CHAPTER-VI

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Decision Making means achieving objectives of certain course of action. Women constitute about 50 percent of the total population of India. As such if women are excluded from the political decision making process then the process of development will remain incomplete. Woman’s participation in political decision making and their active engagement in public institutions including campaigning for election and pursuing such activities either individually or through groups is essential. The New Delhi document on woman development (1985) recognized that despite rapid growth of formal political activity by women, their role in the formal political structure has remained unchanged since independence. Broad based political participation of women has been limited due to various factors like male domination i.e. patriarchy does not allow women to lead a life of their own choice. The feminist believe that women are handicapped because they are deprived of power. So they should empower.
Decentralized governmental structure helps to institutionalize participation of citizen in political decision making. Panchayat Raj can play a very significant role as it involves public in local planning. Democratic decentralization aims at making democracy real by bringing people into functioning of their representative government at the lowest level. It is just an extension of people’s right to manage their own affairs in a local area without any undue interference from regional or national authorities. Grass root democracy is essentially decentralized democracy in which the management of public affairs operates through a wide network of people participating in the local institutions. Democratic decentralization, as a political concept, aims at widening the area of people’s participation, authority and autonomy through dispersion or devolution of powers to people’s representative organizations from the top levels upto the lowest levels in all the triple dimension i.e. political decision making, financial control and administrative management with least interference from higher level.\(^1\)

Grass root democracy is essentially decentralized democracy in which

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\(^1\) Iqbal Narain, Democratic Decentralization, The Idea, the image and the Reality, " Indian Journal of Public Administration" Vol. IX, No-1, pp 09,34, 1963
management of public affairs does not begin and end at the top but operates through a wide network of people.

Grass root democracy was at widening the people's participator in decision making. It is a system in which authority is transferred to local governance so that local citizen can enjoy full political right. It the ruler area the principle of democrat or decentralization is marginalized through Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Political participation has been acknowledged as the central theme of democratic governance, where citizen enjoy the right to participate in governance. In democracy large and continuous participation of people is necessary. Participation enable women to educate, interrogate and empower women constitute half of the society. So empowering women means the development of the women of the whole society. The political space belongs to all citizens. If women are associated in the decision making process then they can change the modalities and out come of politics. Only then the concepts of democracy will be concrete.

Although women are participating in great number in politics and public life all over the world, they still remain largely outside the realms of power and decision making in the government.
Women's participation tends to increase their level of empowerment. A key aspect of women empowerment in the formal political structure. This was recognized as one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, Women Power and Decision Making. The Constitutional 73rd Amendment Act is a Landmark in the history of women empowerment in India. The experience of women's participation in grass root level is very important.

Reservation may be a tool to ensure adequate representation, but also adequate delivery of local public goods to disadvantaged groups. Women Panchayat members are carrying their tasks with confidence which is new to them. They are functioning in a hierarchical, basically patriarchal society where the odds are still heavily against them.

Reservation of seats in each tier has widened the base of women's political participation. The Act made the way to develop the leadership quality of women and to empower them politically. The Act provided for the establishment of the district Planning Committee for each district. The Act made it mandatory for the State Government

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2 P.Chattopadhyay and E. Dullo, Impact of Reservation in Panchayat Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment, Economic and Political Weekly, 39(9), Vol. XXXIV, N-9

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to Constitute Finance Commission to look into the financial aspects of
the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Prior to reservation bill women's participation in Panchayat was significantly low. Today 33 percent candidates in the Panchayat are women. Despite reservation for women, effective participation in the Panchayat failed due to misuse and manipulation of local power brokers. More increase in the number of reserved seats for women in the local bodies will not increase participation of women, unless structural changes are brought about a sincere efforts to educate women is to be made. Women representations after run in barriers (especially of family and society) and are hindered from participating effectively.

They feel inhibited to speak especially when they are in large male dominated assemblies. Those who muster up enough courage and strength to speak receive very little respect from the male members. The Panchayats of both the blocks are male dominated society with a legacy of strict traditional gender roles. Patriarch cal system indirectly controls and directs their participation. Women
members have some individual weakens also. They are over burdened with family responsibilities, introversion due to lack of communication skills.

The socio-economic and political background plays a significant role to determine the political profile of the representations. While analyzing the socio-economic and political status of representations it has been observed that significant changes have emerged in the composition of Panchayati Raj institutions most of the Women Panchayat members belong to age-group 30 to 34 followed by 24 to 29 in both the Blocks majority of Women 70% to 80% are married. There is a replacement of older people by younger ones and dominance of married people, Majority of women representatives are from nuclear family. The educational level among the respondents is mostly of the primary level only a few of them were found to be graduates and one post graduate.

Majority of the members did not have any paid employment before joining the Panchayat. Agriculture is the main occupation. Some are also engaged in weaving, fishing and animal husbandry
practices like rearing of poultry, piggery particulars amongst the tribal population. They also engaged in small time business. Most of them are simply house-wives. Majority of the members are Hindu. In Demoria Block majority of the members are Schedule Tribes and General Caste in Rani Block.

Majority of the women did not have political connections before joining the Panchayat, they were the first timers. However few members of both the Blocks were associated with Mahila Samittees (Women’s organization). Some of the members were also involves in the developmental activities as members of Self-Help Groups and Anganwadi workers.

Majority of the respondents are reported to have entered into the process at party directives or own will. Many of them said that their decision to contest election was either their own will or due to the party directives. In Rani Block the majority of the members mentioned their own will. Majority of them lack interest is politics. Political parties play a dominant role in the village politics in both the Blocks. Majority of the representatives in the Demoria Block
belonged to the Indian National Congress. In Rani Block majority of the women belonged to A.G.P. (Assam Gaon Parishad). Majority of women are elected from reserved seats. As such woman’s reservation in the Panchayat has widened the base of woman representation in the political arena. With respect to co-operation the woman panchayat representative said that they received no objection. Only a minimal number (8%) in Demoria and (14%) in Rani received objection in participating in the election.

A significant majority of woman representatives depended on both men and woman voters. In both the Block most of the members did not receive any objection while campaigning. Majority of women did not face any problem. Those who had problems mentioned about economic conditions, domestic responsibilities and lack of mobility is the main problem.

The members are regular in attending meeting in both the Blocks. Only a few women representatives are members of committee.
It has been observed that woman representatives fully involved in decision making. The board-base of woman’s participation is limited due to traditional factor like caste, class family structure etc. woman generally lake the capability to take independent decision. It is found that woman representatives are not able to decide how much money would be allotted to each particular programme. They are dependant on the bureaucrats. It has been observed that women representatives due to lack of knowledge about the rules and procedures the bureaucrats with the Panchayat maintain the records and accounts. Their financial power is minimal Panchayat mainly depend upon the governmental-sponsored programmes or taxes from various sources. Women representatives held that grant in aid is not sufficient for development activities. Some due to lack of proper communication Panchayat cannot levy taxes.

Most of the development works and the execution of the centrally sponsored scheme like NREGA (National Rural employment Guarantee Act), Indira Awaj Yojana and other such schemes are mostly followed are executed as per direction of the local M.L.A. These schemes were generally improperly executed and corruption
exists. As per the job card distribution entrusted in the NREGA scheme were not distributed properly and there exists large number of irregularities, personal influence and personal gains. In the Indira Awaj Yojana scheme homes are constructed for people below poverty line. On many instances the material used for such construction was of poor quality and inadequately used. On several cases genuine persons of B.P.L. (Below Poverty Line) was totally ignored from the benefit of the political leads and the political leaders and their henchmen. 

Rampant corruption prevails in the Panchayats as press report published in news papers and media.

A significant majority of women Panchayat functionaries depend on both man and women voters in both the Blocks.

Most of the Panchayat representatives belong to the economically weaker sections. The Women complained about the wide corrupt practices among the male members and local bureaucrats.
The main reason for granting reservation for 73rd Amendment is to motivate women into Panchayat. However in general the status of women has not changed much. They lack proper Knowledge about Panchayat and lack motivation within themselves. The major weakness of the women members are lack of communication and inability to speak out Misguidance of the local bureaucrats and indifferent attitude and behavior of the official are the major drawbacks.

The Gaon Sabha was created by the constitution (73rd Amendment) Act 1992. The main function of the Gaon Sabha is to mobilize voluntary labour, to contribute in cash or kind for Community welfare programme, to identify beneficiaries for implementation of various developmental schemes and to promote unity and harmony among all the people in the village. The agenda of the Gaon Sabha meeting is specified by the state government to raise the awareness of governmental sponsored development programmes; to select the beneficiaries, to discuss the problems, grievance petition and to distribute individual or community benefits.
The Gaon Sabha is the most important unit of the Panchayat Raj system.

Through Gaon Sabha widens the participation of people, the meeting of the Gaon Sabha has been completely ignored. The Gaon Sabha is empowered to identify beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes. The secretary of the Gaon Panchayat can finalize the list in consultation with the President and Block Development officer. Active participation of woman is absent in Gaon Sabha.

Suggestions

The woman leaders of both the Blocks were asked to give suggestions for the improvement of the functioning of Panchayat. The suggestions given by the elected women leaders are.

According the act of 1994, Panchayat were supposed to have devolution of powers regarding 29 departments. The process of devolution has yet to be completed. The Government must take immediate steps to complete the process.
The scope of financial resources for panchayat should be increased. All financial resources sanctioned by the centre should flow to panchayat without any interruption.

Panchayat should be freed from the bureaucratic red-tapism. Panchyat officials should be de-empowered in order to empower Panchyat representatives.

There should not be any political interference in the functioning of panchayat.

Gaon Sabha should be made effective.

Rural People should be made aware of the various scheme of the Panchayat and let them know about their utility.

Training should be given both to the elected representatives and panchayat officials soon after election in order to increase awareness.
Mere reservation is not enough because woman representatives lack active participation in the decision making process. This is a process which involves sincerity earnestness and capability on the part of both men and women. It is a challenging task for the people, as even today women cannot take independent decisions. She feels subordinate to her husband and son. Woman should realize their own strength capabilities and capabilities. As a women representative she should be able to meet all the challenges in both private and public spheres. She should be confident and courageous to face all obstacles that comes on her way, she should be empowered and educated.

**Training of Panchayati Raj Functionaries**

Training is an investment in human resources. It is and important means of improving the human potential and increasing efficacy of personal. Training and development is increasingly recognized as a most important organizational activity. Training of Panchyat function areas for smooth and efficient performance forms an integral part of the Panchayati Raj institutions. In this respect it has been found that some form of training of women representatives have taken place in
both the Blocks, but the number of woman who had undergone such training camps in very few.

The training camps were conducted in the city of Guwahati and also in the both the block by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD). Few members had undergone training conducted by the district administration and also by the District Rural Development Agency.

In the training camps the women learn about the Panchayati Raj Institution of governance and its different dimensions. They were also oriented to the different social development programmes and scheme some women said that topics on women empowerment and awareness were also given during the training programme. Some members said that in some programme they get remunerations. But they get less payment than the allotted money. Most of the trainees were of the opinion that the trainway programmes gave them new glimpses of the Panchayati Raj institutions they become aware about the Panchayati Raj Acts, the polices and programmes under the system, the rules and
regulations etc. The camp helped them to know about system, which would help them to work in a better way.

Some of there are not very much impress by the camps and opened that the trainings can be conducted in a better way. Majority of the women Panchayat member from both the block expressed their eagerness to attend training camps in future.