CHAPTER - II

Survey of Literature

This chapter is devoted to a survey of literature existing in the field of Panchayati Raj in India. Some important studies conducted on different dimensions of the Panchayati Raj bodies in different states are briefly examined in this chapter. This survey includes the studies conducted in the past and also in the recent times.

Any scientific and systematic study on any subject or problem requires a comprehensive review of the research already conducted by the eminent scholars in that particular area. Keeping this fact in view an attempt is made in this chapter to review the literature existing in the area of Panchayati Raj and specifically on the political empowerment of women at the grassroots the backdrop of the reservations provided to them in the political offices of the Panchayati Raj Bodies which constitute the main theme of the present research study. Over the years, several scholars both India and abroad have studied various issues relating to the working of the Panchayati Raj System prevailing in different states of the Country. The Panchayati Raj which has been in operation as a system of rural local government since 1959, drew extensively the attention of the scholars of various disciplines. As a result there exists huge body of literature which deals with a wide array of issues relating to the working of the Panchayati Raj bodies all over the country. This chapter attempts a review of the existing literature in this vital area. It reviews broadly the studies on the working of Panchayati Raj bodies in general. However, it focuses on the specifies issue of reservations provided to the women in the political
offices of the Panchayati Raj bodies by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. The research conducted in the newly emerged area of political empowerment of women and its implications of such empowerment are also examined in this chapter.

The studies reviewed in this chapter can broadly be grouped under four headings: (I) Studies conducted on the working of the Panchayati Raj System in the country in general,(ii) Studies conducted on different aspects of the Panchayati Raj bodies functioning in the State of Andhra Pradesh,(iii) Studies on the pattern of emerging women leadership in the Panchayati Raj Bodies during the post-73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, period (4) Studies on the political empowerment of women as a consequence of the reservations provided for the women in the political offices of the Panchayati Raj bodies.

(i) Studies on the Panchayati Raj System in India:

A lot of research was conducted to examine different aspects of the Panchayati Raj institutions working in different states in the country. Harichandran C., (1998)\(^1\) conducted a study to ascertain the awareness of the people about the Panchayati Raj bodies working in their respective areas. He found that the Panchayati Raj system had become popular among the rural people and that they were actively involving in the activities of the Panchayati Raj bodies particularly, the panchayats.

Vasant Desai’s (1979)\(^2\) study on the Panchayati Raj system reveals the recent changes in the working of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country which have facilitated the strengthening of the democratic system by enhancing the participation of people in the political process at the grassroots.

Krishna Chakrabarthy and Swapan kumar Bhattacharya’s (1993)\(^3\) study conducted on the Nabagram Panchayat located in the district of Hooghly in West Bengal noted that the Panchayati Raj System had brought about several qualitative changes in the traditional arrangement of distribution of political power in the rural areas of the state. In their opinion, the advent of Panchayati Raj Institutions and universal adult suffrage has notably changed the traditional base of power and mode of its exercise in the rural areas.

Lokesh, K., Prasad, (1991)\(^4\) in his article “An Inquiry into the participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions”, is of the opinion that it is a matter of national pride that India became the only country in the world that not only paved the pathway for the creation of institutions of local Self Government, but has also reserved one-third seats for women. He believes that empowered by the constitutional status, active participation, involvement and control of women in the


development process would give rise to a socio-political system more conducive to attain economic development along with a greater degree of social justice because to make democracy meaningful in the traditional society like India, full involvement of women was nothing less than a necessity.

Hoshian Singh's (1993) in his study exposed several glaring larcunae in the Panchayati Raj system in the state of Haryana. He examined the implications of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, its strength and weaknesses and whether it has really strengthened Panchayati Raj in the State. He found that the Act had strengthened the positions of Panchayati Raj bodies in the fields of development and planning in the rural areas.

S.P. Jain and others (1995) in their splendid work on the Panchayati Raj in India, presented a detailed account the disturbing trends emerged in the rural areas after the advent of Panchayati Raj system. This study proved that the traditional factors such as ethnicism, kinship, groupism and religious identity have become very powerful in the rural areas as a result of the Panchayati Raj System.

Eashvaraiah, P., (2003) in his article “Reservation for Women in Parliament and Legislatures: An antidote to their Marginalisation” opines that social structure, customs and practices, high illiteracy among women

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and the unending violence unleashed during and after elections, seem to be some factors deterring women from entering into the political arena. Further, he maintains that it may also be unrealistic to expect larger participation of women in public life in a male dominated society without congenial atmosphere and proper encouragement.

Evelin Hust (2004)\(^8\) in her Book Women’s Political Representation and Empowerment in India: A Million Indiras Now? which deals with the PRI in Orissa, maintains that with regard to women’s political presence, the presence of SC women was over-proportional. This fact disproves the supposition that the quota mainly benefits the elite. It appears that high status families are still reluctant to introduce their womenfolk into the public sphere. So far as reservation is concerned, she goes further to add that the expectation that women’s political presence will lead to a transformation of politics, because of women’s natural inclination towards cleaner politics, is tenable neither theoretically nor empirically. However, she feels that reservation for women is a step towards women’s political empowerment.

Prabhat Kumar Datta (1998)\(^9\) while discussing about the effects of reservation of seats for women in the Panchayats of different states of India maintains that in Orissa there were certain women representatives whom villagers had nominated to different positions in the village panchayati without seeking their consent. Their husbands greatly proxy


for them in Panchyati meetings. Sixty per cent of the women leaders were unaware of the mission of Panchayats, while 27.5 per cent of them were ignorant about their responsibilities and assumed that their only duty was to attend meetings when ever the Sarpanches summoned them. Even when they attempted to do their job they encountered a whole set of problems. Sexual harassment apart, they were denied their positions and power in their brush with officials.

Pratyusna Patnaik (2005) in his study of elected representatives belonging to the weaker sections in the functioning of the four gram panchayats in Dhenkanal District of Orissa is of the opinion that the elected representatives were not able to properly articulate group-specific interest or to exercise their own judgment in Panchayat decision-making. Thus bringing into question the very notion of representation of marginalized groups through affirmative action. The representatives in a majority of cases were answerable to the elites of the village and remained under their control rather than exhibiting any accountability to citizen at large. However, he maintains that local governance has ample scope for the inclusion of hitherto excluded sections of society in making decisions and formulating programmers that would affect their lives. It is also reasonable, to some extent, to expect the disadvantaged groups to break the dependent and patriarchal relations which have excluded their political participation since generations. Besides most of the representatives were also first generation politicians for whom this was the

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first public exposure and with time and experience these representatives would be able to effectively represent their constituency.

Niranjan Panth’s (1980)\textsuperscript{11} study on the Official and Non-Official Relations in the Panchayati Raj Bodies exposed the disturbing fact that the officials are dominating the non-officials (elected representatives) in the administration of Panchayati Raj Bodies.

Bhargava, B.S., (1990)\textsuperscript{12} empirical study on “the role of political parties in the Panchayati Raj bodies in a state” reflects that the successful functioning of Panchayati Raj system depends to a great extent on the pattern of role played by the political parties and the nature of politics they generated in these bodies. He pointed out that the Panchayati Raj system has brought the rural leadership into the mainstream of nation politics. In his the opinion political education and political socialization acquired by the rural people are the natural consequences of the impact of the Panchayati Raj bodies working in their areas since a long time.

Haragopal’s (1980)\textsuperscript{13} study on role of “Administrative Leadership in the Rural Development carried out in certain Panchayati Samithies in Andhra Pradesh stressed that the pattern of political leadership functioning at the grassroots in the India do not conform to the leadership theories evolved by the western scholars.

\textsuperscript{11} Niranjan panth, Politics of Panchayati Raj Administration: A Study of Official and Non-Official Relations, Concept publishers, Delhi, 1980.

\textsuperscript{12} Bhargava B.S., Panchayati Raj system and political parties, Ashish publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{13} Bhargava B.S., Panchayati Raj system and political parties, Ashish publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 27.


Mahipal (1997)\textsuperscript{14} in his article on “Panchayati Raj in India: Issues and Challenges” discussed the trends emerged in the working of Panchayati Raj bodies in the wake of the Constitutional (seventy-third) Amendment Act of 1992. He concluded that the experience gained by the Panchayati Raj bodies in the Post-Amendment Act pointed presents a gloomy picture because the states have tailed to implement the Act in its letter and spirit. Hence he emphasized that Amendment to the Constitution is required to give real functional, administrative and financial autonomy to the Panchayati Raj bodies.

Sankaran, P.N., (1997)\textsuperscript{15} in his study on the dimensions and deficiencies Panchayati Raj Institutions of the discloses that there are certain shortcomings in the working of the Panchayati Raj institutions. He also concluded that the government, people’s organizations, NGO’s and political parties should contribute to the creation of a suitable environment for the Panchayati Raj System to function successful and effectively.

Reflecting on the latest developments taken place in the Panchayati Raj system, Ranga Rajan (1997)\textsuperscript{16} asserted that “the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment Act placed the Panchayati Raj bodies totally at the mercy of the state governments. It is possible for the state legislatures to enact laws empowering the government to dissolve these bodies at their will. He

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argued emphatically that these institutions are not clothed with any powers of self-government in the real sense by the above Act.

George Mathew’s (1999) study on the Gram Sabhas and Social Audit which examined the powers and functions assigned to the Grama Sabhas by various States made a sensible suggestions that the panchayats would become effective only if the Grama Sabhas meet regularly and with the active participation of the people in these meetings.

Madha Kotwal Lele (2001) in his study reveals an interesting fact that there are two parallel local bodies which function in Maharasra State at the village level i.e., the Gram Sabhas and the traditional Village Panchayatis and both these bodies are dominated by the rich and upper castes people.

The study on “Panchayati Raj- Need of Public Participation” by Gupta, B.P., (2004) argues that the self-sufficiency of Grama Panchayatis could be achieved only by granting financial and functional autonomy to these bodies.

The study namely Relationship between Grama Sabha and Grama Panchayats conducted by John, M.S., and Jos Chatukulam(1999)


eminently observed that a workable relationship between the Grama Sabhas and Panchayats are almost absent in several states in the country which is very negative impact on these bodies.

Subha, K., and Bhargava’s (2000)\(^{21}\) in their study highlights the role of Panchayats in the social change. While highlighting the importance of non-government organizations, the authors emphasized that there is an urgent need to assign a key role to the Non-Governmental Organizations in realizing the goal of democratic decentralization. A close understanding and co-ordination between the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations is essential for the development from below, as suggested by these authors.

Govind Gowda S., and others (1996)\(^{22}\) made a study on the functioning of the women Panchayati leaders in Karnataka reflects the fact that the women leaders of the Panchayati Raj bodies in the developed areas which of developed taluks are playing their role more effectively than their counterparts of the Panchayati Raj bodies in the developed areas working in these bodies functioning in the back ward areas. The findings of the study also disclose that the women political functionaries of the Panchayati Raj Institution would play certainly an effective role if they are provided adequate motivation and encouragement. O.P.Bhora’s (1997)\(^{23}\)


study conducted in Tamilnadu reveals that the women leaders hardly have any interest in running the Panchayati Raj bodies.

Rashmi Arun (1997) who held a study on the Panchayati Raj Bodies revealed that the women elected to the various offices in the Panchayati Raj bodies are mostly housewives, first-time entrants into the Politics and most of them are illiterates or educated up to the primary school level only.

(ii) Studies on the Panchayati Raj Bodies in Andhra Pradesh:

In Andhra Pradesh, much of the research on the Panchayati Raj institutions is empirical. Its main focus is on the structural and functional changes taken place in the Panchayati Raj bodies during different periods. In recent times, however, the research in this field is mainly focusing on the impact of the 73rd constitutional Amendment Act on these bodies, particularly on the women leadership which emerged as a consequence of 33 percent reservations for women in these bodies.

Jayalakshmi K., (1997) in her empirical study conducted in Nalgonda District of Andhra Pradesh on all the Women Panchayats found that the women representatives were able to identify the village needs and assist each other in accomplishing them. To a great extent these women have made serious efforts to gain the confidence of all sections of the village. They abide by the rules and follow procedures pertaining to the functioning of the Panchayats.

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Vasudeva Rao’s (2003) study conducted on the emerging leadership of women in the Panchayati Raj institutions in three districts of Andhra Pradesh i.e., East Godavari, Kammam and Kurnool found that presently the women are playing an active role in the political process at the grassroot level in view of the increasing number of the Self Help Groups and reservations in the Panchayati Raj Bodies for women.

Sivalinga Prasad’s (1981) empirical study entitled “Panchayatis and Development” highlighted the administration of the Village Panchayats in the Telengana region of the State. The author pinpoints that the position of panchayats became feeble because of insufficient powers and resources, untrained and incompetent staff, concentration of powers in the hands of sarpanches, ineffective linkage and channels of communication, incapable bureaucracy and so on. Indeed these are the major problems prevailing in the entire Panchayati Raj System in the Country. Vithal, C.P., (1995) who analyses the impact of the Panchayati Raj Act which came into force in 1994 in Andhra Pradesh observes that despite the demand for more decentralization of powers to the duly elected grassroots level democratic institutions, the state government has retained more powers and transferred only limited powers to these bodies.

(iii) Studies on The Women’s Participation and Leadership:

The pattern of women leadership emerged in the Panchayati Raj bodies and their political empowerment have drawn the serious attention of many scholars in the Post-73rd Amendment Act period. These scholars have critically analyzed the related issues and provided several interesting insights about the dynamics of women leadership in the Panchayati Raj bodies who occupied several important positions in these bodies as a consequence of the reservations provided by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. In one of the earlier studies on the women leadership in the Panchayati Raj bodies conducted by Manikyamba (1989) examined the extent of women’s representation in the leadership positions in the Panchayati Raj bodies even before the enactment of this Act and came out with certain valuable findings on this aspect.

Similarly, Uma Joshi (1994) pleaded in her study that a multi-pronged effort is needed to enable the women to assume leadership roles in the Panchayati Raj Bodies and effectively participate in the decision-making process in these bodies.

In his study conducted on the women leadership in the Panchayati Raj Bodies Ashoka Gupta (1994) explained how the position of women in the politics has changed due to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of

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30 Uma Joshi, Women Role Imperative for strong Panchayati Raj Institutions, Kurukshetra, New Delhi, Vol.XLII, No.9, June 1994.

Virendre Kaur and Sukhdew Singh (2002)\textsuperscript{32} who explored the leadership of women in the Panchayati Raj bodies in Punjab observed that the number of women sarpanches in the Village Panchayats in that has increased several times due to the provision of reservations for women in the Panchayati Raj institution under the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act.

Another similar study conducted by Devaki Jain (2002)\textsuperscript{33} proved that the women’s involvement in the politics of Panchayati Raj Bodies has been gradually increasing since 1995. The study also highlighted the fact the women have started playing a key role in the Panchayati Raj Bodies in Karnataka. The important observation of Devaki Jain’s study is that the women had have become empowered by exercising control over the resources and officials and most of all by competing with the men in all respects.

There are few other studies which dealt with the issue of political empowerment of women in the rural areas. The study conducted by Santosh Kumar and Arun Deshpande (2002)\textsuperscript{34} firmly argued that the Panchayati Raj system at last made it possible for the historically marginalized women to participate actively in the governance at the grassroots level. They also argued that the bureaucracy, political parties and also the political elite tend to lose their power as a consequence of the emerging women leadership at the village level. Inspite of these changes,

the upper caste people are still dominating the decision making process at the grassroots, as disclosed by this study.

Swetha Mishra's (1997) study dealing with the Women and 73rd Constitutional Amendment stressed that the participation of women leaders in the Panchayati Raj bodies was severely restricted by various traditional factors such as the caste, religion and feudal outlook of the male leaders. Another research study conducted on the Panchayati Raj system in different states including Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh exposed the fact that at present the women are getting more opportunities to play active role in the political process at different levels. They have to utilize these opportunities and change the political scenario existing in the nation.

Bohra's, O.P., study (1997) hails the 73rd Amendment Act, as a step for decentralizing the political power and also removing the gender imbalances and biases existing in the political process at the grassroots level. The author also commended the noble intention of the policy makers in the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

The implications of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act were examined by Devaki Jain (1994) who revealed that the main intention of

the policy makers behind the provision of reservation of seats in the
Panchayati Raj Bodies to the women include promotion of social justice
and resource utilization(human).The study discloses that since nearly half
of the population of the country are women, the country’s development
cannot be achieved without their participation in the political process at
different levels. Shirin Rai (2000)38 who probed the implications of the 73rd
Constitutional Amendment Act reflected that the Act had launched the
process of democratization of rights from the local level.

Bidyats Mohanty’s (2000)39 in her study on the women reservations
in the Panchayati Raj bodies noted that by providing reservations of seats
for women in the local bodies, our policy makers aimed not only to
increase the number of women leaders in these bodies but also to improve
their economic independence and access to different facilities including
education.

Analyzing the aims of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act Usha narayana
(1996)40 reflects that the Act ensures the participation of women in the
political process at the local level as voters, members of political parties
and finally as the candidates in the elections help the local bodies. The
women elected to the various Panchayati Raj Institutions are taking active
part in the decision making and planning processes. Another finding of
this study is that the reservations in the local bodies for women are a
guarantee for their empowerment in the political sphere.

38 Rai Shirin, Looking to the future: Panchayati, Women’s representation and Deliberation
politics, A paper presented in Women and Panchayati Raj Institutions, April, 2000, pp 8-27.
39 Bidyut Mohanty, Women and Political Empowerment, Institute of social science, New
Delhi,2000.
Nirmal Buch (2000)\textsuperscript{41} in his review of earlier studies on the leadership of women in the Panchayati Raj Bodies demonstrated the fact that in the past i.e., prior to the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act noted the few women leaders functioned in the Panchayati Raj Bodies hailed from only the rich sections as they own more than twenty acres of land. This situation existed in Karnataka, Maharastra and so on. It was also proved by this study that during the post 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act period that the majorities of the women leaders in the Panchayati Raj Institution were illiterates and came from the families falling in the lower economic strata. They were comparatively younger than the women leaders of the past, as this study revealed.

Bhargava and others’ (1996)\textsuperscript{42} study also came out with similar findings as they noted that the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act has increased the women’s representation in the rural local bodies in Andhra Pradesh.

Snehalata Panda’s (1996)\textsuperscript{43} pains taking study on the Village Panchayats in Orissa exposed that the women entered into the arena of politics due to the mandatory provision of reservations incorporated in the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment Act. According to this study the majority of the women Panchayati Raj leaders have no certain political background before they entered into the politics but exhibited higher degree of maturity, enthusiasm, political consciousness and so on. In her another study conducted in 1996, Panda concluded that there prevails a strange

\textsuperscript{41} Nirmala, Buch, “Panchayats and Women, Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, 2000.

\textsuperscript{42} Bhargava,B.S., Bhaskar, Manu, “Women in Grassroots Democracy- A Study of Kerala, University of Kerala, ICSSR, New Delhi,1996.

situation as the women belonging to the upper castes are not coming forward to contest the Panchayati Raj elections. This has provided a good opportunity to the women belonging to the lower castes to emerge as a potential force in the village politics.

Mesa Seth (1995)\(^{44}\) who analysed the role of women in the Indian politics since independence argued that the political empowerment of women has become a reality only after the enactment Amendment of 73\(^{rd}\) Amendment Act in 1992 which started this process at the grass roots level.

The study conducted by Swetha Mishra and Mishra, S.N., (1995)\(^{45}\) highlighted the fact that the marginalization of Indian women in different spheres prevented their participation in the political process notwithstanding the legal measures enacted to protect their interests. Hailing the policy of reservation of one third of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj bodies as a step in the right direction, the authors felt that it would ensure progress of the women in all the spheres of life. The study disclosed the encouraging trend that in several states the extent of participation of women in the elections held to the Panchayati Raj bodies has gone beyond expectation.

In contrast, the study conducted by Yogendra Narain (2005)\(^{46}\) and others provided a different picture about the Act as they pinpointed that there exists a wide gap between the enunciated goals of the Act and the


existing position of women in India. The author forcibly argued that what is more important is not simply evolving a legal framework for promoting women's empowerment but it should be translated into reality.

The role of women in the development process as a critical factor in the process of uplifting their families from poverty is rightly stressed by Agarwal and Deepti (2001) in their study. These scholars firmly advocated that the women should be viewed not as beneficiaries but as active participants in the process of development and change. They further suggested that the poor women should be organized into groups for community participation as well as for assertion of their rights in various fields for delivering their economic and social well being.

Shyam Sundar Singh Chauhan and Gaurav Bansal (2002) who tried to assess the progress of women empowerment reflected that in the case of women's empowerment in India still a lot has to done to make them fully self-reliant and empowered equally on par with the men. They also added that women are still living as second grade citizens in several parts of the country. These authors underscored the need for the speedy disposal of cases of exploitation, torture, rape and atrocities against the women for achieving their empowerment effectively.

Reflecting on the need for women empowerment Marino Pinto (1995) insisted upon the involvement of women in the development

process for attaining the goal of political empowerment of women along with their socio-economic development. The author also pleaded strongly that the fruits of development should not only be passed on to the women, but also made them the partners of this process and such participation leads to their empowerment supported by economic independence. The author concluded that the empowerment of women is a sin qua non for creating an egalitarian society.

Tyagi L.K., and Sinha, B.P., (2001)\textsuperscript{50} in their article “Empowerment of Weaker Sections through Panchayats: a Diagnosis”, while discussing about the empowerment of weaker sections through Panchayats after conducting a study in districts of Rajasthan and Haryana are of the opinion that the people realize the importance of representation to weaker sections by way of reservation, yet the process is moving extremely slow. The tendency of the dominant people to avoid, suppress and manipulate the views of SC/ST members is also prevalent. Further they suggest that, we should not make the mistake of assuming that the task of empowerment of the weaker sections is over by providing them adequate numerical representation in the Panchayats through reservations. The process will have to be facilitated by provision of education, economic opportunities and intensive awareness campaign.

Neera Agnimitra (1995)\textsuperscript{51} in her article “Women in Panchayats Empowerment or Illusion”, after analyzing in detail about women’s


empowerment in Panchayats is of the view that women’s empowerment is legitimate and critically important in its own right not merely to address the issues of decentralized democracy, but also to foster the well being of all women. Further she adds that to leave women, especially the rural women, out of participation in decision-making and to deny them a share in the fruits of development is to miss the point of what effective participation is all about.

Susheela Kaushik (1992)\textsuperscript{52} in her article “Organizing Women for Panchayati Raj” is of the opinion that Women’s effective participation in Panchayati Raj or their usefulness for Women’s rights and development will not be available, if the Panchayati System itself does not operate in a principled, democratic and meaningful way. Hence all those who are interested in greater participation of women and benefit from the Panchayati Raj System should simultaneously work for strengthening this system in general and direct it towards greater people’s participation and work for the development of weaker sections.

Goel, S.L., and Salini Rajnesh (2003)\textsuperscript{53} in their Book on Panchayati Raj in India: Theory and Practice emphasized the fact that women empowerment is not something which can be handed over to women. This is a process, which involves sincerity, earnestness and capacity and


capacity on the part of both men and women. The main efforts required in the context of 73rd Constitutional Amendment is to break the hegemony of male chauvinism in the rural areas. Further they believe that women’s entry into the functioning of Panchayati Raj Bodies at all levels, particularly at decision making level will usher in an era of equality and prosperity to the villages and empowerment of women leading to rural development and moral values. Ultimately, it provides women with the opportunity to transform the legal, political, economic and social system as per the vision of the 21st century to realize their demand for an equitable, environmentally clean and peaceful world where there would be no difference based on sex, creed, faith, etc. This would make 21st Century really fruitful.

Rajeswari,A., (1996)54 in her article “Panchayati Raj Institutions and Women” is of the opinion that so far the role played by women in PRIs has been weak. Only those women who are connected to political or influential personalities come forward for elections. Lack of education, social and family barriers and preoccupation with household duties also prevent women from participating in the political process. Welcoming the 73rd Amendment Act, she is of the view that the prevailing male-dominated power structure in the villages is not ready to accept women as the Chairpersons of the Panchayats. This problem can be solved by persuading the women to come forward to assume the responsibility of managing these bodies About the women of SC/ST categories, she

maintains that initially these women may find it difficult to mix with the representatives of general category. To cope with the problem it is necessary to inculcate confidence among them and to bring attitudinal changes through training in the numbers of upper classes. Stern action should be taken against such persons who create communal feelings.

Snehlata Panda (1997)\textsuperscript{55} in her article “Political Empowerment of Women: A Case of Orissa” maintains that, women’s entry at the grassroots level democratic institutions is a positive indicator of Orrissa. The Stereotyping of women as reproductive units of society is radically changing in the rural value pattern as a result of political empowerment of women and the performance of the PRI representatives has ended the speculation on their capabilities and interest in discharging their duties.

Analyzing the basic features of empowerment Shanta Kohli Chandra (1997)\textsuperscript{56} conceptualized that empowerment both as a process and the result of the process. Empowerment in her opinion transforms the structures or institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination. She asserts that empowerment enables the women to gain access to and control of material as well as informational resources.

Reflecting on the success of women leaders of the Panchayati Raj bodies in the Tamil Nadu State, Palanthurai (2004)\textsuperscript{57} argued that the

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elected women representatives of the Panchayati Raj bodies consider the space which they occupy as a space for development.

In his recent survey on the working of Panchayati Raj institutions in Andhra Pradesh Jain S.P., (2002) observed that after gaining an initial success, the Panchayati Raj Institutions in this state have failed to improve their political process inspite of their conformity with the Provisions of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. At the same time, these bodies, have failed to accelerate the pace of development in the rural areas he adds further.

Revanth Narayanan (1994) who analyzed the functioning of the women leaders of the Panchayats pointed out that any endeavor attempted towards a just and equitable social order could not provide magic solutions. Hence, a well designed national level game plan should be evolved for maximizing the social and political benefits intended by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.

Palani Thurai’s (1994) appraisal on the role of women leaders in the Panchayati Raj Politics in the state of Tamilnadu underscores the fact that the level of performance and perceptions of women leaders in the Panchayati Raj bodies are marginal. Hence there is a need to orient them to their role. These leaders are not effective in their functioning and hence

60 Palanithurai,G., Empowerment of Women A Novel Exercise, kurukshtra, June, 1994,pp.50-53.
they are of little use, as he observes. Hence he emphasized the need for conducting orientation programmes for the women leaders to improve their leadership capacities.

The above brief review of research studies conducted on the political empowerment of women after of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act reflects that the Amendment Act has become a landmark as it initiated the process of politically empowering women through the reservation system of political positions for them in the Panchayati Raj bodies. However, they are equally critical of the Act that there are several lapses and defects in the concerned Act which minimized its effectiveness in achieving the political empowerment of women at the grassroots, as assured by the framers of the above Act.

**Conclusion:**

It can be noted from the above analysis that there is vast amount of literature on the Panchayati Raj System which has been working in India since the last five decades. In fact, the Panchayati Raj system has become a very potential area of research in all the social sciences, particularly Political Science, Public Administration, Sociology and Economics. A number of scholars of these social sciences have conducted extensive research on various aspects of Panchayati Raj Institutions working in their respective states. In the beginning, the focus of the research of the scholars was on the structure, functions, programmes, financial position, leadership pattern, achievements and failures of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in their respective states. In course of time the focus of the scholars has started changing. They started focusing on certain emerging issues such as
the weakness as and defects crept into in the working of the Panchayati Raj bodies the various types of hurdles faced by them, the indifference of bureaucracy the deteriorating official and non official relationship, declining position and role of these bodies and so on. This trend also changed during the 1990s. After the introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act which affected a radical transformation in these bodies by means of devolution of functions and finances of these bodies, granting them Constitutional status, reservation of certain numbers of offices to the women etc, all these new development drew the attention of the scholars all over the country, the implications of reservations for women in the Panchayati Raj Bodies needs to be mentioned particularly in this context. Emerging women leadership in the Panchayati Raj Bodies in different states as consequence of the reservation becomes the most dominant theme in the research on the Panchayati Raj System. Particularly, how far the rural women became politically empowered on account of reservations in Panchayati Raj Bodies and the implications of the empowerment on their socio- economic life started dominating the research in this area presently the largest space in the research in the area of Panchayati Raj has certainly occupied by the studies on various emerging issues relating to the political empowerment of rural women on account of reservations in the Panchayati Raj bodies with particular focus on the pattern of, the type and nature of emerging women leadership in these bodies, the changed political scenario in the rural areas in the changed context and so on.