CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has opened a new chapter in the process of empowerment of women, especially in the grassroot context. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned the actual devolution is yet to take place. In the absence of proper devolution of powers, functionaries and finances the Panchayat institutions have to perform their roles and responsibilities with constraints. The performance of the Panchayat institutions is determined by a constellation of factors. There are certain important factors closely associated with the perception and performance of the elected women representatives.

The three Rs, namely Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of the elected women representatives, are closely associated with their performance and the same is determined by the perception of the elected women representatives. The factors that shape the perception are the three Fs, namely Functions, Finances and Functionaries, as devolved in correspondence with the spirit of the constitutional amendment. The other factors favoring the performance of the elected women representatives are as follows:

1. The level of political will of the political leaders in power at the state government and the commitment of the bureaucracy towards devolution.
2. Operationalization of the state conformity act in terms of formulation of rules, regulations and procedures.
3. The capacity of the elected representatives to take up the responsibilities.
4. The level of participation of the people in the process of development.

The socio-economic background has its bearing on the perception and performance of the elected women representatives. The other components in this regard are: age women receive respect and recognition when they are at an advanced age, the political affiliation of the family, educational background, the rapport with the members of the village based organizations, support extended by the self help groups. All these have favoured the perception and performance of the elected women representatives. The important aspect of the civil society organizations is creating awareness among the rural women.
and building their capacities towards new leadership roles; in the context of SHGs pre-election activities have favored their change in the perception and performance of the elected women representatives.

The political socialization process that leads to the recruitment is also based on the above said factors. This has ultimately favoured the change in perception and performance of the elected women representatives. One important aspect to keep in view and analyze is the problems faced by the elected women representatives. Elected women representatives are facing a series of problems though they are having all the above said positive factors they face problems: domestic and Panchayat: low literacy, non-party basis, shyness, alcohol, disrespect and non recognition as elected representatives by the community and officials, interference and influence of MPs and MLAs, poor recognition for hard work and achievement, encroachments, complicated administrative procedures etc. But cutting across all these problems the women representatives have excelled in performance and proved themselves models for others.

The elected women representatives came out with high expectations that they can solve all the problems of the people and achieve development easily. But the actual situation was totally different. They have to undergo stress, struggle and come out successfully. In the context of making the elected women representatives more effective, the efforts of different stakeholders have become necessary, starting from the CBOs in the Panchayats to the Government at the State and the Centre.

Firstly, the CBOs, especially the women SHGs and youths, have to be oriented to support the elected women representatives of the Panchayat when they work towards the common cause. In general, when an initiation is made towards a common cause, it is very difficult to draw the attention and support of the common people. In a dynamic scenario, where the CBOs are gaining momentum, an effort towards the capacity building of these organizations in order to orient them to take part in the process of development by extending their support, especially to the elected women representatives must be made a must. This is an integral part of the community mobilization process.

Secondly, identification and training of potential women as future leaders, before the elections and projecting them as ideal candidates. Identifying potential leaders and building their capacity before the elections will help in projecting them as ideal leaders. Leaders or members of CBOs,
especially women, who exhibit leadership skills, are to be identified and trained further. This enables the people to select leaders who will work for the betterment of the village as a whole.

Thirdly, pre-election voters awareness campaign, so that the entire eligible registered sequent exercise their right to vote and elect the right candidate. The best criterion for the selection of the best leader is the number of voters who accept and recognize the individual as a leader, irrespective of all the related aspects. The voters are also needed to be trained or oriented about who is an ideal leader and the voting rights of the individual concerned etc. This aspect has impact both before and after the elections. Before elections it helps to know about the right candidate and right to vote. After the elections, it will decide when and where to support the leader and also decide the future course of leadership based upon the present performance.

Fourthly, an orientation programme to the newly elected women representatives on their roles, rights and responsibilities is needed. Reservation is new, politics is new, position is new, but the personality is old. Hence, it is essential to orient the newly elected representatives about all the aspects associated with their position. An eye-opener is essential for all the newly elected representatives. It helps to draw a correlation between the expectations and the real life situation. It also helps to assess the needs and appraise the planning process of the simultaneous capacity building.

Fifthly, continuous information dissemination, issue based capacity building programmes, exposure visits to model Panchayats, interface with officials and members of the other tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, etc. In continuation of the eye-opener, a continuous support system is required for effective performance. The dynamic nature of the environment, new perceptions and expectations has to be realized in a better perspective. This can be done only through a series of activities as mentioned. Especially in the case of women elected representatives it is a must, they have been marginalized for centuries together. Thus, this effort of reservation has to be realized in a better perspective: so as to achieve the desired results.

Sixthly, networking the elected women representatives and interfacing and interlinking with other women associations and organizations. The sustainability of success retains for a longer duration, only when the efforts get consolidated. A consolidation of all the efforts made has become inevitable, as this new convention needs some more efforts, like bringing the elected women...
representatives under one umbrella and raising their voice for the right to perform their roles and responsibilities in a better way.

Seventhly, providing legal support and protection. Yet another dimension of extending support to the elected women is legal support. As discussed, this new dispensation has legal validity and the provisions are constitutional. Hence, any gap that arises in the process or the problem faced by the elected women representatives has to be ratified in the judicial system. For a newly elected women representative, it might not be that much easy to cope with the situation on her own. Thus, the need for the extension of legal support has emerged as a part of the process.

These aspects are to be considered and carried out by the civil society organizations, government, academic institutions, media and all other pro-Panchayat workers. It is a collective responsibility of all these stakeholders to work towards women empowerment.

It is not only the socio-economic background, educational background and the way in which the political socialization process has taken place but the political recruitment has also influenced the perception and performance. It may be derived that there are enabling and disabling factors operating both internally and externally in the life of the elected women representatives. What is needed is that the elected women representatives have to be sensitized so that they can shoulder responsibilities and take forward the process of development. This has led to postulations such as:

- **What kind of impact the reservation created among the elected women representatives?**

- **What kind of interface can be made among the SHGs and Panchayati Raj Institutions in the context of facilitating the local development process?**

It is evident from the analysis that elected women representatives are aware of the basic problems and work towards solving them, for which they seek the support of the different stakeholders of different forms. If the development process has to be made sustainable, it has to be started from creation of awareness, acquisition of skills and bringing an attitudinal change and providing enabling environment. If all this is done the elected women representatives can excel and make the process of local development sustainable.