

**REVIEW OF
LITERATURE**

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Knowledge of existing and up-to date relevant literature related to the studies and their critical and comprehensive review helps a researcher to formulate research project on scientific lines. It guides the investigator to solve the researchable issues of the study based upon the techniques used in the past research and interpreting the results with special reference to the past studies. Keeping in view this logical thinking and considering the objectives of the study undertaken, an effort has been made in the present chapter to make analytical review of the relevant literature under the following sub-heads:

2.1 Women Empowerment

2.2 Personal profile of PRI members and non-members

2.3 Women and Panchayati Raj Institutions

2.1 Women empowerment

Agarwal (1994), observed that in rural India, 86 percent of women workers were in agriculture, compared with 74 percent of men. But few women own or control land and this handicap them in warding off poverty for themselves and their families. Lack of access to land was found to be critical for 20 percent or so of rural household in Bangladesh and India that are headed by women as a result of widowhood, desertion or male migration. Hence, he observed that women's access to land is very important for their empowerment.

Everett and Savara (1994), in their study on empowerment of women for different occupational categories revealed that the women played a larger role in

household decision- making. Married women tended to practice family planning after that they had reached their desired family size of 3-4 children and they had high occupational aspiration for their daughters. Only 23 percent of the respondents felt that paid work had made a positive impact on their lives. The respondents participated as voters and as users of ration cards. He also examined the personal factors influencing the empowerment in the household work and community. Age and her position in the household were found to be associated with variation in decision making scores of women. It was observed across different occupations. Organization participation was found to be associated with increased empowerment in the household and at work. Similarly, education was found associated with same indicators of household empowerment.

Choudhary (1995), in his study on farm women in Chikkaoda village in Ganjam district of Orissa found that 30 women were of the opinion that the family matters were decided by husband/father/sons, 14 women were of the view that they themselves could manage the family affairs and the remaining six women did not express any opinion out of 50 women respondents. Their influence on decision-making in household affairs was affected by certain factors like the degree of economic independence, socio-cultural pressure, demographic factors and physical settings.

Reddy and Rao (1995), analyzed the various issues and components of empowerment and reported that there was marginal difference in self-perception of women's role. There was no difference between the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the aspect of socio culture. The area of education and training was second lowest among the components of empowerment for both beneficiaries and

non-beneficiaries. The economic aspect was one of the strongest among the five components of empowerment followed by public co-operation with considerable difference between the scores of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Choudhary (1996), reported in her study on 'empowering strategies for rural women' that the goals of poverty reduction and empowerment of women can be effectively achieved if poor women could organize into groups for community participation, as well as for assertion of their rights in various services relating to their economic and social well-being. Poor women's creativity, group dynamics and self-management are major elements in tackling the gender and equity issues.

Rao (1996), reported that the beedi workers co-operative organization of SEWA enhanced the women's self-confidence, mobility, decision-making and autonomy. The group members organized a struggle and were finally successful in completing their group housing scheme. The collective consciousness gained through experiences of several struggles of housing, marketing etc, enabled the women to respond effectively to male harassment in their personal lives to improve their bargaining position within the household and also to face collectively the harassment of contractors, traders and government functionaries.

Srinivasan (1996), found that SHGs offer means by which the poor had access to resources in their own right, without waiting for anyone and not by another person's mercy. This makes the people confident that by saving small amount over a period of time they could master resources to help each other in group in a big way. This gives a feeling of being in charge of their own line. They feel emboldened to conduct themselves and take a share of resources as a matter of right.

Pattanaik (1997), described the important area of empowerment of rural women were (a) women and their work force participation (b) women and their education (c) women and their health and (d) women and their political participation. He also felt that empowering women with economically productive work will enhance their contribution to rural development.

Joythi (1998), reported in her study on employment pattern and empowerment of rural women in Kolar district that the major factors contributing to higher level of empowerment among large farms is the level of education and savings mainly obtained from parents rather than their own earnings. Among the agricultural laborers and small farms, it is mainly on account of earning cash income and having control over income. Therefore, it can be said that the economic empowerment is more among the women of small farm and agricultural labour category, who also participated in decision making.

Mridula (1998), reported that women's education leads to reduction in family size, greater attention by mothers towards health, education and character building of their children, greater participation of women in labour market and greater per capita income and better quality of human capital. An educated woman is more likely to share in family decisions about how many children to have, how to bring them up and how to care her own and her family health.

Agarwal (2000), described that training of rural women was important so as to increase their involvement in development process, enhance their skill and make them equal partners in national development. The major objectives of training for rural women should be to equip them with better skills and enhance their knowledge so as to prepare them to face new challenges due to technological developments.

According to UNIFEM (2000), women's empowerment includes: acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and ways in which these relations may be changed; developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life; gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power; and developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

According to Vijayanthi (2000), empowerment is a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make their choices and control their resources, which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination. Empowerment is also a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, a greater decision making power and control.

Bhargav (2001), also emphasized that the attempt of empowerment under western model would necessarily create chaos in the Indian society. He further expressed that we should empower every individual of the family, so women in the family should also be empowered otherwise, our social system will collapse.

Saradha (2001), in her study on empowerment of rural women through SHGs in Prakasan district of Andhra Pradesh found that education, social participation, extension participation, training, mass media use and capacity building had significant association with the level of empowerment, whereas age, family size, land holding and material possession had no association with the level of empowerment.

2.2 Personal profile of PRI members and non-members

Jha (1994), conducted a study on "role of Panchayat as perceived by Panchayat member and non-member rural women of Mavali Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur district". The study revealed that majority of women Panchayat members belonged to middle age group and were illiterate having no social participation and cultivation as a family occupation. They belonged to middle socio-economic status and had poor mass media exposure.

Wankhede (1994), indicated that 31.66 percent of the members belonged to low income group (up to Rs. 8000) while 39.18 percent of the members were belonging to medium income group (Rs 8000 to 15,000). Nearly, 29.16 percent of the members were observed from higher income group.

Mandal and Ray (1996), found that 40.54 percent of the Gram Panchayat pradhans were office bearers in two organizations while 28.83 percent of pradhans were members of four organizations.

Fuzele (1996), in his study on reading and listening interests of Gram Panchayat members observed that majority (90.17%) of the members preferred crop cultivation content of radio programme, followed by use of fertilizers and plant protection measures to the extent of 81.67 and 70 percent, respectively. One-third of them preferred storage and marketing, folksongs with agriculture base, whereas, forecast of weather was their least preferred choice (26.67%).

Bipate (1997), found that 41.43 percent of the Gram Panchayat members were the members of more than one organization, while 34.28 percent of them were office bearers.

Ghose (1997), found that 36.76 percent members belonged to scheduled caste while 11 to 76 percent were scheduled tribes. Remaining 51.48 percent members were from the other castes including Muslims in West Bengal. Participation of Muslim women was to the extent of 47.62 percent of others category. Out of 408 women members, 61.76 percent members were from the age group of 30 years, only 4.42 percent members were above 45 years age group. Information on marital status of the women member's shows that majority of the members (92.89%) were married. Educational status of members visualized that 37.25 percent have an education up to primary level and 32.11 percent have attained the education level of secondary stage. The SC/ST communities had very low education profile.

Vidya (1997), revealed that out of the 62 women members in Zilla Parishad 1.61 percent women were working as a typist in a Government office, 12.90 percent were typical housewives, followed by 11.30 percent who were involved in business like having flour mill, tailoring shop and small hotel. The majority of them (74.19%) were involved in helping their husbands on their agricultural land. Most of the members after fulfilling their domestic duties were involved in some productive work.

Rashmi (1997), in a case study of Madhya Pradesh found that in most of the cases women are housewives, first time entrance into politics and most of them are illiterate or educated up to primary level.

Misra and Singh (1998), found that majority of the Panchayat Samiti members (60.70%) main occupation was agriculture, while 25 percent were labourers. Apart from these, 7.1 percent were from the service class families and those hailing from business families also constitutes for 7.1 percent.

Singh (1998), in his study conducted at Kurukshetra district in Haryana state found that the majority of the respondents were from the age group of 30-50 years followed by those in the age group of 50-60 years. More than 63 percent of the respondents belonged to SC, BC and OBC categories.

Patil (1999), observed that 74.42 percent of Gram Panchayat members were found in medium category of mass media exposure, while 15.12 and 10.46 percent of them were found in low and high categories of mass media exposure, respectively.

A status report on Panchayati Raj in India (1999), indicated that in Karnataka at Gram Panchayat level, a good percentage of women were illiterate, agricultural labourers, poor and more so quite new to the political life, with majority of their family members not being in any kind of political life. All these factors had acted negatively on the performance of women members in these Panchayat.

Salunkhe (2000), observed that 62.80 percent women Gram Panchayat members had the annual income in the range of Rs. 16,001 to 84,000.

Rani (2000), in her study on “Impact of socio-economic status on the emergence of rural women leadership” indicated that 43.20 percent of both the elected and defeated respondents belonged to the age group of 31-40 years, 36.40 percent were from the age group of 21-30 years, 15.10 percent were from the age group of 41-50 years and only 5.30 percent came under the age group of 51-60 years. She indicated that 63.10 percent of the elected and defeated respondents belonged to the backward communities, 24.30 percent hailed from SC/ST communities, 12 percent were from most backward communities and only 0.50 percent was from forward communities.

Shyamala and Pinjar (2000), reported that in Karnataka majority of women Panchayat members belonged to the dominant and backward caste and the least number of representative, were from the upper caste. A majority of them were inexperienced and were not exposed to politics and only a few of them had come to Panchayat due to their socio-economic status and political background of their family. Study showed that 97.3 percent of women members of Zila Panchayats were literate, majority of them in matriculates. They had come from both social and economically advanced and disadvantage families, mostly hailed from agriculture families.

Mor *et al.* (2000), reported that in Kurukshetra district of Haryana, most of the women representatives were below 45 year and literate. More than half of them were from medium sized families and from the lower castes other than higher castes. They contested the election under family pressure on advice.

Chauhan (2002), conducted a study on "Knowledge of women Panchayat members about functioning of Panchayat". The study revealed that more than half of the respondents (52.64%) were in the age group of 30-45 years and illiterate (56.64%). None of them was educated above the primary level. Majority of them belonged to prestigious caste (41.89%) and scheduled castes (32.94%), having cultivation as a family occupation 58.41%), belonged to nuclear family (68.14%). Majority of them were not members of any organization (80-53%), had low mass media exposure (97.35%), used locality source of information (85.34%) and belonged to lower (57.52%) and middle socio-economic states (42.82%).

Jadhav (2002), observed that 23.86 percent of Surpanchs had marginal size of land holding i.e., up to 1 hectare while 42.05 percent of Surpanchs had small sized land holding i.e., 1.01 to 2 hectares, more than half (36%) of Gram Panchayat

member had education up to pre-primary level and 23.86 percent of them had primary level education.

Shantha (2002), in her study on Performance analysis of elected Women Presidents in Village Panchayat observed that 34.25 percent of the respondents belonged to young age group, 39.73 percent belonged to middle age group and only 26.02 percent belonged to old age group. According to their level of education, of the 73 respondents (36.99%) studied up to the secondary level, 27.40 percent had primary education, 19.18 percent had middle school education, 6.85 percent were functionally literate, 5.48 percent had collegiate education and only 4.10 percent were illiterates. She also indicated that 31.51 percent of the family heads of the respondents were educated up to secondary education, 20.55 percent up to primary education, 9.58 percent had college education and only 6.85 percent were illiterate.

Mankar (2003), found that less than half of the male members (45.91%) belonged to middle age group, while almost equal number of them were from young (27.27%) and old (26.82%) aged groups. In case of female members, majority (83.16%) were in young age group and a few (9.47% and 7.37%) of them were in old and young age groups, respectively. He further found that at overall level, nearly equal percentage of Panchayat members came from nuclear (50.48%) and joint (49.52%) families. The male members were distributed equally in joint and nuclear families, while in case of female members, 51.58 and 48.42 percent belonged to nuclear and joint families, respectively.

Hemalatha (2003), found in a study of Mysore Taluk of Mysore district that 7 women came from SC/ST group, 11 from forward caste and 12 from backward caste. In all the selected Panchayat, both men and women of the forward caste were

dominant. 12 women belong to families in which agriculture is the main occupation, 6 are agricultural labourers, spouses of 5 women are government and factory employees and 9 women have business, carpentry and other work as the family occupation.

Devi and Haranath (2004), in study on "Participation of women and dalits in Gram Panchayat" found that more than half of the Surpanch and Ward members were illiterate. However about 70 percent of the illiterate respondents reported that they could sign. The educational levels of the rest of the ward members including those of villagers were more varied. Occupation wise, four Surpanchs reported themselves as cultivators, two as agricultural labourers as they were landless and all the three women as housewives. Among ward members and villagers, nearly half reported themselves as cultivators followed by those who are agricultural labourers.

Singh (2004), conducted a study on empowerment of women representatives in Panchayati Raj in Haryana expressed that about 63 percent of the women representatives are from the young (21-30 years) and lower middle age groups (31-40 years) and 14 percent from the elder age group i.e. 51 years and above, 60 percent women from upper cast and 33 percent from SC. The education profile shows that a considerable number of women are still illiterate because the level of female literacy remains rather low in Haryana. About 21 percent of them have studied up to primary level and those who have get education up to high school form only 17 percent. Only two of them were graduates. One of the reasons for this situation is the fact that women are not usually given land ownership in Haryana.

2.3 Women and Panchayati Raj Institutions

i) Knowledge level of Panchayat members related to PRI

Jha (1994), her study conducted at Mavli Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur district revealed that majority of women members knew about their surpanch, method of election, electorate of Panchayat, age of casting vote and term period and provision of women members in Panchayat. Majority of them knew about the general functions like construction, arranging water and drainage, health service, lighting and cleaning and repairing the public roads and wells. Other functions like agriculture, convenience, comfort, entertainment, safety etc. were known to few members. No members knew about functions like establishment and maintenance of cart stands, public recreational place, slaughter house and organization of sports etc.

Mahadik (1995), observed that majority of Gram Panchayat members (86.21%) had medium knowledge level, followed by low (10.34%) and high (3.45%) about agricultural development programmes. Further, the study revealed that the members of PRI had knowledge of handful of schemes.

Shivaramu *et al.* (1995), in their study on "Knowledge, attitude and problems of Mandal Panchayat members revealed that low knowledge of Mandal Panchayat was acquired by 18.30 percent members, while 48.40 percent and 33.33 percent of members had medium knowledge and high knowledge respectively.

Singh and Gill (1995), found that 95 percent of the respondents were not aware of the Amendments in PRI. Ninety percent of elected leaders were not fully aware of legislative, judicial, administrative and financial powers provided under PRI.

Ramaparvathy (1996), in her study opined that not even a single respondent was aware of the 73rd Amendment. Only seven percent of respondents were aware of the percentage of reservation extended to women. The respondents knew the functions of the Panchayat president as, presiding village Panchayat meetings (40%), carrying out works related to village development (32%) and solving local problems (31%). The functions of the vice-presidents as per the respondents were performing presidents function in his absence (40%) and helping president in his functions (30%). The functions of ward members were, taking village problems to the president's notice (44%), helping in the proper functioning of Panchayat (40%) and checking the records and registers maintained at village Panchayat office (32%).

Khare *et al.* (1998), observed that 58.53 percent respondents were belonged to high knowledge level. The medium and low knowledge level was observed by 29.27 percent and 12.20 percent about agricultural development.

Kalakanavar (1999), indicated that the knowledge level of Gram Panchayat women members was low (41%) followed by high (37%) and medium (22%) about their role performance.

Panwar (2001), in a study conducted in Haryana reported that all the women Surpanchs selected for study one Surpanch had little knowledge about the powers and functions of the Panchayati Raj government schemes.

Chauhan (2002), in a study revealed that more than half of the respondents (52.61%) were aware about duties of helping the eligible person to get certification for different government all programmes and encouraging activities related to

education, health, women and child welfare in the ward. Other duties were known to less number of respondents (5.27%).

Shantha (2002), observed that overall knowledge about the duties of Panchayat, 45.21 percent had medium level knowledge, 31.50 percent had high level knowledge and 23.29 percent had low level of knowledge.

Singh (2004), at Haryana revealed that more than 80 percent of the women were not even aware of the one third reservations for women in the Panchayats at the three levels despite the fact that they got elected because of this very provision. Almost all of them were aware of their five years term. It was also noticed that 61 percent of the respondents were not aware of the quorum required for meetings. Only a small number of them were aware of the electorate majority of the respondents do not know about the required number of Gram Sabha meetings, the quorum for those and the person responsible for preparing the agenda. As many as 80 percent of the women members were also not aware of taxes imposed by the Panchayats and still a higher percentage (86%) did not know about the schemes that are implemented by the Panchayat .

ii) 73rd Amendment act and impact on women empowerment

A study of women Panchayat members in Orissa conducted by Panda (1997), expressed that women entered into politics due to the mandatory provision of 33 percent, most of the women were above 40 years, less educated and from low caste having non-political background and entered politics due to persuasion by their family members or pressure from the village community. The important aspect of her study is that the women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in

outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role & responsibility. In another study in 1999, Panda brought out an interesting point in her field study. There prevails strong caste feelings and women belonging to upper caste have not come forward to representing the Panchayat. This has provided an opportunity to the women from the labour and lower caste to emerge as a potential force in village politics.

Jain (1996), in her study found that women's experience of Panchayati Raj Institutions has transformed many of them. This includes empowerment, self-confidence, political awareness and affirmation of information. Women's empowerment challenged traditional ideas of male authority and supremacy.

Gowda and others (1996), in their study of Karnataka women elected Panchayat leader found that the women members of developed taluks were play a better developmental role of their counterparts. The study reveals that among the socio-economic attributes such as age, education, caste, annual household income and land holding of women leaders, only education and annual household income had a highly significant and positive relationship with their developmental role performance. The findings of the study state that women members of the Panchayat Raj institution could play an effective developmental role if they are given adequate recognition and encouragement.

Jayalakshmi (1997), mentioned in field study conducted at the Nalgonda district that reservation in Panchayat ensures entry for all sections of women and thus visualizes as the harbinger of equality and social justice. Further, it was found that reservation has merely brought in a quantitative change in the gender participation rather than ushering qualitative developmental efforts. Study further revealed that

reservation in Panchayat ensures entry for all sections and thus visualizes as the harbinger of equality and social justice. Further, it is found that reservation has merely brought in a quantitative change in the gender participation rather than ushering qualitative developmental efforts.

Bohra (1997), in his case study of a Tamilnadu Panchayat observed that even though women electorate constitute half of the voters, candidates including female candidate do hardly have interest in campaigning to seek the women support.

Indian Institute of Social Science (2000), in a study of Panchayati Raj in Haryana has reviewed the progress of some hundred elected women in four districts; majorities of the elected women panches including younger women were illiterate when elected to office. After two years in office, they demanded literary skill and generally feel the need of education for their daughters.

Mohanty (2000), in her study on the impact of 73rd amendment in Orissa through field experience analyzed that about 80-90 percent of women attended the Panchayat meeting regularly. Further she observed that majority of them come from the lower income group particularly at the village Panchayat level.

Subha and Bargava (2000), in an article on Panchayati Raj System and Political Empowerment of women says that Karnataka has the distinction of having the highest number of women elected at all levels of Panchayats, 46.7 percent for Gram Panchayat, 40.2 percent for Taluk Panchayat and 36.45 percent for Zilla Panchayat. The women members from Panchayat at Mydolalu village of Shimoga district in Karnataka have been elected for the first time and work of the village was better than that of the mixed Panchayats. They further define that feminism

considered reservation as one of the instruments of political empowerment as it guarantees representation. While analyzing elections for Panchayats in Karnataka after the 1993 Act, the study revealed that mostly illiterate women with no political background have become members. They observed that reservation policy can be used to advance women's agenda.

Palanthurai (2001), in his study of Tamilnadu observed that women have come to positions in the local bodies as provisions have been made in the constitution. The outlook of the society towards the women has started changing. Author from his experience suggests that women need orientation, sensitization, capacity building information and counseling continuously through organizations. The ongoing experiments and experiences suggest that periodical training orientation and sensitization can help the women leaders to perform the assigned role in a better way. He argues that the Government will respond to the needs of these women leaders only when social organization and groups support them.

Sharma (2004), observes that after the year 2000, with Panchayat elections in Himachal Pradesh, there has been an increased participation of women in grass roots governance. The state government is also committed to reservations in the leadership structure of the community to give women their long overdue share of power so that they can exert pressure and exercise authority in the decision making process.

According to the Patnaik (2005), the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and after represents a third phase in which PRI were empowered with autonomy and resources and visualized them as institutions rather than units of self-government representing in a fair way hitherto neglected groups of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Pillai (2005), suggested that the political empowerment resulting from the 73rd Amendment has greatly influenced local governance and socioeconomic life. Besides, it removed the widespread myth about inability of women to shoulder political responsibility. It has also prepared the environment in which women gained not only social status and self-confidence but successfully fought the centuries old oppression and exploitation. Wherever women achieved success as above, the desire for education among girls intensified and parents started dreaming a better future for their daughters.

The political training and experience women gained during the process were likely to contribute towards their empowerment. The doubts earlier expressed about the ability and capacity of the elected women are now getting cleared and being replaced by increased confidence in them (Kushwaha 2005).

iii) Gram Sabha and women empowerment

In Kerala, Gandhi Yuvamandalarn (1996), conducted a survey regarding the functioning of Gram Sabhas. The study was limited to the first two Gram Sabha held and the sample was small even though it was drawn from all parts of Kerala. They used the response sheet of young Gandhian workers who had participated in the Gram Sabha or were reliably informed about the proceedings, to arrive at the findings. The study reveals that they were Gram Sabha which could not reach quorum and it also stated that in many wards, there was only one Gram Sabha meeting in place of the two.

To understand the working of Gram Sabha a preliminary study in Kottayam District, Kerala, conducted by Lucyamma (1997), he shows that attendance was very

poor and hence qualitative participation of people is almost negligible. The study reveals that women have not been coming forward to express their opinion before public gatherings. In the first Gram Sabha meeting held between January and June 1996, people attended the meeting in Oct of curiosity. Some ward members do not want more people to attend the meetings for fear of rampant criticism of their work.

•Khanna (1994), revealed that it is disappointing to find that the Gram Sabhas, which have been statutorily empowered to scrutinize the annual administrative reports and accounts of the Panchayats and also consider proposals for fresh taxes etc., have not been meeting at all, in spite of the legal provision that the Surpanch would lose his position if he fails to call at least two meetings of the Gram Sabha annually.

Aziz (1992), in his study on Decentralization: Mandai Panchayat System in Karnataka, stated that the Gram Sabha meetings were held somewhat regularly in the first year and, in due course, the frequency of meetings and the number of villages where meetings were held, declined and attendance also was not encouraging.

A micro-level study of the working of Gram-Sabha in Karnataka by Bhargava and Jos found that the structural arrangement for people's participation in the decentralized planning process through Gram Sabha at grass root level became almost a defunct mechanism (1994).

In Kerala, the Committee on Decentralization of Powers (1997), recommended measures to create participatory community structures for enabling poor to have a say in development matters; these include formation of neighborhood groups and level organizations. The Committee has focused on certain critical areas. The final report states that the corner stone of decentralized democratic governance is

people's participation anywhere in the world and not even consultation in participation. It also recommended strengthening people's institutions like Gram Sabhas, Ward Sabhas and Ward Committees

On the basis of the analysis of Gram Sabha meetings, Jain (1997), revealed the level of participation of people differed a great deal making the proceedings either dull or unproductive. Sometimes a majority of them were indifferent to the discussion and were content to attend it for a while and then leave in the middle. The meetings were also, at times, utilized by rival groups in criticizing, ventilating, exposing and for condemning some of the actions of Panchas and thereby settle their social and political scores by highlighting facts and out misappropriation of funds and other actual commission and other acts of commission or omission.

Isaac (1997), quoting figures available with the State Planning Board in connection with the Peoples Planning programme, gives an idea of the role of Gram Sabha in identifying the development problems of the Panchayats and concludes that the Gram Sabha has taken root in Kerala.

Jos in a book, Panchayat hurajum Sen Committiyurn (Malayalam), published by Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam, based on the recent experience of Gram Sabha in Kerala, warns against the approach of the Committee on Decentralisation (upon whose recommendation the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act 1994 was amended in 1999) to strengthen the Gram Sabha and advocates strengthening of the Panchayat as the first step towards accentuating decentralization. (1998)

Jain (1999), has emphasized the need for action plan for awareness generation about working of Gram Sabhas. He stated: "it has been observed over the years that

the performance of the Gram Sabha has suffered due to lack of awareness among the people about the concept and utility of the institution of Gram Sabha and their own role in making it successful. Any effort directed towards strengthening this institution, therefore, requires a very serious action plan for awareness generation about various aspects of working of Gram Sabha among the people".

Mathur (1999), in his study about Gram Sabha in Rajasthan says, "ever since the Antyodaya Scheme was launched during 1977-80, the Rajasthan Government had been utilizing the Gram Sabha as a public forum for selecting the beneficiaries of the Anthodaya scheme", which is a creditable achievement.

Dutta (1999), in an article cited an example of the success of the Gram Sabha in Tripura. He stated: "The institution of Gram Sabha is dormant in most of the North Eastern States precisely because its peer group i.e., the Gram Panchayat is non-existent.

iv) Role perception and performance by PRI members and non-members

Ramathilayam (1995), stated that women had exercised their franchise to full extent. Their turn out in the elections was discouraging because they hesitated to vote, being tradition bound and largely illiterate and they did not exercise their discretion and just behaved as rubber stamp of men and voted for the person or party, their husband / fathers/ brother told them to vote for.

Gowda *et al.* (1996), in a study of developmental role of women members of PRI in Karnataka observed that role of women in health and family planning programmes reveal that 56.4 percent of the sample respondents involved in transmitting information to the people, about 49.6 percent of the women leaders

reported to have assisted in organizing family planning camps by motivating women from their village to undergo family planning operation. The data further reveals that a significant majority (76.9%) of the sample respondents secured seeds, fertilizers, pesticide, agriculture implement to small and marginal farmers under the integrated rural development programme.

Khare *et. al* (1997), in a study conducted on Role perception of village Panchayat chairman towards agriculture development in Jabalpure Block of Jabalpur district revealed that maximum surpanch (52.44%) had medium role perception, followed by high (34.15%) and low perception (13.41%).

Swarnkar *et al.* (1997), in a study conducted in Rewa Block of Rewa district reported that the elected PRI representative's role performance was observed in the manner of three categories i.e. low, medium and high on quartile method. Out of 120 respondents 56.66 percent had low performance (10.84%). The roles related to irrigation and watershed, supply of agriculture inputs and I.R.D.P. ranked first, while their roles related to improved farming, horticulture, dairy and poultry development as well as pasture development ranked second. Similarly in roles related to unemployment and L.I.C. for land less farmers. The respondents ranked third. The socio-economic factor like age, education, caste, social participation, political contact and training obtained were significantly associated with role performance of respondents. It meant that these factors played an imported role in the role performance of the respondents.

Jayalakshmi (1997), indicated that women involvement in Panchayati Raj bodies encourages both individual and social assertions of women's right and responsibilities and urges them to assist each other in accomplishing these quests.

Such efforts enable to assess their hidden capabilities of managerial skills outside the home and their work needs to be acknowledged and duly rewarded. Given the opportunities and avenues they seem to deliver good in a reasonably better manner with a human touch. They need to be given sufficient training and be provided with the entire wherewithal to function both independently and collectively as representatives exclusively towards developmental goals. They have taken it in good stride with the challenging tasks ahead.

Linten (1997), in his study of Panchayat leaders in Birbhum district of west Bengal, points out that due to the devolution of power poor peasants, agriculture labourers, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people were coming to the fore front but still there was a complete absence of women as candidates in the Panchayat elections.

Khare *et al.* (1998), in their study conducted at Jabalpur Janpad of Jabalpur district in M.P. found that 52.44 percent of the elected representative of PRI had medium role perception followed by 34.15 percent of them having high role perception whereas the percentage of respondents having low level of role perception was meager (13.41%). Finding also depicted the level of attitude of Surpanch towards agricultural development programme. It was observed that over three fourth of respondents (76.83%) had high attitude followed by medium (21.95%) and low (1.22%).

Banerji (1998), documented four cases of elected women members of Panchayats in a field project for strengthening the participation of women in local self-government showed that while a women Panchayat member from an upper caste background resigned herself to her husband's problem in Panchayat matters, an illiterate women from a backward caste performed remarkably poor. In the case of the

competent women Surpanch in Karnataka all women Gram Panchayat, had lack of familiarity with her new responsibilities and dependence on experienced and lessened with the passage of time.

Kalakanavar (1999), concluded that most of the female members (86%) did not hold party position in the Gram Panchayat, however 14 percent female members were holding official position in the Gram Panchayat.

Palnithurai (2001), in his study of Tamilnadu observed that women have come to positions in the local bodies as provisions have been made in the constitution. The outlook of the society towards the women has started changing. Author from his experience suggests that women continuously need orientation, sensitization, capacity building, information and counseling training for helping them to perform the assigned role in a better way.

Chauhan (2002), reported that more than half of the respondents (57.65%) had made efforts for the construction of water tank, community tap and roads but only 12.20 percent respondents achieved these targets. One third of the respondents (34.43%) made efforts for the construction of school building, boundary walls, water tanks for animals; establishment of anganwadi, mahila mandals but only 2.15 percent achieved these targets.

Chaudhary and Mokale (2004), in a study on women Panchayat representative inferred that the roles like attending Gram Sabha, participating in village fairs and social programmes, providing medical services through village dispensary, providing individual latrines in village, providing newspaper, books and literature in villages literacy were well performed by majority of respondents. However, majority of

women members of Gram Panchayat looked the performance of role which is vital importance for the welfare and development of village.

According to Hemlatha (2003), majority of the respondents (24%) mentioned the same roles as discussed in the meeting i.e. water, drainage, electricity and street light, sanitation, roads, school building, site and house allotment and government schemes, cleaning of the village. Roles like construction of water tank, street tap as well as taps for each house, drainage construction, implementation of Bhagirathi Yojna, opened anganwadi centers and repaired school building etc. were done by majority of the respondents after become members of PRI.

v) Problem faced by EWR and NEWR in Panchayati Raj Institution

Chandrashekhara and Inbanathan (1991), found that a factor that throughout hampered the functioning of women as elected members was their traditional status in society and viz. men and they also had to defer to the wishes and decisions of the man of their families and had little scope for independent action in PRI. In addition they were also constrained by relatively poor education and by the fact that most of them were new to active politics.

Nandini (1992), reported in a study on the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana that inadequacy of finances, poor leadership, lack of supervision and guidance, illiteracy and unawareness about the statutory powers and procedure, caused hindrance in the successful working of the Panchayat. It can be said that the traditional structure of male dominant society, illiteracy, lack of knowledge are the major hurdles in the way of active participation of the women in the activities of

Panchayats. The attitude of male members, villagers and bureaucracy, that woman cannot bear the responsibility of plays important role in limiting their participation.

Trust (1994), reported that when women members of Panchayati Raj institution tried to speak in the meetings or raised questions, they were silenced by the male members who claimed that the subject was beyond their understanding. They admitted that their illiteracy and ignorance are the two main stabling blocks in the way of effective and meaningful participation.

Joshi (1995), stated that the rural scene was still one where the women folk in general remained at the periphery with heavy responsibilities of tending their families and farms it was feared if they would had the time, despite their inclination to attend meetings of Gram Sabha. Certain factors like caste, factualism, apathy and family states had come in the way. There had been absolutely no motivation for women to contribute their role in meetings.

Sharma (1995), reported the plight of ten women panches and Surpanchs of Punjab. The study revealed that they had to fight through mockery, intimidation, apathy, bureaucracy, illiteracy about their constitutional rights, powers, duties, while managing the daily problems of their villages. Though initially many of the elected Surpanchs were rubber stamps, through sheer courage and common sense they outsmarted their male counterparts and earned the respect of their colleagues and constituencies.

Khare (1995), reported that majority of the respondent had faced so many difficulties in performing their roles for rural development through agriculture under Panchayati Raj system. The main difficulties i.e. lack of cooperation of

administrators, lack of finance, political interference and personal causes, were the most popular as reported by the majority of respondents.

In a study conducted at Tamilnadu by Palnithurai (1997), reported that elected leaders felt that it was highly impossible to convene the Gram Sabha meetings as the condition in the village were not so conducive for decision making as village communities were divided in caste lines. It was very difficult to convene the meetings of two thousand members of Gram Sabha. The presidents did not know the value of peoples participation in Gram Sabha. Hence Gram Sabha was an unnoticed concept among the village presidents.

Study conducted by Sharma (1999), on elected representatives of 67 Panchayats of Mhow block of Indore district revealed that all elected women in Panchayat had crossed the barriers of household and were in market and in community through any means. They had accepted the challenge of leadership but still unaware of the laws, rights and responsibilities of Panchayats.

Bhan and Singh (2001), indicated that major obstacles to women's poor participation in politics were illiteracy and ignorance about their right and duties. Lack of education, social and family barriers / obligation and pre-occupation with household duties prevented women from participating in the political process and only those women who were connected to political and influenced personalities came forward for elections. Due to less political awareness among women the male member of the Panchayats as well as their husband and other family members kept them away from meetings, took signature at their residence and treated them as dummy participants.

Stephen and Rajsekaran (2001), in their study on women in Gram Panchayats in Karnataka identify achievements and constraints of the women Gram Panchayat members. It was observed that there were more stumbling blocks than building blocks for the first generation. Still some of the women could emerge victorious due to the determination and perseverance got through training. Four basic factors-mobility, personal strength, educational status and training were responsible for better performance by women Gram Panchayat members, according to the study.

Chauhan (2002), in a study revealed that most of the respondents (52.67%) complained the problems of no consultation by male members for proposal, compulsion to sign approved proposal, monopoly of male members in decision making and lack of information about financial matters. Other problems like, lack of information about developmental programme and timings and place of meetings, lack of attention to women headed wards and womens problems in Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha, forceful signature on incomplete proposals were reported by 20-41 percent respondents.

Satapathy (2002), in the case study from Orissa analyses field data from Panchayats in the district of Orissa. He observes that many women were elected due to pressure from husbands or influential politicians. 42 percent of them took part in decision making and 58 percent of them were unable to strike entry into actual Panchayat decision making. The handicaps noticed are lack of education, articulation and self-confidence.

Subrahmanyam (2002), stated that due to low levels of literacy and awarness, ignorance and imposed inferiority complex resulting from the prevailing social pardah system and lack of exposure and experience, the elected women members and

chairpersons of the village Panchayat in several cases, had to depend upon their male counterparts for briefs in decision making process. There is a need for attitudinal changes among the male members in the families. This requires special orientation camps. Mass media can also play an important role to bring about radical change in the attitudes of people in society.

Rajvir and Dhaka (2002), in study conducted in Rohtak district of Haryana reported that cases of husband's proxy for the elected wives were not scarce. In some cases, during the local bodies elections, particularly, at the Gram Panchayat and block samiti levels, photographs of the husband was on the posters of the contesting female candidates and not of the candidates herself. Of course, names of both husband and wife were there. Lack of awareness of power and functions on the part of the elected representatives does come in the way of active participation of the people in the Panchayati Raj affairs and confidence building to shoulder leadership responsibilities.

Mayaram and Shail (2002), the election of scheduled caste women as political leaders question the traditional social hierarchy of Indian villages and discrimination based on deep-rooted caste prejudices is commonly used by upper castes to maintain status quo. Another strategy that is used against women representatives is to simply prevent them from completing their work, e.g. through not passing any of their propositions, or to use no-confidence motions towards woman who speak out and prioritize development issues. Their work is accepted only as long as they don't challenge the power of men or question male privileges, e.g. by addressing issues of alcohol abuse or domestic violence.

Sabyasachi and Laharia (2003), expressed in their study that only 17.78 percent of the respondents were having high level of job performance and rest were

either in medium or low job performance categories. The reasons behind the low job performance may be due to lack of timeliness, low quality and quantity of inputs supplied for efficient execution of extension activities, less scope to merit and excellence in the job and lack of help and guidance from the superiors.

Hemalatha (2003), reported that majority of the women members of PRI were not able to identify the problems related to their family, administration of Panchayat and villages. Women said being women minority and belonging to lower caste, they cannot express their views. Simply, they have to go to the meetings, sign the records as asked by the secretary and come back. It is very difficult to get any information from the office.

Shrivastava (2003), in study found that most important economic constraint faced by the cent percent formal leaders of PRI was lack of financial support of the government (100%) followed by no honorarium at grass root level (93.33%). In the category of technical constraints, lack of knowledge regarding rural development programmes (90%) was the major constraints, followed by lack of training (80%). In case of administrative constraints, lack of power (98.67%) was the major constraints followed by delay in sanction of development work (96.67%), lack of cooperation of village level worker (94.67%), lack of communication media (88%) and lack of staff (68%) were the important constraints. The personal and socio-psychological constraints expressed by the formal leaders were, low level of education (86.67%), lack of cooperation and unity among formal leaders (83.33%), lack of cooperation from villagers in development work (63.33%) and lack of peoples interest in development work (43.33%).

A case study of SC women in Haryana (Dhaka and Dhaka, 2004), showed that many of them are not aware of their role and responsibilities in PRI. Nor the social inhibitions and disabilities allow them to assert themselves. It is so primarily because most of them are illiterate, lack leadership quality, forced to observe purdah and their husbands or fathers-in-law represent them in Panchayat meetings and take over functions expected of elected women members. The proxy representation in Panchayats has become quite common. Owing to their illiteracy, lack of confidence and purdah, their husbands or male family members take over their functions. The studies revealed that their reservation cannot empower them beyond a limit; there are other factors as well which need to be addressed to.

Shashidhar (2004), experience showed that the districts where literacy campaign was run successfully and women literacy was relatively higher, women participated more actively. In contrast, where illiteracy was pronounced, women members remained weak and became tools to serve the interests of male members.

Verma (2005), revealed that lack of education also leads to misuse of their powers and their exploitation; they are made to put their signatures or thumb impressions on papers which can neither be read by them nor were their contents made known to them.

Kasturi (2005), Even though there are many success stories of women breaking ground as local leaders, a number of studies have also paid attention to the harsh conditions that elected women representatives face in the Panchayats. Above all, cultural norms and socio-economic factors provide structural barriers to women who go into politics in India. These include household and child caring responsibilities; conservative attitudes to women's roles in society and male

dominance in the family and community; illiteracy, lack of political skills and experience of public affairs, as well as lack of self-confidence. Moreover, political parties practice of excluding women from influential positions, as well as opposition from government officials towards women representatives provides barriers to their engagement in politics.

Nanda (2006), also reveals that in spite having a constitution and the 73rd Amendment Act which reinforces the equity and equality and social justice, women is significant and not into decision making in such bodies/organization.

Samad (2007), in a study on women empowerment and Panchayati Raj Institution in Kerala found that unhealthy criticism at meeting was the only problem faced by women members of PRI. Actually this is not a problem or a real hurdle. Instead it strengthened the power and efficiency of women.

vi) Participation of Panchayat members in PRI and developmental programmes

Shekhawat (1991), observed that officials of non-government organization were perceived as key motivator for participation in social forestry programme. He further reported that fulfillment of fuel demand of family, need of fodder for cattle, employment and the financial help were the main motivating reasons for the farmers to participate in social forestry programme.

Patel and Vakaria (1991), found that not a single farm woman had indicated the Panchayat officials and extension personnel as source for motivating them to receive training. The president of mahila mandal was indicated as a source of motivation by 81 percent of the respondents, while 34 percent of the farm women

were motivated by the Gram-sevaks. The percentage respondents who reported their neighbors and other trained women as a source of motivation were 24.50 and 12 respectively.

Trivedi (1992), observed that self-actualization and economic security were the main motives for participation of tribal and non-tribal beneficiaries security in the TRYSEM programme.

Radha (1994), reported motivational factors of participation in training programme on sericulture. Around 50 percent of the trainees attended the programme to learn, though they were not involved in rearing in their households. More than 30 percent attended the training to learn new methods and 17.3 percent of the trainees attained for various other reasons like to get the stipend or because it was a lean agriculture season thus to spend their free time.

Kumar *et al.* (1994), reported that the important motive influenced the farmers to take up agro-forestry programme was the additional income. The other important motives were affiliation, self-esteem, recognition, safety and self-actualization motive.

Chauhan (1994), stated that majority of the big peasants (78.33 percent) and nearly half of the general peasant (48.10 percent) had high while 48 percent of the small peasants had low level of economic motivation.

Sharma *et al.* (1995-96), observed that Surpanch/Panchayat members and master trainers of the TRYSEM were perceived as key motivators for participations of youth in the TRYSEM programme. They further reported that economic security,

family need and economic freedom were the main motives for their participation in the programme.

Punjabi (1997), reported that fodder for livestock, employment and demand of fuel wood and timber wood were the important reasons for participation of farmers in the social forestry programme.

Mehta and Malaviya (1997), revealed that the chief motivating factor for women in Bhiwani, Hisar and Kurukshetra districts of Haryana was training provided to them by various agencies and departments working in the field.

Upadhyaya (2000), found that the main reasons for participation of women in DWCRA programme were "to earn money for better living," "persuasion by programme functionaries" and "desire to get employment".