Chapter-III

Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: An Assessment of Contemporary Literature

Introduction

The detailed review on the study proper centres around relevant books, research articles and committee reports. Further each review is specific and distinct from one another. A review of literature and assessing it helps to prepare base for any objective study. It also helps to identify the gaps to be taken up for further research and to suggest measures for empowerment. A number of studies –micro and macro –have covered both theoretical and empirical aspects relating to the Scheduled Castes and Panchayati Raj Institutions. The studies were conducted by Government Organizations and Researchers. The following discussion would focus on the findings of the studies with regard to background, perceptions, participation, empowerment and the related aspects of the Scheduled Castes Vis a Vis Panchayats Raj Institutions.

3.1 Democratic Decentralization in Panchayat Raj

While the decentralization as concept is discussed in chapter II, the present chapter discusses the following the application part of decentralization, as found, in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Democratic Decentralization has been debated at length by researchers and policy-makers. “Decentralization is the transfer decision-making to more directly concerned. It is adopted in 80 percent of all developing and transition countries, and local government has become a major arena of policy formulation. According to one important report, decentralization produces mixed results. It facilitates good governance, improves participation and gives opportunity to non-discrimination. Local governments could be more effective and more legitimate. Involvement of civil society is possible to a greater extent. But poor governments became worse governments. Instances of increased accountability are relatively less. If decentralization is assessed only quantitatively, the issue of empowerment gets missed”.

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About democratic decentralization, James Manor writes that “it has the benefits of stimulating greater popular participation and civil society activity, increases transparency and enhances accountability. In most cases, democratic decentralization brings about improvement to Less Developed Countries (LDCs) to some extent. For reducing poverty, as force for reducing poverty, it has mixed record, but the likelihood of democratic decentralization’s impact reducing poverty is more positive than before. The impact of women on local bodies sometimes increases because of the taking up of services such as ante and post natal care. Especially when civil society organizations, committed to assisting the poor and women, support women members of local councils, positive results follow. Unwillingness/ Lack of willingness of government to devolve powers to local bodies and taking back of already conferred powers would come in the way of democratic decentralization. The need for encouraging governments to be more generous in devolving power to local bodies, preventions of higher level bodies to victimize local bodies, (reorganizing/recognizing) the administrative and fiscal decentralization and supporting civil society organizations committed to decentralization is considerable”.2

Referring to the need for reforms, Manor points out, “reforms can make government more open, responsive and accountable and can increase its legitimacy and popularity, even when conditions are difficult. Decentralization can assist the poor and disadvantaged. Downward accountability, constitution of user committees, reduction of cynicism through reforms, bottom in promoting decentralization”.3

“The involvement of self appointed activities and local opinion of leaders, community participation development of participatory planning process need to be encouraged. Ensuring accountability, skill development, adoptability and exchange of information between countries also are desirable” say Andy Inglis and Ced Hesse.4

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Craig Johnson\(^5\) says that, since 1993 in India the experience has been highly variable, ranging from ambitious attempts at Gram Swaraj or (village self-rule) in Madhya Pradesh to political re-centralization in Karnataka. Based on a study of five hundred villages in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Timothy Besley, Rohini Pandey and Vijayender Rao found “Grama Panchayats created by the massive experiment in democratic decentralization have had an effect on delivery of public services, especially in the targeting of beneficiaries of welfare programmes. It is found that having a reserved Pradhan would further the end of getting better targeting towards Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes households. However, there are some unresolved politicians remaining opportunistic is one of the unresolved issues.”\(^6\) A study in Madhya Pradesh by Shashank Kela\(^7\) notes that limited fiscal, political decentralization has not led to any fundamental change in country side. Caste still defines social and political identity and the oppressed groups are represented only by tiny sections. Mehta argues that despite linkages with the multinational corporations, multinational investment and technological cooperation, the communications revolution has spread political awareness and is empowering the poor. Weaker Sections are getting confidence. There is accentuation of dissatisfaction, sharpened conflicts and exposing indifference, bureaucratic collousness to grievances and the neglect of public good. The efforts of organizations like Institute of Local Self Government and Responsible Citizenship established at Udaipur in 1997 brought about encouraging results he points out. Mehta says that “with the help of non-ulterior voluntary organizations, Panchayat Raj may well become a model of the ‘city on the Hill’ for democracy in the developing world.”\(^8\) Singh opined “the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has strengthened the democratic values and has emerged


with a new and resounding consensus about the value of democracy in the process of social transformation.  

Prasad discusses the methods of enabling people “to participate in development process and to improve governance. Capacity building, promotion of participation, devolving the sense of ownership and trust in Panchayati Raj Institutions, training and using of new tools like e-governacne can bring about positive results he says. Access to authentic information, encouragement of interactions and new skills’ development would go a long way for a better situation.  

Based on the Karnataka experience Aziz discusses the decentralization process and planning. The article says that the planning process is not happening because: Absence of regular gram sabha meetings, lack of autonomy to panchayats planners and absence of co-ordination of governance and planning process are identified as the reasons. Aziz suggests concerted efforts to train the panchayat officials in the art of science of decentralized governance and planning. Especially training among the weaker sections to create some degree of awareness will promote attitudinal changes and impart governance skills.  

Aziz develops a general theoretical perspective based on a review of the actual experience of decentralized planning in the state of Karnataka. Starting with a brief account of the theoretical and methodological issues involved, he delineates the institutional structure necessary to achieve the ends of decentralized governance. Among the main elements are capacity to identify both local level needs and problems and the aspirations of the people to facilitate people's participation and to formulate and implement appropriate projects.  

Mathew’s research paper focusing on the working of Panchayats in the villages of Madhya Pradesh, “is a critical examination of certain violent incidents in

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four village panchayats of the state. The paper analyses these violent incidents (stripping a woman sarpanch, gang rape of a woman panch, brutal attacks on Dalit panches, etc) against the backdrop of the age-old customs and traditions of the villages, especially a factor in poor villages in northern India”. The author further states, Panchayats, which are institutions of self-government, cannot function in a society that is ridden with caste, feudalism and poverty. It attempts to fathom the social factors behind them and to provide a clear perspective. The paper argues strongly that Panchayati Raj Institutions should be made effective instruments for social change. Therefore, “Panchayats can become instruments of social transformation through a vibrant democratic political process at the local level.”\textsuperscript{13} Mathew’s study of the working of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, Karnataka and Orissa helps to understand the issue of decentralized governance in India. It is argued that mere statutory changes are insufficient to have healthy local bodies. There must be strong people’s movement to make the constitutional changes in reality.\textsuperscript{14}

Mukarji argues, “the fundamental question before panchayats everywhere in the country has for long been whether they are there for development functions only or for the wider purpose of self-government. The central objective of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act must, therefore, be seen as self-government, unabridged by the quite unnecessary references to economic development and social justice.” The theory he has propounded in this article is that the amended constitution requires the states to constitute panchayats as institutions of self-government not only for villages but also at intermediate and district levels. Consequently there will be, henceforth, be three strata of government: the union, the states and the panchayats. According to him, a more radical change is difficult to visualize. Its implications are far-reaching, perhaps not fully grasped even by those who legislated the measure. He says that the 73rd and 74\textsuperscript{th} Amendments and says that the two acts have created artificial dichotomy between rural and urban self-government. To him, the union must first decentralize to the states so that the states will have enough to decentralize to the lower strata. It is argued that India should abandon the distortion of over-

\textsuperscript{13} Mathew, George and Ramesh C. Nayak, Panchayats at Work: What it means for the Oppressed? Institute of Social Sciences, Occasional Paper Series - 19, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1996, Pp.2-4

\textsuperscript{14} Mathew, George, Panchayati Raj from Legislation to Movement, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, P. 4
centralization. The earlier principle of federation with a strong center should give way to a federation with strong center and strong states.\(^{15}\)

Mukarji study of Panchayat Raj in West Bengal provides insightful information on West Bengal and also on the general process of evaluation of elected local government that is relevant to all the other states in India. Based on two broad lines of enquiry, one conceptual and the other programmatic, Mukharji and Bandopadayay identifies the inherent structural weakness of the panchayats as the root cause of the mood of despair into which they have sunk. Self-governance and autonomy are theoretically and ideologically central to the long-term prospects of Panchayati Raj but they have sunk, they point out.\(^{16}\)

Mukarji and Datta argue for bringing power down to the people through the panchayats, and stressing on the need for organic linkage between the three strata of governance local, state and central. The findings are based on the fieldwork done in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Punjab in 1995. Two districts from each of the three states were intensively studied.\(^{17}\)

Singh, commenting on the 73\(^{rd}\) Constitution Amendment argues, “comprehensive understanding of local government is needed today. It must involve both development and planning components in it. Panchayati Raj in India has to work as an agency of decentralization having both political and administrative powers. Panchayati Raj Institutions must be encouraged and developed for mass participation and self-governance. Therefore, he says that there is a need to strengthen the planning process at the micro-level for overall rural development and to provide opportunities for the poor to participate in the decision-making process in the local bodies”\(^{18}\).

Sivanna, “finds many operational constraints which come in the way of meaningful planning process. Added to this is the inter-relationship between the officials and the non-officials, which was seen as one of ‘love-hate’ relationships. To him Gram Sabha is a mechanism people could participate as beneficiaries of the programs and there is need for the decentralization process to be strengthened by


further devolving necessary powers and resources to the panchayats. Then only is it possible, the author argues, for the grassroots level institutions to make a concerted effort to meet the onerous tasks of ameliorating the living conditions of the rural poor and developing social and economic rural infrastructure”.

A study, based on primary field research conducted by Johnson, Deshingkar and Start in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh concludes that Indian decentralization has been articulated and defended principally on the basis of two normative goals- political inclusion and social advancement. It is found that the government of Andhra Pradesh has not devolved power to the extent that proponents of the decentralization would have liked. However, government programmes like poverty reduction programmes have empowered the poor to an extent. This is present to a usher degree in Madhya Pradesh.

An extensive study sponsored by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Centre, Paris on the impact of democratic decentralization on the chances of socially excluded groups to participate in the local governance institutions in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu by Narayana brings out interesting findings. Awareness, support or social capital, literacy, structure of governance, and gender are determining facts for participation. Women’s participation is lower than that of men, though in Kerala women fared better. In Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh the participation of the socially disadvantaged was of lower in any aspect of governance. In Kerala participation of Scheduled Castes is higher compared to other backward castes and forward castes. In Kerala, participation of the poor is higher compared to that of the rich.

The experience regarding decentralization has been varying. In general there is limited decentralization and even efforts to re-centralize is seen in some states. The communication revolution has been useful to spread awareness. But unwillingness of the government to devolve power, indifference of bureaucracy limited training are

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some problems associated with effective implementation of decentralization. Wherever self appointed activists involve, the effects have been encouraging.

3.2 Empowerment

The following description deals with brief review of literature on empowerment of Dalits. Fenella Starkey’s article on the ‘Empowerment Debate’: Consumerist, Professional and Liberational Perspectives in Health and Social Care, aims to clarify the meaning of the much-used term ‘empowerment’ in order to contribute to a more theoretically coherent development of policy and practice aimed at facilitating the empowerment of health and social care service users. The liberalational and consumerist models of empowerment are highlighted, with the former having a broader emphasis on people’s roles within society than the latter. The concept of ‘empowerment as professional practice’ is also critically explored, with the conclusion that professionals can work with people in empowering ways if they recognise and work to address the structural causes of oppression. According to an important paper, decentralization is increasing in all parts of the world. Assessing the efficiency of decentralization as a means to mitigate ethnic conflict is then of primarily importance. This paper builds a simple model of decentralization as an empowerment mechanism. It suggests that decentralization could promote peace conditional on a set of countries and groups characteristics. Typically, decentralization should empower minorities which are small at the national level, while representing a critical mass of the population in the regions they live in. Empirical results confirm that decentralization impacts ethnic conflict only when those conditioning factors are controlled for. Furthermore, decentralization dampens all forms of ethnic violence for groups spatially concentrated enough and/or for groups having a local majority. In contrast, it fuels protest and even rebellion for groups lacking one. The paper then highlights the crucial need to build checks and balances mechanisms at the regional level for local minorities not being harmed by the decentralization process.


Writing on the empowerment of elected Scheduled Castes members through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Bihar, Sachidanda says that the orientation, training imparted by government officials and voluntary agencies is not found useful by the representatives. The representatives, though hailing from the socially depressed communities have not been silent spectators, but too active part in the functioning of panchayats. They did raise awareness among the villagers about different schemes; prepared annual plans and budget- they also selected beneficiaries and supervised the implementation of schemes. It is also noted by Sachidanda that membership to Scheduled Castes in Panchayats has given them a new lease of life more than three fourth of the representatives gained self confidence, commanded respect and served society. They have made a fruitful entry into the democratic process. In fact there took place social transformation in rural society because of reservation.24

Sharma, writing about the empowerment of Dalits in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Himachal Pradesh observes that the process of sharing of power by the Dalits began in the country and that the commitment of the government of Haryana to accord reservation in the leadership structure to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women to enable them to share power is visible. The field study in Sirmaur district of the state revealed that the process of change did not involve violent reactions and resistance. The response of the non-Dalit leadership towards the transfer of leadership to the Dalit community is found positive.25 Hidden simmering of caste sentiments and same type of acrimony and resistance between the Dalits and non-Dalits is seen. The Caste and class hierarchy among the Dalits and non-Dalits is noted. In same cases, the Dalits are better placed than the non-Dalits in respect of education, land ownership and related matters. The Dalit leadership is found to be very actively participating in decision-making. However in view of same ‘blurred spots’, periodical holding of orientation programmes, organizing the Dalit youth are among the suggestions made by Sharma. The entry of Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions has led to a beginning of the process of sharing power. The process of empowerment is on.

24 Sachidanda, Empowerment of Elected Scheduled Castes Member through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Report of the Project Sponsored by Planning Commission, New Delhi,2006, Pp.82-91.
Kumar points out that the process of decentralisation presently lacks a methodology for community participation. Participatory Rural Appraisal and associated participatory methodologies could be used to aid decentralising programs. He further says that decentralising programs need to be accompanied with a participatory methodology and participatory methods need to be institutionalised and suggests the constitution committee to draw out a structure for implementing and using participatory techniques. Universities need to address participation in their courses to create professionals who understand the importance of community participation, and promote research. To him, data collection and documentation of lessons learned and experiences of other organisations and Non-Governmental Organization’s need to be carried out and further research commissioned. Traditional vertical prevention programmes are inappropriate to deal with the emergence of HIV/AIDS which needs to be addressed at a social level - budgetary constraints, social taboo, awareness issues and inequalities should be addressed using community based planning. Some Problems associated with decentralization are identified by Kumar.26

A research study of Kripa in Karnataka examines the role of customary village councils as promoters of democracy, she finds that the customary village councils are actively taking on new roles including developmental and electoral. They have become more and more pluralist and democratic, providing a wide range of services to the villagers. The paper concludes by suggesting that the major reason why customary village councils continue to enjoy significant authority is because they operate in a relatively democratic and pluralist environment in which the formal state provides many services quite effectively. For this reason, it is argued, Customary Village Councils have no monopoly and must continue to earn the authority which they exercise.27

Balaramulu and Raghavendra Rao point out that democratic decentralization was a complete break from the traditional system and had brought in democratically

26 Kumar, Uday, Decentralising of Health Policy and planning using Participatory Rural Appraisal: Indian example, Decentralization without participation: India’s Health Policy Lacks a Participatory Methodology, Global Development Network (GDN), U.K, 2001. (http://www.gdnet.org/pdf/kumar.pdf)

elected members. In many cases the traditional authority itself manages to come in because of their social background of influence, resources and education. The emerging leadership in Panchayati Raj institutions is neither traditional nor modern in nature, it is somewhere between both and if these are assumed as forming a continuum, then the author calls it `Neo-traditional' leadership.28

Bhargava’s paper “Panchayati Raj in Orissa” describes and analyzes Orissa’s experiments with rural local self-government at different points of time and under various regimes. The author adopts a historical perspective to study the local self-government in the state, tracing the evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions from the pre-independence period. They are of the view that the nature, character and functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions vary depending on the attitude of the ruling elites, the quality of their leadership, governmental control exercised upon the local bodies from time to time, and the way the government looks at them. Those at the helm of affairs at the state level are often suspicious of the emerging leadership at the local level institution and see a potential threat to their hegemonic leadership and therefore take little interest in the conducting of regular elections.29

Choudhary and Jain’s work on democratic decentralisation contains with specific studies on Panchayati Raj system in India till 1998. It looks at among other issues, the extent and effectiveness of autonomy, functional and financial devolution, empowerment of the poor and the disadvantaged sections of society and the involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the planning and implementation of central and state schemes and programs.30

Asha Kaushik in the chapter on `Constitutionalization of Panchayati Raj in the Gandhian Perspective' focuses on the Gandhian perspective in the context of constitutionalization of Panchayati Raj and contends that the attempt to realize `Gram Swaraj' through the 73rd Amendment is a hasty conception which ignores the political reality in India as well as the key premises of the Gandhian framework. P.C.Mathur in ‘Constitutional Panchayats of India: A Radical Innovatory Improvement over the Pre-

1993 Developmental Panchayati Raj Institutions’ is of the view that Article 243-G has a non-mandatory status and leaves the Panchayati Raj Institutions at the mercy of state legislatures. The author says that the conferment of a constitutional status upon the Panchayati Raj Institutions is neither a radical-structural nor a radical-functional innovation in rural India and their gains in democratic improvement in organization of local-level panchayats are not commensurate with the functional agenda of the panchayats as units of self-government. The discussion made supra gives a positive impression and slightly so, the decentralization in politico-administration arena bringing positive results and peoples’ participation in decision-making and its processes are ensured by decentralization. At the same time there are functional problems that work as barriers in decentralization and good governance in Panchayat Raj. There are several important aspects that need to be given not only as a supportive material to the subject proper but also they are essential factors to be discussed only to drive at appropriate factors to be studied and conclusion given- the aspects, as supportive notes for the study, are as follows:

(a) Background;
(b) Participation;
(c) Reservations;
(d) Women;
(e) Problems;
(f) Summary.

3.3 Emerging Leadership among Dalits

Studies on the background of elected representatives are considerable in number. The findings of some important studies are discussed below. Shymala’s study in the state of Karnataka finds that a 40% are youth and a majority of them are literates, Hindus and a greater number among them are land owners. Males outnumber women with regard to experience. Males, well-informed citizens and educated are included. In general, landless, tribals and women to a large extent are excluded.

Singh’s study of Panchayat members in Uttar Pradesh observes that most of the rural Scheduled Castes leaders are now young and literate and hail from dominant

castes and well to do families among their caste groups. Their exposure to mass media, political awareness and political participation is on the increase, but it cannot be rated as very high or satisfactory, which may be the consequences of their socio-economic backwardness. Their entry to the power and authority structure is by and large moved through the process of reservations. But it would be wrong to say that they cannot share power otherwise. Some of them are emerging as leaders by contesting unreserved seats also. This reflects that they are fitting into the larger political processes in the body politics. But their emergence as successful leaders depends upon the group support structure they have. Generally only those persons are able to emerge as leaders who have strong caste, kin and village factional bases. From the point of view of social values they stand half-way between tradition and modernity; they are highly development oriented but feel helpless and are not able to do much because of the oppressive attitudes of the higher castes and classes.32

Ravi notes that a large proportion of Schedule Caste men than Scheduled Castes women are found to be elected. However, at Gram Panchayat level relatively more of Scheduled Castes women got elected than at the other two levels. Most of the Scheduled Castes women representatives are aged below 40 years where as most of the Scheduled Castes men are above the age of 40 years. A majority of male and female representatives are educated. The percentage of illiterates, especially women is more at the Gram Panchayat level. A majority of the Scheduled Castes leaders have come from nuclear families. Most of the Scheduled Castes’ representatives have come from agricultural background followed by business which includes people working as contractors and traders. A majority of the women representatives are house wives. It is clearly found that the new Panchayati Raj System paved way for the participation of poor Scheduled Castes people in the democratic organizations particularly the mandal and village levels. At the Zilla Parishad level, in general the Scheduled Caste representatives are from sound economic background. A majority of Scheduled Castes’ leaders have been elected from Telugu Desam and Congress Parties. New entrants, though small in percentage have given way for the

participation of Scheduled Castes in democratic process. Non political family background is seen in a majority of the castes.33

Yet another study about political leadership in the Panchayats in Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh Balaramulu and Raghavender Rao found that 44.7 per cent of the seats were reserved for Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Women. The upper castes constitute 10 per cent of the total population and they had captured most of the seats. The leadership is emerging from middle-aged groups and the majority of them have intermediate, degree and post-graduate education. Most of them come from agricultural backgrounds. From the study, it was evident that 53.6 per cent had previous political experience. The respondents suggested that elections should be on party basis; all development programs must be brought under the umbrella of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The respondents were of the view that the local bodies do not have sufficient autonomy.34

Based on interviews conducted in Thiruvarangulam Panchayat Union in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu with 450 rural poor, 137 ward members and 38 panchayat presidents, randomly selected, explores the leadership pattern in the Panchayat Union through comparing the socio-economic condition of the panchayat leaders and the rural poor and tries to identify the factors that affect them. The findings of the study are, inter-alia, points out that while a number of ward members were elected from lower castes and lower income groups, the panchayat presidents were mostly from a stable economic background among the numerically superior backward castes. The factors attributed by the author to the emergence of such caste and class composition of the panchayat leadership are: the numerical dominance of the caste; voting behaviour of the rural poor; the caste and economic background of the candidates contesting in the panchayat elections. The votes of the lower castes decide the winning candidate in the panchayat president elections. In such contests a number of backward caste candidates aspire for positions. This situation creates a tough competition among them to plan and implement many welfare measures for

their development. It invariably influences the shifting of power structure in favour of the less-privileged sections. This is a good article on caste factor in Panchayats.  

Santha’s report is the outcome of a study conducted in Haryana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu to assess the performance of elected women representatives and their relative independence in decision-making at the local bodies. The role of sociological factors like caste, class, educational status and religion on the political participation of women has also been taken into consideration. These three states were selected for the study, according to the author, these states put together constitute a representative sample of the social, political and economic realities that exist in India, particularly regarding the development of women. The report gives a comparative overview of women's political participation in these states and describes the factors that influence the level of their participation and also attempts to broaden out understanding of the wider impact of the 73rd Amendment on the role and status of women in rural India.  

A positive development is that the young and middle aged among the Dalits are showing interest in contesting elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gender difference exists and males outnumber females. The educational levels and economic status of the dalits is lower to that of the non-dalits. Emergence of women’s leadership is also visible among the Dalits.  

3.4 Caste  

Caste plays a significant role in the Indian politics. Several Studies on caste and politics have brought out interesting findings. The following discussion focuses on this aspect. George Mathew says that knowing entrenched caste system in villages, it would have been almost impossible to imagine that there will come a day when a village will be headed by Scheduled Castes’ man or woman. India has had an unbroken history of village panchayats and caste panchayats; they were not true democratic as privileges attached to caste, land holding and other factors prevented them from functioning as the forum of common people. In those panchayats, these marginalized groups like women, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes had no


voice at all. Vijaya Lakshmi Purwar in her study in Uttar Pradesh states that the experiment of democracy at the grass roots also brought into play the parochial forces of caste and social hierarchy as well as partisan conflicts and factional strife.\textsuperscript{38} Lal gives details of the caste based problems of empowerment of Dalits. The Scheduled Castes, in order to survive, surrender to the forces exploiting them; he says claims for equality of treatment are met with cruelty as caste is the basic determinant of equality of Dalits. They remain exteriors encountering social restrictions situated on the margin of economy; the Scheduled Castes face prejudiced treatment. Despite several failures, the Dalits have acquired impudence to question the perpetuation of exploitation against them.\textsuperscript{39}

Khan points out that the Scheduled Castes did not have access to 'power' in the past, not only because of the absence of any of the factors which the caste Hindus had, but also due to their low social status and economic dependence on the caste Hindus. Even the limited franchise that was made available to the people possessing education and property qualifications, till recently was denied to the Scheduled Castes since they lacked these qualifications too. Political freedom which the Scheduled Castes have got is a ‘novelty’. It was a thrilling experience to vote, though under influences by the dominant castes and consequent torture, particularly by the employers. Increasing awareness of the voting power, interaction with caste Hindus, membership in the Panchayats, casting of votes are some positive trends, observes Khan\textsuperscript{40}

A study on caste and patriarchy in panchayat by Mahipal in Haryana finds that the caste system and patriarchy still exercise a strong hold on panchayat institutions leading to making a mockery on decentralized governance. Referring to strengthen the participation of women elected representatives. It is suggested that adequate support system and education are necessary to make them effective leaders. Special arrangement for women representatives; economic support; sensitization and reorientation of social administrative system; promotion of good practices are suggested by Mahipal \textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38} Vijay Lakshmi Purwar, Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh, Tej Kumar Press Lucknow, 1959, P.129.
\textsuperscript{40} Khan, Muntaz Ali., The Scheduled Castes and Their Status in India, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, P.172-185.
\textsuperscript{41} Mahipal, Caste and Patriarchy in Panchayat, Economic and Political Weekly, August 7, 2004, Pp. 3581-3583
Joshi and Narwani point out that the clashes between the higher castes and the newly emerging women/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. The struggles have given to the weaker sections the taste of the fight for rights. Some of them are keen for contest from unreserved seats in the next election women contestants are getting support from Mahila Mandals, Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes women candidates, the marginalized among the marginalized got a chance to participate in governance. Though strong women’s leadership is resisted by men, women are making head way. It is true that a number of negative factors are coming in the way of affirmative action, legal ambiguities, caste and gender prejudices, poverty, and other factors do came in the way. But the deprived sections have found in the panchayats a forum to ventilate their grievances, a training ground for learning and to work for social justice. The new woman and dalit leadership got strengthened through information, linkages for effective functioning and change in the attitudes of society. According to Chaudhary the practice of untouchability is present and there is no effort on the part of panchayats to eliminate this evil practice.

Suresh Misra and Rajvir S. Dhaka have attempted to review the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in democratizing the decision-making process at the local levels and in mobilizing the people for social and economic development in the State of Haryana. A range of issues including the legal basis of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the electoral process that has brought new leadership to the forefront; the socio-economic background of the elected representatives, the way they function and the role that they play; the motivations that prompt them for action or no action and this study suggests the reforms still needed to make the system work in accordance with letter and spirit of the Constitution of India have been examined. The study found a nexus between law, social milieu, economic structure, and host of other factors that make a society as a grassroots democracy.

Yatindra Singh Sisodia points out that the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the subsequent state-wise Panchayati Raj Acts in India have

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brought to frontline significance of grassroots democratic processes. The Statutory provisions for the reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes and women are significant decisions so far as the political empowerment of the depressed sections of the society is concerned. This study, aimed at studying the socio-economic background of Scheduled Castes women’ leadership in panchayats, implementation of Panchayati Raj and roles of Scheduled Castes women’ leadership and attitude of Scheduled Castes women leadership towards the political processes, done in five districts in Ujjain division of Madhya Pradesh. Sarpanch of Gram Panchayats reserved for Scheduled Castes women as unit of observation brought some pertinent findings. The socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes women Sarpanch is average and this more or less the same as that of Scheduled Castes members of society. From the point of view of implementation of Panchayati Raj the Scheduled Castes women leadership has played a very significant role in some specific cases related to their groups while this kind of leadership is in the process of learning for the last four and a half years the basic ideas and principles of Panchayat Raj. As far as their level of consciousness is concerned it leaves much to be desired. However, what is more important to note is that this backward group of society has at last become a part of political process at the rural level. It is also worth mentioning and also significant that, what was the most backward segment of the society was till yesterday is now introduced to the political process and this will provide opportunities of equality and social justice to this section.

A study conducted in Uttar Pradesh from 1990-96 in three districts; Muzzafarnagar, Rae Bareilly and Jaunpur finds the stark reality of a deficient democracy through the Panchayats. The authors opine that the Panchayats have remained an affair of the rich with intense factionalism Panchayati Raj, it remains the raj (rule) of the village strongman and the poor villagers by and large continue to comply as a co-opted caste." Although this is the general trend in Uttar Pradesh, the authors recognize a slow movement of Muslims, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) emerging in the villages. This study also underlines people’s perception that they need a corruption-free panchayat. Lack of land reform is
cited as the single most factor for the ineffective Panchayati Raj system in Uttar Pradesh.\textsuperscript{46}

A comparative study in the state of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana regarding Dalit leadership in Panchayats brings out interesting findings. This study by Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai focuses on three aspects—representation, inclusion and participation. In Himachal Pradesh, the absence of an oppressive social order, rise in literacy, improvement in the economic conditions and employment opportunities offered by the State have provided Dalits confidence and capability. The panchayats have become more inclusive to them than in the past. But full access to decision-making is not present low social status has to be overcome. The process of inclusion began.\textsuperscript{47}

In Uttar Pradesh, Dalits are attempting to improve their position in the new Panchayats. Meaningful and effective participation, though they attend, in the panchayats is not seen. Illiteracy, factionalism and lack of unity among Dalits, continuation of various forms of social discrimination are some hindering factors. Local bureaucracy is unhelpful or helpless. Uttar Pradesh presents an example of a state which is in transition. One good aspect is some non-Dalit leaders are making efforts to improve their position.\textsuperscript{48}

The position in Madhya Pradesh is that the state still continues to have an oppressive social structure which does not allow Dalits to make full use of reservations. Illiteracy, low level social and political awareness are coming in the way of Dalits to question the hold of upper and middle classes participation in the meetings is high but not productive. Madhya Pradesh experience has shown that the provision of reservation alone would not help Dalit and much more has to be done.\textsuperscript{49}

As regards the influence of castes, it can be observed that the parochial forces of castes and social hierarchy have not disappeared or diminished but the influence is less than that earlier. The Scheduled Castes face prejudiced treatment in general. But there is increasing awareness of the voting power. Caste based struggles have grown


\textsuperscript{49}Ibid, Pp.119-163.
among the weaker sections and also the taste of fights and consequent tendency of assertion. The dalits are not able to fully use the benefits of reservations.

Singh notes, when elections were held to 100 and odd posts in local bodies, across Tamil Nadu in September 2004, four panchayats reserved for Dalits remained untouched. The upper caste leaders prevented Dalits from contesting. Those who dared to contest had to bother consequences including leaving of the village and hiding in some distant place. Their names have been struck off from the electoral rolls through manipulations. Disgusting discrimination, though not accepted by the upper castes is very much seen.  

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) notes that the systematic and historical domination by upper caste groups implied that the constitutional provisions (reservations) are likely to be resisted fiercely. Despite being elected to public offices, a vast majority of the dalit representatives are unable to effectively perform their roles.

Based on a study of six villages in Karnataka Parvathamma finds that a majority of weaker sections are agricultural labourers and they depend on the upper castes for their survival. The representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on village statutory panchayats has not brought about substantial changes in the situation. Political representation has not been helpful to bring about the emergence of Scheduled Castes’ leaders in rural India. Scheduled Castes’ political leadership at upper levels is very much divided. Local Scheduled Caste leaders are not able without the economic base and reduced them to economic dependence. It is social justice and not distributive justice that is more important. An effort on the part of Dalits to fight against caste based subjugation is evident.

3. 5 Dalits’ Participation in Panchayat Raj

Participation of all sections of society including Dalits is important in democracy. The following description gives details of the participatory trends of Dalits in Panchayat Raj. Gurumurthy points out that the participation of weaker sections as Panchayat Raj functionaries at the village level/grass root level is not satisfactory. They continued to be passive participants in its meetings and proceedings.

This is because they lacked the essential requisites of participation like education and sufficient income. This is a pre 73rd Amendment Analysis.\(^5^3\)

Shymala opines that the findings of the study lend credence to the hypothesis that instead of continuing the old and traditional, the leadership emerging among SCs is new and development oriented and mobility oriented and large sections of them belong to landless working class. Secondly, the process of transfer of power to the people at the grassroots level has begun. The reservation policy has altered the rural power structure in favour of the marginalized. The new generation has started participating in the activities of Panchayat Raj Institutions. But this does not mean that one can afford to be complacent. The new entrants have yet to acquire the knowledge and skills required to become meaningfully functional. Quite a few of them have been only mouthpieces of strong sections, given the ando-centric nature of the society, it is more so in the case of women. Grama Sabha is yet to go along way to play its decisive role. The study is makes a changed situation clear after the amendment.\(^5^4\)

Vijay Kumar’s study on Scheduled Caste Panchayat Pradhans in India spreads over six village panchayats in four Community Development Blocks. With the main objective of looking into the political changes in rural community with respect to time and space. In regard to performance of the Pradhans, it was found that, the Scheduled Castes Pradhans could ensure that the various benefits provided by the government reach the Scheduled Caste masses. Development schemes became more successful during the tenure of Scheduled Castes Pradhans, where as non-Scheduled Caste Pradhans paid less attention to these programmes. On the other hand, certain complication of social structure became apparent with the upper caste creating hurdles for the Scheduled Castes Pradhans.\(^5^5\) The contribution of Scheduled Castes’ Sarpanches to Scheduled Castes is noted in this study. Besley, Pande, Rahman and Rao have examined critical questions relating to the impact of political geography,


\(^{55}\) Vijay Kumar., Scheduled Caste Panchayat Pradhans in India: A Study of Western Uttar Pradesh, Ajantha Publications (India), Delhi, 1989.
political identity and reservation of post on providing public goods at the grass roots level. They find that final decision-making power rests with the Grama Panchayat head and that there is little consensus on how to develop governance structures that are responsive to the interests of the poor.\textsuperscript{56}

A case study of the Pappapatti Panchayat in Madhurai district of Tamilnadu by Sumathi and Sudersen opine that the Dalits elected as panchayat presidents are not allowed to function. Where the position of sarpanch is reserved for Dalits the fight in fact will be between the various upper castes. The upper castes that supports the Dalits would be called as people belong to Dalitnadu. There is also feeling among upper castes their that own slaves can not rule them. They would argue that tradition and devine order can not be intrepreted by any agency in the name of Constitution and Parliament. The youth from upper castes/higher castes expresed their anguish at the Dalits holding chair position. In fact the sprit of 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitution Amendment Act is subotaged.\textsuperscript{57} This study speaks of the efforts of Upper Castes’ domination

Venkata Ravi has conducted an extenstive study on the participation of Scheduled Caste members in Panchayati Raj Institutions of Andhra Pradesh. He states that Scheduled Castes leaders of Panchayats are found to be facing problems from upper castes’ members. There has been communication disability and problems relating to awareness. But the upper age group (above 40 years) Scheduled Castes leaders have faced less problems than the lower age (below 40 years) group Scheduled Caste leaders. Thus there has been significance in participation. The lower age group Scheduled Caste leaders have been found to be possessing less communicating facilities and less accomodating attitudes, especially with officials and senior leaders. Domination by the upper castes’ senior local leaders is found. It is found that the participation of Scheduled Caste men is more frequent than that of women. Scheduled Caste leaders who were close to political parties attended


meetings regularly. At the panchayat level Scheduled Caste leaders especially women have not discussed or interacted.\(^{58}\)

Sisodia examines the role of the representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the tribal regions of Madhya Pradesh, which is a rich treasure house of tribal communities. It is found that the level of participation of people at the grass roots has been very low and the Gram Sabhas are almost formal institutions with no participatory role in various assigned works. Both the leadership and bureaucracy have not been able to strengthen the Grama Sabha. A majority of the Panchayat representatives are not aware of the quorum required for Gram Sabha meetings; caste, class and gender divide the villages. Sarpanches and other influential people dominate the decision-making process.\(^{59}\)

Chaudhary observes that Dalit representatives are asked to sign on papers sent to them. They are not asked to attend meetings.\(^{60}\) Based on field work during 1991 to 95, Lieten finds that in West Bengal, Panchayats ensure the democratic participation of the poorest because the state restored to agrarian development through strengthening Panchayati Raj with a strong pro-poor orientation.\(^{61}\)

The extent of participation of the Scheduled Castes in the Panchayati Raj Institution is varying. It ranged from passive participation to active participation. The leadership emerging among Scheduled Castes in new and development oriented. The process of transfer of power has begun. Reservation policy has altered the rural power structure in favour of the marginalised. Scheduled Castes’ representatives are giving a helping to their community to develop.

The extent to which numerical representation has been successful in the actual exercise of power by weaker sections is examined by Patnaik. Her study of four gram panchayats in Orissa’s Dhenkanal district finds that elected representatives were not able to properly articulate important specific interests. They have not also been able to exercise their own judgement in panchayat decision-making, thus bringing into

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question the very notion of representation of marginalized groups through affirmative action. However, she says that there definitely exists scope for change among those representatives, who with time and experience will be able to effectively represent their constituency.  

Another study reveals that only a limited proportion of Scheduled Castes representatives have put poor attendance at the Grama Panchayat meetings. Women members’ attendance has been less than that of male members. A majority of Scheduled Castes members attend the mandal meetings. Less educated put poor attendance, caste hierarchy played an important role in attendance. Participation during discussion is very less. Men have not allowed women to take part in discussion. Lack of education and participation are positively related. A notable difference is observed between trained and untrained leaders’ degree of participating in decision-making.  

Pundir conducted a study of Participation of Scheduled Castes in political process and decision-making in four villages of Uttar Pradesh where the Scheduled Castes are numerically preponderant and occupationally diversified, they have emerged self confident and efficacious through participation in the decision-making and political process. Numerical strength contributed to participation. It is clearly found that participation of Scheduled Castes in the political and decision-making process has increased quantitatively and qualitatively.  

3.6 Reservations  

Reservation is a means of including the excluded. Dharam Raj Singh rightly points out that after independence, large scale efforts were initiated to induct the weaker and the deprived sections of the society in the wider political culture of the country. Constitutional safeguards, reservations and other facilities for the Scheduled Castes were source of the important steps in this direction. The Scheduled Castes participation in politics and leadership was considered all the more significant for rural socio-economic development and mobility. Reservation in Panchayati Raj  

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Institutions is a process through which they could seek entry into village power structure and articulate the interests of their castes and communities.

Reservations paved the way to all weaker sections to become sarpanches or members of panchayat. There are more than half a million men and women from Scheduled Castes who have contested and won panchayat elections to occupy political spaces at local level by 1996. However, caste and patriarchy have larger implications in the emergence and performance of leaders belonging to Scheduled Castes at the grass root level. A majority of people suffering from the effects of traditional oppressive power structures are unable to utilize effectively the new opportunities provided through panchayats. Serious conflicts have taken place during and after the elections in their functioning in the villages because of the new system of powerful panchayats. In one study Aziz found more or less the same phenomena. While dealing with the relationship between local level traditional power structure, Panchayati Raj and the Dalits he said,“ attempts made to access power to weaker sections by reserving seats and executive positions have altered hitherto dominant caste centered rural power structure. It should not go to the credit of the makers of law to have given seats and executive positions to the extent of 18 per cent to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates and 33.3 per cent each to backward communities and women. However, since most of the elected representatives are first generation politicians there is a need for providing training to them.”

This study reveals a changed scenario with regard to empowerment of Dalits. According to a study conducted by Duflo and Chattopadhyay, male, well-informed citizens and educated people are included; and landless people, tribals and women are excluded. Original assumptions relating to caste and wealth as determinants of exclusion were found not to be true. Reservation of elected positions in Panchayati Raj Institutions, which has been supported on the grounds that it will equalize power differentials between privileged and under-privileged castes, as well as between men and women, has had a limited impact. Data from the study shows that

levels of inclusion are not higher for either women or tribal people when a position is reserved for a person from that category. The study also found that the majority of rural people did not regard panchayats as particularly relevant to their lives, and had low levels of interest in the panchayat as an instrument of democracy and development. The study recommends policy interventions to improve inclusion and spread benefits more equitably among village populations. Political reservation is relevant for within-village allocation of low spill-over goods but not for overall village allocation.

Peter Ronald de Souza in his paper “The Struggle for Local Government: Indian Democracy’s New Phase”, says that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment of 1993 giving local government a constitutional status introduced new institutions into the working of Indian democracy through several significant innovations, such as reservations of seats for marginal groups, women, Dalits, and Adivasis; creation of a decentralized planning mechanism; establishment of state election commissions to oversee local elections and state finance commissions to prepare a blueprint for sharing of state revenues; and institutionalization of the village assembly (gram sabha). This article examines the implications of these innovations for local government and vulnerable groups in the context of Indian democracy. It does so within the larger debate on the capability of political institutions to produce outcomes and so a new political culture.

Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo examined the impact of reservation through a nation wide randomized sample. The findings suggest that reservation has positive impact. Women representatives have given preference to invest more in goods that are relevant to the needs of women, like water and roads. They prefer to invest less in goods that are less relevant to the needs of women. Scheduled Castes’ Pradhans preferred to invest a large share of public goods in Scheduled Castes’ hamlets than the non-Scheduled Castes’ Pradhans. It is found that

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the Scheduled Caste women could exercise effective control over decision-making processes. It is pointed to note the Women representatives are not entirely controlled by the husbands. This study in West Bengal and Rajasthan found that reservation of elected seats is an effective tool to safeguard the interests of the weaker sections.\textsuperscript{70} The study reveals that there are positive trends found in that regard. Further the study is mainly intended to examine the interface between panchayats and Dalit leadership using a semi-structured interview schedule and informal discussions, Chaudhary finds the impact of the new assignment in Panchayati Raj Institutions, positive as well as negative; knowledge of reservation facility is not complete; training facilities are limited and even those who received have not had intensive training and their awareness levels are low.\textsuperscript{71}

According to Gowda the statutory reservation of seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions provided an opportunity to rural women to formally involve themselves in the development process at the grassroots level and to secure as many development benefits as possible to the local community. An attempt to examine the extent to which women members of Mandal Panchayats (the lower tier in the Panchayati Raj System of Karnataka between 1987 and 1992) secured development benefits to the people in their villages under different development programs is made. The study reveals that the majority of women members had put up fairly better development role performance; they secured development benefits to the people of their villages mainly in the fields of agriculture, public works and civic amenities, welfare and education. They had also involved themselves in organizing health programs for the benefit of people in their villages or Mandal area. The assistance secured by women members to the people under different programs was economic in nature and this reflects upon the basic needs of rural communities. The study revealed that among the socio-economic attributes such as age, education, caste, annual household income and land-holdings

of women leaders, only education and annual household income had significant and positive relationship with their developmental role performance.\textsuperscript{72}

Karnataka's Panchayati Raj Act of 1983 was considered one of the most progressive pieces of legislation. The act had made it possible through various measures for the majority of the rural people to participate in the functioning of the panchayats. However, according to the author, the 1993 Panchayati Raj Act was a retrograde step in many ways. The paper considers the participation of disadvantaged groups such as women and Scheduled Castes in the panchayats, particularly in the Mandal panchayats of the 1983 Act, and the Grama Panchayats of the 1993 Act respectively. It tries to gauge the effect of their elections on the mandal and grama panchayat representatives' social and economic status and the `power', and `social honour' that have accrued to them. The general conclusion reached is that, although reservations to the panchayats enabled a very substantial number of people from various socio-economic groups, elected members, their participation, for the most part, can hardly be considered independent or effective. The handicaps faced by most members of these groups have, through the present form of reservations, made it much easier for the dominant groups of rural society, the elite's, to continue their dominance and control of the panchayats. There is still some time before the disadvantaged groups in society can find a space for themselves in the political structure at the local level.\textsuperscript{73} Reservation, to some extent helped the Dalits to find place in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Original assumptions relating to caste, wealth as determinants of exclusion have been less relevant now. Reservation, in a way produced to a small extent positive impact. Women members are giving preferences to women’s concerns.

After reviewing the literature on the aspect of reservation provided to Dalits in Panchayat Raj institutions in various states, it becomes pertinent to focus on Dalit women and their participation in rural local bodies.

3.7 Women

As already pointed out, the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment provided for reservation of one third of the seats and chair positions to women who include dalit


women also. The experience of women in the period following 1993 is discussed below.

Kanango writes about women’s leadership in the Panchayati Raj Institutions with special reference to the state of West Bengal. The main purpose of this paper is to examine women’s leadership in the political arena in the background of the 73rd Constitutional amendment. He further observed that all women candidates were not necessarily formal members of political parties. Another factor for selecting women candidates is for their background and training in different areas. For example, quite a few Anganwadi workers got nomination and got elected too. It was also seen that women instructors of Adult Literacy Centres were selected for nomination. Besides, many of the women candidates had undergone a number of training under Training Programmes the scheme of Self-Employment (TRYSEM-Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA) and some other programmes carried out by the Development Block. Women entered in panchayat politics for various reasons. Some entered because they were asked by the party, but some other entered to get high status. Women representatives also face difficulties. One of the representatives said ‘I spoke in the meetings about the needs of my area I had been attending the meetings quite regularly in the beginning but the men folk did not pay any attention to what I said’ she conveyed.74

Writing about the journey of women towards empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Bidyut Mohanty75 says where voluntary organizations working for Women’s Welfare and Mahila Samakya (Women’s Federations) are active, women panchayat members are contributing effectively to women’s development.

E.K.Santa reveals that the reservation of 33 percent of seats for women in Panchayat Raj, Institutions enabled thousands of women to contest elections and entered local government bodies for the first time. This work assessed the performance of elected women representatives and their relative independence in

decision-making at local caste, class, educational status and religion on the political participation of women has also been taken into consideration. 

A.Karam points out that women’s participation in politics is an essential part of the democratic process. However, there are many socio-economic and socio-cultural obstacles to participation. This concluding chapter forms an International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance publication gives an overview of these obstacles and offers recommendations on how to overcome them, drawing on case studies from Russia, Egypt, Scandinavia, India, Costa Rica and South Africa. The main impediments to participation are: lack of political party support, male orientated norms, male dominated structures, insufficient media support, a lack of quotas, electoral systems that are not conducive to women’s participation, a lack of leadership orientation and training for women, and insufficient networking with women’s organisations. These impediments are similar in all the countries studied, despite their cultural and geopolitical differences. The aim of participation should be to go beyond ‘tokenism’ and move towards a women’s perspective so that changes can be made on issues that affect women. This can be achieved by bolstering their numbers in parliament, using the electoral system and quotas.

Another Study of Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo find that gender definitely influences policy decisions. It is noticed that reservation affects policy choices. Women representatives give preference to women needs and the process of bargaining is seen.

Sachidanda argues that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has the most profound impact on the socio-economic and political empowerment of women. In his study on the empowerment of elected Scheduled Castes members through PRIs, when the panchayat elections were announced, more than 1/3 of the 358 women representatives decided to contest on their own. Despite problems like lack of funds, absence of security, resistance from dominant persons and vested interests as well as anti-social elements, the women representatives did perform their duties; but


improvement in their status; commanded respect from the public and created awareness among the Scheduled Castes women of their rights and also the schemes. They motivated Scheduled Caste women to organize themselves. A sense of accommodation between the Scheduled Castes and other segments of the population began. Building up an integrated rural society is noticed.  

Only Scheduled Caste men could get chance to head the panchayats and Scheduled Caste women are given very less chance for heading. Thus Scheduled Castes women are empowered for limited extent of participation under the new panchayat system. Singh gives a detailed account of the empowerment of Scheduled Caste women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana. He notes that a majority of them are illiterates, married and belong to the age group of 35-45 years. They assumed the roles because of reservation facility. They are housewives and daily wage labourers. The maximum annual family income is Rs. 15000. A majority of them did not have association with political organizations other than the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is the support of the family members and their community that brought them into these positions. Though they did not know the procedure of nominations, even they conducted active door to door campaign. Their attendance to the meetings of the Panchayati Raj Institutions was irregular. Preoccupation with household activities, family matters and health problems were cited as reasons for not attending. They remained very much dependent on their families, communities and men in performing their expected roles. Skills relating to political participation and using political power are very limited.

Chaya studied the role of women members of PRIs in Gujarat in relation to their empowerment. It is observed that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has brought about a sea change in the involvement and participation of women in PRIs.

79 Sachidanda, Empowerment of Elected Scheduled Castes Member through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Report of the Project Sponsored by Planning Commission, New Delhi, (Unpublished), Pp.82-91.
In a way, says Chaya ‘it is silent revolution i.e a sudden and invisible change’. Being a woman social customs, traditions and practices have hindered real empowerment. Setting of women’s agenda in the Panchayati Raj Institutions is a mere nil. Role conflict and male domination are noticed. Challenges regarding power relationship at house, in society and office may not change for a long time to cure. And to that extent, she thinks, their role would remain names sake formal and restricted.82

Deepika Gupta examines the selection process, background awareness levels and performance of women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh identifying the causes that came after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, she says that women stopped wearing veils, gained confidence and realised the need of being literate and educated and (around 30%) were very articulate and capable. They began to discuss women’s issues among themselves. Women’s participation should an enthusiastic picture. The percentage of Scheduled Castes women getting elected unopposed is very less (8.5%) and that of candidates in general is 58.59. The findings support the fact that all women are not dummy candidates. Even the dummy candidates, began to perform their role independently after getting elected. It is found that 2/3 of the women representatives are literate and the SC Woman Sarpanches are educationally better than their male counterparts. A high percentage of women representatives (86.17) regularly attended meetings. Half of the SC woman representatives, who have attended meetings, have proved that they are not mere spectators and they had put their views on various proposals. In general 1/3 of the women leaders have proved to be very articulated. Women have proved that the powers given to them and the trust reposed in their ability to work were not erroneous.83

Baviskar’s case studies of Mandume, Alwadi and Pilkod village Panchayats in Maharashtra, where Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and other castes women have served as Sarpanches respectively produced interesting findings. Women entry into the political institutions at the village level is the beginning of long journey

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of empowerment. Presiding over the meetings, signing as office bearer are sign of empowerment, however limited it might be. The process of getting benefits is also acquired by them. First, women leaders did work for the benefit of women and also for that of community despite gender based discrimination, poverty, limited educational qualifications and social background, women did show their abilities.\textsuperscript{84}

Patil’s paper on empowerment of Scheduled Castes women in three villages of Kolhapur district in Maharastra finds that the percentage of women, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe women Sarpanches has increased over the years in Maharastra. There are examples of all women Gram Panchayats which have done commendable work in various aspects. There is evidence of efficient role performance by women. Though the problems of illiteracy, non-co-operation from officials, male domination, harassment, pressure of dominant caste leadership on dalits existed, a changing situation is visible. Women are marching on the challenging road towards empowerment. Because of the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitution Amendment Act, women could come to the political fore and their status moved upward. A majority of the Gram Panchayat members favoured reservation.\textsuperscript{85}

Kamble and Salunkhe studied the factors influencing women’s participation in Panchayati Raj. Based on their empirical study of elected women representatives, they found that 69.2\% of the Schedule Castes representatives have reported active participation in discussion in Panchayati Raj Institutions and the percentage of the women belonging to other categories less than that. The Scheduled Castes women did enjoy relatively better freedom to participate. Age, education, occupation family income, caste; community background and political background of the family have had their impact on participation even in discussions. Higher levels of education, exposure to the world outside of the house, higher levels of income and influential family political background are positive associated with active participation\textsuperscript{86}

Santhosh Kumar’s Study of marginalized sections in rural governance in relation to positive discrimination notes that change has varied between various

\textsuperscript{84} Baviskar, B.S, Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless: Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharastra in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 11-38.


\textsuperscript{86} Kamble Archana (Jagatkar) and Salunkhe, Factors Influencing Women’s Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions, in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 175-203.
regions of the state. Effective or ineffective women and dalit leadership is the result of a combination of factors cutting across socio-economic culture, gender, caste and class. Reservation policy has provided avenues for social and economic mobility and for climbing the social ladder through political steps. Santhosh Kumar suggests a two pronged strategy for getting positive results education and financial benefits are necessary for self emancipation and empowerment. Access to natural resources through redistribution is also necessary these would enable the socially and economically peripheral sections of society to organize and fight against discrimination and subjugation. Then a meaningful participation in governance is possible.87

Discrimination leading to denial of rights and the need for protecting the rights of the marginalised groups focussed in the study of Sahai. He says that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are stopped and even forcibly stopped by upper castes, from enjoying their rights. Humiliation, prevention from voting, manipulations are some of human rights violations that have occurred. Scheduled Castes representatives are made to follow the wishes of the upper/ dominant caste, similar is the position of the Scheduled Tribes. Some Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women panchayat representatives have experienced serious backlashes. There have been instances of the tribal women representatives of panchayats being stripped by dominant caste people. Sahai proposes that civil society mainly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and parties could play significant role in making the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act a ground reality. In other words, serious intervention of civil society in the process of decentralization is necessary.88

Joshi in his paper on the functioning of Panchayati Raj in Scheduled Areas of Gujarat finds that people’s representatives have shown interests in discussing issues like woods, electricity, drinking water, which are among the basic needs. Low level of awareness, illiteracy, low level attendance at Gram Sabha meetings by officials are some of the bottlenecks. However, the functioning of Panchayati Raj in Scheduled


Areas of Gujarat has opened up possibility of self rule. The tribals slowly understanding the importance of Panchayati Raj and are becoming conscious of the rights and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{39}

Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai’s study of Dalit leaders in the panchayats of Madhya Pradesh reveals that Dalit women, despite being elected to the panchayats, continue to suffer on both the counts of caste and gender. Participation of women in the Panchayats is supported by the leaders but they are sceptical about the tasks given to women.\textsuperscript{90} Continued prevalence of caste based discrimination, role of vested interests are coming the way of Dalits’ participation in Haryana. Entry of young Dalits in Panchayats is a positive trend in the state. The condition of Dalits is better than Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Reservation did not bring larger avenues to Dalits. The picture is not a completely negative in the context of the role of Dalits. Provision of education and employment by the state which help to raise the capabilities of Dalits and political mobilization through civil society and political parties are considered to be useful. “The process of change from aristocratic to democratic politics is going on”. The authors say “but it remains incomplete”\textsuperscript{91}

Singh and Bahmani’s study of Scheduled Castes women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions of Haryana is mainly carried out to examine their empowerment and political experience and motivations. It is found that a majority of the Scheduled Castes women contested due to the opportunity of reservation. They did not have political experience before they contested (75.5%). They have held door to door campaign in general only less than 20% of them have regularly attended all the meetings and a little less than this had participation in the meeting. Training, advance notice of meetings, careful discussion of the agenda and independent role of women members are among the suggestions made.\textsuperscript{92}


\textsuperscript{91} Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Four States, Rawat Publication, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2006, P.216.

Ravi and Sunder Raj, examining the emerging situation and concerns in decentralisation and development in India identified several successful cases of women’s participation in local self governments. Nirmal Thapar, Dhaneshwari Devi, Swaran Kumari and Santhosh of Himachal Pradesh have successfully carried out developmental works in their areas. Women Sarpanches are found to be encouraging and bringing of other women into the panchayats. Experiences in village level organizations have helped these women to take advantage of reservation. They gained collective bargaining strength. They have raised voices on many social issues affecting their lives. The entry of women in panchayats brought an interesting change in population control movement. Small family norm is propagated by them. Some of them stood as role models in this regard. In Madhya Pradesh, Kiran Kanchet, a pro-active woman Sarpanch used her position for the promotion of women welfare. She worked for the construction of maternity and child centre in the land which was brought back to the panchayat from the encroachers. Premlatha Jain of Madhya Pradesh worked to get more class rooms to girls in a school. A woman Sarpanch of Andhra Pradesh worked for the effective use of waste land for public purposes. Ravi and Raj note that women elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions have effectively proved that they can make significant contribution to rural development and also to nation building. “Factors like illiteracy, less experience, male domination and untouchability, are some problems faced by these women creating unfavourable environment”, the authors say.93

Gill conceptualises the experiences of women members in his paper on Empowering Women through Panchayats. Based essentially on the information from Panchayati Raj update, the success and struggle stories of women representatives are evaluated. Gill argues that the beginning has been impressive, with the anxious and some times aggressive reactions from the male patriarchs. It also argued that gender per se does not make much impact. But when it is supplemented by caste and class, things get worse. Dalit women are often traumatized by their male colleagues. There is need to bring changes in the mind set of the electorate, make incumbents and bureaucrats. Women have to be prepared to participate in decision-making on par with their male colleagues. Gill notes that women have got the taste of freedom, confidence and exposure to the outside world with women being elected to

panchayats the agenda underwent significant change. All women panchayats have done very good job in providing public amenities. Innovative, honest and committed women came to the forefront to assume leadership roles. Interaction with villagers by these women helped a lot. In 2005 Tilia Devi, a member of Lakhnore Block Panchayat was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Fatima bee, the Sarpanch of Kalva village in Andhra Pradesh was given Best Sarpanch Award. Dalit women Sarpanches, Shanta Bai (Scheduled Tribe), Uma Arsay (Scheduled Castes) leaders hoisted the national flag, despite opposition. Women representatives did face problems like enrobing, insults leading to suicide attempts and illtreatment. Threats of rape, kidnaps have been present. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has ‘feminized the very patriarchal agrarian political scene in India’ and made the rope walk light for women. It is necessary that the ground situation should be shaped in the way consistent with the Constitution Amendment, says Gill.94

Bhargava and Sudha’s study on Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions adds to the existing literature on political empowerment of women. The paper gives valuable data on elected women panchayat members in the 1987 elections in various districts of Karnataka. It gives an account of positive aspects of women’s reservation with empirical evidences, but concludes that there is a need to raise the consciousness of women so that they can bring about social change. The authors say “it is a herculean task in view of the low literacy, health, lack of consciousness and poor living conditions. Now women are more than nominal in the political bodies and this is an epoch-making step in women's empowerment and political participation”, say the authors.95

Datta’s paper examines the problems and prospects of political empowerment of rural women through participation in village self-government in India. It provides an overview of the evolution of local self-government institutions in India and focuses on the empowerment of rural women through them. This paper discusses against the backdrop of the approaches to the problem by the various committees and commissions on Panchayats and women. The author argues that if women's empowerment has to be successful then the existing feudal-patriarchal

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structure in most parts of the country has to be dismantled. Moreover, women's empowerment through the panchayats requires a sustained campaign and vigorous efforts for creating awareness about their rights and duties.\textsuperscript{96}

Snehalata discusses the changes in the rural power structure after the induction of women into the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the pattern of decision-making in rural local government in selected Panchayats of Orissa. The study concludes that women have not been able to occupy higher levels in the Panchayat Raj Institutions structure. The well-known disabilities of women are standing in the way of their role performance. However, women's growing interest in public life is seen as a positive factor for the future.\textsuperscript{97}

Rajasekharan points out that India has made a legislative expediency over political initiative in ensuring participation of women at the grassroots level. He enumerates the major criticisms against the reservation for women in the political sphere. It underlines the role of political parties and non-governmental organizations and the mass media in ensuring better participation of women in local government bodies.\textsuperscript{98} It has to be pointed out that the impact of the amendment on women in Panchayati Raj Institutions definitely is positive. They are coming to the fore front, despite problems.

Writing about Panchayati Raj and Development, Mahipal\textsuperscript{99} says that most of the Scheduled Castes women panchayat leaders are facing the problem of non-cooperation from officials and the upper castes/dominant sections of the Gram Panchayats. But affirmative action for women and marginalized groups in local governance has resulted in social identities and political awareness. An urge to become part of mainstream political, economic and social life is visible. Initial clashes between higher and lower castes are reducing and are giving way to social cohesion at local levels. They have been fighting against the forces of higher castes and landlords. Though the weaker sections’ women are not participating as effectively as they ought to, they are learning to prepare plans for the development of marginalized sections.

Sutar, writing about the emerging women leadership in Panchayats in Karnataka, points out that the caste background of women representative is an important factor in their emergence as panchayat leaders. Most of the panchayats women leaders are from the lower social order. Upper castes are reluctant to let their women folk to enter village panchayats. Lower castes women are also seen elected to seats not reserved for women. A majority of the women of lower castes are those with out any political background. The insistence of the community in the case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women and that of family in the caste of upper castes women to contest is noticed. It is a fact that reservation for women has posed challenges to the customary caste panchayats which consisted of the elderly male members of the community. The prevailing rigid caste system and cultural values and social norms surrounding the systems of patriarchy have stronger implications in good governance at the grass roots level. The emerging women leadership from the lower castes is found relatively more democratic and people-centred precisely because of the lesser degree of patriarchy practiced among them and the more like rating and radical ideologies of their castes. Rising of assertive leadership is more among lower castes.\(^{100}\)

A visible positive trend is noticed in a study made by Participatory Research in Asia after field investigations in six states. It is found that 25% of women noticed and remarked on the visible change in their status within their family after they are elected. About 60% of women said that they were encouraged by women to stand for election and the same percentage is contemplating to contest Panchayati Raj Institutions again.\(^{101}\)

Based on sample survey of members of Panchayati Raj Institutions at the Zilla Parishads, Mandal and village levels and officials Venkata Ravi finds that the positions are occupied by men of major political parties in general. Only the reserved positions are given more chance than women to contest.\(^{102}\)

Reddy writing about the post 73rd Amendment scenario in decentralized local bodies, says that the amendment has thrown up political opportunities for the disadvantaged sections. Some women chairpersons have clear role perception,

\(^{100}\) Anil Sutar, The Emerging Women Leadership: Panchayats in Karnataka, University News, 58 (1) January 2008, Pp.82-83.

\(^{101}\) Gender Projects, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), 2000

promoted income generating activities to women and also adopted a pro-poor attitude. However, the proxy role of husbands, in particular, is seen. Some women leaders have shown great dedication and honesty. But women are unable, in general to break free and take advantage of the position of power offered to them. He finds that there are a few cases where although inducted by men in panchayats, did perform reasonably well in implementing developmental programmes. There are also women sarpanches who have totally surrendered to proxy rulers. He concludes that on the whole, it would be too optimistic to expect an overnight change in gender relations because of the 73rd amendment.\footnote{Reddy Gopinath, M., Decentralized Local Bodies: Post 73rd Amendment Scenario, in CH.Hanumantha Rao and S.Mahender Dev (Ed) Andhra Pradesh Development: Economic Reforms and Challenges a head, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, 2003, Pp. 613-619.}

3. 8 Problems

The afore said analytical explanation of various facts hindering Dalits to perform their tasks etc drives one to highlight in a nut-shell the problems faced by Dalits in Panchayati Raj institutions. Malcolm Adiseshaiah (1964) aptly pointed out that that the actual beneficiaries are not getting their due and only those beneficiaries who aligned with Pradhans receive benefits. There is also corruption. Even schemes, which were meant for the Scheduled Castes are manipulated in favour of those who are close to the Pradhans. The most deserving cases remained deprived of the benefits of such development schemes. This became possible because of the in-built scope for manipulations at different levels. The well- to-do pradhans had the capabilities and resources for carrying out such manipulations.\footnote{Cited by S.N.Choudary in Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, P. 15}

Ali’s report brings out that, by and large, the Panchayat Raj Institutions have not been able to devote any special attention and render any significant help to weaker sections mostly due to limited financial resources. Under the existing circumstances and limitations, Panchayat Raj Institutions have not exhibited any special solicitude for the welfare of the weaker sections of the community. Awareness about sources of finance, standing committees, plans, and schemes is reasonably high. But they are totally ignorant of the control of plan schemes. Further, their participation rate in decision-making, planning process and programme monitoring are high but they do not know the rights and importance of Gram Sabha. It is also observed that the effect of training at the grassroots level has been limited to creating awareness and inducing
participation among Panchayat Raj functionaries, it has not been successful in conscientizing them to become fully functional.105

Desai says that Panchayati Raj has provided a new framework for a political caste struggle between rival landlords, jealous of the prestige of each other and determined to maintain their strength at the cost of the rival group. On the positive side of the Panchayati Raj System, he maintained that, the villagers are becoming election minded because it represents their choice.106

Mahipal says that there are possibilities that the disputes at the local level might increase in funitive as reservation given to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women have created animosity among the established social forces, which have resulted in conflict and disputes on various issues relating to decentralized governance, planning and development.107

Parvathamma had analyzed the impact of Panchayat Raj Institution on weaker sections. One of her observations is that political representation has not helped to bring the desired level of development among the Scheduled Castes. She contends that there are built-in drawbacks which present the people of these categories from becoming vocal and assertive and much less to mobilize. ‘Poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, the mere total dependence on upper castes and above all the lowest ritual rank which make them a constant source of pollution to caste Hindus certainly limits the scope of the roles they could play as panchayat members.108

Prasad and Suman Chandra say that, the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have developed over the years not only as units of Self government but also as the media for development activities. Though the legislations governing the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state and Union Territories include safeguards to protect the interests of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes their involvement in the democratic processes and in decision-making for development activities has been


marginal owing to their vulnerable position in social and economic hierarchy of the rural areas.  

Gopal Iyer had done a study of democratic decentralization, social movements and predicament of tribals in Jharkand and Madhya Pradesh. He finds that the emergence of Sarpanch Patis, use of veil by women and their poor attendance in Gram Sabha meetings. Absence of awareness, influence of dominant caste and class and their strong nexus with political and bureaucratic power structure were observed by him.

Specific problems faced by the Dalits have neither been addressed by the Dalit nor by the non-Dalit representatives. It was hard to get members of the vulnerable groups to participate or to assess the feasibility and sustainability of suggested projects.

Randhawa rightly says lack of understanding of decentralized planning, restrictions imposed by the government on the panchayats in the performance of their function, lack of technical knowledge and dearth of suitable personnel, inadequate financial resources, politicization of the system, unwillingness of the politicians and bureaucrats to devolve power to the local bodies are some very important problems coming in the way of effective working of panchayats.

It can be concluded that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment did bring about changes in the political roles of dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The process of change has begun and concerted efforts for improving the situation is necessary.

A study conducted by Bhaskar Rao on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes elected leaders in two talukas of Bellary district in Karnataka notes local level of exposure of these leaders in terms of mass media, information and technology, social awareness, development and outside world. The officials are also not interested 

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in interacting with these lower strata community leaders. These leaders are not allowed into the rooms of officials. The participation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women was nominal and proxy.\textsuperscript{113}

A micro study of Pappapatti village panchayat in Madurai district of Tamilnadu reveals that Dalits elected as Panchayat presidents are not allowed to function. The Dalits are regarded by the upper castes as those belonging to slave family. The upper caste people feel that if they allow Dalits to become leaders, they would be regarded as belonging to Dalit Nadu.\textsuperscript{114}

\section*{3. 9. Conclusions of Different Studies}

The study has taken care to furnish the conclusions of various studies made in this area. This information is added to the thesis only to state the suggestions to the prevailing problems studied by various authors. In addition researchers who worked on the participation of Weaker Sections in Panchayati Raj Institutions have suggested measures for improvements in participation. The following information is towards that end.

Sachidanda notes that the task of empowering Dalit elected representatives should be looked a part of the overall vision for the future of the Dalits. Psychological mobilization to reinforce equality, justice and absence of exploitation; conscientization and identity formation; promotion of healthy interface with bureaucracy efforts for increased involvement of Dalit members in Panchayati Raj Institutions; awareness generation, training and functional education; energising the Gram Sabha; compensation for loss of income due to working for the panchayat and focus on new areas of work for Dalit and women representatives are the important suggestions made by the researcher for an improved position.\textsuperscript{115}

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\textsuperscript{113} Bhaskar Rao, Y, Emerging Leadership among SCs and STs, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1998.


\textsuperscript{115} Sachidanda, Empowerment of Elected Scheduled Castes Member through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Report of the Project Sponsored by Planning Commission, New Delhi, (Unpublished), Pp.129-138.
\end{flushleft}
For a better participation of Scheduled Castes women in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Singh suggests some measures. These include promotion of literary provision of information, through media and officials, relating to the purpose and working of PRIs; training; regular holding of Grama Sabha meetings; discussion of agenda when the view points of women members should be given due importance; interaction between women members of PRIs and others like Anganwadi workers, Grama Sachiv and Panchayati Secretary and appointment of female Panchayat Secretaries.\textsuperscript{116}

Chaudhary points out that in a situation characterised by lack of social capital to the Dalits, they face problems which include lack of capacity, economically weak position, limited awareness and limited facilities for training. But some of the Dalit leaders have done wonderful work. Dependence on secretaries and others gave scope to suffer from manipulations. Chaudhary suggests the strengthening of Grama Sabha, honest addressing of common cause and training for Grama Sabha members. There is need for public demonstration of achievements of Panchayats under the emerging leadership of Dalits.\textsuperscript{117}

Bryld’s research on increasing participation in democratic institutions through decentralization in the context of empowering women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through Panchayati Raj Institutions in six villages of Karnataka attempts to disclose the potential and the pitfalls in the processes. Pointing out that among the least favoured sections of Indian society are women and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and more importantly women. He says that tradition, disinterest, control on mobility, male domination, absence of awareness and some pitfalls. It is noted that women themselves were often more eager to hinder the participation of their own gender in the public sphere than men. Women are to a large degree reproducing the social structures which keep them out of active participation. Very active women as well as a women excluded from decision-making process were encountered. Escorting of women by men, men advising women as to what they should do. Low level participation questions the effectiveness of reservation. The rule of rotation adds to the ineffectiveness of reservation. The wishes and thoughts of


women are often neglected. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes representatives are either prevented or discouraged to participate in decision-making. Lack of capacity due to illiteracy, language barriers, inexperience or less respect among fellow villagers are among the main problems. Unless reservation is backed by increased education, networking, and training it will not succeed in reaching the needy. There is an unstable balance between the empowerment and disempowerment of the weaker sections of society. The balance should not try to disempowerment. He argues that participation for all through decentralization can only be achieved through ‘genuine devolution’ of power in a context specific set of arrangements. He concludes by saying that mere technocratic regulations are not sufficient to ensure genuine empowerment for all in democratic decision-making.118

Narendra Kumar and Manoj Raj have made a comparative study of Dalit Leadership in four states- Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. The study suggests that reservation has enabled Dalit to enter into the panchayats in large numbers. But effective and meaningful participation by Dalit leaders is determined by the specific social, economic and political context in which the panchayats are embedded. Social factors age, education, economic situation and the presence and absences of social discrimination play a central role in determining the extent to which Dalits able to participate meaningfully. Training helps to overcome inhibitions instils confidence and increases knowledge about the running of the panchayat and its programmes. Helping attitude of the bureaucrats would be useful to bring positive results. In Himachal Pradesh, Dalits have not only entered the panchayats but in comparison other states, also initiated a process of participation to a limited manner. In Madhya Pradesh, least change has taken place and the entry of Dalits has yet to show substantial change. Uttar Pradesh and Haryana fall in between. Change in Uttar Pradesh is due to political mobilization. Reservation helped in making the social process move faster in Haryana. In this state caste system’s welfare is milder than that in the other states. Dalits fail to know that reservation has been a major factor in empowering them. Partnership between Dalits and Non-Governmental Organizations has shown positive results. Political socialization of

Dalits, transforming role perception of leaders, imparting functional education and training, civil society initiatives would bring better results, the authors suggest.\textsuperscript{119}

**Summary**

A careful study of the available literature on the empowerment of Dalits in India’s democratic decentralization process has made certain points very clear. The delivery of effective benefits to SCs when a Scheduled Caste’s Sarpanch is present is found by researcher like Craig Johnson. As regards participation of SCs, studies of experts like Sachidananda, Venkata Ravi, Sharma and Kumar noted that the SC representatives have not been silent spectators; the non-Dalits in same places are positively designed to Dalits’ active participation; there has been a break from the traditional system and that a leadership which is neither traditional nor modern has emerged. The emergence of young and middle aged development oriented Dalit leadership; inclusion of poor SC people in Panchayati Raj Institutions are some significant results. SC women are on the journey towards empowerment through Panchayati Raj. However, caste based clashes in the process of empowerment of SCs, the domination of rich, the control of the influential on the SC; communication disabilities are some important problems which deserve considerations for identifying solutions. The studies have noted that limited fiscal and political decentralization; impact of caste on defining social and political identity; use of violence; casteism, feudalism and poverty. But it is evident that the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitution Amendment has contributed to create democratic values and to the process of social and political transformation. The need for training for capacity building, promotion of participation is often emphasized by academic experts and activists.

\textsuperscript{119} Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Study of Four States, Rawat Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2006.