CHAPTER - V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing analysis several startling inferences can be made. Empowerment comes into play when discrimination exists between women and men and gender inequality creates an environment detrimental to women’s welfare, health, education, social and public life, including political participation and power of decision-making. All the world over efforts are being made since long past to put an end to women’s exploitation, torture, violence and seclusion from society. The reservation of seats for women has created an opportunity for rural women to participate in rural local governance. Women Village Panchayat Presidents’ affiliation with political parties has played a major role in their empowerment. The major findings of the study are presented hereunder.

1. 42.22 percent of the women Village Panchayat Presidents come under the age group of 31 to 40 years and 37.78 percent of the respondents come under the age group of 41 to 50 years. This clearly shows that middle aged women are showing interest in rural local governance.

2. The educational level of 55.55 percent of the respondents was medium (above primary and below higher secondary). 8.89 percent of them had studied upto degree level.
Women belonging to the Hindu religion got adequate representation in rural local governance. 93-33 percent of the respondents belonged to the Hindu religion and only 6.67 percent belonged to the Christian religion. There was no Muslim Village Panchayat President in Theni District.

The majority (57.78 percent) of the respondents were from the Backward Class; 22.22 percent of the respondents were from the Scheduled Caste (SC); and 20 percent of the respondents were from the Most Backward Class (MBC). Women of all castes got adequate representation in rural local governance.

An overwhelming majority (97.78) of the women leaders were married. Only one Village Panchayat President was a widow but she did not face any social alienation.

The majority (75.56 percent) belonged to the nuclear type of family and 24.46 of them belonged to the joint family category.

66.67 percent of the respondents were of the category of 1-5 members in the family; 26.67 percent of the respondents were of the category of 6-10 members in the family; 4.44 percent of the respondents were of the category of 11-15 members; and the remaining 2.22 percent of the respondents were of the category of 15 and above members in the family.

62.22 percent of the respondents were from agricultural families. Their families’ main income was from agriculture.

The annual income of the majority (62.22 percent) of the respondents was Rs.50,000/- and above. 22.22 percent of the
respondents had an annual income of Rs.25,000/- and less. 15.56 percent of the respondents had an annual income of between Rs.25,000/- and Rs.50,000/-. 

10. 60 percent of the respondents had concrete houses and 26.67 percent of the respondents had tiled houses. 4.44 percent of the respondents lived in houses in government colonies.

11. 93-33 percent of the respondents had household tap connection. 75-56 percent of the respondents had toilet facilities and 97.78 percent of the respondents had electricity facility in their households.

12. Two-thirds of the respondents (66.67 percent) were affiliated to political parties. One third (33-33 percent) of the respondents were not affiliated to political parties. The majority of the respondents reported that they were village level members in their party. Some of them were working in the women’s wing of their parties.

13. The majority (62.22 percent) of the respondents said that only because of reservation they got an opportunity to contest in the Panchayat election. Reservation brings about inevitable participation of women in Rural Local Governance, especially in the Village Panchayats.

14. The majority (84.45 percent) of the respondents said that they contested in the Panchayat election to render service to the people. Only 13-33 percent of the respondents said that they contested in the Panchayat election for prestige.
15. Of the respondents 44.45 percent reported that the support extended by the villagers encouraged them to contest in the Panchayat elections.

16. 22.22 percent of the respondents said that the support rendered by the political party encouraged them to contest in the Panchayat election. 13.33 percent of the respondents said that their family support encouraged them to contest in the Panchayat election. 11.11 percent of the respondents cited the support of NGOs and SHGs.

17. Of the total respondents, 33.33 percent said that the political party supported them in the Panchayat election. The political party spent money for filing nominations, bit-notices and wall posters and gave timely advice and led the election campaign. 22.22 percent of the respondents reported that the village community was responsible for their victory in the election. 20 percent of the respondents reported that their own caste group was responsible for their victory in the election.

18. 42.22 percent of the respondents said that the political party played a vital role in the election campaign. Of these 28.89 percent were helped by the political parties during the election canvassing.

19. The majority (60 percent) of the respondents said that only one candidate contested apart from them in the election. 22.22 percent of the respondents said that 2-3 candidates contested against them in the election. Of the party affiliated
respondents, 63-33 percent reported that only one candidate contested against them. But in the non-party affiliated respondents category 26.67 percent of the respondents were selected as unopposed candidates without election. 53-33 percent of the respondents contested against only one candidate.

20. 46.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents spent Rs.20,001/- and above for election expenditure which is only 26.67 percent in the case of party affiliated respondents. 26.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents spent Rs.10,001/- to Rs. 15,000/-. The non-party affiliated respondents have spent more money than the party affiliated respondents.

21. The majority (84.44 percent) of the respondents did not face any problem during the time of election and only 15-56 percent faced problems like conflicts and violence during the election time. Of the party affiliated respondents 83-33 percent did not face such problems and 86.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondent did not face such problems during the election.

22. 51.11 percent of the respondents are visiting the Panchayat office and attending to the Panchayat works on a daily basis. 53-33 percent of party affiliated respondents and 33-33 percent of non-party affiliated respondents are attending to the Panchayat works daily.
23- Of the total respondents, 97.78 percent are sitting in the chair earmarked for them in the Panchayat office and only one non-party affiliated respondent is not allowed to sit in the Panchayat office by the Traditional Panchayat leaders.

24. The majority (73-33 percent) of the non-party affiliated respondents are accompanied by their spouse or family members to the Panchayat office which is only 20 percent among the party affiliated respondents. 80 percent of the party affiliated respondents are not accompanied by their spouse or family members.

25. Of the total respondents, 73-33 percent preside over the monthly Panchayat meetings by themselves. 17.78 percent of the respondents’ spouse or relatives preside over the monthly Panchayat meeting. 80 percent of the party affiliated respondents and 60 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents preside over the monthly meeting by themselves.

26. 64.44 percent of the party affiliated respondents adopted the strategy of circulation of bit notices among the members of the Gram Sabha to mobilize them for the Gram Sabha meetings but only 46.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents adopted this strategy.

27. 71.11 percent of the party affiliated respondents mobilized the people through drum-beating (tom-tom) but only 53-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents mobilized the people through drum beating. 51.11 percent of the party
affiliated and 33.33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents gave advertisement about Gram Sabha meetings in daily newspapers. 55.56 percent of the party affiliated respondents mobilized the people for Gram Sabha meetings by informing them through Ward Members whereas 13.33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents informed the people about Gram Sabha through Ward Members.

28. 76.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents are supported by their Ward Members in organising the Gram Sabha meetings whereas 60 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents are supported for the same.

29. 63.33 percent of the political party affiliated respondents meet the villagers every day and speak with them about their problems. The people generally put forth demands like supply of water, maintenance of street lights and maintenance of drainage. Only 26.67 percent of the non party affiliated respondents meet the villagers every day and speak with them about their problems.

30. 76.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents are receiving the officials in the Panchayat office during the official visits and only 40 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents receive the officials. 33.33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents said that their husbands receive the officials which is only 3.33 percent among the party affiliated respondents.
31. Of the total respondents, 48.89 percent involve their spouse or family members in the execution of Panchayat works. 93-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents involve their spouse or family members in executing the Panchayat works which is only 26.67 percent among the party affiliated respondents.

32. 40 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents’ husband carry out the contract works in the Panchayat and only 26.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents’ husband carry out the contract works. 20 percent of the non-affiliated respondents gave contract work to their village elites, which is absent among the party affiliated respondents.

33. An overwhelming majority (86.67 percent) of the non-party affiliated respondents have consultation with their spouse or family members before taking decisions regarding the Panchayat administration. Only 33.33 percent of the party affiliated respondents consult their spouse or family members before taking decisions regarding the Panchayat administration.

34. 63-33 percent of the party affiliated respondents reported that their party supports their functioning in the Panchayat. 60 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents said that they were guided and supported by the Traditional Panchayat.

35. 53.33 percent of the party affiliated respondents decide on the selection of beneficiaries for various government schemes and
programmes in consultation with the members of the Panchayat Council. 86.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents said that they consult their own caste leaders and the Traditional Panchayat.

36. 53-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents recruited their own caste members as Panchayat Assistants but only 23-33 percent of the party affiliated respondents recruited their own caste members as Panchayat Assistants.

37. Of the total respondents, 73-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents consult their own caste leaders on the implementation of Panchayat works. Only 40 percent of the party affiliated respondents consult their own caste leaders on the Panchayat works.

38. 73-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents attend to the demands raised by the caste leaders but only 46.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents attend to the demands raised by the caste leaders from the Panchayat.

39. 93-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents said that the intervention of the caste leaders is very helpful in the Panchayat administration but only 36.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents said that the intervention of the caste leaders is helpful in the Panchayat administration.

40. 63.33 percent of the party affiliated respondents are aware of committees in the Panchayat. But only 40 percent of the non-
41. 70 percent of the party affiliated respondents did not face any problem during the committee formation. 73-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents faced problems during the committee formation. 93-33 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents gave membership in committees to their own caste leaders which is only 26.67 percent among the party affiliated respondents.

42. 73-33 percent of the party affiliated respondents are concentrating on rural electrification and energy and this is only 53.33 percent among non-party affiliated respondents.

43. 70 percent of the party affiliated respondents concentrate on educational activities such as enrolling dropout students in the schools, giving awareness about basic education to the parents, providing infrastructural facilities such as toilets, compound walls to the schools and balwadis in the Panchayat area and this is only 60 percent among the non-party affiliated respondents.

44. 90 percent of the party affiliated respondents are having linkages with government departments like health, TWAD, PWD etc., but only 46.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents have linkage with government departments.

45. 93-33 percent of the party affiliated respondents concentrate on the welfare of women and children whereas only 73-33
percent of the non-party affiliated respondents concentrate on the welfare of women and children.

46. 76.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents are organising rural markets and fairs and only 26.67 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents are doing so.

47. 46.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents concentrate on sports and cultural programmes but only 20 percent of the non party affiliated respondents concentrate on sports and games.

48. 66.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents work for the development of common property resources, viz. desilting of ponds, maintaining the trees on the road sides, etc. Only 53-33 of the non party affiliated respondents have developed common property resources.

49- 63-33 percent of the party affiliated respondents work for the welfare of the youth in the Panchayat area. Only 46.67 percent of the non party affiliated respondents work for the welfare of the youth.

50. 76.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents concentrate on the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayat area. Only 40 percent of the non-party affiliated respondents concentrate on their welfare.

51. Of the total respondents 56.67 percent of the party affiliated respondents concentrate on gender equality and only 33-33
percent of the non party affiliated respondents concentrate on gender equality.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that affiliation to political party has a positive influence on the empowerment of elected women Village Panchayat Presidents in Rural Local Governance. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act does not specify party affiliation at the Village Panchayat level. Broad based political participation of women has been limited due to various factors like caste, religion, feudal attitude and family status. But it is proved in this study that political party affiliation is an essential element for the empowerment of elected women Village Panchayat Presidents in Rural Local Governance.