CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The Panchayati Raj is a South Asian Political system mainly adopted in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal for local administration. The word “panchayat” literally means “assembly” of five wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of administration. Mahatma Gandhi advocated panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of government. It is the oldest system of local government in the Indian subcontinent. This system was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s as laws were passed to establish panchayats in various states. It also found backing in Indian constitution with the 73rd Amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. In the history of Panchayati Raj in India, on 24th April, 1993, the constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions. Currently, the three tire Panchayati Raj system exists in all the states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram and the all Union Territories except Delhi.

The states of Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, and Sikim have two-tier panchayats- one at the village level and the second at the Zila or District level. In Jammu and Kashmir, block is the second level. In all other states Panchayati Raj is a three-tier system with village as first level, block or janapad as second level and zila or district as the third level.
Village is the basic unit of Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is generally a revenue unit. The unit of local government here is called village panchayat. In the structure of the Panchayati Raj, the village panchayat is the lowest unit. The panchayat chiefly consists of representatives elected by the people of the village. Only the persons who are registered as voters and do not hold any office of profit under the government are eligible for election to the panchayat. The persons convicted by the court for criminal offences are disqualified for the election to the panchayat. There is also provision for co-option of two women and one member of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, if they do not get adequate representation in the normal course. The panchayat as a body is accountable to the general body of the village known as Gram Sabha which meets at least twice a year. The Gram Panchayat must present its budget, accounts of the previous year and annual administrative report before the Gram Sabha. Furthermore, it has to secure the latter’s approval of the village production plan, proposals for taxation and development programmes before they are enforced by the panchayat. Every panchayat elects a president and a Vice-President.

The present study is an attempt to know the extent of participation of elected women representative in Panchayats and the factors influencing participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. This study shows that the reservation for women can be an important impetus to women’s empowerment in Kanyakumari district. Women were actively prevented from
participating in panchayat activities by male family members and other members of the panchayat itself. The male members often insisted women members not to attend meetings. Male panchayat members took advantage of the low levels of literacy and lack of knowledge and experience to take decisions in the absence of elected women representatives and tried to keep them out of important meetings. Many elected women complained that their suggestions were not considered seriously nor were they consulted while decisions were being made. Some felt that their views were ignored only because they are women. The goal of women’s empowerment will not be accomplished by reservations alone. The study also tried to find out the factors influencing the women elected representatives in making decisions. To expedite and speed up this process it is essential to implement some supplementary policies which encourage the self-confidence of women, build up women’s capabilities and remove operational obstacles. To enable women to participate and function effectively at every stage, capacity building support was needed from the beginning of the election process to the end of the tenure of the elected representatives.

The present study analysed the socio-economic conditions of the sample respondents participating in the PRIs with the following objectives.

1. To know the socio-economic conditions of the sample respondents participating in the PRIs.
2. To study the factors inducing sample respondents to participate in the PRIs.

3. To know the extent of involvement of sample respondents in the activities of PRIs.

4. To find out the problems of sample respondents involved in PRIS.

5. To make possible suggestions to overcome the problems.

The researcher has selected Kanyakumari district as the study area. Kanyakumari is the second smallest of the districts of Tamil Nadu. It is divided into two revenue divisions, viz., Padmanabhapuram and Nagercoil. It consists of four taluks viz, Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode, nine blocks namely Agasteeswaram, Killiyoor, Kurunthencode, Rajakkamangalam, Thovalai, Thuckalay, Thiruvattar, Munchirai and Melpuram. It also consists of four municipalities, viz., Nagercoil, Colachel, Padmanabhapuram and Kuzhithurai, six assembly constituencies and one parliamentary constituency.

Stratified proportionate Random Sampling technique has been adopted to select the sample respondents for the present study with Kanyakumari district as the universe, panchayat union as the primary units and the women panchayat members as the ultimate units. The study area consists of 1097 members spread over all the nine blocks of the district. Of which 695 members (63 per cent) are male and the remaining 402 (37 per cent) are female. From each block fifty percent of the female members are taken as sample. A
pretested interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the respondents. After the collection of data it was processed, tabulated and analysed with the help of various statistical tools. The important findings are presented as follows.

7.1 Summary of Findings

The study reveals that majority of the respondents are in the age group of 41-50 years which account for 41.50 per cent and 21.50 per cent of the respondents fall under the age group of 31-40 years. It is inferred from the study that women participation in panchayati raj is notable during the ages ranging from 31 to 50 years.

It is found that 83.50 per cent women panchayati raj members are married, 11 per cent are unmarried, 4.50 per cent are widowed.

It is observed that 51.50 per cent of the respondents are Hindus, 47.00 per cent of the respondents are Christians. It is inferred from the study that majority of the women panchayati raj members are Hindus.

It is inferred that 74.50 per cent women PRIs members belong to backward caste, 13 per cent belong to most backward caste, 7.50 per cent belong to forward caste and the remaining 5 per cent belong to the scheduled caste/schedule tribe.
The study shows that majority of the respondents, 35 per cent has secondary level of education. It indicates that there is no relationship between women participation in panchayati raj institutions and their level of education.

It is evident from the study that 73 per cent of the respondents live in terraced houses and 17.50 per cent live in tiled houses. The analysis shows that some PRI members come from economically underprivileged section of the society.

It is inferred from the study that majority of the women PRIs members have owned houses and only 4 per cent respondents live in rented house.

It is found from the study that nuclear family system is the most common in the study area 79.5 per cent women members of the panchayat raj institution live in nuclear family.

It is observed from the study that 65 per cent of the respondents family have three to four members.

It is understood from study that 52 per cent of the sample respondent’s family have no earning members and 44.5 per cent of the respondents have one more earning members in their families.

It is revealed from study that majority of the women PRIs members (43.50 per cent) are from labour families.
It is observed from the study that majority of the respondents (27.00 per cent) get credit from co-operative banks.

It is understood from the study that majority women PRI members (45.50 per cent) households income comes from family members.

It is revealed from the study that majority of the respondents 50.50 per cent earn a monthly income between Rs.60001 to Rs.120000.

It is found from the study that 32.00 per cent of the respondents fall in the monthly family expenditure group of Rs.7001 to Rs.9000. It is observed from the study that 30 per cent respondents have a saving of above Rs.25000 per annum.

It is portrayed that 60 per cent women PRIs members have high level of satisfaction from their performance.

It is found the Chi-square test that there is significant relationship between age of respondents and their level of performance.

It is understood from the Chi-square test that there is significant relationship between marital status of respondents and their level of performance.

It is evident from the chi-square test that there is no significant relationship between education of respondents and their level of performance.
It is revealed from the Chi-square test that there is no significant relationship between caste of respondents and their level of performance.

It is observed from the Chi-square test that there is no significant relationship between housing pattern of respondents and their level of performance.

It is found from the Chi-square test that there is no significant relationship between ownership of house of respondents and their level of performance.

It is understood from the Chi-square test that there is no significant relationship between type of family of respondents and their level of performance.

It is evident that the Chi-square test proved that there is significant relationship between family size of respondents and their level of performance.

It is observed from the Chi-square test that there is significant relationship between income of respondents and their level of performance.

It is portrayed that the Chi-square test that there is significant relationship between savings of respondents and their level of performance.

It is inferred from the study, that there is relationship between level of their performance and profile variables namely age, religion, community,
education, marital status, type of family, housing pattern, ownership of house, family size, family income and savings.

It is observed from the study that though there is no relationship between caste and income of the respondents the per-capita income is higher in SC group.

It is found from the study that Muslim families are earning a household income between Rs.60,001 and Rs.1,80,000 and their per capita income is Rs.41,375, which is higher than that of the Hindus and Christian families.

It is evident from the study that the women PRI members with higher level of education and have higher household income.

It is found from the multiple regression analysis that the values of multiple R and $R^2$ get increased. It indicates the income of the respondents; education and family size are best set of prediction of empowerment of women having the combined contribution of about 78 per cent. The variables were statistically significant at 5 per cent level.

It is found that out of the 200 women panchayath members, 78 per cent are ward members of village panchayats.

It is understood that out of the 200 total women PRI members, one hundred and eighty five respondents are from the village panchayats.
It is shown that out 200 women PRIs members. 87.5 per cent are selected by the general turn for women while only 9.5 per cent were selected in general turn.

It is revealed that out of the 200 respondent’s 91 per cent are selected as independent candidate.

It found that out of the 200 women PRIs members, 54.5 per cent contest the election because they consider it is a social work.

It is clear that out of the 200 women PRIs members, 65.5 per cent are new to the office. This shows that majority of the respondents are the members in PRIs for the first time and this is because of the reservation policy of the central and state governments.

It is inferred 53 per cent women PRIs members opine that they are interested in contesting future election.

It is understood that 42 per cent of the respondent attend the meetings regularly, while 51 per cent of the respondents do not attend meetings regularly.

It is found that, 31.16 per cent of the members have an index up to 20 after they become members. before PRI stage. The percentage of members in PRIs activities who have an index value of above 80 at before becoming
member of PRI is 3.41 and the figure has increased to 12.04 after becoming PRI member.

It is seen that the average economic indices of the members in PRIs has increased by 32.51 per cent.

It is evident from the study that, 84.86 per cent of the respondents feel that they have increased their net working skills.

It is observed from the analysis that, the average social indices of the members in PRI activities increased by 35.61. The changes in social index during the two periods in PRI activities are statistically significant since its ‘t’ values are greater than the respective table values.

It is inferred from the study that, after becoming members in PRIs the leadership position of the respondents has improved to a better level.

It is revealed that out of the 200 women PRIs members, 33 percent respondents make decisions with more than one factor such as support of all members and public demand.

The application of One-way ANOVA test the significance of women empowerment in home environment before and after becoming a member in PRI shows that the variables are found to have a lesser influence on women empowerment.
One-way ANOVA test, with regard to the significance of women empowerment in home and working environment after becoming member in PRI indicates that the variable are found to have a strong influence on women empowerment in home and work environment after becoming member in PRIs.

It is evident from the study that the important problem of the women PRIs respondents, is the domination of males over the work their duties with a high score of 74.73, followed by heavy workload with 71.35 scores. Low level of education is the third problem in performing the duties with 69.65 scores.

It is observed from the study that 31.5 per cent of the respondents opined that lack of support from male and female members and 25 per cent of the respondents hesitate to speak boldly in the meetings of PRIs.

It is understood from the study that 14.5 per cent respondents have the negative approach to avoid the problems by way of absenting themselves in the meetings.

The ‘F test’ has revealed that the contribution of PRIs members to family income has been more than the earnings of their family members.

7.2 Suggestions

To improve the level of empowerment of women members of Panchayati Raj Institutions the following suggestions will be much useful.
Proper orientation has to be given to the elected women representatives by way of training. The women representatives are to be sensitized on the issues of the women. They have to be organized at a larger level in order to enable them to address their issues on their own by creating a suitable support base.

Institution based legal support has to be provided to the women who take up the struggle to administer social justice. Periodic interface between successful women and women leaders who lead struggles has to be organized. Managerial skills, leadership qualities, accounting skills and communication skills have to be developed through periodic capacity building exercises.

Comprehensive awareness programmes have to be conducted in rural areas on the problems of women. Information has to be provided to the women representatives on all vital matters pertaining to improvement in the quality of their life.

Women component plan has to be initiated at every level. Stringent laws are to be enacted to deal with individuals committing atrocities against women. The women segmented on the lines of political party, caste, religion and class have to be united and they should be helped to stand as a single entity. Elected women representatives have to be organized at State level and further federated with other organizations so that they will gain added strength.

It will be clean and good if the women PRIs members, their spouses and communities are periodically oriented on gender issues to maximize the participation of both men and women in decision making processes in families and communities.

Reviewing the guidelines of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Central Sector Programs to ensure the centrality of participation by Panchayati
Raj institutions from the drawing board to implementation of schemes including poverty alleviation, elementary education, rural health coverage etc.

vii) It is necessary that NGO’s should become active in guiding the women panchayat members on a regular basis and in giving them the needed support and access to higher authorities where their problems can be heard.

viii) The women panchayat members should receive full information of all government schemes and policies plus guidelines as to how they can effectively help eligible families to receive benefits. The role and powers of panchayat members should be clearly defined so that they know exactly what their duties and responsibilities are.

ix) Strong steps should be needed to stop corruption that is so rampant and works against the poor. Ward members should be paid a sizable stipend per month.

x) Loans and credit at easy interest rates should be made available to deserving people who could use them to better their condition.

xi) An amendment should be made, where the clause on no-confidence motion is concerned, so that women are not easily removed from their positions if they try to rectify defects in the functioning of the panchayats.

### 7.3 Conclusion

Now large numbers of women are holding different positions in the PRIs due to the provisions included in the constitutions through various amendments. The attitude of society towards women has started changing. But, the hurdles in the process of empowering women are continuing. Steps are being taken by the women on their own to overcome the hurdles. It is a long
drawn process. A structure which has been created over centuries to work against the interests of women cannot be dismantled within a short span of five years. It can be changed only by creating a movement by the masses for which this provision of reservation of one third seats for women will help in this aspect. In order to make the women achieve results in their positions an array intervention are necessary. They need orientation, sensitization, capacity building, dissemination, information and continuous counseling through organizations. The on going experiments and experiences suggest that periodical training, orientation and sensitization make the women leaders perform the assigned role in a better way than the novices. When the women leaders are responding to the socio-political challenges in society, they are to be supported by the organizations and institutions which are working for empowerment of women. Wherever such interventions are available the achievements of the women leaders are substantial and impressive. The government should respond to the needs of these women leaders only when they are supported by organizations well known for their credentials and are to be reckoned with as a force.

7.4 Scope for Further Research

A few suggested areas for further research are,

1. A study on the role of lead bank for improvement of women members of in PRIs rural areas.

2. A study on the impact of entrepreneurial education in generating employment for the uneducated poor women members of PRIs.
3. A study on the effects of various Government Programmes for upliftment of women members of PRIs in rural areas.

4. A study on the role of PRIs on the empowerment of women in rural areas.