functioning satisfactorily only in a very few states like West Bengal, Karnataka and Gujarat. It was in 1989 that Rajiv Gandhi introduced the 64th Amendment Bill in the Parliament to revive the Panchayati Raj Institutions as effective instruments of democratic action by providing them constitutional status. However, the Bill was defeated in Rajya Sabha.

In 1991, the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution was adopted by Parliament. The Amendment is a revolutionary step in the political history of the country as it provided constitutional support to lakhs of Panchayats all over the country, including several other things. The amendment firstly provided for stability to the structure of Panchayati Raj by the mandate that in case of super-session the local bodies should be reconstituted within

six months. Secondly, all the three tier Panchayats (Gram Panchayat, Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad) will have a five year term. Thirdly, provision is made for the direct election of members of Panchayats while the Chairpersons of the higher two tiers will be elected indirectly.

New Panchayati Raj System

New Panchayati Raj system is the outcome of the World-wide movement to liberate the people from the clutches of the ‘big-brother’ government and the total state system. It is also one of the new policy options of Rajiv Gandhi to integrate our system of political and economic activities with the activities of the developed societies. The new arrangement of decentralization of power or devolution of power or empowerment of people is equated to that of a developing resourcefulness of the people or entrustment of more responsibilities to the people and to turn the government from the role of a provider to facilitator and by which the role and function of the government will be reduced and the role of the government in the present context has to be redefined.

Success of any system needs a thorough understanding of the system by the operator. Hence, to make the new Panchayati Raj system vibrant and active, the people are to be made aware of the full implications of the new system. The new system envisages more responsibilities rather than powers and authority. The new system further envisages for the emergence of political leadership at the village level. The new arrangement of new Panchayati Raj system is to administer development activity by involving people^{xxxviii} in every stage of the development process, utilizing the skills available with them, and using the natural resources available in their areas. It is not only for growth but also for equality and social justice. Under the new system, State Election Commission and State Finance Commission were established. Provision of Reservations to all backward/down trodden communities and women is the main feature of this system. All these aspects help in the emergence of local leadership at grass-root level. The reservations provided for Dalits will help to emergence of Dalit leadership at village level.

Concept of Leadership

The dynamics of leadership, its socio-economic origins, and social consequences have always fascinated social scientists. But there is no unanimity on the precise meaning of the term “Leadership” among the social scientists. Leadership has undergone certain radical changes from its inception. “As social scientists have learnt to probe beneath the manifest aspects of leadership and have become correspondingly more sensitive to the relevance of numerous and complex latent facts, they have found it more difficult to agree on what leadership is and does”^{xxxix}. This statement

indicates how difficult the problem of arriving at some general agreement about the precise definition of the term leadership. This becomes more difficult when one's objective is to construct a view of leadership which will encompass many different types of leaders and varying leader-follower situations. As a result the term of leadership is variously defined by social scientists. Leadership is "the act of organizing and directing the interests and activities of a group of persons as associated in some project or enterprise, by a person who develops their co-operation through securing and maintaining their more or less voluntary approval of the ends and methods proposed and adopted in their association"^{xli}.

Leadership, as Bass^{xli} point-out, is a kind of interaction between or among the people. Any attempt on the part of a group of members to change the behaviour of one or more members of a group is leadership. However, leadership does not consist merely of the attempt, the degree to which it has occurred is indicated by the extent to which the intended change takes place. Katz and Khan maintain that the concept of leadership, as generally understood in social science literature, has three important meanings: the attribute of a position, the characteristics of a person, and a category of behaviour^{xlii}. Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik^{xliii} define leadership in terms of interpersonal influence that is exercised in specific situations and directed through communication process and is definitely goal-oriented. Leadership always involves attempts on the part of a leader (influencer) to affect (influence) the behaviour of a follower (influences) or followers in situations. Lasswell and Kaplan^{xliv} maintain that "the leaders of a group are its most active power holders electively and in the perspectives of the group". In many studies, leadership has been identified as a group process through which individuals initiative activities for delivering the common objectives of the community by working together, stimulating each other, supplementing abilities and resources and evolving and effective organizational pattern. Ordway Read^{xlv} defines leadership "as an activity of influencing people to cooperate towards some goal which they come to find desirable". Pigors^{xlvi} also takes a similar view in defining leadership. He maintains that "Leadership is a process of mutual stimulation which by the successful interplay of relevant individual differences, controls energy in the pursuit of common cause".

Social scientists usually define leadership in terms of power or the capacity of any actor in a social system to influence the behaviour of others. Davis^{xlvii} views power as "the determination of the behaviour of others in accordance with one's ends". According to Merton^{xlviii}, inter personal influence refers to the direct interaction of persons in so far as this affects the future behaviour of participants.

Role of Leadership in Panchayat Raj Institutions:

In moulding the social, political and economic life of village communities, leadership plays an important role. In fact, this is a universal phenomenon. Since man is a social being and interacts in a group situation, he needs constant guidance and direction. These aspects are generally taken care of by the leaders. The structure, content and place of development in the Indian Political Landscape have undergone numerous changes since Independence. The introduction of universal adult franchise and new forces of socio-economic and political change unleashed by the implementation of several programmes of development and social change in the rural areas have not only undermined traditional leadership, but also generated new values and vision.

This necessitated a replacement of the old order based on a descriptive social attributes of leadership by the new secular leadership tempered with democratic urges. The introduction of the Panchayati Raj System in 1959 made a tremendous impact on villages in India as it brought about a new political awakening among the masses. The rural masses for the first time realized that democracy has traveled down to the village level and that they too have an opportunity of participating actively in the process of socio-economic development.

It may be inferred that with the introduction of the Panchayati Raj System, the rural leadership has come to occupy an important place in the Indian political system. The Panchayati Raj soon became popular and gained roots in the countryside. Gradually the social power structure has developed a close nexus with its counterpart at the state level. The state leadership controls its vote bank through Panchayati Raj leadership. There is strong linkage between the grass root level of leadership with the leadership at the state level. Apart from this, the decision of the government to involve the PRIs actively in the planning and implementation of state sponsored anti-poverty programmes gave a new fillip to these bodies for increasing their sphere of influence.

The socio-economic development of any rural community depends to a great extent on the quality of leadership. Unless the leaders play an active role progress in this direction would be impossible. Hence, the Panchayati Raj leadership which aims at the development of community through its active involvement becomes the 'gap closer' between the bureaucracy and the masses and thereby filling-up a vast organizational gap.

Further, the Panchayati Raj Leadership mediates the interaction between tradition and modernity and plays an educative role through broadening the range and deepening the reach of participatory processes

by accelerating the pace of modernization. Furthermore, by effective planning and implementation, it can utilize the available resources by taking into account the local interests. The rural leadership can help mobilize local resources in the delivery of inputs and services. The leadership can communicate the requirements of the people in voicing their concern to the higher ranges of administration. This sort of communication and interaction would positively facilitate in strengthening the administrative accountability and responsiveness in the sphere of socio-economic development in the rural areas.

In view of its significance, it becomes imperative to examine the nature and functioning of emerging rural leadership over time. It can be made out from the new dispensation i.e., the constitution (73rd Amendment Act) 1992, the role of local leadership has a great responsibility in transforming various policy measures into pulsating reality. Besides, it is germane to identify the segment that constitutes the rural leadership in the changing social milieu with new reservations coming to force for SC/STs and Women.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions have developed over the years not only as units of self-government but also media for development activities. The legislations governing the PRIs in the states and Union Territories have included sufficient safeguards to protect the interests of the Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes. Their leadership and involvement in the democratic processes and in decision-making for development activities has been marginal owing to their vulnerable position in the socio-economic hierarchy in the rural areas.

Reservations play a crucial role in breaking the strong hold of the traditionally dominant sections on the PRI Leadership which is no longer confined to a particular class, caste or gender. Thus, there is no doubt that it reflects the strength over democratic structure and political processes. The new system has given scope for the vulnerable sections of society to enter politics and it has been responsible for the emergence of a new leadership. In other words with reservations to SCs, STs, BCs and Women. Under the 73rd Amendment Act, major changes have occurred since its implementation. In the overall leadership, the prominence of dominant castes in local bodies has considerably declined over the years. Also, it is evident that the leadership of SCs, STs and Women has shown keen interest in managing their affairs at the grass root level.

Reservations for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes and Women have been built into the system to ensure equitable participation of all sections of society. Despite certain limitations

this will help the lower caste leadership to move up in the ladder to look after their own affairs in the rural areas. The shift of power to the poor and weaker sections of society may be rather slow, but it is taking place. In a way the mandatory elections of SCs, STs and Women candidates is likely to change socio-economic dynamics in the countryside. How the emerging power structure is to be shared by the advantaged, how disadvantaged must be accepted by society and how the new leadership emerges through the reservations and accepts the challenge of the new roles is anybody's guess. It is not merely a question of getting into the growth process but also to become more assertive, responsible and responsive^{xlix}.

Importance of Leadership in Rural Local Bodies

Leadership plays an important role in moulding the social, political and economic life of village communities. In fact, this is a universal phenomenon. Since man is a social being and interacts in a group situation, he needs constant guidance and direction. These aspects are generally taken care by the leaders. The structure, content and pace of development in the Indian political landscape have undergone numerous changes since Independence. The introduction of universal adult franchise and new forces of socio-economic and political change unleashed by the implementation of several programmes of planning for economic development and social and social change in the rural areas have not only undermined traditional leadership, but also generated new values and vision. This necessitated a replacement of the old order based on a descriptive social attribute of leadership by the new secular leadership tempered with democratic urges.

The introduction of the Panchayati Raj system in 1959 made a tremendous impact on villages in India as it brought about a new political awakening among the masses. The rural masses for the first time realized that democracy has travelled down to the village level and that they too have an opportunity of participating actively in the process of socio-economic development. It may be inferred that with the introduction of the Panchayati Raj System, the rural leadership has come to occupy an important place in the Indian political system. The Panchayati Raj soon became popular and gained roots in the countryside. Gradually, the social power structure has developed a close nexus with the counterpart at the state level. The state leadership controls its vote bank through Panchayati Raj Leadership. There is strong linkage between the grass-root level leadership with that of the leadership at the state level. Apart from this, the decision of the Government to involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions actively in the planning and implementation of state sponsored anti-poverty programmes gave a new fillip to these bodies for increasing their sphere of influence.

The importance of leadership in every walk of organized social life and needs no explanation. It is much more important in relation of rural local bodies. The very success of Panchayati Raj Institutions depends largely on the quality of leadership available at the grass-roots level. Socio-economic and political developments as well as growth of healthy democracy depends on the quality of local leadership and its effective and dynamic functioning in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The survival of state as well as national leaders depend on the existence of basic, local leadership. Without the support of local elite leaders the top level could not continue their activitiesⁱ.

The phenomenon of leadership in the Panchayati Raj Institutions has perhaps been discussed much more extensively and vehemently than that of leadership at the state level or the national level of the Indian polity after Independenceⁱⁱ. This is mainly due to the fact that the tasks and functions of the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been associated with the complex uncertainties arising out of the ground factors of caste, class, kinship and other societal and physical variables in the Indian rural societyⁱⁱⁱ. The state and national level leadership is not so categorically identified with the societal and physical variables playing an indomitable role in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Moreover the leadership at state and national level has structural and functional directives contained in the Indian Constitution, whereas the leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions lacks all these structural, functional and constitutional arrangements^{liii}. They have to work with different situations in different state governments. So the study of the concept and importance of leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions has been recognized to be the most crucial variable determining the quality and level of realization of the tasks and functions vested in them by the status of the State Governments^{liv}. It is so in the areas of the state and national governments also. But it is much more so in respect of the Panchayati Raj Institutions because they are new institutions, they are constitutionally insecure and their fortunes fluctuate more significantly with the environmental contexts surrounding them^{lv}. The effective functioning of the leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions would also depend on various factors such as the attitude of the respective state governments towards the health and progress of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, their functional, financial and personnel competence and the autonomy offered to them in their day to day governance.

Since the introduction of community developmental programmes, establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions at the grass root level, and adult franchise, the old leadership structure is gradually giving way to a new leadership structure in the rural communities. The pattern of

leadership is undergoing transformation from hereditary to the elective, from formal to informal and ascriptive to functional type^{lvi}. That is why the roles of the leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions are undergoing many changes. Further, the concept of decentralization and welfare state have given new approaches to leadership patterns in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The leadership of Panchayati Raj has to address itself to the challenges of meeting the developmental urge of the masses. It must prepare the citizens to assume obligations relating to taxes, savings, voluntary efforts and the like. It must give up the distrust and negative attitudes towards the officials in enlisting their enthusiasm and cooperation for achieving the developmental goals. The discipline of collective deliberation has to be learnt and the process of controlling the execution mastered. This is no superfluous achievement. To the people, Panchayati Raj is a means for recognizing such constructive leadership from the adventurous type. They have to distinguish the true representatives of the people from narrow and selfish interests masquerading as popular representatives^{lvii}.

Women Leadership

Panchayati Raj Institutions, the grass root units of local self-government have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation of India. Article 243(e), 11th schedule lists 29 subjects which are to be looked after by Panchayati Raj Institutions. These are developmental in nature ranging from education, health, sanitation and communication to agriculture, minor irrigation and small scale industries^{lviii}.

Empowerment of women for effective participation at various levels in PRIs has been discussed and debated in different forums, particularly from 1957 onwards. But the first concrete measure to give constitutional sanction on it was taken by Rajiv Gandhi's Government by introducing the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill on Local Government on 15th May, 1989. The bill aimed at revitalizing Panchayati Raj Institutions by bringing changes in their powers, structure and functions. It was defeated by a small margin in Rajya Sabha. The Narsimha Rao government has been successful in enacting the Constitution (seventy third) Amendment Act, 1992 which includes various provisions for strengthening panchayats at all levels. The Act is extremely important for political empowerment of women, scheduled castes and schedule tribes. Not less than one third of the total membership of Panchayat bodies have been reserved for women including that of SCs and STs and these seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in Panchayats. The idea behind this move is to enable more women to enter the political

stream and create a critical mass of women leaders. If applied in letter and spirit as many as eight lakh women including those belonging to the SCs and STs will become panchas and Sarpanchas.

India is perhaps the first country to recognize this social fact and to have taken concrete measures to draw women into leadership positions and thereby into politics by giving them one third reservations. This will have far reaching consequences in Indian political and social life. We cannot make democracy meaningful in a traditional society like ours without the full involvement of women. The constitutional provision is only a necessary step which should be followed by effective measures of women upliftment in the country.

But there involved several questions like, is our society ready to accord such a position to women in public affairs? Are women ready to accept the responsibilities entrusted to them? Will the dominant groups at the Panchayati level use them and further consolidate their position in the general interest? Such questions are neither hypothetical nor unreal, given the social milieu which denies equal position to women in several areas of activities.

The inhibiting factors for effective women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions are many and diverse. Understanding of such factors will help us to suggest practical ways to overcome some of the limitations in evoking women's participation. Various studies relating to women's participatory role in the Panchayati bodies have revealed that these bodies being male dominated could not recognize the importance of women in the local bodies. Moreover, in the traditional rural society, politics is regarded as unwomanly and the traditional attitude prevents women from taking an active role in the body politic. Unaware of their fundamental rights and being exploited at home and outside, women are facing a gender bias and this does not allow them space enough for independent thought and action in Panchayati Raj in its existing rural scenario. Hence, the women may not be properly motivated and or are able to undertake additional work load, may be such that they can hardly find time to do justice to Panchayati work.

Effective and meaningful functioning of the grass-root units of self-government would depend on active involvement, contribution and participation of its citizens both male and female. For any such activities, initiation and action should come from the people and for such a change there should be positive attitude towards gender equality^{lix}.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came into force in April, 1993 and accordingly all the states have amended their laws relating to local self-government. Since it is for the first time in the political history of India that one third of the total seats in its local self-government institutions have been statutorily reserved for women, the legislation has several important implications, for the empowerment of women. It has created a silent revolution in the country. It is necessary to create proper social, economic and also political conditions to enable women to participate effectively in the local government institutions without endangering the positive values of the prevailing family systems^{ix}.

In so far as the empowerment is concerned the act has provided that at least one-third of the total seats at all levels shall be reserved for women out of which one third shall be from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In this context it is important to note that at least one-third of the total posts of the office bearers at all levels should also be reserved for women.

According to the Census of 2001, the sex ratio (females per thousand males) is 924 and has been declining since 1901^{lxi}, with a marginal increase in 1981 and 1991. Since the beginning of the planned development era, women have been viewed as a deprived section requiring welfare measures. It was only in 1975 that a UN declaration compelled the government to shift the emphasis of the women's programmes from welfare to development. More attention was given to health, education and employment. In 1985, after the women World Congress at Nairobi, a National document was prepared laying down forward looking strategies for women's development. In this document the question of their political participation was highlighted and it was recommended that 35 per cent of the total seats should be reserved for women.

The document is known as the National Perspective Plan (1988). It was also recommended that some posts should be reserved for women at the block and village level bureaucracy. On the economic front a number of income generating schemes targeting women such as Development of Women and Child in Rural Areas (DWACRA) were introduced. In addition, provisions were also made to keep certain proportion of women as beneficiaries in all the developmental schemes like IRDP, JRY, NRY, TRYSEM, thus, national and international events coupled with the complex social and economic factors influencing the decisions and culminating in the reservation of 33.3 per cent of the total seats for them at the Panchayati Raj level.

Since women do not have much social and economic power hitherto, they are also unable to exercise political power. Evidence from Parliament, State legislatures and trade unions clearly shows that women's representation in them is insignificant. In political parties, important posts are also not given to women. In fact, the New Delhi document on women in development (1985) was aware of this problem and remarked that despite the rapid growth of informal political activity by women, their role in the formal political structure had virtually remained unchanged. Even after a decade, not much perceptible change has taken place on the national scene except the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution. If it is implemented, around one million women would come into national politics from both Panchayats and municipalities. But not all states have been enthusiastic about holding elections to the local self-government bodies.

There are several other factors which explain low participation of women in the political process. These factors are criminalization and factionism at a macro level and lack of awareness regarding legal and economic aspects of the society, which prevent women from taking part in the public sphere. This indicates that the reservation of seats is a necessary condition for women but not sufficient to take part in the political process in an effective manner^{lxii}.

Again, the role of the family also needs to be considered in respect of women's active participation in the political process. The family as an institution cutting across the caste and class line as well as regions, allocates power, authority and resources in a biased manner. It is not favourable to women and children in general and girl child in particular. They are always undeservedly undervalued and their work is invisible.

Finally the role of caste in panchayats needs to be highlighted. These Panchayats consist of the older members of the caste who would like to preserve their caste traditions. Thus, the caste Panchayats would not like women to come out publicly and to take part in political meetings since it would go against the tradition. Similarly, the village elders may harass women Panchayat members if they raise their voices against social evils such as child marriage and any other anti-women activities.

Administrators do not take much interest in the specific problems of women. Of course, over the years, a number of schemes specially for the benefit of women have been devised, but administrators have been giving only lip sympathy to them. Since the elected women representatives would not immediately be in a position to grasp the significance of the schemes, administrators would have ample opportunity to bypass them

completely. Very often there is no transparency about the decisions. Further, there are not many women officials available; if available all women officers are not sensitive to the women problems. Many women officers think that having attained a certain status, they belong to a superior category and can deride village women. Widespread red tapism robs the schemes of their dynamism. For all these reasons, women should be made aware of the deficiencies of the bureaucracy and the bureaucrats should be made more sensitive to the needs of women. In sum, it seems that women have to cross many hurdles before becoming effective partners in the decision making process.

Elected Women Representatives: Participation and Decision-Making

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made a little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target endorsed by the (UN) Economic and Social Council of having 30 percent women in positions at decision-making levels by 1995. Globally, only 10 percent of the members of legislative bodies and even a lower percentage of ministerial positions are now held by women. Indeed, some countries, including those that are undergoing fundamental political, economic and social changes, have seen a significant decrease in the number of women represented in legislative bodies.

Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote and hold office in almost all states who, are members of the United Nations, women continue to be seriously underrepresented as candidates for public office. The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life. Women may be discouraged from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child-care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office. Women in politics and decision-making positions in Governments and legislative bodies contribute to redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences, and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues. The low proportion of women among economic and political decision-makers at the local, national, regional and international levels reflects structural and attitudinal barriers that need to be addressed through positive measures.

The equitable distribution of power and decision-making at all levels is dependent on Governments and other factors undertaking statistical gender analysis and mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and the implementation of programmes. Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women. National, regional and international statistical institutions still have insufficient knowledge of how to present the issues related to the equal treatment of women and men in the economic and social spheres. The inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

Women's political participation and representation at decision-making levels are two different issues^{lxiii}. Participation is a necessary but insufficient condition for representation because representation does not flow automatically from participation. Women all over the world have participated widely in political movements in times of crisis but, once the crisis is over, they are relegated again to the domestic arena. Women's active participation in local bodies is creating a paradigm. The buzz word today is "Women can do it" which is proved very emphatically by various luminaries in different walks of life. Panchayati Raj Institutions, the grass root units of self-government have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation in rural India, where 56.14 per cent of our people live according to the 2001 census.

Empowerment is a process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged (power less) individuals and groups to challenge and change (in their favour) existing relationship that place them in subordinate economic, social and political positions. In this context, the reservation of women has empowered women in great numbers, especially at the grass root level. Although women have taken an unprecedented active role in the political events around the world in the last decade, their participation in politics and governance continues to be limited. They continue to be relegated to the backseat of politics and remain unable to meaningfully influence policy and decision-making notwithstanding their roles as legislators, chief executives and top administrators.

Women and Inequality in Politics

The Indian Constitution guarantees political equality through the institution of adult franchise and the right to equality which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. The equal political status will not be realized by mere declaration in the constitution. Voting in the elections do not bestow equal status. If adequate opportunities to take part in the deliberations of the nation are not provided participation has no meaning^{lxiv}.

The socio-economic conditions are not conducive for the effective participation of women in political affairs. Political equality is meaningless in a country where the mass of the population suffers from poverty, illiteracy, inequality of class status and power. Apart from these, women suffer from traditional attitudes which made them to feel that they are unequal.

The political background of women show that they are far away from an equal status along with men. Women are politically not active and do not come forward to participate in public affairs. The membership in political parties, public institutions, voluntary organisation exercise of franchise, discussing politics, etc, explain the political profiles of the women. The problem of equal status and equal participation must be understood in the context of a society. In a traditional society like India, the participation of women in public life is not encouraging. Women are keeping low profile as far as political life is concerned.

Though, women became members of political parties, their percentage is very low. When the question of closeness to a political part comes, the picture is not encouraging. Apart from political activities, in other social activities the participation of played by women is minimal.

Political parties provide ways for citizens to participate in politics. “Political parties are the articulated organisation of active political agents who are concerned with the control of global powers and who compete for popular support with another group or groups. As a result political parties are the great intermediaries linking the social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relating them to political action within the community.

Women in Local Electoral Process

The gradual transfer of power from British to Indian hands gave women experience in participating in the democratic process. The Government of India Act of 1935 extended the franchise to more than six million women, as compared with 313,000 under the Act of 1919. In 1937 general elections, eight women were elected from ‘general’ constituencies and forty-two from ‘reserved’ constituencies. Six women became ministers when the provincial cabinets were formed. It was natural then that in independent India women would participate actively more often than before in all aspects of politics, political office and thus have ‘political right’.

Political rights may be considered to be inclusive of three main aspects the right to vote in local, state and national elections, the right to be elected and the right to hold public office (legislative, executive and judicial), appointed or elective. To these should be added the right to nationality or citizenship which is basic and fundamental, the rest being only incidental of citizenship. Elections, therefore, constitute a major political activity for the people in general and women in particular in achieving political rights. Since this appears to be the only area where the background in terms of education, economic conditions, social background and other such considerations do not come in the way of furthering their prospects, it is the first step in promoting equal participation of men and women in politics.

Equality in political participation is of great significance in urban areas as the percentage of women’s literacy is equal to that of men. They are more exposed to various modern developments like television, cinema, literature and public meetings as compared to their rural counterparts. Moreover, women constitute half the population. So to set up a representative and responsible government, it is necessary that more women enter the political arena.

A political system can properly be described as a system of representative government if it is one in which representatives of the people have a share in the making of political decisions. The term

‘representative’ is commonly used in three different ways, indicating different ways in which members of a committee or assembly can represent a larger group of people by virtue of their activities, by virtue of the manner of their selection and by virtue of their personal characteristics. In addition to being representative, the political system should also be responsible. Political responsibility signifies a government responsible to public opinion, to pursue policies which are prudent and mutually consistent and to be accountable to the representatives of the electorate.

In this process the representative system plays a vital role. It is through this system that public demands are expressed, modified and presented to the government. The political parties absorb a wide variety of opinions and merge them into a limited number of alternate policies. Political leaders use party conferences and election meetings to increase public understanding of their programmes. Periodic elections ensure that some weight is given to the opinions of inarticulate and unrecognized citizens as well as those citizens who know how to make their voices felt.

The early fifties came to be regarded as the period of women’s triumph, with middle class women from a background of restricted lives confined to the roles of wives and mothers entering administrative, professional and political employment as equals to men. Women entered new occupations in the modern sectors in increasing numbers. Women were elected to Parliament and State Legislatures, became Cabinet Ministers, Governors of States, Ambassadors, Vice-Chancellors of Universities, and Judges and exercised their vote in increasing number in elections. Local self-governing bodies, in both urban and rural areas, were asked to include a few women on their panels by nomination, if they did not come through election channels.

Municipal Corporation is the nearest representative body to an urban dweller which can enable the government to be responsible. “Popular participation in local government is the harbinger of similar participation in government at higher levels. The municipal institutions that were growing up by fits and starts in different parts of India during the British regime provided the training ground for citizenship and administrative management”. It is of vital importance because it ensures the basic services and amenities required for civilized life like public health and safety, sanitation and drainage, education and recreation facilities which improve the quality of life. Therefore this body has to be truly representative and for this periodic elections are a must. Any deviation from the set standard will be depicted well in the succeeding elections by electing the same representative or by choosing a different person.

Nature of Emerging Leadership

In today's fast changing world, values, norms, goals often accept different definitions as the order of the time dictates. But till the beginning of this century, the word "status" suggested the potentialities, as also the limitations of an individual or to be prosaic, a person's strong points or the shortcomings. However, as time progressed, the definitions have changed and the rules of those in authority or the unwritten rules of the society have begun to influence our ways and means. In this context, the non-scalar usage of the, now loosely termed "status in the Linton sense", named after the social anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936), assumes significance. Here, age, sex, birth, genealogy and other biological and constitutional characteristics form the basis of this status.

An analysis of the socio-economic background of a community has thus become an indispensable pre-requisite for understanding of the behaviour of its members. Traditions tend to be observed with rigidity and family as well as caste status play an important role in directing the course of life of an individual. This is more so in the life of women for whom every step is ritually prescribed, leaving a small margin for personal choice. Manu's injunction that a woman ought to be protected by the father while she is a maiden, by the husband when she is married, and by the sons when the husband is no more, was motivated primarily to give women the protection she needed. In the course of time the phrase came to be construed in a literal sense with the understanding that a woman deserved no independence and she ought not do anything on her own initiative. Thus women came to occupy an increasingly dependent position in the family and society in a wider sense. Today, prestige and status of a family is judged according to that of the senior male members as they play an important role in various social activities.

Accordingly women enjoy for the most part, an ascriptive status. This implies that it is necessary to study the family and other socio-economic backgrounds to analyse the influence of various characteristics on an individual. In this background one could examine the various objectives of the study. It has also been used to analyse its impact on individuals' response to a particular problem.

It was assumed that women can do much for improving their lot if only they have leaders who can bring dynamism in their lives and act as catalytic agents for social change. In the absence of such leadership it is difficult to influence people to cooperate towards a common goal and to create situations for collective response. Further, the very success of Municipal Corporation depends largely on the quality of leadership available at the grass-roots level. Political development and mobilization

together with democratic growth depends on the local leadership and its functioning.

Leadership has been defined in various ways. Ordway Tead defines it: "Leadership is the activity of influencing people to cooperate towards some common goal which they come to find desirable". As regards leader, "Any person who is more than ordinarily efficient in carrying psychological stimuli to others and is thus effective in conditioning collective responses may be called a leader". This study being concerned with Municipal Corporation, the members (councillors) of Corporation are taken as holders of leadership. So, the very fact that a person is a member of the Corporation makes him/her an institutional leader and hence the reference of institutional leadership.

The women councillors who are representatives of nearly half the population i.e., the women folk, are the 'political elite' at the local level. The apprehension that such a group consisting of women from different backgrounds, may succeed in bridging the communication gap between the government and the women, needs an indepth analysis. One would not deny that councillor would be substantially affected by the nature and mechanics of socialization, family background and socio-economic set-up which in turn affect their attitudes, way of thinking and philosophy of life. It is inevitable, therefore, to find thrust of studies being shifted from organisation and system to people who man the organisation. This Chapter seeks to identify the socio-economic profile of women leaders of the Corporation respondents in terms of age, religion, caste, education, parental education, marital status and the like. This would help in understanding the kind of women leaders who have emerged in the urban local government.

The Emerging Women Leadership

The independence of the country and the republican form of polity with universal adult franchise has initiated the process of political modernization and democratization in the country. However, the political modernization confined only to the state and national level politics. When India emerged as a republican country, the rural society was mostly feudal in nature. Therefore, the first task of the nation building process confronted was how to transform the rural feudal and conservative society into a democratic and modern society. This necessitated the implementation of democratic decentralization in the country. The novel idea of democratic decentralization is conceived in the form of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) in India. Apart from achieving economic and material goals, PRI's have wide-ranging repercussions on the social, cultural and political fabric of Indian society.

It has been argued that the democratic decentralization has widened the base of democracy in India by involving the marginalized and the women in the process of governance. It is also observed that the values of caste loyalty, patriarchy and gerontocracy have given way to the egalitarian principles of social justice, equality and development in the rural politics. One of the distinct changes that have come out as a result of democratic decentralization is the emergence of women leadership in the Panchayats. The patriarchic society in India had confined women for a long time only to the household chores and denied them participation in public activities. The traditional caste Panchayats which were decision-making bodies of the villages denied access to women as they did in case of Dalits. The rural socio-political life was upper caste male dominated and women were mere voiceless spectators. However, the democratic decentralization has brought revolutionary changes in the rights of women at the grass root level governance. The constitutional mandate making one-third of the seats in the Panchayat reserved for women has brought drastic changes in the male dominated decision-making traditional bodies. The rise of women leadership in male dominated politics at the grass root level is a significant development in post independent India. It is noteworthy that there are more than one million elected women Panchayat members in the country which is 42 percent of the total elected Panchayat members^{lxv}. Thus in some of the states the number of women Panchayat members exceeds the proportion that is provided in the law.

However, there are concerns about the functioning and performance of women Panchayat members. This has gained a wider academic attention in the country. The studies carried on participation of women in Panchayats so far have addressed broadly three issues. Firstly, the inability of women Panchayat members, presidents and vice-presidents in carrying out their functions in the Panchayats. Under this kind of studies it is reported that because of illiteracy and lack of experience women Panchayat leaders are unable to discharge their duties and exercise their power in an efficient manner. Thus they become easy preys in the hands of the men folk (husbands, fathers, father-in-law etc,) who pretend that they themselves are the rightful occupiers of these offices and many of them carry visiting cards calling themselves "sarpanchpati"^{lxvi}. Secondly the opposition and problems posed by the dominated society to the women Panchayat members have been addressed. It has been reported by several studies that the patriarchic social order comes in the way of women's effective working as Panchayat leaders. When some women leaders become more assertive, the men folk abuse them by calling them brazen and shameless^{lxvii}. Thirdly the lack of involvement of women in Panchayat Raj institutions has become another issue of the focus. It is observed that women Panchayat leaders consider their positions in Panchayats as ornamental in nature and they feel that maintaining family pride and

culture is of paramount importance to them. Such women Panchayat leaders do not mingle with rural women folk and try to address their problems. They ritually attend the Panchayat meetings and fail to contribute to the process of governance^{lxviii}.

Women Leaders in Local Bodies

Women have assumed the leadership at grassroot level governance, and they are here to stay and make their own contribution in the newly assigned role. But this new genre of leaders is not without its load of problems and drawbacks. The prominent handicaps being the age-old dependence on male members, lack of proper education and exposure to the administrative and social milieu. The problem is more acute for female leaders representing dalits and backward classes who cannot completely get rid of the caste stigma.

One-third reservation of seats for women in local bodies through the constitutional amendments had opened a channel in the power structure for women from different strata of the society both vertically and horizontally, to occupy the legitimate space. The new entrants are large in number and they have definite roles, however insignificant in terms of their capacity, to play in the given structure. The inherent impediments and hurdles associated with the women in Indian society, particularly in the political and economic structure, are common to the elected women leaders too. Yet, they occupy these positions and perform their role and faithfully discharge their responsibilities. How do they perform their role? How do they manage the problems in their institutions? These are some of the issues and problems one has to address.

Till the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, academics were not sure to mention about the role to be played by women in the process of development of the society in general as well as the development of women in particular. Political scientists hardly find out any role for women in the political process of the society. Indian Council of Social Science Research had undertaken a major review of studies conducted in India on different areas of polity. One is unable to find a chapter on Women and Politics. So, this is the status of the studies on women in politics in India.

The empowerment of women is a loaded concept which connotes different meanings to different individuals. To me empowerment of women refers to the process by which women are acquiring due recognition as men, to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignity. (The barriers which have been very active in the process of development

of women have to be removed, for which interventions are imperatives at different levels). Reservation of seats in the local bodies is one of the steps in this direction and this is not only way to ensure the participation of women in the development process. It has to go a long way in the process of development in society.

The reservation of seats for women has been looked at from many perspectives. One basic question normally addressed in this context is the objectives kept in the minds of the framers of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India, while providing 33.3 percent of reservation of seats to women. Secondly, the women leaders who are in local bodies should have a clear perception about the objectives of the reservation of seats for women in local bodies. There are other notions on similar issues perceived by the people and the functionaries who are working with the women leaders at the grassroots level. One could see the incongruity and ambiguity in perceiving the role properly.

There is a second aspect i.e., the general perception about the role to be performed by the women leaders as these perceptions are being guided by the historical notion about women folk and their responsibilities and capabilities. This provision of seats in the local bodies makes the women as well as the society to move out of the traditional track. This process has already been initiated. But in reality, despite several weaknesses, the elected women leaders are in a position in discharging the ear-marked responsibilities with varying degrees of success. This study attempts to identify the problems encountered by the women leaders and to find out the ways and means to facilitate the women leaders to discharge their duties and function effectively in their domain^{lxix}.

The Panchayat Raj Institutions are the primary units of self-government. They are instruments for participatory democracy and decentralization at the grassroot level. They carry back to the people's power that really belongs to them. Thus they have an immense potential for democratic decentralization and devolving power to the people. They are the vehicles of socio-economic transformation. It is therefore necessary that these bodies are effective and function meaningfully. This demands an active involvement, contribution and participation of the people. Participation refers to direct involvement of people, both men and women, in : (i) decision-making, (ii) implementation of development programmes, (iii) monitoring and evaluation of programmes and (iv) sharing the benefits of development. Thus there has to be a 'bottom up approach' rather than one where people are mere observers and total dependents. The people should operate and the government should co-operate.

Significance of Women Leaders at the Grassroot Level

The equality guaranteed by the Constitution of India, demands active political participation by women which is integral to the whole issue of the progress of women. Women constitute 50 percent of the rural population. This gives them the legitimacy to play an important role at the grass root level. Such participation is important primarily due to the following reasons.

1. To initiate, formulate and implement policies and programmes which will benefit women. It has been observed that in most of the Panchayats the decision-making has been in favour of men, and the needs of rural women go unnoticed.
2. To bring in a feminine perspective to the process of planning, policy formulation and execution of rural development programmes. It is expected that more women would change the focus of rural administration towards important facets of life like health, nutrition, children's welfare, family care, drinking water etc.
3. Election of more women to Village Panchayats would play a major role to empower women. Empowering women refers to strengthening their innate capacities through acquiring knowledge, power and experience. Power here means not power to dominate but power to reduce helplessness and dependency. Thus women's access to power structures would help them in overcoming inequality and subordination they have been experiencing for ages.
4. The entry of more and more women into the realm of grassroot politics suggest that their increased number will offer them equally increased opportunity to influence the local decision-making. Once a group reaches a certain 'critical mass' then its position, power and influence is likely to increase. Thus, increase in number will help women in becoming an effective pressure group through the instrument of collective bargaining.
5. Women are the active agents of socio-economic transformation in rural areas. They have the potential for effective networking and pooling of resources. They can understand better their problems, identify them, give priorities and preferences, and are aware of strategies towards solution. Hence their active participation will not only enhance the status of women in the village, but will also help in the overall development of the village.
6. The elected women can act as an intermediary between the government and the women in rural areas. Their accessibility to other women in the village, their contacts at the grassroots, and their awareness of the needs and interests of women will improve the condition of women in rural areas.

7. Larger participation will provide women an exposure to outside world. Their participation would improve their status in society as well as at home. It would also give them an opportunity to work in groups on projects of common interest and associate themselves with ongoing programmes.
8. It will provide a platform for women to gain experience, overcome their fear and build in confidence; break the shackles of patriarchy and orthodoxy. It will create an access to women at state and national level politics.

Thus, women's entry in village political system would ensure change in the political system of the village, the familial and social perceptions of the role of women and development of grassroots leadership among women. At the Gram Sabha and Panchayat levels a new leadership would emerge which is expected to administer better financial resources and would provide constructive thinking in village administration and its development.

Women in Panchayats-Post 73rd Amendment – A Review

Various research studies have been conducted to study the women leadership at Panchayat level in different states. The women's representation has been very encouraging in states like West Bengal, Haryana, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. In fact, in Kerala and Karnataka Gram Panchayat elections, not only 33 percent seats but over 43 percent have been captured by women. Even in the state of Orissa a large number of women have come to power at grassroots level, and this achievement becomes all the more spectacular when it is seen against the backdrop of a low literacy level of women in the State, which is 29.1 percent only^{lxx}. The outcome of these studies is of mixed nature.

However, the studies in different states reflect that women were used as proxies^{lxxi}. The proxies suffer from certain characteristics: (i) They display a lower level of political awareness, (ii) They owe their primary loyalty to their family. (iii) Their role as an elected representative is merely an extension of their role as a housewife. (iv) They serve the patriarchal interests of the family. (v) They enter the political arena for protecting the constituency of their male relatives and are prepared to vacate the same, once de-reserved. Illiteracy is considered as the major cause for women to be used as sheer proxies. A study of the role of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh found that a majority of women Panchayats were housewives and were either illiterate or educated upto the primary level only. A large number of cases the decision to participate in the election was not their own. If a seat was reserved for a women, the men who were politically active convinced their wife, mother, sister-in-law to contest the election, in order to keep the family alive in

local politics. And it is the men who are exercising the power by proxy today. The institution of “Sarpanch-Pati” or “Adhyaksha-Pati” might not have any legal sanction, but it is thriving in many Panchayats in the state of Madhya Pradesh^{lxxii}. Similar observation was made by another study in Uttar Pradesh, where female illiteracy and lack of independent voting rights did not allow women to play active role in the village politics. The Pradhanis played an almost insignificant role in the functioning of the gram and block Panchayat level bodies. They have never attended any meeting or made any decision about allocation of funds to individual schemes.

It was also observed that the male members in the family very often dominated the women Panchas. It has been found that male relatives usually coach women to speak at meetings, or actually do the necessary paper work when the women are illiterate^{lxxiii}. A survey in Rajasthan showed that women Panchas were not interested to contest again as they felt that the male members in their family did not allow them to function independently^{lxxiv}. A study of women elected representatives in Karnataka Panchayati Raj institutions between 1987 and 1990, conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences at a time when the Zilla Parishads had just come into being, revealed that majority of the women elected members had no experience in active politics. Usually a male member of the family had been instrumental in persuading the women to contest, and in many cases women continued to have all their time for household chores as usual, because the men in their families were involved in discharging the political responsibilities on their behalf. However, it has been reported after two years when the same Zilla Parishads were studied, changes were evident.

Another important observation made by these studies is that, unlike the trends in national and state level politics, there is predominance of younger women in grassroots politics. A study of the women elected representatives of Lalgudi Panchayat, Tamil Nadu reveals that there is predominance of the younger members among women Panchayat Presidents^{lxxv}. UMA study group also noticed the same trend that women in the child bearing age group are coming forward to join politics in spite of the domestic responsibilities^{lxxvi}. The experience of Maharashtra revealed similar features in one of the micro studies of the state. Also studies of Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka have shown that the effective female participants are those from the age group of 25-40.

Further, caste plays an important role at grassroot politics. The work of UMA and of Indira Hirway on Gujarat’s Panchayat Raj institutions has revealed the enhanced role of women from dominant castes such as the Vokkaligas and Lingayats, while Dalit and tribal participation

has been muted. A similar picture emerged from the primary survey conducted in Orissa. Around 66 percent of the women elected members in the state are from Karans (Kayasthas) and Khandaits (cultivating caste), A study conducted in Kerala on women Panchayat members found that only about 30 percent of the members belonged to the forward caste / communities, while the bulk of them were from the backward caste / communities^{lxxvii}. The Panchayat elections that took place in the state of Madhya Pradesh in 1994 brought forward a large number of women, many of whom belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

In some States, it was revealed that Panchayat Raj has made women more vulnerable than before due to increasing atrocities towards them. There are hundreds of cases where women Panchayat members are humiliated and even killed. The cases of stripping a women Panchayat member of Salheona village and gang rape of an OBC women Sarpanch of Gujjarkhedi Gram Panchayat in Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh are well documented. In Kachranli village near Panipat in Haryana, an incumbent Dalit women member was beaten up and abused by the police, while inquiring about a land deal. In Madhya Pradesh, in the village of Harpura, both the hands of a women were broken. Tapati Sarkar, a member of Chandpara Panchayat in the Gaighata Thana area in West Bengal was assaulted with an iron rod. Besides, there are various cases of sexual harassment registered^{lxxviii}.

However, a ray of hope emerges as the studies show that these women have a development agenda for their village. Sweta Mishra has quoted a large number of instances to show how women were keen in development of their village. Thus, one Sarpanch of Rewari block in Madhya Pradesh, removed the liquor shop from her area. Another told the SDO that if he did not get the water supply to the village she would drag him to the village. Elected women in some states have taken part in protests and rallies against wages and for drinking water. Some are reported to have participated in demanding better implementation of Government schemes and have communicated information of Government schemes to the people for whom they were meant. In Arunachal Pradesh some of the newly elected Panchayat leaders have even faced imprisonment in the process of persuading the Government to build a twelve bed hospital for women. Women have raised many issues like alcoholism, lotteries, drinking water, health facilities, etc. Panchayat women in Karnataka paved the way for the economy of women to flourish by arranging to impart floriculture training to women. In west Godawari district of Andhra Pradesh, Panchayat women were successful in stopping the employers from hiring labour for less than the minimum wages from outside their village depriving the local women of their work and wages.

Thus, women in local government have made a difference through their sincere, dedicated and mature approach to issues that significantly affect the daily lives of the people such as supply of drinking water, firewood, literacy projects, access to credit, etc.

The research studies conducted on functioning of all-women Panchayats have also revealed some interesting findings. Such all-women Panchayats are functioning in Maharashtra, in Tripura, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. Medha Kotwal and Sinorcita Gopal Singh who looked at all-women Panchayats here found that they are working more effectively than the women Sarpanches of other Panchayats because the former could get encouragement and strength from fellow women. The members of all-women Panchayats have shifted the developmental priorities of the village. The Sarpanch, a tribal, and old women of eighty, has set eradication of illiteracy from the village as her top priority in the all-women Panchayat in Tripura. In the Kultiri Gram Panchayat of West Bengal, all eleven women members of the Panchayat are young (30) and have not passed even high school. Yet, they have managed government projects involving Rs. six lakh. They have tried to utilize the waste land resources by setting up shrimp farms and mango orchards. In this way they have been able to create employment opportunities. According to the study, each and every girl child is attending the school in this village. In the all-women Panchayat of Vitner in Maharashtra the Panchayat implemented 'Laxmi Mukta Scheme' whereby women have been given land. However Bhandari opines that even though the women have been elected and have formed Panchayats, they have not been empowered enough except in a few cases. In those cases the personality of the women mattered a lot. The Indian Express study has confirmed Bhandari's observations.

Women's entry in grassroots politics has given rise to various questions which require detailed analysis.

- Have the women become mere puppets in the power play of men and politically vested interests? Are these women mere proxies, and if so, would this be an everlasting phenomenon, or in a span of time, will they be able to assert themselves?
- Has the burden of women increased, as now she has to carry the household work and also attend the Panchayat work would this over burden women?
- Has women's entry into politics brought about qualitative change in her life? Does she now enjoy larger share in family's decision-making? Has it altered the public-private dichotomy with regard to household responsibilities?

- Has the empowerment of women brought in qualitative changes in local politics? Can they check, and are they willing to check the increasing corruption at grassroots level? Do they have different leadership styles or do they imbibe the “masculine ethos” as survival instinct overpowers them?
- Are they capable of espousing the cause of women? Do they try to understand the problems faced by women and take initiative towards solving them?
- The increasing money and muscle power is well known. Are the women likely to become target of attacks of unsocial elements when they move out of their homes?
- Would the bureaucracy cooperate with the women Panchayats or will they become the helpless victims of officialdom?

The functioning of women leaders in Warangal does not differ from other parts. Women representatives were treated as proxies who suffer with lower level of political awareness and shows interest in their family rather than politics. It is observed that the male members in the family often dominate the women elected representatives. It has been found that male relatives usually educate women leaders to speak at meetings, or actually do the necessary paper work when the women are illiterate. It is revealed that Panchayat Raj has made women more vulnerable than before due to increasing atrocities towards them. There are several cases where women Panchayat members are humiliated.

The empowerment of women has brought to some extent, qualitative changes in local politics. Gradually, the elected women are making themselves as capable to solve the problems of women. The women have been trying to get cooperation from the bureaucracy to solve the problems of women. The entry of women in politics has brought qualitative changes in their lives. Their entry in politics has contributed to (a) increased political awareness, (b) exposure to outside world, (c) maintain relations with bureaucracy, (d) behavioural change, (e) contacts with the public, (f) method of getting things done etc.

Though there are certain demerits, the ultimate merits derived out of reservation of seats to women are welcomed by the policy-makers, researchers, public, academicians, planners and political elites. Women elected representatives have been attempting to accommodate themselves in the present electoral domain. Since they are new to political field they

need guidance, assistance and encouragement. Over a period of time, they may become adept in politics.

After discussing the emergence of women leadership at grass-root level, it is pertinent to discuss the women leadership scenario in Warangal district. Before doing so, a quick look at the salient features of Warangal district is necessary.

References:

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part – A explains about the profile of the study area i.e. Warangal district, which contains historical background, status of demographic figures, land use pattern, agriculture, tours spots and also the profile of S.C. women reserved sarpanch villages have been discussed.

Part – B focuses on the functions and performance of SC women representatives at their respective jurisdictions on developmental activities and their role in the decision making process.

Chapter 4 Profile of Study Area

Salient Features of Warangal District

Warangal and Hanamkonda as legend goes is linked with the dynasties of Great “Vishnukundins” and even prior to it also of the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist periods of Indian History. During Eighth Century A.D., Warangal with an old name “Orukal” has served as Capital City of Yadav King of Tuluva Andhras from the middle of the 12th century for two hundred years. This area is ruled by the Kakatiyas or Gajapatis making Warangal as Capital City. The name of Warangal “Orugallu” is said to be the corrupt form of Orukal which is the original designation of the old town. The words “Orugallu”, “Orukal” are the two variants of one appellation which means “Solitary cliff” standing in the middle of the Warangal fort. The Kakatiya line seems to have been in existence even earlier to the middle of 7th Century A.D. because the famous Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, mentions the name of the kingdom of “Danakakatiya” in the South. The family name Kakatiya is derived from the local appellation of the Goddess Durga (Kakati). The Rajahs of Warangal in the beginning were vassals of the Chalukya Kings of “Vatapi” in the 8th Century. When the Chalukyan kings were in downfall, the kings of Warangal assumed independence and gradually rose to power. The names of few kings i.e., Polaraja Rudra Deva-I Ganapathi Deva, Rani Rudrama Devi and Prathaparudra have occupied proud position in the history. The Thousand Pillars Temple, Bhadrakali Temple, Ramappa Temple and Warangal Fort are the masterpieces of Kakatiya sculpture and architecture.

Later, after the fall of Bahamani Kingdom, Warangal fell to the “Qutub Shahis” of Golkonda and thereafter it has come under the sway of Nizam’s dominions. Thus the city of Warangal has developed both under the political and historical influences of successive great kings. Historians have divided the growth of the city into four stages of significant historical events and development that occurred in Warangal city.

There are:-

1. Kakatiya Stage	:	1260-1422
2. Transmission Stage	:	1422-1725
3. Asifjahi Stage	:	1725-1948

Boundaries and Topography

The District lies between the latitude of 17-19' and 18-36' North and longitudes of 78-49' and 80-43' East. And is above Mid sea level by 870 ft. 1700 ft. It is bounded on the North by Karimnagar District. On the West by Medak District, on the South by Nalgonda District and by Khammam District on East and South-East. The Geographical area of the District is 12846 Sq. Kms. For the purpose of administration the isolated Hills, hill streams rainfed tanks and large lakes. The District possesses interesting pictures of geographical formations and contains minerals of economic importance. The principal formations are classified into two divisions i.e., Archean puranas and Gondwanas. The soils of the district comprise of sandy loams with patches of shallow black cotton soils, and at places even medium and deep black cotton soil. As the district generally tends to be dry and there is no much fluctuation in the temperature, it gets quite warm during the summer months of April, May and June and also continues to be warm in the rest of the year except during December and January, when the temperature drops slightly. The maximum & minimum temperatures have been recorded as 50.5 and 13.5 Centigrades respectively.

The Rainy season sets in the district with the onset of South-West monsoon in the later part of June, and ends with the month of September with the end of the South-West monsoon. The normal annual rainfall of the district is 994.001 mm. The maximum of it occurs in the months of July, August, September and the highest rainfall occurs in Mulug, Parkal, Mahabubabad and Narasampet mandals, besides SRSP canal with 1.5 lakh acres assured ayacut.

The important irrigation sources in the district are Ramappa, Ghanpur (M), Pakhal and Lakhnnavaram and Salivagu projects under which considerable area is irrigated. The other sources of irrigation in the district are rainfed tanks, wells and hill-streams which require good showers in the season.

The principal cereal crops grown in the district are rice and maize. In its production of rice the district occupies 4th place in Telengana region and 11th place in Andhra Pradesh. According to the consumption of food grains the 90% population of the district are rice-eaters.

Demographic Particulars

With a total population of 32.46 lakhs (2001 Census) the district occupies 13th place in the State of A.P. in population and 12th place in regards to its area. There are 262 persons per Sq.Km in the district as

against 277 in the state. As a whole 22.49% of its population is living in urban areas. During last ninety years i.e., from the beginning of this century the district has recorded a marked increase of 396.33%. The percentage of literacy in the district is 49.26% as against the state figure of 61.58%. Only 19.16% of the female population of the district is literate as against 26.10% of the State.

The Scheduled Caste population in the district is 5.51 lakhs and the Scheduled Tribes population is 4.5 lakhs which forms 16.9% and 14.07% respectively, of the district population.

Out of 1098 revenue villages of the district 1003 villages are inhabited and the rest of the villages are deserted. The total rural population of the district is 26.23 lakhs. There are (5) towns in the district viz: Warangal, Hanamkonda, Jangaon, Mahabubabad and Dornakal. The total urban population is 6.2 lakhs. Warangal city is classified as Municipal Corporation. The working class population in the district is 15.66 lakhs, which is 55.53% of the total population. The workers in agricultural sector are 9.14 lakhs forming 28.12% of the total population. The remaining 4.34 lakhs of the workers are engaged in non-agricultural sectors comprising of 27.7% of the total population of the district. The non-worker class population is 25.52 lakhs constituting 78.62% of the total population.

Natural Resources

The forest of the district comes under category of tropical dry deciduous and tropical forest types. There are varying types of crops of all ages, classes with intermixed patches of different types and qualities. Thus it is quite common to find good quality of valuable teak mixed up with valueless types of poor quality species. The important and valuable species commonly found are teak, Bijasal, Nallamaddi, Boja, Channagi, Turuwaram, Shisham, Station Bandar, Bamboo and Abnus varieties.

In the extensive forests, large game is abundant such as tigers, leopards, cheetahs, bears, wolves, hyenas, wild-dogs, spotted deer, bison and antelope. The Pakhal forests are declared as Reserved Forests. Wild birds like Duck, Snipe Blue, Green pigeons, partridges, quail are also observed in the forests. Iron Ore, Coal, Copper, Limestone form the main minerals of the district, which are economically not exploited so far except granite stone.

Development Activities

The Warangal city has considerably developed during the past three decades. The establishment of many new educational institutions like Kakatiya University, Regional Engineering College, KITS, Govt. Politechnic, Kakatiya Medical college, I.T.I., Evening College, Law College, Women's College of Education, Music and Dance School etc., besides the other Private Colleges in all fields. The SDLCE has also added to the growth of education, culture in large sections of population. Warangal district has large number of small and medium size industries like tanning, light engineering, rice mills, wood works, etc. Besides the granite industry, A.P. Rayons at Kamalapur & Singareni Collieries at Bhoopalpally are employing a major portion of working population in the industrial sector.

Next to Hyderabad in Telangana region, Warangal occupies importance in trade. The entire district is covered with regulated markets and Enumamula market yard with 30 platforms and 172 shops in 112.06 acres, considered to be the biggest marketyard to cater the facilities of Warangal and Karimnagar districts. Women self-help group movement has made indelible impact on district development in the shape of promotion of literacy of women, decrease of population growth rate apart from empowering women economically and socially. Today there are about 2500 such groups with 3.10 lakh, women members with Rs. 85 crores corpus fund.

Places of Tourist Importance

The great temple constructions of Kakatiyas reveal magnificent outlook of rulers, who with a great patronage and love for architecture raised immortal monuments. The sense of proportion and qualities observed in these structures differ from the similar structures found in other parts of the country. The Bhadrakali and Thousand Pillars temple at Hanmakonda and Ramappa temple at Palampet and Warangal Fort are the specimens of their aesthetic taste of fine arts and reveals the genealogy of the Kakatiya Kings. The large lake Ramappa, Lakhnnavaram and Pakhal are immortal creations of the Kakatiya kings which stood the test of the time and even now known as the best irrigation works of engineering skill. Thus Warangal district stands as an important tourist center attracting pilgrims, archeologists and pagans from all over the country. Besides this, once in two years for two days in the month of February "Sammakka Saralamma Jathara" will be celebrated by tribes for which lakhs of people offer prayers and the same was recognized as State festival vide G.O. Ms. No. 127 dated on 01-02-1996

Table-4.1
Total Number of Villages, Hamlets, Households, Area, Population, Density of Population and Sex Ratio Mandal Wise-2001

S No	MAN DAL	Ar ea in Sq .K m.	No. of Revenue Villages		No . of Ha ml ets	Occ upie d Resi dent Hou ses	H ou se H old	POPULATIO N			Den sity of Pop ulat ion (per Sq. Km)	Sex Rat io Fe mal e per Tho usa nd Mal es
			In- ha bit ed	Un- Inh abit ed				Ma le	Fe ma le	To tal		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Cheria l	27 2.0 0	21	-	9	116 43	14 02 5	33 52 8	33 70 7	67 23 5	247	100 5
2	Madd ur	16 6.6	21	-	1	729 0	80 67	19 47 9	19 42 7	38 90 6	234	997
3	Narme tta	21 9.7	16	-	13	747 5	93 09	21 51 3	21 24 3	42 75 6	195	987
4	Bacha nnapet	19 6.4	23	-	2	805 0	94 89	21 57 1	21 95 0	43 52 1	222	101 8
5	Janga on	19 1.0	20	-	1	140 99	17 88 6	42 37 7	41 18 9	83 56 6	438	972
6	Lingal aghan pur	18 2.3	13	1	5	763 0	87 94	19 75 6	19 58 0	39 33 6	216	991
7	Raghu nathap ally	25 3.1	19	-	13	105 93	12 17 8	26 50 9	26 36 7	52 87 6	209	995
8	Chanp ur (Stn)	32 8.7	25	-	12	161 34	19 53 8	44 26 4	43 35 5	87 61 9	267	979
9	Dhar masag ar	25 9.0	19	-	7	123 07	15 07 1	34 97 6	34 06 7	69 04 3	267	974
10	Hasan parthy	15 6.6	17	1	15	116 28	16 96 8	37 78 8	36 96 1	74 74 9	477	978

11	Hana mkon da	24 9.9	24	-	20	101 173	19 47 4	44 99 9	42 50 4	87 50 3	350	945
12	Wardh annap et	25 2.0	18	-	18	136 99	16 89 5	36 57 9	35 78 6	72 36 5	287	978
13	Zaffar gadh	16 5.8	18	-	5	844 1	10 47 0	22 79 8	22 29 8	45 09 6	272	978
14	Palaku rthi	25 6.0	21	-	6	100 76	11 96 3	27 66 9	26 57 4	54 24 3	212	960
15	Devar uppala	22 4.3	13	-	11	780 0	91 25	20 84 4	20 21 4	41 05 8	183	970
16	Kodak andla	18 9.3	16	-	2	870 0	10 78 5	24 86 0	24 35 0	49 21 0	260	979
17	Raipar thy	21 6.0	18	-	12	997 2	11 52 9	26 24 0	25 77 9	52 01 9	241	982
18	Thorr ur	21 0.8	24	1	24	119 29	14 96 8	34 95 5	34 05 1	69 00 6	327	974
19	Naliku dur	20 0.1	18	-	78	102 54	12 58 1	29 30 8	28 07 6	57 38 4	287	958
20	Narsi mhula pet	21 1.4	18	2	62	102 90	12 51 6	28 57 7	27 78 5	56 36 2	267	972
21	Marip eda	28 5.0	23	-	89	141 81	17 84 6	40 52 6	38 76 1	79 28 7	278	956
22	Dorna kal	16 1.7	13	-	29	737 0	12 38 7	27 77 5	27 41 9	55 19 4	341	987
23	Kurav i	23 4.7	20	-	50	110 98	14 33 5	32 31 9	32 01 2	64 33 1	274	991
24	Maha bubab ad	22 3.9	20	-	11 8	162 77	21 91 7	51 06 5	49 95 4	10 10 19	451	978
25	Kesa mudra m	20 0.4	16	-	52	102 86	13 91 9	31 57 6	30 95 2	62 52 8	312	980
26	Nekko nda	18 1.2	17	-	43	833 5	10 50 5	23 01 7	22 11 6	45 13 3	249	961

27	Gudur	24 5.4	28	-	74	956 5	12 26 7	27 76 0	26 12 4	53 88 4	220	941
28	Kothagudem	20 5.4	58	11	9	687 7	84 46	18 15 0	18 17 1	36 32 1	177	1001
29	Khana pur	11 2.2	11	3	12	627 4	72 75	15 72 8	15 12 4	30 85 2	275	962
30	Narsa mpet	99. 6	12	1	35	111 57	14 50 5	31 71 4	30 50 7	62 22 1	625	962
31	Chenn araope t	12 9.0	14	-	40	990 8	12 02 9	25 84 5	24 84 2	50 68 7	393	961
32	Parvat hagiri	14 4.7	13	-	12	801 0	10 25 7	22 76 7	21 87 2	44 63 9	308	961
33	Sange m	18 5.4	19	-	16	980 2	12 02 0	26 81 3	25 94 2	52 75 5	285	968
34	Nallab elli	14 3.3	19	-	23	670 0	89 41	18 93 0	17 97 9	36 90 9	258	950
35	Duggo ndi	11 7.9	18	-	34	752 5	10 31 9	21 82 7	20 67 8	42 50 5	361	947
36	Gessu gonda	15 8.7	18	-	16	748 8	13 45 5	29 86 4	29 11 9	58 98 3	372	975
37	Athma kur	21 0.6	22	-	16	113 20	13 69 1	29 04 3	28 37 6	57 41 9	273	977
38	Shaya mpet	12 1.0	13	-	12	835 1	98 24	21 12 1	20 28 9	41 41 0	342	961
39	Parkal	17 9.1	23	-	8	146 33	17 80 9	39 20 7	38 53 4	77 74 1	434	983
40	Regon da	23 4.9	18	-	28	122 53	14 23 2	30 26 3	29 12 6	59 38 9	253	962
41	Mogul lapally	12 8.1	19	-	16	764 2	98 38	20 32 9	19 68 0	40 00 9	312	968
42	Chitya l	30 0.7	32	-	33	114 78	14 49 0	28 86 6	28 56 8	57 43 4	191	990

43	Bhupalpally	225.6	19	1	26	8544	14122	29713	29257	58970	261	985
44	Ghanpur (Mulugu)	119.0	8	1	26	6449	8016	16619	16483	3102	278	992
45	Mulugu	360.7	18	1	63	10150	13645	30547	28588	59135	164	936
46	Venkatapur	246.1	10	1	40	7555	8787	18481	18078	36559	149	978
47	Govindaraopet	86.3	10	13	23	5920	6987	14740	14525	29265	339	985
48	Tadvali	209.9	41	32	4	3679	4567	9897	9830	19727	94	993
49	Eturnagaram	249.1	41	23	6	6599	8046	19015	18138	37153	149	954
50	Mangapet	308.2	20	3	36	7889	10798	23834	23120	46954	152	970
51	Warangal	39.9	8				112204	268954	261682	530636	13299	973
DISTRICT TOTAL		12846.0	1003	95	1305	575118	729110	1644895	1601109	3246004	253	962

Source: Census of India 2001 Census.

As per the above table, Warangal District administratively has been divided into five divisions and 51 mandals. As far as the population is concerned, Warangal mandal occupies top position with 5,30,636 persons. While Mahabubabad mandal occupies second position with 1,01,019 persons. In the subsequent positions, Station Ghanpur, Hanmakonda, Jangaon mandals follow. Regarding density of population also Warangal mandal stands first with 13299 density of population per sq.km followed by Narasampet mandal with 625 density of population per sq.km. In the subsequent positions, Hassanparthy, Mahboobabad, Jangaon mandals stand. As far as the area is concerned, Mulugu mandal stands with 360 sq.kms followed by Mangapeta and Chityal with 308 and 300 sq.km of area respectively.

Women Leadership in Warangal District

There are 51 mandals in Warangal district out of which 12 have been reserved for women (7 for BCs + 3 for SCs+2 for ST) and another 5 mandals have been allotted for women under unreserved category. Thus 17 mandals have been allotted for women and remaining 34 mandals comes under general category where both men and women can contest elections Names of 17 mandals which have been allotted to women are as follows².

Table-4.2

Women under Reserved Category

S No.	Mandal	Category
1.	Hanamkonda	Women (BC)
2	Geesugonda	
3	Duggondi	
4	Nallabelli	
5	Venkatapur	
6	Parkal	
7	Chityal	
8	Govindaraopet	Women (SC)
9	Kodakandla	
10	Narsimhulapet	
11	Kesamudram	Women (ST)
12	Dornakal	
13	Athmakur	Unreserved Category
14	Chennaraopet	
15	Shyampet	
16	Mogullapalli	
17	Bhupalpally	

Table-4.3
Women Leadership in Rural Local Bodies in Warangal
District: A scenario

S N o .	Person/ Catego ry	U R/ G	U R/ W	B C/ G	B C/ W	S C/ G	S C/ W	S T/ G	S T/ W	Tot al/ W	Tot al/ G	Tot al
01	Ward Membe rs	19 66	98 5	24 29	12 02	12 25	60 7	12 73	61 9	341 3	689 3	10,3 06
02	Sarpanc hes	17 0	83	25 5	13 0	12 2	56	13 2	65	335	679	1,01 4
03	M.P.T. Cs	13 3	61	20 0	10 0	92	49	83	42	252	508	760
04	M.P.Ps	10	05	13	07	06	03	04	02	17	33	50
05	Z.P.T.C s	09	04	13	07	06	03	05	03	17	33	50+ 2
	Total	22 88	11 38	29 10	14 46	14 51	71 8	14 97	73 1	403 4	814 6	10,3 06+ 2
+2=Elected ZPTC												

Source: Censuses of India 2001

As per the above table in Warangal district 33% of rural local bodies have been reserved for women. In the district, 10,306 ward members have been elected out of which 3413 ward members are women and the remaining 6893 ward members are from General Category. Similarly 1014 Sarpanches have been elected in the district out of which 335 are women Sarpanches under reserved category and remaining 679 Sarpanches have been elected under general category. As far as MPTCs are concerned there are 760 MPTCs in the district. Out of these 252 are women while 508 are from general category. These figures indicate that 30% of seats have been reserved for women. On the same lines there are 50 MPPs in the district out of which 17 MPPs are women while remaining 33 MPPs are from general category. As far as ZPTCs are concerned, there are 50 ZPTCs out of which 17 are women ZPTCs while remaining 33 ZPTCs fall under general category. Thus, out of total 10,306 seats in rural local bodies under various categories, 4034 have been found with women and remaining 8146 are under general category. Thus, the above table indicates that after the enactment of 73rd Constitution Amendment reservations for women are

being followed strictly. Hence 30% of seats in rural local bodies have been occupied by women.

The following table presents the scenario of reservation of seats to women in urban local bodies.

Table-4.4
Women leadership in Urban Local Bodies in Warangal District

S No.	Name of the Town	Elected Representatives		Total
		General	Women	
1.	Warangal	35	18	53
2.	Jangaon	16	08	24
	Total	51	26	77

Source : Cense of India 2011

In Warangal Municipal Corporation, there are 53 Corporators elected, out of which, 35 are under general category and remaining 18 are exclusively Women Coprorators. Similarly, in Jangaon, there are 24 Municipal Councillors out of which 8 are women and remaining 16 are from general category. In total there are 77 Councillors in two municipal towns out of which 26 are women and remaining 51 are from general category. On observation it is noted that women representatives in Warangal district participating in the election process on their own without the influence of others. History of the district reveals that women in Warangal have been participating in politics, power, war since centuries. Rani Rudrama Devi is the classic example of such instance. After the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, awareness among women about the politics, leadership, participation in elections, contesting elections etc. have increased³.

Instances are there that apart from winning the seats reserved for women, they won few seats which are unreserved. This indicates their enthusiasm, zeal, interest they have about participating in the local body elections. They are very much eager to serve the community, especially women community. They are familiar with the problems being faced by women in the modern society. They are acquainted with day-to-day problems emerging in the society for women⁴. The reservation helped them a lot to solve the problems of their own community i.e., women. The elected women representatives, under their leadership are putting their effort to redress the grievances of women. No doubt, even if they are women and elected under reservation, they are supposed to serve the whole population irrespective of gender variation. Simultaneously, they can concentrate more on women problems while doing justice to the

general public. The women leadership scenario in Warangal district exhibits that women who were elected under reservation category or under unreserved category have been devotedly serving regulations framed by the Government⁵.

The present study of S.C. Women Sarpanchs in Warangal district is being taken up with the following data. As per the 73rd P R amendment, 33% of its institutions are reserved for the women including SC and ST women, being allotted on rotation system, to enable in greater number to empower themselves. 56 women Sarpanchs were reserved for S.C. category in Warangal district, according to the P.R. Amendment provision. All the 56 S.C. women reserved sarpanches were taken up for the study. In this connection, we discussed the profile of the reserved grampanchays and women sarpanches.

Table – 4.5
Scheduled Caste Population in Rural Area in Warangal District

S No.	Name of the District	Rural Population	Urban Population	Total	Percentage of SC Rural Population to Total Population
1	Warangal	471136	80249	551385	85.44%

Source : Cense of India 2011

The data in the above table shows that the SC population is highly concentrated in the rural areas.

Table – 4.6
Rural – Urban S.C. literacy rate in Warangal District

S No.	Name of the District	Rural			Urban		
		Male	Female	Sex Ratio	Male	Female	Sex Ratio
1	Warangal	239397	231739	1000:968	40520	397290	1000:980

Source : Cense of India 2011

The male – female ratio of the SC population by their residence wise, either in the rural area or in the urban area are nearly equal and the difference is very marginal.

Table – 4.7
Scheduled caste workers' status in Warangal District

S N o.	Name of the District	Cultivators	Agriculture Labour	Manufacturing House hold	Total main workers	Total marginal workers
1	Warangal	32005	124283	3788	210225	66197

Source : Cense of India 2011.

The above table shows that majority of the S.C. population depends on the agriculture sector. Moreover, most of them are working as agriculture labour in other word the majority of the S.C. workers get meager income.

Table – 4.8
Profile of the SC Women Sarpanches villages

S No.	Name of the Gram panchayat	Total Population			Percentage of SC Population
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Peddapur	3915	3869	7784	1878
2	Urugonda	2704	2656	5360	1073
3	Itkalapally	834	879	1713	347
4	Kamalapur	918	887	1805	275
5	Konapuram	1546	1539	3085	626
6	Gurujakunta	1118	1009	2127	733
7	Tadur	684	695	1379	317
8	Garimillapally	1199	1184	2383	552
9	Gopalapoor	992	1001	1993	509
10	Peddamadur	1414	1401	2815	708
11	Maddelagudem	1546	1539	3085	726
12	Velair	4724	4459	9183	1098
13	Ammapalem	1299	1375	2674	407
14	Advirangapur	619	618	1237	227
15	Roheer	870	867	1737	1023
16	Elukurthy (m)	2056	2025	4081	391
17	Potharajupally	305	294	599	-
18	Mylaram	1435	1477	2912	617
19	Sreepathipally	790	818	1608	282
20	Vishwanathapally	530	554	1084	211
21	Gundlasingaram	2092	2001	4093	798

22	Mukalagudem	2074	2129	4203	794
23	Nagaram	1024	1010	2034	508
24	Yellamala	1435	1477	2912	671
25	Ammenapuram	2087	1992	4079	714
26	Regula	940	909	1849	337
27	Balpala	1971	1865	3836	452
28	Waddicherla	2320	2221	4541	898
29	Dhoolmitta	1517	1531	3048	552
30	Ayodya	-	-	-	-
31	Maripeda	7596	7190	14786	2102
32	Pothugallu	537	519	1056	218
33	Devagiripatnam	-	-	-	-
34	Ramatheertham	660	695	1305	200
35	Bhanjpet	2120	1980	4100	574
36	Peddammupparam	3500	3372	6872	1291
37	Mudigonda	758	712	1470	223
38	Rajulakothapalli	1603	1642	3245	555
39	Valmidi	1456	1473	2929	545
41	Parkal	10781	10280	21061	4887
42	Venkatapur	810	753	1563	438
43	Konkapaka	1558	1554	3112	568
44	Bhanjipet	1199	1245	2444	462
45	Raghunathapally	2421	2396	4817	1206
46	Gannaram	638	618	1256	228
47	Narayanapur	721	769	1490	265
48	Rangaihpally	1288	1000	2288	860
49	Kuntapally	1090	1200	2290	910
50	Venktapur	615	602	1217	224
51	Vasanthapur	645	634	1279	380
52	Chinnavangara	1512	1521	3033	717
53	Nallagunta	1212	1208	2420	481
54	Lyabarthi	1629	1561	3190	737
55	Punnel	2241	2147	4388	1006
56	Garmillapally	1315	1311	2626	639

Source : Cense of India 2011.

For the purpose of the present study the researcher administered a questionnaire for collecting the socio-economic and political participation and perception of the SC women Sarpanchs. The socio-economic and political details of the SC women Sarpanchs are given in the following pages.

TABLE – 4.9
AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

S No.	Age	Sample of persons	Percentage (%)
1	26 – 35	30	53.5
2	36 – 43	18	32.0
3	Above 45 Years	8	14.5
	TOTAL:	56	100.0

The above table deals with the age particulars of Respondents. It reveals that a majority of the Respondents belong to 26-35 Years of young and middle age group. A considerable level percentage of the respondents belong to old age group. Thus the study reveals that a majority of SC Sarpanches are young and the reservation have been properly made use of the youngsters.

TABLE –4.10
SUB CASTE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

S No.	Age	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	SC Mala	12	21.0
2	SC Madiga	44	78.5
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table clearly indicates that out of the total number of respondents about 78.5 percent of the respondents are SC-Madiga and 21 Percent of there are SC Mala. In telangana region sc madigas are more in number than sc malas.

TABLE –4.11
EDUCATION WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

S No.	Education	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Illiterate	15	26.5
2	Primary education	25	44.5
3	High School	4	7.0
4	Intermediate	6	11.5
5	Degree	4	7.0
6	Others	2	3.5
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table presents the educational level of respondents About 26.5 percent of respondents are illiterates and about

44.5 percent of the respondents have primary education and 7 percent of the respondent have completed high school education, About 11.5 percent have completed Intermediate education and 7.14 percent have completed, Degree and 3.5 percent have completed other courses and no one has post degrees. It is obvious that about more than one fourth of the respondents are illiterates.

**TABLE – 4.12
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS**

S No.	Occupation	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Farmers	14	25.0
2	Agriculture Labour	36	64.3
3	Business	3	5.3
4	Others	3	5.4
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table gives the occupational details of Respondents out of the total respondents about 64.3 percent respondents are working as agricultural labours, 25 percent of respondents are Farmer's, 5.3 percent respondents are doing Business and 5.4 percent of respondents are in other livelihood sector. It is evident from the table that about 65 percent of the respondents are agricultural labour and only 25 percent of them are farmers. Having come from lower class-caste of society a majority of them are poor.

**TABLE –4.13
MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS**

S No.	Marital Status	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Married	51	91.1
2	Unmarried	0	0
3	Widow	5	8.9
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table presents the marital status of respondents. Out of total respondents, 91.0 percent of the respondents are married and 8.9 percent of the respondents are widow's unmarried women are not seen in the sample. It shows that after marriage only women could become sarpanches.

**TABLE – 4.14
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF SPOUSES OF THE
RESPONDENTS**

S No.	Occupation of spouses	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Politicians	30	53.5
2	Private Employees	9	16.0
3	Govt. Employees	2	3.5
4	Business	3	5.3
5	Farmers	10	17.3
6	Others	2	3.5
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table reveals that occupational status of spouses of the respondents. Out of total respondents about 53.5 percent of respondents spouses are in politics, 16.0 Percent of respondent’s spouses are working as private employees, 3.5 per cent of respondents husbands are working in Govt. Sector, 5.3 percent of respondent’s husbands are doing business, 17.3 per cent of respondent’s husbands are farmers, 3.6 percent of respondent’s husbands are engaged in other livelihood sectors and no spouse is Agricultural Labours.

**TABLE –4.15
HOUSING PARTICULARS OF RESPONDENTS**

S No.	Type of house	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Pacca	35	62.0
2	Semi-pacca	15	27.0
3	RCC	6	11.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table gives a clear picture of household particular of the respondents. Out of the total percentage of respondents about 62 percent of respondents are living in Pacca houses and 27 per cent of respondents are living in semi-pacca (roof is covered with tiles) and 11 percent of respondents are living in RCC (roof is covered with iron sheets) It is obvious that a majority have pacca houses and No one has hut or living in a rented house. Atleast there are able to have a pacca house to live no being the first person in the village.

TABLE – 4.16
LAND HOLDING DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

S No.	No. of Land Holding	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	0 - 2 Acres	3	5.35
2	2 – 4 Acres	23	41.08
3	4 – 6 Acres	26	46.42
2	Above 6 Acres	4	7.15
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table shows land holding particular of respondents about 5.35 percent of respondents are have 0.2 Acres land, 41.08 percent of respondents are have 2-4 acres land, 46.42 percent of respondents have 4-6 acres land and 7.15 percent of respondent have above 6 acres land and there are no respondents with more than 10 Acres of land no there are any landless sarpanch in the sample.

TABLE – 4.17
Minimum Amenities in the respondents households
((Cumulative Percentage))

S No.	Amenities	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	TV	56	100.0
2	Refrigerator	23	41.0
3	Cooler	30	53.5
4	Two Wheelers / Four Wheelers	3	5.5
5	Bath Room	56	100.0
6	Toilets	56	100.0
7	Drinking Water	56	100.0
8	Electricity	56	100.0
9	Phone/Cell	56	100.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table reveals that minimum amenities are found in almost all the sample house holding respondents. All the respondents have the TV's, Bath rooms, Drinking water facilities electricity and communication facility and toilets. About 41 per cent of respondents are have Refrigerator's 53.5 percent of respondents have coolers 5.5 percent of respondent have 2 wheelers but no are has AC facility in the house. It only goes to prove that minimum facilities are enjoyed by almost all the respondents in the sample.

TABLE – 4.18
NATURE OF THE FAMILY

S No.	Nature of the Family	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Joint Family	20	35.0
2	Nuclear Family	36	65.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table clearly indicates the nature of the respondent's family is two fold. About 35 percent of respondents are living in joint family system and 65 percent of respondents are in nuclear families. It is evident that a majority of the sample shifted to nuclear family system. In the modern era the trend is towards setting up of nuclear families owing to disintegration of joint family system industrialization, modernization and migration is the changed socio-economic content of society.

TABLE – 4.19
DECISION MAKING IN THE FAMILIES OF THE RESPONDENTS

S No.	Management	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Husbands	46	82.0
2	Respondents	5	9.0
3	Others	5	9.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table shows a clear picture of decision making role of persons in the families of respondents. About 82 percent of respondents in families are managed by the Husbands, 9 percent respondents families are managed by themselves (Because these respondents are widows and their children's are younger ones and unable to manage their families about 9 percent of respondents families are managed by others (it means their families are managed by the elder children the respondent and their spouses are unable to manage their families because of the ill-health) In a patriarchy structure of the family it is the men/spouses are dominate and they take decisions in the family and in a few cases where there are no spouses either the respondents or other in the family are the decision maker.

TABLE – 4.20
Asset position of the respondents

S No.	Property	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Land	10	17.8
2	House	10	17.3
3	Others	36	65.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table clearly indicates that the holding of the property of the respondents name. Out of total percent of respondents 17.8 percent of respondents are having land on their name, 17.3 percent of respondents are having the house 65 percent of respondents are could not have any land, house, and others.

TABLE –4. 21
ANNUAL INCOME OF THE FAMILY OF RESPONDENTS

S No.	Annual Income	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Rs. 12000 – 24000	12	21.5
2	Rs. 24000 – 36000	35	62.5
3	Rs. 36000 – 48000	4	7.0
4	Above Rs. 48000	5	9.0
	TOTAL :	56	100

The above table presents the details of Annual Income of the families of the respondents. About 62.5 percent respondent's families annual income ranges between Rs. 24000 – 36000. 21.5 percent respondent's annual income is between Rs. 12000-24000, 7 percent of respondents families annual income ranges between Rs. 36000-48000 and 9 percent of respondents families annual income ranges above Rs. 48000. A majority of the respondents family income ranges between 24000-36000.

TABLE –4. 22
INTRODUCTION OF RESPONDENTS TO THE POLITICS

S No.	Introducer	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Husbands	47	84.0
2	Family members	7	13.0
3	Friends	1	1.5
4	Others	1	1.5
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table indicates the introducer of the respondents to the politics. About 84 percent of the respondents are introduced into the politics by their husbands, 13 percent of the respondents are introduced by their family members such as father-in-law, Sons, Brothers-in-law etc. About 1.5 percent of respondents are introduced by their friends and 1.5 percent of respondents entered politics on their own. In a male dominated society it is the men who are in politics generally introduce their spouse to politics wherever women reservations are made.

TABLE –4.23
EXPERIENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS IN POLITICS

S No.	Experience in politics	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	0-5 years	53	95.0
2	5-10 years	3	5.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table reveals the experience of the respondents in politics about 95 percent of respondents entered into the politics just 5 years ago i.e. after 2005, 5 percent of respondents entered into the politics about 10 years ago between 2000-2005 and respondents did not enter into the politics before 2000. The study reveals that the sarpanches do not have much experience. A majority of them entered politics for the first in 5 years ago as sarpanches only to reservation.

TABLE – 4.24
Persons helped in elections

S No.	Helped by	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Caste leaders	7	13.0
2	Religion Leaders	5	8.0
3	Women support	4	7.5
4	Party leaders	38	67.5
5	Husbands	2	3.5
	TOTAL :	56	100

The above table presents a clear a picture on the help extended to respondents in elections. About 67.5 percent of the respondents are taken help in election by the party leaders. 13 percent of respondents by caste leaders, 8 percent of respondents by religions leaders, 7.5 percent of the respondents by the women organizations and 3.5 percent of the respondents received help from their husbands. It is reveling that

67.5 of the respondents supported by party leaders of political parties and it is followed by caste leaders.

TABLE – 4.25
PROBLEMS FACED BY RESPONDENTS IN ELECTION
COMPAIGNS

S.No.	Problems	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Caste	11	19.5
2	Finance	36	64.5
3	Violence	3	5.5
4	Party members	6	10.5
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table reveals the problems faced by the respondents in elections. About 64.5 percent of the respondents faced financial problems, about 19.5 percent of the respondents suffered owing to cast, 10.5 percent of the respondents faced inconvenience by the party members, 5.5 percent of the respondents became victims of violence at the time of elections. Owing to poverty a majority of the respondents faced financial crises, caste was also a barrier at the time of elections.

TABLE – 4.26
Capacities of Respondents in Taking Decisions

S.No.	Response	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Able to take decision	37	66.0
2	Not able to take decision	24	26.5
A	Domination of male member	5	31.5
B	Others	8	42.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table shows the clear picture of the respondents' capability in taking of decisions and conducting of the meetings. About 66 percent of respondent are conducting the meetings and taking the decisions very successfully, and 34 percent of the respondents are not conducting meeting and taking decisions for the following reasons. 31.5 percent of respondents are dominated by the male

members in conducting of meeting and taking of decisions about 42 percent of respondents are conducting meetings and taking decisions behalf of others. About 26.5 percent of respondents are unable to take decisions and conducting the meetings because of lack of experience, lack of leadership skills, lack of education and lack of awareness of the government programme and policies.

TABLE – 4.27A

Levels of socio-political awareness before and after electing as sarpanch

S No.	Political Awareness	Before No. of Persons	After No. of persons	Before Percentage	After Percentage
1	Low	20	13	36	23.0
2	Medium	27	35	48	62.5
3	High	5	8	9	14.5
4	None	4	-	7	-
	Total:	56	56	100	100

The above table presents the clear picture about the awareness of political awareness of the respondents. Before electing as a Sarpanches 36%, 48%, 9%, 7% percentage low, medium, high, none shows the non-awareness of the politics before they are elected as Sarpanches on the other hand 23, 62.5, 14.5 percent of respondents are expressed the awareness of politics such as low medium, high respectively.

TABLE – 4.27B

Levels of socio-political awareness before and after electing as sarpanch

S No.	Social Awareness	Before No. of Persons	After No. of persons	Before Percentage	After Percentage
1	Low	21	16	37.5	28.5
2	Medium	27	30	48.0	53.5
3	High	7	5	9.0	10
4	Nil	2.8	-	14.5	-
	Total:	56	56	100	100

The above table gives the clear picture about the awareness of social awareness of the respondents regarding to the Social awareness out of the total respondents 37.5, 48, 9, 14.5 percent of the respondents they

low, medium, high awareness of social phenomenon before they are elected as sarpanches. On the other hand they are elected as sarpanches they have the knowledge of social phenomenon 37.5 percent low, 53.5 percent medium, 10 percent high respectively.

TABLE – 4.28
Manifesto in elections

S No.	Manifesto	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Alleviation of poverty	1	2.0
2	Development of Women	6	11.0
3	Development of SC Community	4	7.0
4	Village Development	45	80.0
	TOTAL :	56	100.0

The above table clearly indicates the election manifesto prepared by the elected the elections. A majority of respondents i.e., about 80 percent of respondents were elected as sarpanches for showing the village development as top priority, 11 percent of the respondents were elected as sarpanches for showing the development of women in manifesto, 7 percent of the respondents were elected sarpanches for showing the development of SC community as their top priority However only 2 percent of respondents were elected as sarpanches for stating the alleviation of poverty as their top priority.

ABLE – 4.29
OPINIONS OF RESPONDENTS ON POLITICS

S No.	Opinion	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Satisfied	7	12.5
2	Some what satisfied	30	53.5
3	Not satisfied	19	34
4	No Democracy in politics	1	6
5	No freedom for women	5	26
6	High Level Corruption	10	52
7	Higher political Cadre domination	3	16
	TOTAL :	56	100

The above table reveals the opinions of respondents on politics. About 53.5 percent of respondents said that they were satisfied to somewhat for having joined politics, about 12.5 percent of the respondents were to fully satisfied with the politics and 34 percent of the respondents are not satisfied with the politics about 6 percent of respondents were not satisfied because of absence of democracy norms and values in politics, 26 percent of respondent were not satisfied for lack of freedom for women in politics, about 52 percent of respondents dissatisfied with the high level of corruption moment in politics and 16 percent of respondent were not satisfied with domination of higher political cadre over women sarpanches.

TABLE –4.30
Opinions of respondents on discharge of duties as sarpanch

S No.	Opinion	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Satisfied	18	32
2	Somewhat satisfied	23	41
3	Not satisfied	15	27
4	Bureaucrats were not caring women leadership and we are neglecting women leaders	4	27
5	Corruption of Bureaucrats	5	34
6	Lack of English Knowledge	2	13
7	Lack of developmental programmes	2	13
8	Lack of Administrative Knowledge	2	13
	TOTAL :	56	100

The above table presents the clear picture of opinions of the respondents was in regard to discharge of the duties of respondents as Sarpanches about 41 percent of respondents have expressed that they were satisfied to some extent, About 32 percent of respondents revealed that they were satisfied with their duties, 27 percent of respondents that they were not satisfied about 27 percent of respondents mentioned that Bureaucrats were not carrying women sarpanches and their leadership and they were not ready to serve women leaders, 34 percent of respondents have expressed the level of corruption create lot of problems to them in discharging their duties and 13 percent of the respondents were facing the problems in discharging their duties owing to lack of English knowledge, 13 percent of respondents were not discharging their duties because of the complexity of the developmental programs as they were update the developmental programs thoroughly and 13 percent of the respondents are facing problems in discharging their duties owing to lack of Administrative knowledge. It only goes to prove that though a majority of

the respondents were contended with their role performance in different attitude of bureaucrats lack of knowledge of programmes the ever changing of programmes, corrupt methods lack of knowledge of administrative procedures, coming in convenience to the respondents.

TABLE –4. 31

Opinion on reduction of disparity between the rich and poor by Leadership initiatives

S No.	Opinion	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	Agree	9	16
2	Certain Extent	12	21.5
3	Not at all	35	62.5
	TOTAL :	56	100

The above table presents a clear picture about the reduction of disparity between the rich and poor by the politics. About 16 percent of the respondents have agreed to it, 21.5 percent of respondents opined that reduction of the disparity is possible to certain extent and a majority i.e. 62.5 percent of respondents opined that reduction of the disparity between the rich and poor by the politics is at all possible in the existing situation.

TABLE – 4.32

SUGGESTIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN SARPANCHES

S No.	Suggestions	No. of persons	Percentage (%)
1	No idea	10	18
2	Yes	46	82
	TOTAL :	56	100

The above table indicates the suggestions made by the respondents for empowerment of women sarpanches about 82 percent of the respondents revealed that more powers should be given to women sarpanches owing to reservation and sarpanches should be given training in the powers and functions of sarpanches and administrative matters.

It is obvious a majority of the respondents joined politics without any experience to politics and handily knows the powers and functions of sarpanches. Hence the need for training arises to familiarize them with the functions of sarpanches to make the ground roots governance more effective.

References:

- ¹ District Hand Book of statistics 2007-2008 compiled & published by Chief Planning Officer, Warangal.
- ² Warangal District, Gazette, Government of Andhra Pradesh 2002, pp.2-5.
- ³ Ibid, pp 6-8.
- ⁴ Ibid, pp 10-15.
- ⁵ Ibid, pp 19-24.

PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS ON SC WOMEN LOCAL LEADERSHIP
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Chapter 5 People's perceptions on sc women local leadership

In this chapter, an attempt is made to record the perceptions of people on political empowerment of rural women with regard to S.C. women particularly in Warangal District. In terms of the people reacted on the reservations made for S.C. women in rural local bodies under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA). Whether the people are endorsing the reservations made for S.C. women? Whether they feel that women empowerment is necessary? Whether the elected women representatives are justifying the reservations? Whether they are able to discharge their functions effectively? With the above assumptions, a structured questionnaire was administered to 300 respondents from 56 S.C. women reserved Grampanchayats. Stratified random sampling technique has been adopted while identifying the respondents to pick-up from different villages of each Grampanchayat. Adequate care was taken to cover male-female, illiterate, educated, young-old, un-employee, employee respondents.

This chapter discusses the perceptions of Scheduled Caste women sarpanches and their powers and functions in the process of administrative positions. Further, it also projects the case study of SC women sarpanches in the five revenue divisions.

People's perceptions on the performance of the public representatives with regard to the implementation of any scheme, programme, event, amendment work always lead to correct, modify, perfect and change suitably the style of implementation and strategy adopted. Feedback exercise evaluation methods, beneficiaries' perceptions always help run the policy-makers, rulers and Government on the right track. The lacunae in the programme, the deficiencies in the policy, the mistakes in the strategy can be corrected through recording perceptions of the affected people. Keeping in view, the future requirements, the implementation strategy can be modified or amended. Even the amendments made to the Constitution can be assessed. Here, the subject is women leadership and reservations made to women in rural local bodies. The Government through its 73rd Constitution Amendment reserved 33% of seats in rural / urban local bodies for women. In this context, an attempt is made to understand to what extent the reservations for women have been received by the public? How far the reservations are useful? What is the

role that women elected leaders are expected to play. Whether the local bodies are really empowered? Whether the women are really empowered? How far the women leadership is accepted by the public male leaders and upper caste people? With an intention to search the answers for above questions, a structured questionnaire was administered to 300 persons to record their perceptions on the functioning of women leaders in Warangal district.

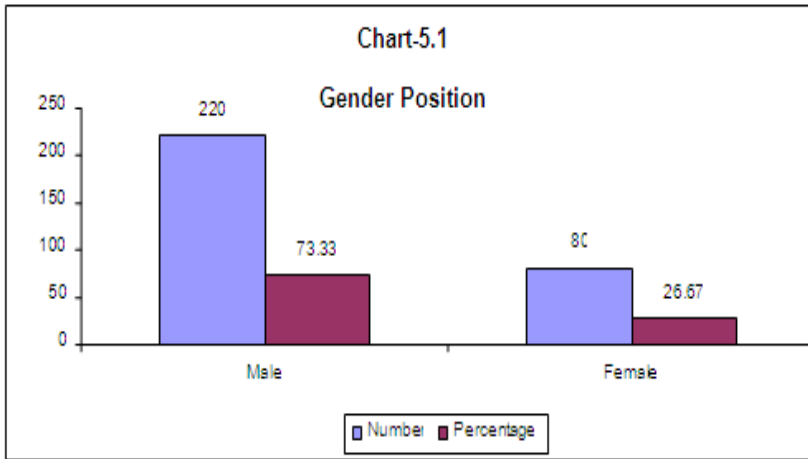
The Warangal district consisting of five (5) revenue divisions and 51 mandals. Out of these 51 mandals 17 mandals have been reserved for women out of which 12 mandals have been reserved for SC, ST, BC and 5 mandals exclusively for women under un-reserved category. Among 12 mandals reserved for women under various categories. There are 1007 village panchayaths in the district. Out of which 56 village panchayaths are reserved for SC women. All of these 56 SC women reserved Panchayaths spread over 5 revenue divisions in the district. The respondents of the study were selected from each Gramapanchayats which are reserved for the SC women. 300 respondents were picked up on the basis of random sampling. As said earlier, stratified random sampling technique has been adopted while administering the questionnaire to 300 respondents in five revenue divisions of the District.

Gender Position:-

The respondents have been asked to answer the several questions. Table-5.1 indicates the gender classification among the respondents.

**Table-5.1
Gender Position**

Sl.No.	Respondents	Gender Position		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Number	220	80	300
2.	Percentage	73.33	26.67	100.00



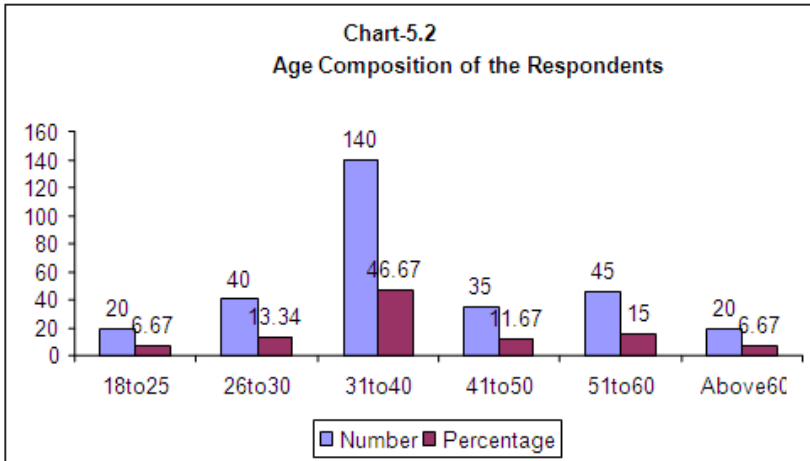
Out of 300 respondents, 220 are male respondents (73.33%), while the remaining 80 are female respondents (26.67%). The researcher has made her effort to identify more number of female respondents. However, only 26.67% of female respondents could be contacted.

Age Composition:-

The respondents were asked to disclose their age. This information is expected to gauge their experience over the subject of research. Table-5.2 furnishes the details of age of the respondents.

Table-5.2
Age Composition of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Respondents	Age Group (in years)						Total
		18to25	26to30	31to40	41to50	51to60	Above 60	
1.	Number	20	40	140	35	45	20	300
2.	Percentage	6.67	13.34	46.67	11.67	15.00	6.67	100.00



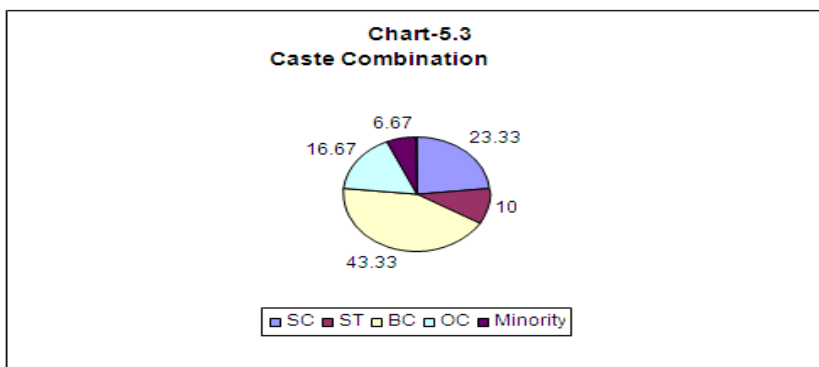
As far as the age of respondents is concerned, out of 300 respondents 140 of them (constituting 46.67 percent) are between the age group of 31 to 40 years. The respondents of this age group were found in the streets of villages and public places. On the other hand, there were 45 respondents (15.00 percent) in the age group of 51 to 60 found at common places and at residences during the after noon periods. There were 40 respondents (13.34 percent) in the age group of 26 to 30 years found on roads and streets either in the morning or evening periods. Similarly, there were 35 respondents (11.67 percent) in the age group of 41 to 50 years. On the other hand 20 respondents (6.67 percent) were identified in the age group of 18 to 25 years and another 20 respondents (6.67 percent) were identified from the age of above 60 years with a view to record the perceptions of young and old people on the functioning of common leaders in rural local bodies. However, table-5.2 reveals the perceptions of respondents of all age groups.

Caste Combination:-

In rural areas, caste always dominates in the politics, administration and development aspects. With this intention the respondents have been asked to tell their community. Table-5.3 indicates the caste of respondents.

Table-5.3
Caste Combination of the Respondents

S No.	Respondents	Caste Combination					Total
		SC	ST	BC	OC	Minority	
1.	Number	70	30	130	50	20	300
2.	Percentage	23.33	10.00	43.33	16.67	6.67	100.00



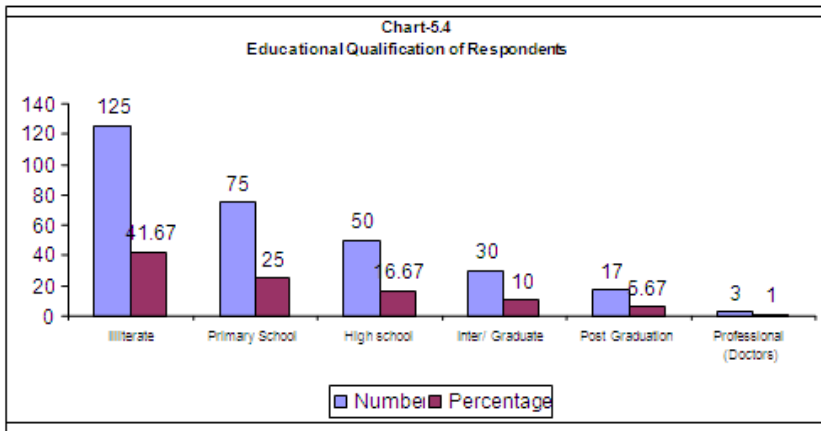
As far as caste is concerned, the different caste people normally used to stay together in the villages. Among 300 respondents, 130 respondents (43.33 percent) are from BC community who is divided into A,B,C,D categories. Next to BC Community, 70 respondents (constituting 23.33 percent) are from SC community. Similarly 30 respondents (constituting 10.00 percent) are from Scheduled Tribe community. On the other hand 50 respondents (16.67 percent) have been drawn from other forward finally. Lastly, 20 respondents (6.67 percent) have been drawn from minorities. Thus, while taking the opinion of villagers, the functioning of women leaders, administration system is enquired from all communities in the village.

Educational Status:-

The educational qualifications of respondents play crucial role while recording their opinion or perceptions on any aspect. Hence the respondents were asked to opine their quality of education. Table-5.4 furnishes the educational qualifications of respondents.

Table-5.4
Educational Status of Respondents

S N o.	Respondents	Educational Qualifications						Total
		Illiterate	Primary School	High school	Inter/Graduate	Post Graduation	Professional (Doctors)	
1.	Number	125	75	50	30	17	03	300
2.	Percentage	41.67	25.00	16.67	10.00	5.67	1.00	100.00



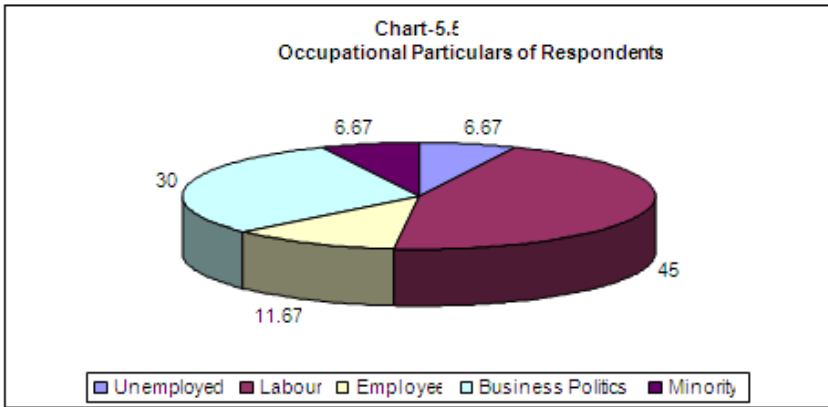
It is understood that the rate of literacy in rural areas is less, when it is compared to urban areas. Out of 300 respondents, 125 of them (constituting 41.67 percent) are found to be illiterate. However, the researcher has not searched only for educated respondents. Since the respondents were selected randomly, more uneducated respondents were drawn. It is further recorded that 75 respondents (25.00 percent) just can sign in regional language only (Telugu) as these persons have gone to schools only for a couple of years. It is further clarified that 50 respondents (16.67 percent) have studied upto Tenth class. However, according to table-5.4 few respondents i.e., 17(5.67%) studied upto Inter/Graduation. Fortunately, 3 respondents (1.00 percent) were found to be Doctors. The analysis indicates that the opinion of illiterates as well as educated persons has been taken into consideration.

Occupational Particulars:-

The occupation of any person is important to know his level of standard and his ability to earn income to feed himself or his family. Keeping this view, the respondents were asked to note their occupation. Table-5.5 reveals the details of occupation of respondents.

Table-5.5
Occupational Particulars of Respondents

S N o	Responde nts	Occupational Particulars of Respondents					Tota l
		Unemplo yed	Labo ur	Employ ee	Busine ss	Politi cs	
1.	Number	20	135	35	90	20	300
2.	Percentag e	6.67	45.00	11.67	30.00	6.67	100. 00



According to table-5.5, majority of the respondents are labourers. It is also observed that due to poverty, majority of people in villages are agricultural labourers. Out of 300 respondents, 135 of them (45.00 percent) depend upon the agricultural labour as their primarily livelihood. Normally, different types of labour works on daily wage are available in agricultural field. On the other hand, 90 respondents (30.00 percent) expressed that their occupation is business. They carry different types of business, petty business, like kirana shop, cycle shop, panshop, cloth business, saree business, etc. Some respondents depend upon seasonal business also like mango business, sugar cane business, fruit selling etc. The table further tells that 35 respondents (11.17 percent) are employees in private firms, nearby companies, watchmen at schools, agricultural fields etc. A few of the respondents are working in Government schools as teachers, attenders etc. According to 20 respondents (6.67 percent) their main occupation is politics. They are involved in political field in such a manner that from dawn to dusk they are drowned in politics. Remaining 20 respondents (6.67 percent) are un-employed.

Exercise of Adult Franchise:-

After obtaining the personal data from the respondents serious attempts were made to enter into the subject. With an intention to know the political awareness among the respondents, they were asked to state whether they exercised their vote. Table-5.6 presents the answers of respondents.

Table-5.6
Exercise of Adult Franchise

Sl.No.	Respondents	Exercised your vote		Total
		Yes	No	
1.	Number	210	90	300
2.	Percentage	70.00	30.00	100.00

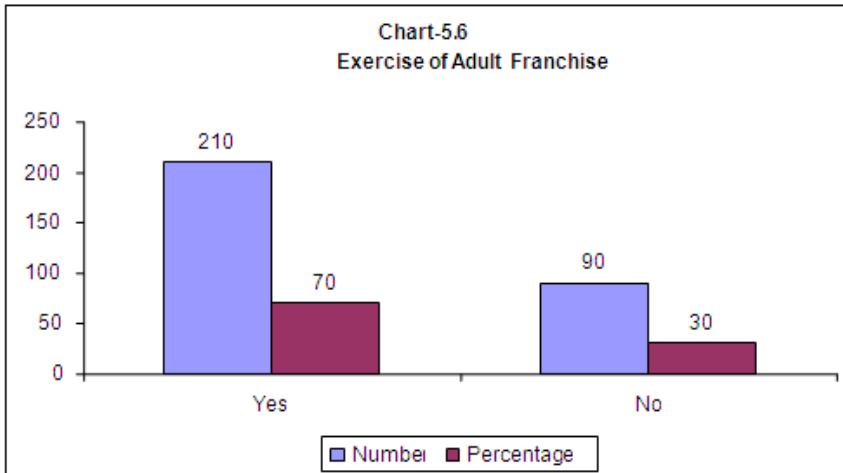


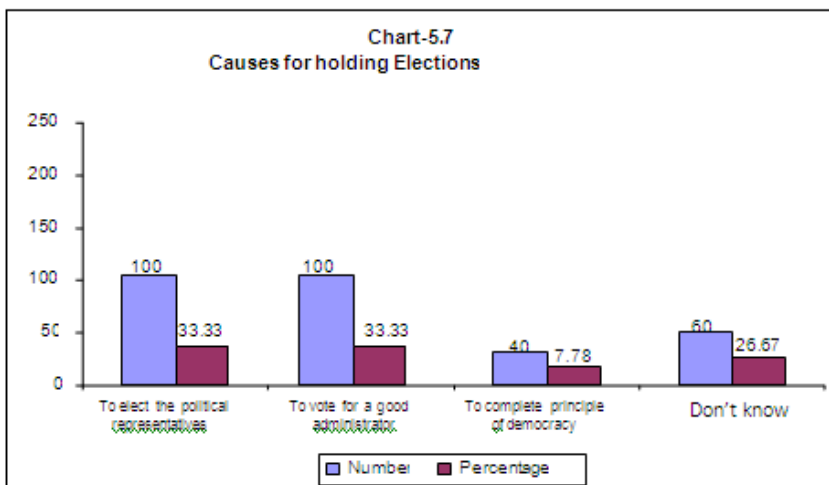
Table-5.6 indicates that 70.00 percent of the respondents have exercised their vote in general elections (MP), Assembly elections and election for rural local bodies, a few of them have exercised their votes thrice also. But, the above table further indicates that 30.00 percent of the respondents (90 numbers) have not exercised their right to vote at any time. These respondents have given several reasons for not exercising their right to vote like: (a) lack of interest, (b) fear complex, (c) engaged themselves with some other important works on the day of elections etc.

Causes for Holding Elections:-

Whether the rural people are aware of the reason for conducting elections? According to their opinion why the elections are being conducted? Table-5.7 presents the opinion of the respondents.

Table-5.7
Causes for Holding Elections

Sl. No.	Respondents	Causes for holding Elections				Total
		To elect the political representatives	To vote for a good administrator	To complete principle of democracy	Don't know	
1.	Number	100	100	40	60	300
2.	Percentage	33.33	33.33	7.78	26.67	100.00



Respondents have given multiple responses for the reasons for conducting elections. Out of 300 respondents, 100 have (constituting 33.33 percent) admitted that elections are being conducted to elect the political representatives of their choice. According to 100 respondents (33.33 percent) the purpose behind conducting elections is to vote for a good administrator. However, 40 respondents (7.78 percent) revealed that it is only to complete principle of democracy. But, 60 respondents (26.67 percent) could not say anything due to lack of awareness. Thus, the

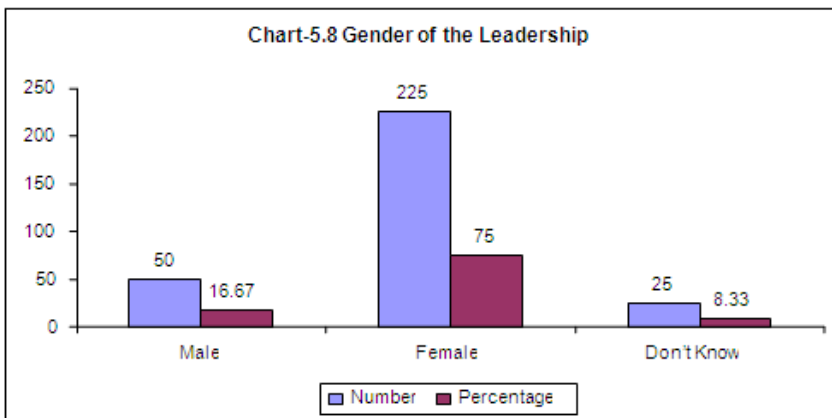
respondents have expressed their different versions about the reasons for conducting elections.

Gender of Leadership:-

Coming to direct question to the respondents about their leader, they were asked to say who is their leader? The reason behind asking the question is to know whether the respondents are aware about their elected representative. Whether their elected representative is male or female? Table-5.8 framed their responses.

**Table-5.8
Gender of Leadership**

Sl.No.	Respondents	Gender of the Leadership		Don't Know	Total
		Male	Female		
1.	Number	50	225	25	300
2.	Percentage	16.67	75.00	8.33	100.00



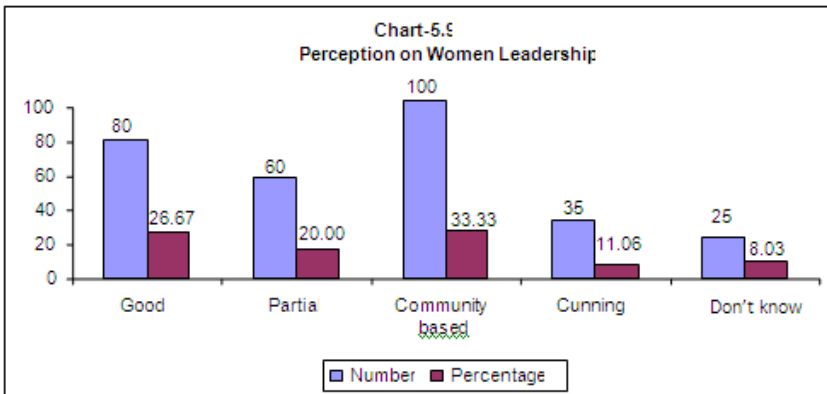
Out of 300 respondents, 225 constituting 75.00 percent said that their elected representative is female. According to them, elected leader means Sarpanch or Mandal President. Few may be having their opinion about MPTC, ZPTC, MLA or MP. On the other hand 50 respondents (16.67 percent) revealed that their political leader is male. They might be having their opinion either on MP, MLA or any other elected member. But 25 respondents (8.33 percent) are not aware about their leader. They do not know whether their leader is male or female.

\on Women Leadership:-

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to tell their opinion on their leader. Table-5.9 presents the opinion of respondents on their leaders.

**Table-5.9
Perception on Women Leadership**

Sl. No.	Respondents	Perception on Women Leader				Don't know	Total
		Good	Partial	Community based	Cunning		
1.	Number	80	60	100	35	25	300
2.	Percentage	26.67	20.00	33.33	11.6	8.3	100.00



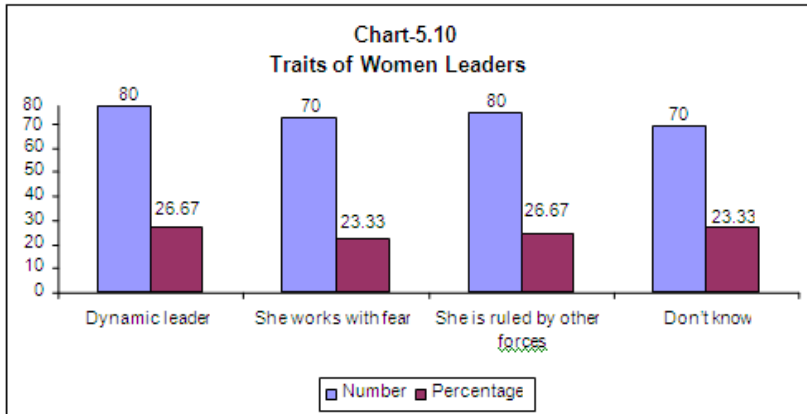
As far as the opinion on women leaders is concerned, only 26.67 percent of the respondents have given positive opinion. According to them, the women leaders have been listening to grievances of respondents and reacting positively. It is also said that the women leaders tried to solve their problem. According to 60 respondents (20 percent), the women leaders are partial and showing favouritism to one section of people. Similarly 100 respondents (33.33 percent) opined that the leaders are community biased. They extend their help and assistance to their community people only. If the leader belongs to SC Community, she helps only SC people. If she belongs to ST community, she helps only ST people. Like that they are community biased. It can also be said that the women leaders have been showing interest in women only. Very few respondents i.e., 25 (8.89 percent of the respondents) pointed out the cunning nature of women leaders. Above all, 25 respondents (8.3 percent) expressed their inability to form an opinion over their leaders.

Traits of Women Leaders:-

Sustainability of leader depends upon his/her good qualities. The respondents have been asked to reveal the qualities of their women leader? Table-5.10 presents the qualities of women leaders as enunciated by the respondents.

Table-5.10
Traits of Women Leaders

Sl.No	Respondents	Traits of Women Leaders			Don't know	Total
		Dynamic leader	She works with fear	She is ruled by other forces		
1.	Number	80	70	80	70	300
2.	Percentage	26.67	23.33	26.67	23.33	100.00



The analysis of Table-5.10 has been quite interesting. Respondents, based on their experiences, have given their opinions on the qualities of their women leaders. According to 80 respondents (26.67 percent) their women leaders are dynamic, functioning well and attend to the grievances of public whenever they approach. According to 70 respondents (23.33 percent) women leader functions with fear. They are afraid of male leaders and the upper caste people. Due to their general ignorance, the officials exploit them. Women leaders rarely show their power on inefficient officials. Another interesting quality of women

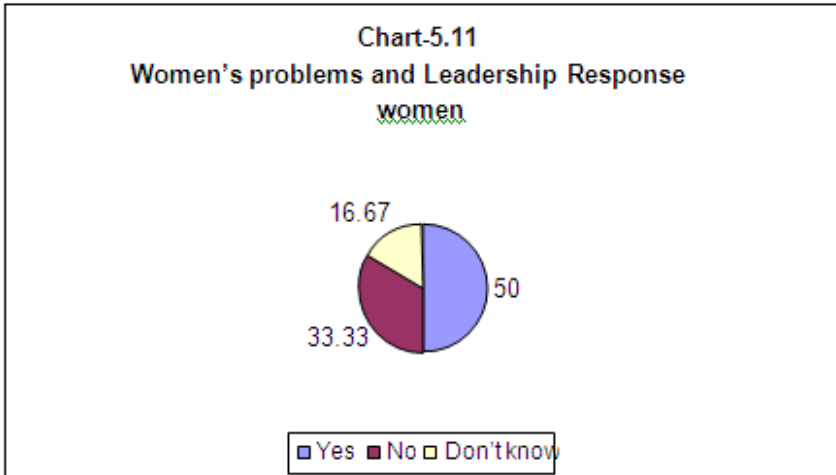
leaders as enunciated by 80 respondents (26.67 percent) is that they are ruled by other forces. They can not handle the charge on their own. Either, her husband, son, brother or any relative or friend guide her in discharging her routine duties. If she is influenced in this way, policy decisions will be affected. Another 70 respondents (23.33 percent) could not evaluate the qualities of women leader working in their areas.

Women’s Problems and Leadership:-

The women leaders who got elected under reservations are really interested in solving the problems pertaining to women folk. Similar question was put to the respondents and their response can be seen in table-5.11.

**Table-5.11
Women’s Problems and Leadership Response**

S No.	Respondents	Leadership Response		Don’t know	Total
		Yes	No		
1.	Number	150	100	50	300
2.	Percentage	50.00	33.33	16.67	100.00



According to table-5.11, out of 300 respondents 150 of them (50.00 percent) opined that the women leaders of their area are interested in solving the problems pertaining to women. They exhibit their enthusiasm and concern with the problems of women. But, due to non-cooperation from officials and situation, they may not do so. But, in the opinion of 100 respondents (33.33 percent) they are not interested in

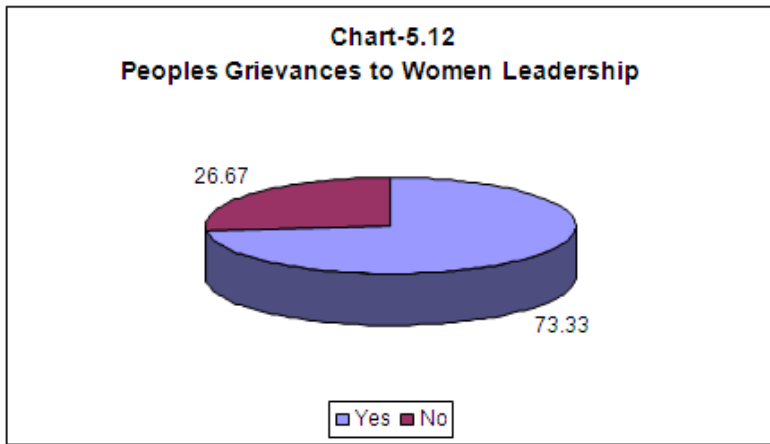
solving problems pertaining to women. They are visualizing all problems as general and not according any specific attention to the problem of women. However, 50 respondents (16.67 percent) could not analyse it due to their ignorance and innocence.

Peoples Grievances to Women Leadership:-

Then, the respondents were asked to tell whether they approached women leader any time with their grievances or not? Table-5.12 presents the responses.

Table-5.12
Peoples Grievances to Women Leadership

Sl.No.	Respondents	Gender Classification		Total
		Yes	No	
1.	Number	220	80	300
2.	Percentage	73.33	26.67	100.00



Out of 300 respondents, 220 (73.33 percent) have approached their woman leader, on different occasions with their grievances. Each time, there were different issues. But 80 respondents (26.67 percent) did not approach even once with any grievance. Though they too have several problems of their own, but they did not show interest to meet their leader.

Attitude of Women Leadership:-

The respondents, who met their leader on different occasions were asked to express their opinion on the attitude of women leaders whenever they met them. Table-5-13 shows the attitude of women leaders.

Table-5.13
Attitude of Women Leadership

Sl.No	Respondents	Attitude of Women Leadership			Total
		Positive	Negative	Indifferent	
1.	Number	120	80	100	300
2.	Percentage	40.00	26.67	33.33	100.00

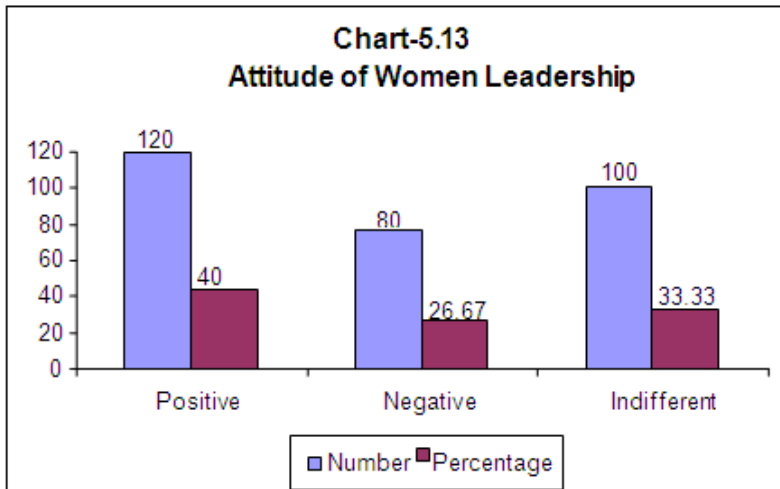


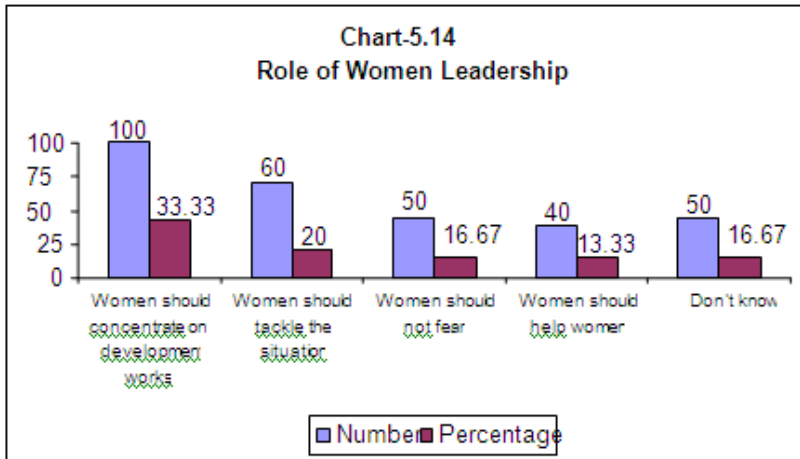
Table-5.13 presents quite an interesting picture. According to 120 respondents (40 percent) the women leader was positive when they approach her with their grievances. She received them well and enquired about their well being and assured them to solve their grievances. On the other hand, 80 respondents (26.67 percent) experience was quite different. When they approached, she did not react positively and received them with negative attitude and was reluctant to hear their grievances. According to 100 respondents (33.33 percent), the attitude of the elected leader was indifferent when they approached her with grievances. She neither showed interest in their grievances nor interested in solving them. She neither assured the respondents nor denied their plea. This way, respondents experienced different types of attitudes with their women leaders.

Role of Women Leadership:-

What is the role of women leaders expected to play? What are the expectations of respondents? Table-5.14 shows the role that women leaders are expected to play in the district, as expressed by the respondents.

Table-5.14
Role of Women Leadership

Sl.No.	Respondents	Women should concentrate on development works	Women should tackle the situation	Women should not fear	Women should help women	Don't know	Total
1.	Number	100	60	50	40	50	300
2.	Percentage	33.33	20.00	16.67	13.33	16.67	100.00



The respondents have given multifarious responses. Out of 300 respondents, 100 (33.33 percent) expect that women leaders should concentrate on developmental work. Fifty percent of the respondents opined that women should be able to tackle any type of critical situation that arise and should go ahead. Especially, 60 respondents (20.00 percent) commented that women leaders should give top priority to the redressal of women problems because most of women voters might have elected them

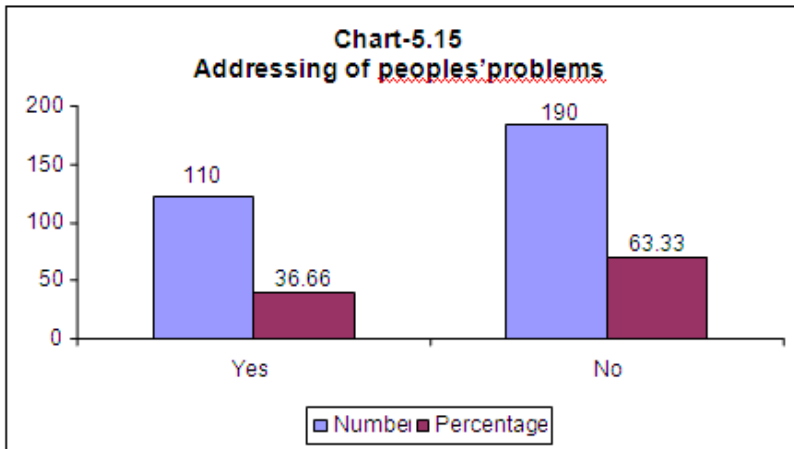
with this intention only. While taking decision women leaders should not fear. This is the expected role of women expressed by 50 respondents (16.67 percent). 40 respondents women should help Women (13.33 percent). On the other hand 50 respondents (16.67 percent) could not expect any role to be played by the women representatives. On the whole the respondents have expressed different views over the role to be played by the women leaders.

Addressing Peoples Problems:-

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to say whether the women representative solved their problems. Table-5.15 presents their responses.

**Table-5.15
Addressing Peoples Problems**

Sl.No.	Respondents	Addressing of peoples' Problems		Total
		Yes	No	
1.	Number	110	190	300
2.	Percentage	36.66	63.33	100.00



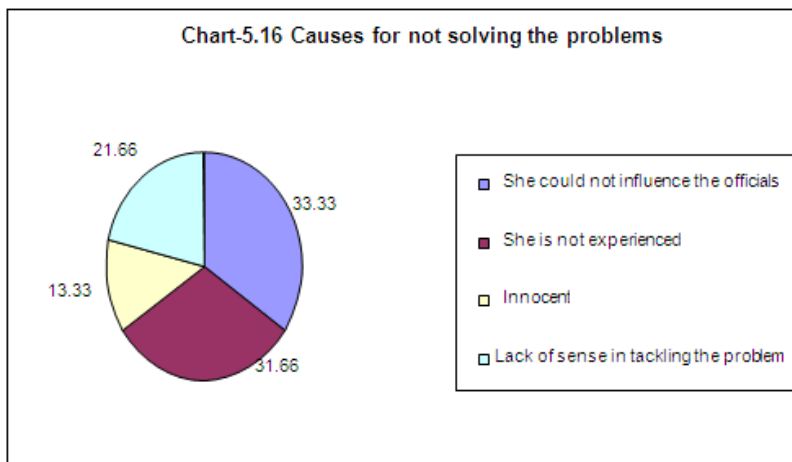
With regard to the redressal of problems, 110 respondents (36.66 percent) admitted that their problems were solved with the involvement / recommendation of their leader. But, according to 190 respondents (63.33) percent their problems are still pending. Whenever they approach her, she is sending them back by saying silly reasons and abstractions. Respondents felt that due to their incapability they could not solve their problems.

Causes for not solving the problems:-

The respondents were asked to tell the reasons, according to their perceptions, why they could not solve their problems. Table-5.16 furnishes the answers submitted by the respondents.

Table-5.16
Causes for not solving the problems

Sl. No.	Respondents	Causes for not solving the problems				Total
		She could not influence the officials	She is not experienced	Innocent	Lack of sense in tackling the problem	
1.	Number	100	95	40	65	300
2.	Percentage	33.33	31.66	13.33	21.66	100.00



According to the perceptions of the respondents, the causes for not solving their problems are multifarious. Out of 300 respondents, 100 (33.33 percent) opined that women leaders could not influence the officials to redress the grievances. Another 95 respondents (31.66 percent) noted that due to their inexperience in administrative problems the grievances were not solved. Likewise, 65 respondents (21.66 percent) commented that

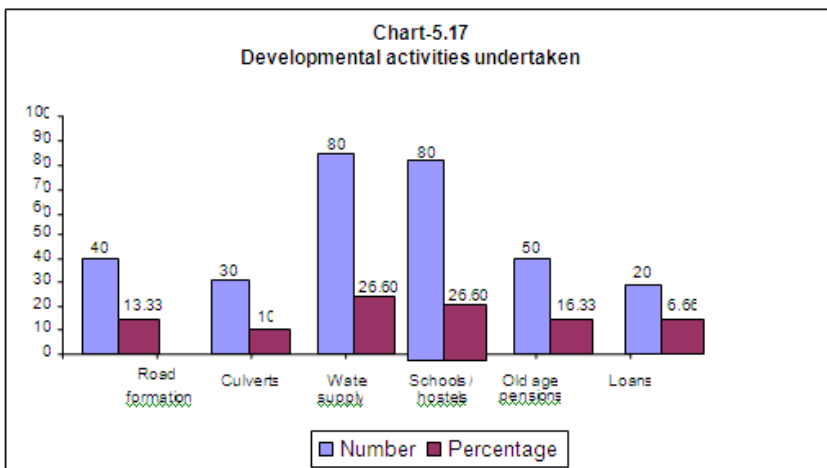
the leaders do not have the sense of tackling the problems and hence they are suffering. Another 40 respondents (13.33 percent) simply commented that the women leaders are innocent.

Developmental Activities undertaken in the Jurisdiction:-

The elected representatives, who ever and wherever they are, they are supposed to take up certain development works in their constituency / jurisdiction / area. Keeping this in mind, the respondents were asked to list out the works executed in their areas. Table-5.17 furnishes the answers given by the respondents.

Table-5.17
Developmental Activities undertaken in the Jurisdiction

Sl. No.	Respondents	Developmental activities						Total
		Road formation	Culverts	Water supply	Schools / hostels	Old age pensions	Loans	
1	Number	40	30	80	80	50	20	300
2	Percentage	13.33	10.00	26.66	26.66	16.66	6.66	100.00



Respondents said that different types of works have been undertaken in their constituency. While assessing the women leaders, they might be having in their minds about the performance of Sarpanches, Mandal Presidents, Members of MPTC, ZPTC, MLA and MP also. Water supply has been given top priority in the developmental works. Equal

importance was given to the construction and maintenance of schools and hostels. Out of 300 respondents, 80 of them (26.66 %) expressed the above views. It is further indicated that old age pension were sanctioned to 50 respondents (16.33 percent). On the other hand 40 respondents (13.33 percent) said that roads were laid in their areas and 30 respondents (10.00 percent) said that culverts were constructed in their areas. Table-5.17 indicates that different types of works have been executed in the areas by women representatives.

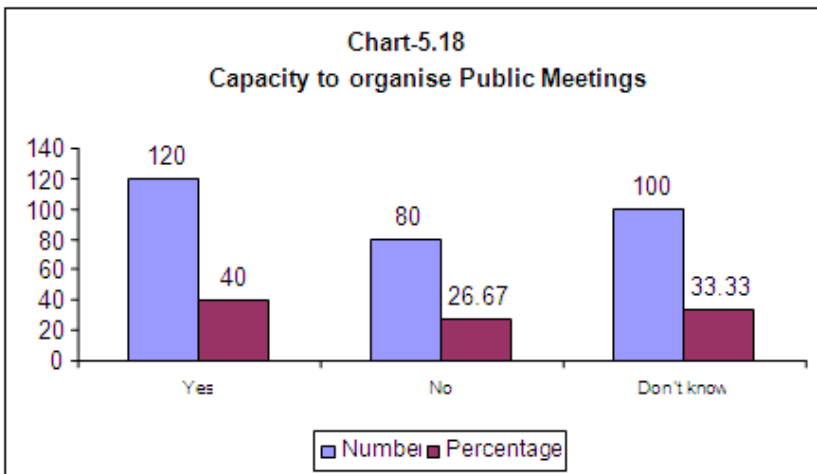
Capacity to organise the Public Meetings:-

Afterwards, with an intention to draw the perceptions on the individual capacity of women leaders, certain questions were put to the respondents. Respondents were asked to reveal whether they organize public meetings in their areas.

Table-5.18 gives the details pertaining to the organization of public meetings.

Table-5.18
Capacity to organise the Public Meetings

Sl.No.	Respondents	Capacity to organize public meetings		Don't know	Total
		Yes	No		
1.	Number	120	80	100	300
2.	Percentage	40.00	26.67	33.33	100.00



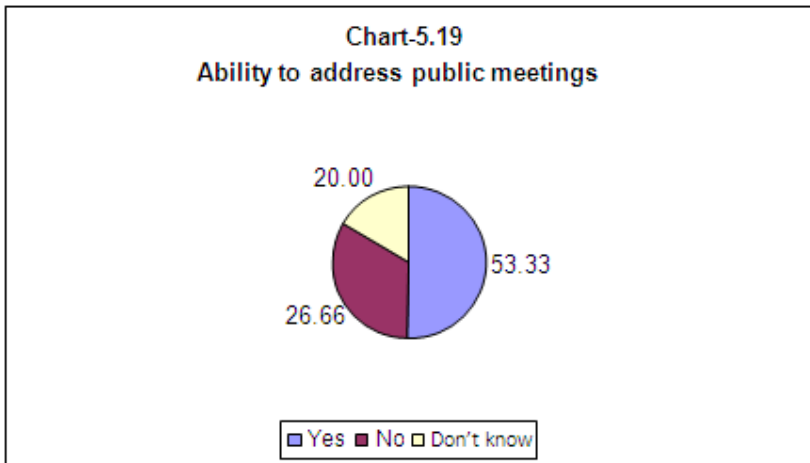
It is necessary for any public leader to organize small public meetings here and there to show gatherings and to project their performance. According to 120 respondents (40.00 percent) women leaders of their area organizes small meetings, gatherings to address the people regarding their activities. On the other hand 80 respondents (26.67 percent) categorically said that no such public meetings are organized by any leaders, except during the time of elections. According to 100 respondents (33.33 percent), they don't know such public meetings.

Ability to address public meetings:-

The respondents who said that the women leaders have been organizing small public meetings here and there, were asked to reveal whether women representatives are able to address the public? Table-5.19 gives the explanation in this regard.

Table-5.19
Ability to address public meetings

Sl.No.	Respondents	Able to address to public meetings		Don't know	Total
		Yes	No		
1.	Number	160	80	60	300
2.	Percentage	53.33	26.66	20.00	100.00



Out of 300 respondents 160 of them (53.33 percent) opined that women leaders of their areas are efficient to address small public meetings to project their party programmes and implementation of developmental activities. However, 80 respondents (26.66 percent) could not see this type

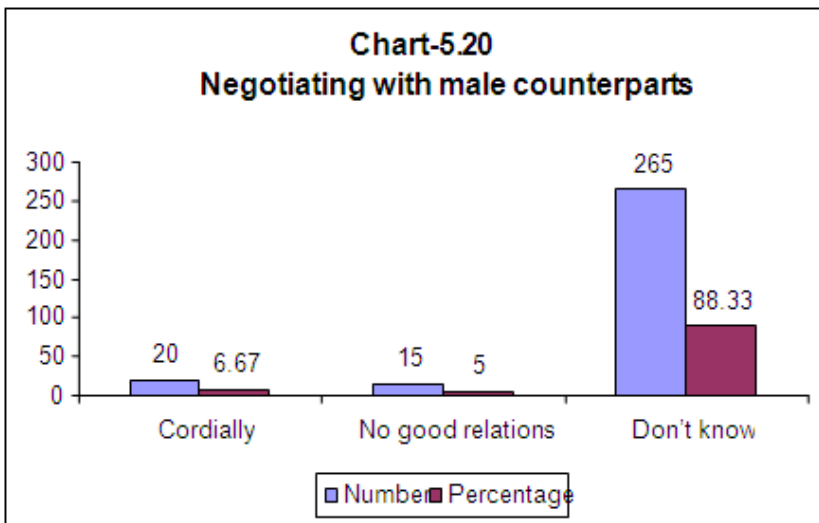
of quality in the women representatives. On the other hand, 60 respondents (20.00 percent) could not judge their capacities.

Negotiating with male counterparts:-

How women representatives behave with their men counterparts? When the same question was put to respondents they reacted as shown in table-5.20.

Table-5.20
Negotiating with male counterparts

Sl.No.	Respondents	Negotiating with male counterparts		Don't know	Total
		Cordially	No good relations		
1.	Number	20	15	265	300
2.	Percentage	6.67	5.00	88.33	100.00



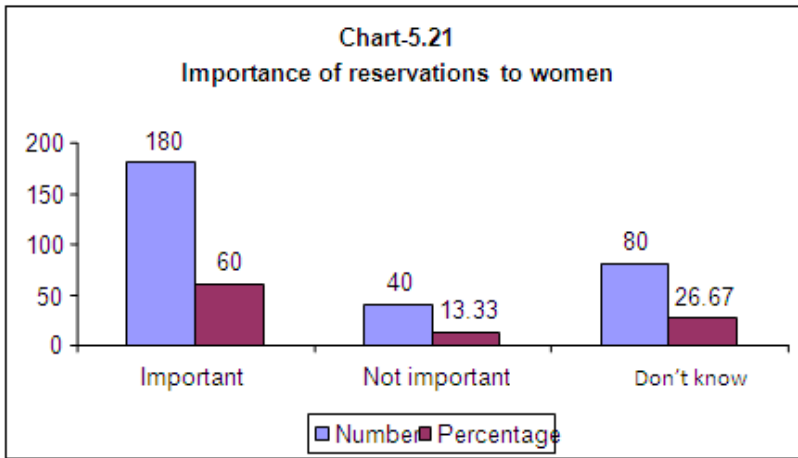
Importance of reservations to women:-

Respondents were slightly under embarrassing situation to answer the question about the behaviour of women representatives with their male counterparts. According to table-4-20, only 6.67 percent of respondents opined that the women elected representatives are maintaining cordial relations with their male counterparts. According to 5.00 percent of the respondents, there are no good relations between them. However, 88.33 percent of the respondents categorically said that they are not aware of any contacts between the women elected representatives and their men

counterparts. The respondents were asked to comment on the importance of 30.00 percent reservation of seats in local bodies of women. Table-5.21 presents the comments of respondents.

Table-5.21
Importance of reservations to women

S No	Respondents	33 percent of reservations to women			Total
		Necessary	Not necessary	Don't know	
1.	Number	180	40	80	300
2.	Percentage	60.00	13.33	26.67	100.00



With regard to the reservation of seats for women, out of 300 respondents 180 of them (60.00 percent) felt that it is necessary because 50.00 percent of the total population in the country are women. However, 40 respondents (13.33 percent) felt that there is no such necessity. Women can fight elections in general quota as men do According to 80 respondents (26.67 percent) they do not have any idea about the reservation of seats exclusively for women.

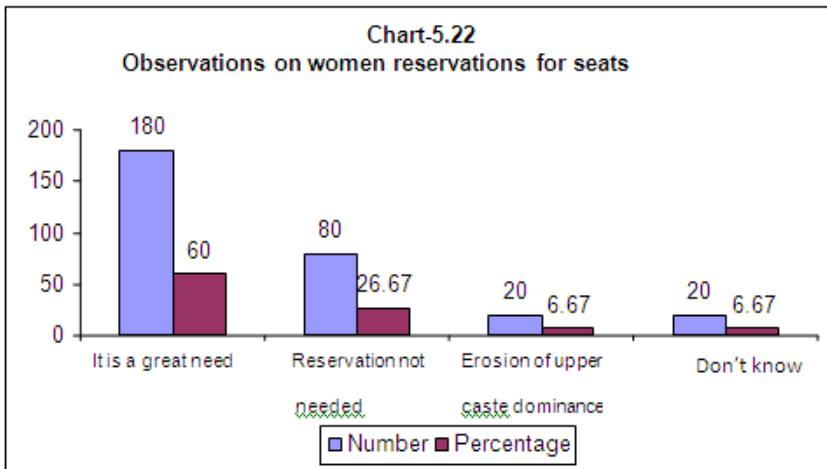
Observations on Women Reservations for Seats:-

Few areas have been reserved for women. Respondents were asked to put forth their comments on the reservation of their areas for women. Such comments can be seen in table-5.22.

Table-5.22

Observations on women reservations for seats

S No.	Respondents	observations on reservation			Don't know	Total
		It is a good decision	Reservation not necessary	It is a slap on upper caste		
1.	Number	180	80	20	20	300
2.	Percentage	60.00	26.67	6.67	6.67	100.00



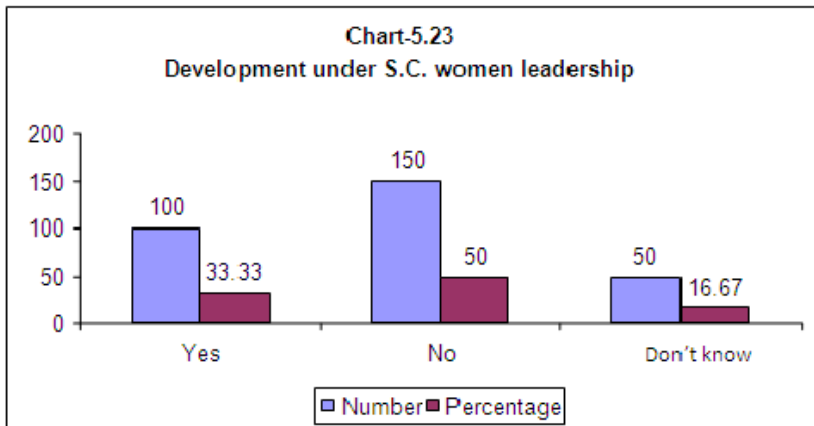
With regard to the meeting of 33.00 percent of reservation of seats to women, respondents have given different opinions. Out of 300 respondents, 180 of them (60.00 percent) welcomed the reservation of seats to women and appreciated the decision. But 80 respondents (26.67 percent) felt that reservation of seats for women is not necessary. An aggressive section of upper caste commented that (20 respondents constitute to 6.67 percent) reservation of seats to down trodden people is nothing but an erosion of upper caste dominance.

Development under S.C. Women Leadership:-

Under the leadership of S.C. women, whether the respondents have seen any development in their area? Answer to this question can be seen through table-5.23.

Table-5.23
Development under S.C. women leadership

Sl.No.	Respondents	Development under the leadership of women			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
1.	Number	100	150	50	300
2.	Percentage	33.33	50.00	16.67	100.00



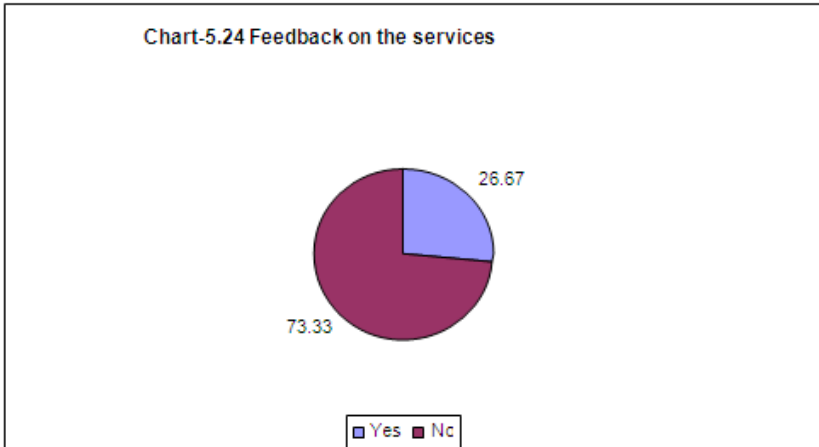
Out of 300 respondents, 100 (constituting 33.33 percent) opined that their areas have been developed under the leadership of women representatives. According to 50.00 percent of the respondents women leadership has not contributed for the development of their area. According to 50 respondents (16.67 percent) they do not have any idea about the development in their area.

Feedback on the services of S.C. women leadership:-

Finally, the respondents were asked to offer suggestions for the better implementation of reservation seats for S.C. women. Table-5.24 presents the suggestions as offered by the respondents.

Table-5.24
Feedback on the services of S.C. women leadership

Sl.No.	Respondents	Yes	No	Total
1	Number	80	220	300
2.	Percentage	26.67	73.33	100.00



It is observed that the majority of people are unhappy with the services rendered by their elected representatives (female) out of 300 respondents, 220 (constituting 73.33 percent) expressed their opinion that the female elected representatives are not taking decisions on their own on several grounds and they are influenced either by their relatives or male friends. Due to this fact, the common public are unhappy. However 80 respondents (26.67 percent), mostly women, expressed their happiness over the services rendered by the elected (women) representatives. It is because whenever they approach their leader with grievances, their representatives listen to them and make their efforts to solve their problems. It is because of this reason, a few respondents expressed their happiness over the services of their representatives.

A few Case Studies on the Functioning of Women Elected Representatives:-

The main objective of this chapter is to record the perceptions of the public over the political empowerment of women as well as their functioning as elected representatives. The public opinion has been recorded by administering the structured questionnaire. Their perceptions have been analysed and presented in a descriptive manner. An idea emerged in the mind of the researcher that what type of feelings do the elected representatives have especially after being elected as public representatives. How comfortable they are after successfully winning the elections? What type of problems they are facing while discharging their duties as elected representatives? Even after their successful participation in the elections, whether they are able to do justice to their family and family members? What do they think about reservations provided under

73rd CAA, especially for women? Whether they are influenced by their husbands or relatives while taking decisions. What type of relations do they have with their co-elected representatives or counterparts? What type of relations do they have with the officials working in their territorial jurisdictions, etc. The researcher has personally met the following S.C. women elected representatives in Warangal district of 5 revenue divisions, each division one woman sarpanch has been picked up and recorded their perceptions.

Case Study-I

Sodari Sammakka, Sarpanch of Royyuru Grampanchayat, Mandal Praja Parishad of Eturnagaram, Mulugu Revenue Division. She was elected under the category of S.C. (W). Her age is 39 years and she has studied till fifth Class. Her main occupation is agriculture labour. She belongs to S.C. Community. Her annual income is Rs. 10,000/- and she is a white ration card holder. She is survived with her husband and Five Children. Her husband is also an agriculture labour. She belongs to the poor family. She does not have any property either house or land. She represents the Telugu Desham Party in her village.

After having a heated discussion with the concerned MLA, her husband, relatives and well wishers she contested in the election under the S.C.(W) reservation category and has been elected. After her successful winning, she expressed the following facts about her functioning. Philosophically, she said that women are always subordinates right from the cradle to grave yard and dawn to dusk. Ours is a male dominated society. Males are ruling the family as well as village, district, state and nation administration with a few exceptional cases here and there. Women are always given secondary importance when compared with men in all aspects. The Government, after a thorough discussion and interaction has taken a decision to reserve some seats to SC Women. It is a very good and novel step taken by the Government. After making an amendment to the constitution the bill of reservation has come into force. Under which she participated the election and won the seat of Grampanchayat.

Before taking the change of Sarpanch. she does not have the experience in politics. Before entering into politics, she was an agriculture labour. After her election for sarpanch post her husband is also actively participating in the elections. She informed that her family members are also playing on active role in the politics. She clearly said that she is discharging all of her official duties by the help of her husband and her relatives. She feels that after her entering into politics, she could bring few changes in women community in general and S.C. women in particular. She informed that whenever and wherever few obstacles arises in her way

of functioning, her husband is taking of it and solving the unwanted problems.

She entered into politics because of the reservation system, her husband's support, MLA's wishes, family members' support and our village upper caste people. She also said that because of the reservation of Royyuru seat for S.C.(W) she is elected. She said that there is a difference in the functioning, responding fund-releasing between men and women elected representatives. She felt that the politics cannot function without finances. Whereas, she is a poor lady and cannot spend money for higher positions in politics.

She understood that after taking the charge as Sarpanch, she could bring out some changes in her personality. She has exhorted the pressure to introduce the Mahila Bill for the betterment of women in the Indian Parliament. She presumed that women are still in backward stage. She voted for effective the empowerment of women and political empowerment for S.C. women.

Case Study-II

Smt. Pisa Mariyamma is the sarpanch of Konapuram village, mandal Parishad of Chennaroapet under the Narsampet revenue division. She represents the TRS party. This seat is reserved for S.C. Women Category. Born in 1976 she studied upto 9th class. She is 33 years old and she is survived with husband, three daughters and one son. Her occupation is agriculture labour and politics. Before entering into politics, she was a home maker. Since Konapuram village is reserved for S.C. category. This has helped her to enter into politics. She has been elected on behalf of the TRS party. Her family members are in politics only since the establishment of the TRS party.

Frankly speaking, the sarpanch has the wider political exposure but whatever the powers and roles conferred on sarpanch, such powers are not being exercised by Mariyaamma. Her husband is running the show sitting behind the screen. She acts as a rubber stamp. All decisions are being taken either by her husband or by her relatives and upper caste people of the village. She does not have experience in politics. Even her husband and other relatives also do not have much political background. Here there is a scope that the officials and upper caste people may mislead them. They are not aware of the acts, rules and regulations. Hence they depend either on officials or political leaders.

She said that even in some of the official meetings also, her husband is attending and taking part on behalf of herself? Instead of her presence being the sarpanch her husband acts as the sarpanch. Even in

National Festivals and Party meetings, her husband always represents. She is a puppet. She cannot speak in the public meetings. On behalf of her, her husband speaks in the meetings and addressing the people. If any signature is necessary on files, then she enters into the picture for making signature otherwise all activities are being carried out by her husband.

Then, what for the S.C. reservations? Far how the purposes of reservations are achieved? Why political empowerment of S.C. women is necessary, and one has to concentrate on this issue in order to make sustainable.

Case-III

Smt. Somarapu Sukkamma, Sarpanch of Aminapuram Grampanchayat, Mandal Praja Parishad of Kesamudram under Mahaboobabad Revenue division. She was elected under the category of S.C. (W). She is 35 years old and she is an illiterate. She is an agriculture worker. She belongs to S.C. Community (Madiga Community). Her annual income is Rs. 10,000/- and she is a white ration card holder. She is survived with her husband and 5 Children (three daughters and two son). Her husband is an agriculture labor. She belongs to very poor family. She has only house, being under the Indira Awas Yojana Scheme. She represents the Congress Party.

After a continuous interaction with congress M.L.A., her husband, relatives and well wishers she is contested in the election under the S.C.(W) reservation category and has been elected. After her successful winning, she expressed the following facts about her functioning. Philosophically she said that women are always subordinates right from the cradle to grave and dawn to dust. Ours is a male dominated society. Gents are ruling the family as well as village, district, state and nation administration with a few exceptional cases here and there. Women are always given secondary importance when compared with men, in all aspects. The Government, after a thorough discussion and interaction has taken a decision to reserve some seats to SC Women. It is a very good and novel step taken by the Government. After making an amendment to the constitution the bill of reservation has come into force. Under which she fought the election and won the seat of Grampanchayat.

Before her election to the post of Sarpanch, she is sporadically involved in political activities. After her election to be a sarpanch, her husband is also actively participating in the elections. She informed that her family members are also playing an active role in the politics. She said that she is discharging all of her official duties with the help of her husband and relatives. She feels that after entering into the politics, she could bring our few changes in women community in general and S.C.

women in particular. She also informed that whenever and wherever few obstacles arise in her way of functioning, her husband is taking care and solving the unwanted problems.

She entered in to politics because of the reservation system, her husband's support, MLA's wishes, family members' support and our village upper caste people and self-confidence. She said that because of reservation of Ameenapuram seat for S.C.(W) she has been elected. She said that there is a difference in the functioning, responding treated out, fund-releasing between men and women elected representatives. She felt that the politics cannot run without finances. Whereas she is a poor lady and cannot spend money for higher positions in the politics.

She felt that after taking the charge as Sarpanch, she could find changes in her personality. She strongly emphasised the introduction of the Mahila Bill in the Indian Parliament. She felt that women are still in backward stage. She voted for the effective empowerment of women and political empowerment for S.C. women.

Case-IV

Smt R. Vijaya, sarpanch of Molukala gudem Grampanchayat, Mandal Praja Parishad of Hanamkonda under Warangal Revenue Division. She was elected under the category of SC (W). She is 49 years old she has studied till 10th Class. Her main occupation is self – employed and agriculture worker. She belongs to SC Community. Her annual income is Rs. 15,000/- and she is a white ration card holder. She is survived with husband and 3 Children (2daughters and one son). Her husband is a small farmer. She belongs to lower middle class family. She possesses meagre property of land. She represents the Congress Party.

After a continuous interaction with congress leaders of her husband, relatives and well wishers she fought the election under S.C.(W) reservation category and got elected. After her successful winning, she expressed following facts about her functioning. Philosophically she said that women are always subordinates right from the cradle to grave and dawn to dust. Ours is a male dominated society. Gents are ruling the family as well as village, district, state and nation administration with a few exceptional cases here and there. Women are always given secondary importance when compared with men, in all aspects. The Government, after a thorough discussion and interaction has taken a decision to reserve some seats to SC Women. It is a very good and noval step taken by the Government. After making an amendment to the constitution the bill of reservation has come into force. Under which she fought the election and won the seat of Grampanchayat.

Before her election to the post of Sarpanch, she sporadically involved in political activities. After her election to sarpanch, her husband is also actively participating in the elections. She informed that her family members are also playing active role in the politics. She undoubtedly said that she is discharging all of her official duties with the help of her husband and other relatives. She feels that after her entering into politics, she could bring few changes in women community in general and S.C. women in particular. She informed that whenever and wherever few obstacles arises in her way of functioning, her husband is taking care and solving the unwanted problems.

She entered in politics because of reservations, her husband's support, MLA's wishes, family members' support and our village upper caste people and self-confidence. She said that because of reservation of Mulukalgudem seat for S.C.(W) she got elected. She said that there is difference in the functioning, responding treat out, fund-releasing between men and women elected representatives. She felt that politics cannot run without finances. Whereas she is a poor lady and cannot spend money for higher positions in politics.

She felt that after taking the charge as Sarpanch, she could find changes in her personality. She stressed the need to introduce Mahila bill in the Parliament. She felt that still women are in backward stage. She voted for effective women empowerment and political empowerment for S.C. women.

Case-V

Smt. Guda Sunitha is a Sarpanch of Raghunathapally village and it is also the mandal headquarter under Jangon Renvenu Division. Aged about 27 years she has studied upto II class. She is surviving with husband, one son and one daughter. This seat is reserved for SC(W) and being a Scheduled Caste she contested and got elected. She is a poor lady and holding white ration card and living under BPL. She belongs to TRS party. Her main occupation is agriculture labour.

During 2006, this village Sarpanch seat has been reserved for SC(W). She belongs to SC community. With the support of local, especially SC community she was elected. Before her joining into politics, her husband was Auto driver. It is informed that to keep her in their hands, the mandal level leaders supported her financially and helped for her success in elections. She is the Sarpanch only for designation sake. All activities are being carried out by her husband only. Whenever her signature is necessary he bring the file to her. Otherwise her presence is not required.

She is a labour. Every day she used to go to agriculture field for labour and earn daily wages. Her life depends upon her income (daily wage) only. Her family background is very poor. All mandal and political leaders have contributed for her success and the elections because in future they can use her services and position for their self interest. Where is political empowerment of women? What is the purpose or reservation of seats for women? How far the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is reasonable?

Reservations for women, women empowerment, political empowerment of women, women rights, equal status to women on par with men are the subjects for discussion, now-a-days. International agencies, national/state/local governments, non-governmental organizations are coming forward to uplift women through ongoing equal status, constitutional status, reservations for them. Government of India has taken a novel step by providing reservations in urban / rural politics through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. All most all state Governments have implemented the 73rd as well as 74th CAA in their respective states and allotted reservations to women as stated in the Amendment. The very purpose of this amendment is to uplift women, especially women from backward communities and providing scope for them to enter into politics to develop themselves and also allow them to take part in the national development.

Now the time has come-up, to study to what extent this reservations policy has yielded good results? How far the political empowerment of women is achieved. The perceptions of people clearly indicated that political empowerment of women has not reached the level of expectations. People find difference in the functioning of women elected representatives to that of men elected representatives. They expressed their opinion that women elected representatives are not bold enough to take their own decisions. It is further noted that whether the women (reserved) elected representatives are there, they are influenced by their husbands and relatives in decision-making.

In other words the women elected representatives are dominated by their husbands, in fact their husbands are ruling their wives constituencies. The case studies also proves the same. The women elected representatives rightly admitted that they are acting like puppets in the hands of their husbands. Their illiteracy, innocence, backwardness is being encashed either by their husbands or by the political leaders. No doubt, the reservation has provided scope for women to enter into politics. But its purpose is not yet achieved. It may take some more time to uplift women and raise the standard of awareness among women to match the political

standards of male dominated society. Let us hope in near future that women may raise their standard of political awareness and play a key role and politics, national development activities and do justice to the objectives of 73rd and 74th CAA which provided reservations to women.

Chapter 6 Findings and conclusions

‘Empowerment’ is a word widely used but seldom defined. Long before the word became popular, women were speaking about gaining control over their lives and participating in the decisions that affect them at home, community, in government and international development policies. The word empowerment captures this sense of gaining control over their, participation in the sphere of administration, decision making and their lives. and decision making. Recently the word has entered the vocabulary of development, particularly in the case of women empowerment.

Empowerment is a comprehensive process and is not, therefore, something that can be given to people. The process of empowerment is both individual and collective since it is through involvement in groups that people most often begin to develop the awareness and the ability to organize to take action and bring about change.

At a workshop of Pacific Women entitled “Women Development and Empowerment” Vanessa Griffen^{lxxix} defines the word empowerment means to her, “To me the word simply means, adding to women’s power – To me the power means:

- Having control or gaining further control;
- Having a say and being listened to;
- Being able to define and create from a women’s perspective;
- Being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not fast areas of society accepted as women’s place);
- Being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make;
- Power means being able to make a contribution at all levels of society and not just in the home, power also means having women’s contribution recognized and valued.

In short, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building to greater decision making power and control resulting in transformative action. Empowerment means the power and authority. The structural features of political life also tend to exclude women from positions of power. An early study by Usha Mehta^{lxxx} brought out the fact that “although the representation, of women in Parliament, in the Assemblies and the Union and State Cabinets of India is longer more than it is in many other countries of the world it is not proportionate to their

number in the total population and does not even approximate to the figure that political parties consider to be a fair allocation.

Political Empowerment of Women

The question of women's political participation is now on the international agenda, and permeating many regional and national plans of action. Much hope has been invested in the United Nations and it has consistently been the engine for keeping the gender issues on the global agenda. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) in 1952. Since 1975 four international conferences on women have been held under its auspices; which have emphasized women's political empowerment as a crucial issue. The issue of women's political empowerment, while attracting considerable attention earlier, actually came to the forefront of the global debate for women's rights at the time of the Fourth World Conference on women's rights held at Beijing in 1995.

Henceforth, the issues continued to hold centre-stage of all discussions on gender justice and equality. Women's equal access to, and full participation in decision-making was emphasized in the platform for action, as one of the critical areas of concern. It unequivocally declared, "women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account" A detailed set of recommendations were issued therein to all governmental and non-governmental communities, at national & international levels to enhance women's political participation and decision-making. It further urges for the governmental commitment to gender balance in all spheres reform of electoral systems, monitoring and evaluation of progress in women's representation, revamping of party structures to remove barriers to women's political participation, incorporation of gender issues and initiatives in the agenda of political parties, affirmative action, strengthening mechanisms to monitor women's access to senior levels of decision-making among others. It also affirmed that women should have at least a 30 per cent share in decision-making positions. However, recommendations are exactly that, they rarely, if ever can be enforced with full authority and extent of law.

Rural women in the Third World play significant roles in agricultural and rural development. Their activities cover all or some of the production stages from managerial activities including decision-making to the actual farm work, the preparatory stage the supporting services at harvest and post harvest activities^{lxxxix}. According to Boserup there were

major regional differences in the role that women play in farming in the Third World and that of Africa could be described as the “region of female farming par excellence”^{lxxxii}.

The Role of Women in the Rural Society

The women in the socio-economic life of Africa and other developing countries have for several decades been neglected by the policy makers and the society at large^{lxxxiii}. All along social scientists have avoided issues concerning women and concentrated on men’s activities that were considered worthy of research and women were described in terms of their relationship to those activities^{lxxxiv}. Yet women make up the largest percentage of rural inhabitants mostly due to migrant labour and the breaking down of the social fabric which labour and the breaking down of the social fabric which has left many women leading families alone and being single parents. Reasons advanced for this neglect include.

- i. There is limited and under-statement of statistical data on women who work on the household farm. Statistical data on women farmers are likely to be underestimated due to female secretiveness. Compared to male farmers, their activities are less susceptible to statistical measurement and systematic observation^{lxxxv}.
- ii. Colonists and westerners, including missionaries, did not understand the role of women and their degree of participation in traditional society, and consequently made no attempt to include them in modern institutions^{lxxxvi}.
- iii. The patriarchal values which hold that men are the more important sex have been accepted in certain societies. According to Wijaya and Agusiobo the common place ethnic in the society is that traditionally men are bread (rice) winners, and not women. Commentators, therefore limit women activities to the domestic roles of home maker wife and mother.
- iv. Development experts have traditionally viewed women as part of a family unit that would automatically benefit from employment opportunities for the male household heads neglecting the view that a high proportion of household heads are females.
- v. Most of the work done by rural women such as collecting water and firewood, storing and processing grains for home consumption among others is unpaid labour. These activities, therefore, remained outside of official statistics that measure economic and agricultural output.
- vi. Women’s perception about themselves tends to put them down and behind the scene. Most of them lack self-confidence to take decisions on their own. The works of Ester Boserup and few

researchers, which aimed at breaking this kind of apathy led to the declaration of International women's year.

Problems and Approaches for Strengthening Women Roles

Many forces tend to hinder or work against women's agricultural activities. There has been a tendency for all women farmers, whether household heads or not, to lose customary rights of access to land. Legislation has not promoted women's legal ownership and inheritance rights and has at times undermined their rights under customary land tenure systems by registering land in the name of the husband or first son. Another difficulty faced by all women food producers is poor access to official resources. Channels of information, credit, inputs and access to markets have frequently been aimed at men on the implicit assumptions that men are head of household and that heads of households produce the food crops. External assistance has far more often gone to male farmers than to women. The gender composition of extension officers makes it difficult for women farmers to obtain extension advice. Most frontline staff is men and so it becomes culturally difficult for them to interact with the increasing number of female farmers. Another problem of much concern is poverty, which is inextricably linked with malnutrition, maternal and child mortality. Figure-6.1 shows the linkage.

For any strategy to be effective, it should aim to:

- i. Bring services physically closer to women;
- ii. Involve them in the formulation and management of programmes affecting them; and
- iii. Make women (individually or in groups) the contact point in order to deliver services directly to the beneficiaries and receivers.

Women need now appropriate technologies for their farming and domestic tasks. On the farm, women need improved small-scale equipment to process food crops. They need much better facilities in work place. Technologies that can increase the efficiency or reduce the time spent on some of these activities may help to increase the time spent on other activities like child care and market production.

The 1995 Beijing conference internationally proclaimed the need to integrate women into development without which the country can lay claim of development. There is a need to empower women to promote gender equity, agents of change in society, participate in politics to represent their demands and to increase their capability to enjoy life to the full. Looking at development of women as freedom and understanding their issues from the perspective of increasing their capabilities are better than concentrating on 'Women's well being'. As Amartya Sen put it

“Nothing arguably is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation of women”^{lxxxvii}.

Political Empowerment of Rural Women

Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicized clichéd concept of the 21st Century. The media talks about it, the local politicians talk about it, national leaders talk about it, policy makers talk about it, the international community talks about it. Yet women are nowhere near to being full and equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. This lack of adequate political participation in decision-making bodies has far-reaching consequences. It deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizens, their viewpoints and perspectives tend to remain unheard or under-represented and in some instances ignored while taking key decisions on national budgets and while setting up priorities for the Government. There was a widespread perception that with the improvements in social indicators, education and growing number of women in the various employment sectors, women would automatically gain space in the decision-making bodies. However, it does not appear to be happening and affirmative action to increase the number of women in representative bodies is gaining momentum day by day.

Gender Perspective in Five Year Plans

In India, values encouraging political participation of women co-exists with the notions of traditional role of women *vis-à-vis* the family and society. The Five-Year Plans of the executive reflected this notion in the first Five Plans. The issue of women and their development was viewed primarily from the welfare point of view. The First Five Year Plan set up Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 to undertake welfare activities through voluntary sector. The Second Five Year Plan hoped for development from grassroots through Mahila Mandals and the third, fourth and the interim plans planned for education of women, material and child care services, etc. In the Fifth Plan there was a shift from the welfare to the developmental approach and it was only in the Sixth Plan that women’s upliftment and their role as agents of development received priority attention. In fact, in the Sixth Plan document a separate Chapter on Women and Development was incorporated. Multi-disciplinary approach with three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment was suggested.

In the Seventh Plan, the objective was clearly stated to bring the women into the mainstream of national development. And in the Eighth Plan the attention was shifted made from development to empowerment of women in the core sectors of education, health and employment. The Ninth Plan states empowerment of women as a strategic objective. The

Approach Paper called for women's component plan as a part of the plan of each sector to identify the impact of plans and programmes on women. The Plan assures that at least 30 percent of funds/benefits from all development sector flow to women. The Tenth Plan approach aims at empowering women by translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action.

The strain of lamentation about insufficient representation of women in our legislatures continue to agitate the conscience of our leaders even after 50 years of the functioning of our Parliament. It found articulation on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Parliament when the Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat while addressed the International Parliamentary Conference expressing his concern that many deprived and neglected sections of society, particularly women, did not have enough space in political life. Taking note of the fact that the share of women in representative bodies all over the world has not gone beyond 14 per cent he recalled the profound statement made by Mahatma Gandhi in 1925: "As long as women of India do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country". Stating that the "Indian experience in this regard could be relevant" he referred to the provision in our Constitution under which 33 per cent of the seats for women at the grassroots representative bodies like panchayats and municipalities have been reserved. Mention that such steps have enabled about a million women to occupy seats in such bodies, he drew attention to the Bill pending before Parliament for providing 33 percent reservation for women at the national and state levels. Possibly affirmative action at the grassroots level democratic institutions constitutes exemplary action for women's empowerment which can be replicated at the national level. Movements launched by women themselves for greater access to public life and decision-making bodies are distinguishing features of the larger trend for deepening democracy and regenerating our inclusive society and polity. Attempts to reserve 33 percent of seats for women in legislative bodies at the national and state levels and the wider acceptability of this idea by people generate hope for their empowerment.

With the grant of constitutional gender-equality in free India came legal support through a series of legislations. While dealing with gender issues, it is important to mention that the Constitution of India has guaranteed equality before law and equal protection of law (Article 14 and prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex alone and it has empowered the State to make special provisions for women and children Article 15). It has made provisions to prohibit traffic in human beings and to provide for just and humane conditions of work along with maternity relief (Article 23 and Article 42). It is a constitutional duty of every citizen to renounce

practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51A). In this respect, India's Constitution has a place of distinction among the comity of nations.

The Indian constitution made a deliberate radical departure from the age-old poor social status of women by granting them equal, social and political status. Constitutional equal status means that every adult female, whatever be her social position or accomplishments, has now the opportunity to function as a citizen and individual partner in the task of nation building.

In view of the constitutional obligations, during the post-independent era, women have been recognised as a separate target group and the government has directed its efforts towards mainstreaming of women into the national developmental process. This period has witnessed far-reaching changes in almost all spheres political, economic and social. In terms of constitutional, legal and administrative measures, many commendable initiatives have been taken. Prominent among them are the Constitutional provisions for gender equality and justice, enactment of new laws and amendment of existing laws to protect and promote the interests of women, setting up of women-specific administrative and economic structures, such as Women and Child Development Department at the Union and State Government levels, formation of National Commission for women in several states, State Women Development Corporations, orienting plan strategy to include women specific and women related programmes, launching of special schemes like *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh* and *Mahila Samridhi Yojana*, *Indira Mahila Yojana*, etc.

The 33 percent reservation for women in *panchayat* elections has made a significant beginning. However, experiences of women elected as members have been both positive and also disheartening. The fact that about one million women came into the public arena for the first time is expected to create ripples in a tradition bound Indian society, but then the quality of participation in the *panchayat* bodies may not be so effective in the beginning. But at the same time, it is also true that most elected women have no idea, as to what being an elected member really means, and just do what the men (as brother, father, father-in-law and husband) tell them to do. Illiterate women cannot take autonomous decision. They are bound to be dictated by educated and crafty male members of their family in the background. Mrs. Rabri Devi, the former Chief Minister of Bihar, is a glaring case in point. Like her, illiterate women in politics have to remain proxy political figures.

The elected women themselves, however, are not yet seeing them as empowered for want of education and therefore, lack the required confidence in asserting themselves. Some do not assert themselves because they do not know what their rights as village administrators. The other point is that community does not perceive the women as capable or worthy of leadership. The attitude of rural people towards women as political leaders is yet to undergo sufficient change. Besides being a votary of political empowerment of women, I really wonder whether empowerment in such a situation would really make much difference in the life of illiterate women. However, in the long run, political empowerment may help them gain social acceptance and they would be quite effective and autonomous in the decision-making process.

S.C. Women Leadership Scenario in Warangal District

India is a representative form of government. People elect their representatives to the policy making bodies. However, it is important to note that to make India a vibrant democracy, it is essential to acknowledge the very fact of the Indian social composition. Indian social structure is highly diversified with different caste, religion, ethnic and cultural groups and communities. These diversified groups are not placed with equal footing in terms of socio-economic development. Moreover, they have differential political consciousness. In this context, it is very important to accommodate these diversified groups into the policy making process so not only these groups will have socio-economic development but also the country as a nation will be strengthened in the arena of international competition.

Panchayat Raj institutions are the grass-root units of self-government. They are the instruments for participatory democracy and decentralization at the grassroots level. They carry back to the people the power that really belongs to them. Thus they have an immense potential for democratic decentralization and devolving power to the people. They are the vehicles of socio-economic transformation. It is therefore necessary that these bodies are effective and function meaningfully. This demands an active involvement, contribution and participation of the people. Participation refers to direct involvement of people, both men and women in: (i) decision-making, (ii) implementation of development programmes, (iii) monitoring and evaluation of programmes and (iv) sharing the benefits of development. Thus, there has to be a 'bottom up approach' rather than one where people are mere observers and total dependents. The people should operate and the government should co-operate.

Importance of S.C. Women Leadership at the Grassroots Level

The equality guaranteed by the Constitution of India, demands active political participation by women which is integral to the whole issue of the progress of women. Women constitute 50 percent of the rural population. This gives them the legitimacy to play an important role at the grassroot level. Such participation is important primarily due to following reasons.

9. To initiate, formulate and implement policies and programmes which will benefit women. It has been observed that in most of the Panchayats the decision-making has been in favour of men, and the needs of rural S.C. women go unnoticed.
10. To bring in a feminine perspective to the process of planning, policy formulation and execution of rural development programmes. It is expected that more women would change the focus of rural administration towards important facets of life like health, nutrition, children's welfare, family care, drinking water etc.
11. Election of more women to Village Panchayats would play a major role to empower S.C. women. Empowering women refers to strengthening their innate capacities through acquiring knowledge, power and experience. Power here means not power to dominate but power to reduce helplessness and dependency. Thus S.C. women's access to power structures would help them in overcoming inequality and subordination they have been experiencing for ages.
12. The entry of more and more S.C. women into the realm of grassroots politics suggest that their increased number will offer them equally increased opportunity to influence the local decision-making. Once a group reaches a certain 'critical mass' then its position, power and influence is likely to increase. Thus increase in number will help women in becoming an effective pressure group through the instrument of collective bargaining.
13. Women are the active agents of socio-economic transformation in rural areas. They have the potential for effective networking and pooling of resources. They can understand better their problems, identify them, give priorities and preferences, and are aware of strategies towards their solution. Hence their active participation will not only enhance the status of women in the village, but will also help in development of the village.
14. The elected women can act as an intermediary between the government and the women in rural areas. Their accessibility to other women in the village, their contacts at the grassroots,

- and their awareness of the needs and interests of women will improve the condition of S.C. women in rural areas.
15. Larger participation will provide S.C. women an exposure to outside world. Their participation would improve their status in society as well as at home. It would also give them an opportunity to work in groups on projects of common interest and associate themselves with ongoing programmes.
 16. It will provide a platform for S.C. women to gain experience, overcome their fear and build self confidence; break the shackles of patriarchy and orthodoxy. It will provide an access to women at state and national level politics.

Thus SC Women's entry in village political process would ensure change in the political system of the country, the familial and social perceptions of the role of S.C. women and development of grassroot leadership among women. At the Gram Sabha and Panchayat levels a new leadership would emerge which is expected to administer better financial resources and would provide constructive thinking in village administration and its development.

Warangal district is divided into 5 revenue divisions consisting of 51 mandals out of which 12 mandals have been reserved for women (7 for BCs + 3 for SCs+2 for ST) and another 5 mandals have been allotted for women under unreserved category. Thus 17 mandals have been allotted for women and remaining 34 mandals come under general category where both men and women can contest elections. There are 1007 village grampanchayats and of which 56 are reserved for the S.C. women. All the S.C. women sarpanchas are picked for the study and interviewed with a small unstructured interview schedule.

On observation it in the study, noted that S.C. women representatives in Warangal district were participating in the election process with the help of family members and the influence of others. History of the district reveals that women in Warangal have been participating in politics, power, and war since centuries. Rani Rudrama Devi is the classic example of such instance. After the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, awareness among women about the politics, leadership, participation in elections, contesting elections etc. have increased. Instances are there that apart from winning the seats reserved for S.C. women, they won few seats which are unreserved. This indicates their enthusiasm, zeal and interest they to participate in the local body elections. They are very much eager to serve the community, especially women community. They are familiar with the problems being faced by S.C. women in this modern society. They are acquainted with day to day

problems emerging in this society against women. The reservation helped them a lot to solve the problems of their own community i.e., women. The elected S.C. women representatives, under their leadership trying their best to redress the grievances of women. No doubt, even if they are women and elected under reservation provisions, they are supposed to serve the whole citizens irrespective of gender. Simultaneously, they can concentrate more on women problems while doing justice to the general public. The S.C. women leadership scenario in Warangal district exhibits that women who were elected under S.C. reservation category have been devotedly serving the public within the regulations framed by the Government.

Role of S.C. Women Leadership in local bodies: Public Perceptions

Awareness of perceptions on the implementation of any scheme or programme will always lead to one correct, modify, perfect or change suitably the style of implementation and strategy to be adopted. Hence a structured questionnaire was administered to 300 respondents identified from 5 revenue divisions, 51 mandals and 56 S.C. women reserved grampanchayats in the district to record their perceptions on the role of S.C. women leadership and their pattern of functioning at their respective grampanchayats. An interview schedule was also employed with S.C. women elected representatives to record their personal views over the reservations of seats to S.C. women in rural local bodies.

Quite a large number of the respondents expect that the S.C. women leaders should function without fear and concentrate on developmental work. They should not forget women who voluntarily voted for their success in elections. A peculiar quality of S.C. women leader is found that she is influenced by her own family members and they rule the constituency sitting behind the screen. S.C. Women leader will simply sign on the decision-making papers. If they are illiterate, entire paperwork will be done by so called relatives and upper caste people so that she will sign on those papers without knowing much what is written on those papers. Public perceptions have gone to extreme by saying that they are threatened by male elected counterparts and upper caste people for their own personal interests.

Since the S.C. women leaders elected newly under reservations are not able to handle the charge on their own. Either her husband, son, brother or any close relative or friend guide her in discharging her duties. If she is influenced in this way, policy decisions would naturally be affected. Majority of the respondents opined that S.C. women leaders are not capable to solve their problems. They do not have either capacity to convince the bureaucracy nor have self-confidence to influence the authorities. Then what is the purpose of reservations made for S.C.

women? However, it is admitted that certain developmental works like road formation, construction of culverts, water supply, grant of old age pensions, loans etc. were provided and executed by S.C. women leaders.

According to study observations, only a few S.C. women leaders are able to organize public meetings in their respective grampanchayats, whereas most of the leaders do not have such talent. Moreover, still very few people are able to address the gatherings. These are the inabilities found in S.C. women elected representatives. Majority of the respondents welcomed the 33% reservations for women. According to them reservation of seats for S.C. women is necessary as they are representing 50% of the total population in the country. They can raise the important issues pertaining to women on the floor and see that justice is done to them. But, coming to the practicality, a very few respondents agreed that some developmental activities were undertaken in their constituencies. Otherwise, in majority of cases no development works are done in the constituencies where women leaders are representing. It has happened due to their inability, inexperience, fear, etc.

Observations and the perceptions of S.C. women elected representatives over their role have been quite different. They have expressed their happiness about the reservations made for S.C. women in grass-root politics. It is understood that women leaders are functioning under the influence of family members and upper caste people. Since they are new to the political field, they wanted to take some sort of help from the experienced persons among their relations.

It has been informed that S.C. women elected representatives are not treated by their male counterparts on a par with them. Similarly, the upper caste people also are not treating them as equals. The drawback is due to the gender inequality. However, S.C. women representatives expressed their overall satisfaction about their role and functioning. It is observed that women folk in the jurisdiction are also happy with the functioning of S.C. women leadership.

Participation in the political process provides an opportunity to the people to make the political system to reflect their aspirations and ambitions and at the same time S.C. women were denied the opportunity to participate in the political process due to several historical reasons. This trend existed in most of the countries including the West. The second of the present century, however, witnessed a radical change in this situation.

It is observed that now a days women became socially and politically conscious due to the spread of education, modernization and started asserting their rights including the political rights. In this changed

scenario, emerged a number of feminist organisations which resorted to agitational measures to claim for their rightful place in the socio-economic and political spheres. As a result, the respective Governments realized the importance and necessity of involving the women folk who constitute almost half of the mankind. This realization resulted in the initiation of legal, political and administrative measures in the direction of active involvement of S.C. women in the politico-administrative processes.

In India, while the women constitute about half of the total population but they are subjected to several kinds of discrimination for centuries, and the realization for the increased involvement of women in politics came late. It was during 1980's, after lapse of three decades of Independence that the issue relating to women's participation in political process came to the forefront and attracted the attention of the Government, the policymakers and the society at large. The rapid increase in the efforts made towards the involvement of women in the working of the political system at different levels enabled women to come forward to take part in this process. There is not only significant spurt in the number of women as voters but also in the number of women as candidates contesting the elections at different levels and also holding key positions like Legislators, Ministers, Governors and so on increased to considerable extent.

In this context, the present study has attempted to examine the growing involvement of S.C. women in the political process in different capacities and also to evaluate their contribution to the development of the political process of the district.

The study reveals that the participation of women in political process of the country is a recent phenomenon, more specifically of 20th century. There are very few historical evidences which speak of women's participation in political activities during ancient and medieval periods. Barring very few instances, the involvement of women in the political life of the country is almost nil during both these periods. Even during the period upto the end of nineteenth century there is not much to say about the role of women in the political process of this country.

The study makes a thorough examination of the extent of participation of S.C. women in politics in Warangal district on the basis of their participation in the elections as voters as well as contesting candidates and as winners in different elections held to rural local bodies.

Of considerable relevance is the experience gained in the field of reservation system in the local bodies particularly Panchayats. The introduction of quota at the grass-roots level of administration gave an

impetus to the demand for its extension upto the Parliament indicates that the states like Karnataka have shown good results in this respect where women constitute more than 40 percent of elected members, far above the one-third mark, while in other states the participation is only nominal. Qualitatively speaking, the performance of women in local bodies for place to place level of political consciousness and socio-economic indicators like literacy, the women representatives are enabled to play a meaningful role. Basically, S.C. women need to be properly trained and equipped to fulfill their obligations as people's representatives and actively help to overcome the obstacles unless on the women's organisations than on the political class because of the latter's tendency to stereotyping its women nominees for its own narrow self-serving ends.

The political position of women in general and S.C. women in particular is truly the most stark paradox of Indian democracy. Though electoral turnout among women has been increasing at a higher rate than that of men over the years, their representation in Parliament and state legislatures has not expanded. Indeed in the last decade, the percentage of women elected to the Lok Sabha has actually declined making a mockery of the first principle of democratic governance higher participation leads to greater representation.

Empowerment of S.C. women is critical to the socio-economic progress of the community and bringing women into the mainstream of national development has been a major concern of the government. The empowerment of rural S.C. women is crucial for the development of Rural Bharat. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of S.C. women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable governments and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of S.C. women and men in decision-making provides a balance. It reflects the composition of society and is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perceptive at all levels of decision-making the goals of equality, development and progress cannot be achieved.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provided reservation of seats for S.C. women and this has raised new hopes and all the states are in the process of making the elected bodies at the grass-roots level to take up the new challenges. Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women. In some countries, affirmative action has led to 33.3 percent or larger representation in local and national governments. The study revealed that globally only 10 percent of the members of legislative bodies and a lower percentage of ministerial positions are now held by women. Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote and hold office in almost all states, women continue to be seriously under-represented as candidates for public office. The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life. Women are discouraged from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office. Women in politics and decision-making positions in governments and legislative bodies contribute in redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences, and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues.

Women participation in elections over the past four decades has confirmed the initial hopes placed by the fathers of Indian Constitution. Certain aspects of this participation are as follows:

- Ever since the first election, the physical participation of women has been more than what is anticipated. It has been more than proportionate to their level of literacy and to their urban population figures.
- The percentage of female participation has been more or less steadily increasing.
- The gap in the turnout at voting between men and women is getting more and more narrowed. According to all accounts, the women have turned out in great numbers and the probability is that the gap would have reduced further.
- The percentage of female turn out has been the maximum, when the nation has been really bogged down by issues of corruption, one party rule, future of parliamentary democracy, national unity and integrity. Issues which have created anxiety in the nation as a whole and turned more men as well as women to express their verdict on the future course of events also seem important.

The study observed that several changes have affected trends in the sharing of power and decision-making by women at all levels since 1990.

- ✓ *The world-wide movement for democratization has created conditions for greater political participation, but has sometime sled to a decline in the number of women in decision-making positions as a result of the elimination of gender based quota system.*
- ✓ *The continuing rise of global women's movement has sustained pressure on governments and international organizations to increase women' participation in decision-making.*

The study observed that the elections to the PRIs have brought rural women to the fore. The affirmative action for S.C. women in local governance has edged social identities and political awareness among them and created an urge among them to become part of mainstream political, economic and social life. With initial clashes between higher and lower castes, there are indications of social cohesion at local levels. The political space given to marginal sections has dealt a blow to the asymmetrical social structure at the local level and given greater space for their participation and involvement in decision-making.

The effectiveness of the political leadership will be largely based on their grasp of various issues cropping up time and again. Their alertness will not only help the system to sustain but make it more acceptable to the mass of people.

The study revealed that majority of the S.C. women Panchayati Raj leaders approved the government policy of affirmative action for weaker sections of the society. It noted that the reservations have achieved quite a few positive things:

- ✚ It has created a space for at least a few women committed to the cause who even after working for the party for over 30 years would not have dreamt of contesting an election. In case of many such activists their women incapacity to bear the election expenditure was not a deterrent in securing their candidature or their success in election. This alone justifies the reservation, whatever the other side-effects might be.
- ✚ It has widened the base of democracy by facilitating the representation of hitherto under-represented section of society.
- ✚ It clearly legitimizes and asserts the role of S.C. women as partners in the public sphere, particularly in operating formal government structures. This will encourage more S.C. women

to take up political activity as their career or mission and shape their priorities accordingly.

- ✚ It has started creating cross-hierarchies that have the potential for challenging the hierarchies of patriarchy in the long run.
- ✚ It has initiated the process of empowerment in the political sphere that is liable to get reflected in all other spheres as well.

The study revealed that nearly two-thirds of the women leaders have agreed that PRIs have done useful developmental activities. Those who have not agreed with the above mentioned said that lack of money is the main reason for not taking up the development activities. Other reasons mentioned were lack of sufficient staff and the pradhans have not shown interest in the developmental activities. The study indicated that quite a good number of S.C. women leaders have expressed a feeling that officials will not agree to their subordinate position to non-officials.

The success of the Panchayati Raj system hinges largely on the extent to which their capabilities are built to perform these functions and responsibilities. Thus, a time bound and systematic training programme to provide orientation to the elected representatives on a very large scale is considered to be the most important prerequisite for the success of Panchayati Raj institutions. The state governments are required to work out systematic and comprehensive training programmes to train the representatives of PRIs to generate awareness among the masses at the grass-roots level and to strengthen the Gramsabha.

Concluding Observations

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act provided a new constitutional platform which ensures the representation of one-third women in the PRIs. This legislation accelerated the process of the participation of S.C. women in the policy making bodies. In many areas of social and political development. Women are accorded more and more importance now a days. It might be regarded as a traditional, benevolent point of view to state that S.C. women promote value codes and encourage in their own way a humane society, no matter whether this perspective can be taken at face value. It also has to be emphasized that S.C. women equally with men, implement democracy as a way of life and generate economic resources. Hardly any country in the world has yet succeeded in fully implementing the equality of women and men. In India, S.C. women are the first and most to suffer from poverty and illiteracy, oppression and violence and from disasters and the infringement of human rights. Over and above, the same Indian women have proved on many occasions that they can be more accountable, equally skilled and less corrupt than men. Confronted with all possible social and political problems, they have

demonstrated their social competence and their own income generating capacity.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act marks a watershed in the field of advancement of Indian women in general S.C. women in particular as they ensure one-third of total seats in all elected bodies of PRIs. This provides an opportunity to about one million rural women to enter as leaders and decision-makers at the grass-root level and public life through the existing 0.25 million bodies-rural and urban. Of these 75,000 will be chairpersons at the village, block and district levels. The participation of often illiterate rural S.C. women in the process of grassroots democracy has attracted both positive and negative views. The allegations are that these institutions are being misused by the predominantly male political structure which keeps women away from meetings, take their signature at their residence well before the meetings and operate through dummy candidates. Nevertheless, even the worst critics have acknowledged that this has caused some activity among rural women who were so far dormant. The fear that S.C. women's participation would not automatically lead to greater decision-making powers in the PRIs is not justified. This is manifested in the elections to the PRIs held in different states especially in the northern part of India.

To make the participation of S.C. women in the PRIs really meaningful, it would be desirable that the percentage of reservation has to be raised to the proportion of women's population. Further, conferment of judicial and police powers would go a long way in elevating the status and authority of the PRIs. Lack of education in the rural areas, social and family barriers and preoccupation with house hold duties prevent S.C. women from actively participating in the political process. However, it appears that true women's participation in grassroots democracy will make its mark on the democratic structure of the nation sooner rather than later. The most significant aspect of women's participation in the decision-making process at the grassroots level is that it would throw up a trained younger leadership for the political mainstream, which has hitherto been restricted to men and a few elite women.

The experience of the working of the PRIs in various states during the last one decade shows that very few states have transferred all the powers given in the 11th schedule to the PRIs. Even the powers that have been transferred, in reality, continue to be exercised by the functionaries under the supervision of the state government. The recommendations of the State Finance Commissions have also not been fully implemented in most of the states. The PRIs have also been reluctant to raise the resources of their own by using the powers of taxation given to them. In this context

it is generally argued that this has happened because of the loopholes in the provisions of the Constitution in which the word 'may' has been given instead of 'shall' in the Article 243G. This has left it to the discretion of the states to devolve or not the 29 functions given in the 11th schedule. This is why it is argued that the word 'may' should be replaced by 'shall' by amending the Constitution. It has also been argued that in addition to the Union, state and concurrent lists, a list on the powers of the PRIs has to be inserted in the Constitution to ensure unambiguously the devolution of the functions on the PRIs. In this context, it should be obligatory for the state governments to accept the recommendations of the SFCs within 6 months of the submission of their reports. Further the state should earmark 50% of their budgetary allocation for the PRIs. Moreover the distribution of the resources among centre, states and the PRIs should be made on the recommendations of the Finance Commission appointed by the President instead of leaving it for the SFC to recommend the distribution of the resources between the states and the PRIs. Over and above, the PRIs can neither really be empowered through the amendments in the Constitution nor by the statues enacted by the state legislatures and notification issued by the state governments.

PRIs can be genuinely empowered only after the rural masses and the elected leaders in the PRIs themselves put strong pressure on the central and state governments for implementing the aforesaid subjects. For this, they will have to sink petty political differences and unite, organize and struggle for a common cause. To conclude, it is expected that the present United Progressive Alliance government initiates some concrete steps towards enabling panchayat leaders in becoming proficient riders and performing their role effectively by getting adequate skill, knowledge and attitudes for local governance, planning and development on priority basis. It is hoped that carving out a separate ministry of Panchayati Raj from the Rural Development and the recently held conferences of the Chief Ministers and State Ministers on RD and PR on the theme of poverty alleviation and rural prosperity through PR held in New Delhi may be a strategic and innovative step towards this direction.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- It is only after the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act some awareness about the reservation of seats for women in politics is known. Hence, there is a need to create awareness about the reservations made for S.C. women in politics, especially among illiterates and women voters.
- In rural areas, the S.C. people (both male and female) are suppressed by their respective leaders because of prevalence of illiteracy. If women are given a chance for electing themselves as

public representatives, there will be a scope to solve their problems and meet their demands. Reservation of seats for S.C. Women has further widened such scope. Especially women are able to solve their problems through their representatives.

- S.C. Women elected representatives should not become proxies. Proxies suffer from some negative characteristics which affect the functioning of leaders and demoralize them.
- It is noted that S.C. women elected representatives are not taking the decisions on their own. In fact their life-partners or relatives and upper caste people are influencing over their decisions. Hence, it is suggested that S.C. women elected representatives should take decisions on their own by analyzing the situation and should not be influenced by others ideas and presence.
- The empowerment given to S.C women by the constitution should be used by themselves alone. As far as possible, S.C. women representatives should keep away their husbands, sons, daughters for that matter all other relatives from their official meetings, discussions and decisions.
- S.C. Women representatives should be in a position to organize public meetings and address the gatherings to convey their messages to the people and canvass the Government policies and programmes.
- Caste plays an important role at grass-roots politics. The elected S.C. women leader belongs to down trodden community. The upper caste people at village level always try to dominate her. Hence, this method of suppressing S.C. women leaders should be banned.
- It is the duty of concerned officials to cooperate with the elected representatives irrespective of their party affiliation, gender & caste. It is observed that such cooperation is lacking in the case of S.C. women leaders. Hence, the officials should be instructed to extend cooperation with S.C. women leadership.
- It has been observed that male elected counterparts are not cooperative with S.C. women leaders. In the interest of overall development of jurisdiction, they should extend all types of support and help to S.C. women leaders. On the other hand, S.C. women leaders too should seek co-operation from their male elected counterparts.
- It is observed that S.C. women representative are not showing interest in the redressal of grievances of common public. She should come out from themselves and discuss with the concerned official to sort out the problems of public. If necessary she can approach the top level political officials for getting things done.

- While listening to problems of public, S.C. women leader should give top priority to the problems pertaining to women. It is against the spirit of the very reservation policy not to have helped the women as whole. Hence, the S.C. women leadership should focus more on helping the general public in view of the fact that S.C. women leader is also the leader of all in a village.
- Since S.C. women leaders are new to politics, there is an acute need to train them in the subject. As soon as they are elected, they must be trained in a reputed training centre about the characteristics and nature of politics, methods of convincing bureaucracy, addressing the gathering etc.
- Further, they should be trained in identifying the problems, nature of problems, specific requirements of particular constituency and how to deal with the public whenever they approach with grievances.
- With the blessings of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, S.C. women have become the part and parcel of elected representatives at grass-root level. Certain seats exclusively for S.C. women have been reserved with an objective to solve women oriented problems. Hence, S.C. women leaders should concentrate more on women oriented problems while giving importance to other problems.
- It is a fact that after the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, awareness, particularly political awareness has been increased among women folk. The constitution has opened a channel for women to participate in elections and to become as deciding factor of Indian politics.
- S.C. Women representatives should have the capacity to convince the bureaucracy and higher officials while taking steps to fulfill the demands of the public.
- Political empowerment of S.C. women is really a boost awarded to women folk by the Government and by the Constitution. Since, this is the transition period, S.C. women elected representatives are in need of some sort of assistance from over a period of time, after getting experience, this sort of assistance may not be required. It is hoped that in due course of time real political empowerment of S.C. women can be seen and real purpose of 73rd Constitutional Amendment can be achieved.
- Government and NGO's Proper Training on administrative skills should be provided to elected women centers by HRD institutes.

APPENDIX – I QUESTIONNAIRE

PROFILE AND PERFORMANCE OF SC WOMEN SARPANCHES IN WARANGAL DISTRICT

Village: Political Party:
Mandal: General:
Division: Reservation:

1. Name of the Sarpanch :
2. Age :
 - 1) 18-25 Years
 - 2) 26-35 Years
 - 3) 36-45 Years
 - 4) Above 46 Years
- 3) Social Status:
 - 1) OC
 - 2) BC
 - 3) SC
 - 4) ST
- 4) Sub-Caste:
 - 1) SC-Mala
 - 2) SC-Madiga
 - 3) Other
- 5) Education :
 - 1) Illiterate
 - 2) Primary
 - 3) High School
 - 4) Intermediate
 - 5) Degree
 - 6) Post Graduation
 - 7) Others
- 6) Occupation :-
 - 1) Farmer
 - 2) Agriculture Labour
 - 3) Business
 - 4) Employee
 - 5) Others
- 7) Marital Status:
 - 1) Married
 - 2) Un-MarriedIf Married :
- 8) Occupation of Husband :
 - 1) Politician
 - 2) Private Employee
 - 3) Govt. Employee
 - 4) Business
 - 5) Farmer
 - 6) OthersIf Politician :
Village Level
Mandal Level
District Level
State Level
Central Level
- 9) Nature of the Family:
 - 1) Single Family
 - 2) Joint Family
- 10) Occupation of Parents :

- 1) Farmers 2) Agriculture Labours 3) Private
Employee
4) Govt. Employee 5) Politician 6)

Business & Others

- 11) What is your Annual income before elected as sarpanch:
1) Rs. 12000 - 24000 2) Rs. 24000 - 36000
3) Rs. 36000 - 48000 4) Above - 48000
- 12) What is your annual income after elected as sarpanch:
1) Rs. 12000 - 24000 2) Rs. 24000 - 36000
3) Rs. 36000 - 48000 4) Above - Rs. 48000
- 13) Annual income of the Family :
1) Rs. 12000 - 24000 2) Rs. 24000 - 36000
3) Rs. 36000 - 48000 4) Above - Rs.48000
- 14) Have you account in any Bank :
1) YES 2) NO
- 15) Do you operative bank account Regularly:
1) YES 2) NO
- 16) The main source of Income:
1) Salary from Gram Panchyat 2) Agriculture 3) Business
4) Others
- 17) After you become as sarpanch is there any change in your family:
1) YES 2) NO
If yes, in what aspect / respect
1) Financially Change 2) Political Change 3) Change of social
Awareness
- 18) Are you satisfied with the politics :
1) Satisfied 2) Some what Satisfied
3) Very much Satisfied 4) Not Satisfied
- 19) If Not Satisfied, What are the Reasons
1) No Democracy in Politics
2) Politics is nothing but cheating
3) No Freedom for women
4) High Level of corruption
5) Others
- 20) Who did you Manage your family:
1) Uncle 2) Husband
3) My Self 4) Others
- 21) How did you came to know about politics:
1) Husband 2) Other Family Members
3) Mass Media 4) Friends 5) Others
- 22) When did you came to know about politics:
1) Before 1990 2) 1990 – 1995 3) 1995 – 2000

4) 2000 – 2005 5) After 2005

- 23) Why did you Join the Politics :
- 1) To Develop the Village
 - 2) To Serve for the Village people
 - 3) to earn Money (to get More Income)
 - 4) Others
- 24) Do you have any property on your Name:
- 1) Land 2) Deposits 3) House 4) Others
- 25) Could you conduct meetings successfully in Grampanchayath:
- 1) YES 2) NO
- If no what are the reasons
- 1) Disturbance too much intervention created by other party members
 - 2) Dominating the by men members
 - 3) Not Able to conduct the meetings
 - 4) Others
- 26) Could you take decisions without the help of the Others
- 1) YES 2) NO
- If No, What are the reasons?
- 1) Not able to take decisions
 - 2) Dominating by the other members
 - 3) Don't Know
 - 4) Others
- 27) Are there any rival groups in Grampanchayath:
- 1) YES 2) NO
- 28) Are there rival groups affect the Functions of Grampanchayath:
- 1) YES 2) NO
- 29) Level of social Awareness after electing of the sarpanch
- 1) Low 2) Medium 3) High 4) Others
- 30) Level of Political awareness above electing sarpanch:
- 1) Low 2) Medium 3) High 4) Others
- 31) Level of Political awareness after electing Sarpanch:
- 1) Low 2) Medium 3) High 4) Others

- 32) The politics is establishing social equality? Do you agree with this Opinion?
 1) YES 2) NO
 If yes;
 1) Irrespective of caste all are equal
 2) Irrespective of income all are equal
 3) All Members are well serve for the people
 4) Others
- 33) The politics reduce the disparity between the rich and poor, do you agree?
 1) Agree 2) Certain Extent 3) Not at all 4) Others
- 34) What is your position in your Party?
 1) Village 2) Mandal 3) District 4) State
- 35) How did you feel co operation of your family members
 1) Satisfied 2) Some what satisfied 3) Not satisfied 4) Others
- 36) Is it own decision contesting for sarpanch
 1) YES 2) NO
- 37) Do you take any help from other member for conducting the Meetings:
 1) YES 2) NO
 If Yes, who are their?
 1) Men Members 2) Women Members
- 38) What are the measures have you adopted to impress people
 1) Party Policy 2) Distribute Money-Liquor
 3) To develop the village 3) Others
- 39) Who is the Decision maker to campaign elect the Sarpanch
 1) Party Leaders 2) Family Members 3) Caste
 4) Husband 5) Women's 6) Others
- 40) Whom help did you take in elections
 1) Caste Leaders 2) Religion Leaders 3) Women's
 4) Party Leaders
- 41) What are the problems faced in election Campaign
 1) Age group 2) Caste 3) Finance
 4) Violence 5) Party Members
- 42) Level of Political awareness after electing sarpanch
 1) Low 2) Medium 3) High 4)
- Others

APPENDIX – II
QUESTIONNAIRE

People’s perceptions on S.C. Women Sarpanches in Warangal District
District ----- Revenue Division-----

Mandal: _____ Village-----

1. Name: _____
2. Gender : (a) Male (b) Female
3. Age : (a) 18 to 25 (b) 26 to 30
(c) 31 to 40 (d) 41 to 50 (e) 51 to 60
(f) Above 60
4. Caste : (a) SC (b) ST (c) BC
(d) Minority (e) OC
5. Educational qualifications:
(a) Illiterate (b) Primary level (c) High school level
(d) intermediate/graduate (e) PG (f) Professionals
6. Occupation: (a) Unemployed (b) Labour (c) Employee
(d) Business (e) Politics
7. Have you ever exercised your vote? (a) Yes (b) No
8. Why elections are conducted?
(a) To elect the political representative
(b) To vote for a good administrator
(c) Formality
9. Who is your Sarpanch ?
(a) Male (b) Female (c) Don’t know
10. What is your perception on your woman leadership?
(a) Good (b) Partial (c) Community based
(d) Cunning
11. What are the traits of your S.C. woman leader?
(a) She is a dynamic leader (b) She works with fear
(c) She ruled by other forces (dominated by men, relatives & upper caste people).

12. Did your leader respond to your problems?
 (a) Yes (b) No
13. Have you approached her any time with your grievance?
 (a) Yes (b) No
14. If 'yes' what was her attitude?
 (a) Positive (b) Negative (c) Indifferent
15. Whether she solved your Problem?
 (a) Yes (b) No
16. If 'no' why?
 (a) She could not influence the officials
 (b) She is not experienced in administration
 (c) She is ignorant about the way to tackle the problem
17. What type of works she undertook in your area?
 (a) Road formation (b) Construction of culverts
 (c) Drinking water supply (d) Construction of schools /
 hostels
18. Whether she organizes public meetings in your area?
 (a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't know
19. If 'yes', was she able to address the public?
 (a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't know
20. How she negotiates with men counterparts?
 (a) Cordially (b) No good relations (c) Don't
 know
21. What is your opinion on S.C. women reservation in politics?
 (a) Necessary (b) Not necessary (c) Don't
 know
22. Since your area has been reserved for S.C. women, how do you
 feel?
 (a) It is a good decision (b) Not necessary (c) Don't know
23. Under the leadership of S.C. women, have you noticed any
 development in your area?
 (a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't know

24. Are you happy with the services of your women elected representatives?

- (a) Yes (b) No

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