1.1 Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to study the effectiveness of the political participation of rural Muslim women in local self-government in South Asian countries. In particular it focuses on the political participation of rural Muslim women of Haryana post 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 which has given reservation to Indian women in local self-government. This study has indicated the extent of rural Muslim women’s political participation in local self-government and how their experiences can be compared with other South Asian countries where the majority of rural Muslim women are also grappling with similar issues of women’s emancipation. This work also poses the pertinent question that whether these women will be set up as an example for the Muslim women of other South Asian countries to emulate them and tread the similar path? Will their counterparts in south Asia be encouraged to pave a way for themselves in their respective local politics.

Rural Muslim women in South Asia have much in common. There exists mass poverty and massive deprivation in rural South Asia even. Cultural and social taboos in South Asia make the role of women in economic and political activities almost invisible. In Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan where Muslim women are more oppressed. According to the 2001 Census, there are about 65 million Muslim women in India of 145 million Muslim, making it the third largest Muslim population country after Indonesia and Pakistan. Bangladesh has 57.3 million men and 54.1 million Muslim women (Ministry of Planning Bureau of Statistic, 2000, Bangladesh). In Pakistan there are around 60.34 million women. Of the world’s
1,100 million people living on less than US $1 a day as of 2000 A.D., South Asia has 432 million or 39.2 per cent and mostly in the rural areas (UNDP, 2004). Living under poverty implies poor nutrition, high illiteracy, children not enrolled in schools, high infant and maternal mortality, inadequate health care, no access to good drinking water, poor sanitation, lack of proper shelter and extreme vulnerability to shocks associated with natural and human events resulting in debt bondage and further deprivation (Arunachalm and Kalpagam (ed.), 2007).

These impinge on rural Muslim women more severely given their lower social status in the patriarchal systems of rural South Asia. But South Asian countries are making rapid progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Between 1990 and 2002, both Bhutan and Bangladesh have decreased child mortality by a commendable 72 and 67 points per 1,000 live births respectively. Yet, there are some countries that reveal setbacks on certain indicators of MDGs. Income poverty in Pakistan increased from 28.6 per cent (people living below the national poverty line) in 1993 to 32.6 per cent in 1998-99. Although income poverty decreased in India and Bangladesh by 7.4 percentage points between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 and 1.2 percentage points between 1995-96 and 2000 respectively, the problem of massive poverty still looms large on both. In Bangladesh nearly half the country’s population is below the national poverty line and India is home to largest absolute numbers of poor in the world. In primary education, Nepal suffered a setback as the net primary enrolment ratio decreased from 85 per cent in 1990-91 to 70 per cent in 2001-02 (UNDP, 2004).

**Bangladesh**

Around 76.1 per cent of the estimated population of 143.8 million persons in 2002 in the country lived in rural areas (UNDP, 2004). Women constituted 48.6 per cent of the total population. The adult literacy rate is far lower for women (31.4%) than
men (50.3%) (UNDP, 2004) and female illiteracy is higher in rural than in urban areas where only 20.2 per cent of women are literate (ESCAP, 1995).

Female Workforce Participation Rate (FWPR) of that 15 year and above was 66.4 per cent and FWPR as percentage of Male Workforce Participation Rate was 76 per cent in 2002. A total of 77 per cent of all female workers were employed in agriculture in 2002 and female workers in agriculture as a predominance of women in agriculture. Of all family workers, women accounted for 81 per cent and of who the majority was in agriculture (Arunachalam and Kalpagam (ed.), 2007).

India

India’s estimated population in 2002 was 1049.5 million. Rural population accounted for 71.9 per cent (UNDP, 2004). Women constitute 48.1 per cent of the population. In 1992-93 only 9.2 per cent of the households were female-headed (ESCAP, 1997).

The adult illiteracy rate in India was 61.3 per cent in 2002. Women had 46.4 per cent literate, whereas men had 69 per cent (UNDP, 2004). Both male and female literacy rate are substantially lower in rural areas than in urban areas. This rural-urban difference is more pronounced in the case of women. Among the rural female population in the age group of 7 years and over, the literacy rate is 30.4 per cent. The literacy rates vary considerably across the states. The Human Development Index (HDI) rank of India in 2002 was 127 out of 177 countries, indicating low income. The Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) rank of India in the same year was 103 out of 177 countries (UNDP, 2004).

The Indian Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) is 39.1 per cent (2001 Census). The WPR of those 15 years and above for women is 42.4 per cent, which is half the
rate of 84.8 per cent for men (UNDP, 2004). The rural female participation rate is much higher than the urban female participation rate. The majority of the workers (58.2%) are employed in agricultural and allied industrial sectors (2001 Census). A greater proportion of women is employed in this sector as compared to men. In rural areas 89.5 per cent of the total female employment is in the agricultural and allied industrial sector (U. Kalpagam, 2007).

**Pakistan**

Pakistan’s population was officially estimated at 149.9 million in 2002, comprising 47.5 per cent of the population is less than 15 years of age and 3.7 per cent over 65. Likewise, 66.3 per cent of the population lives in rural areas (UNDP, 2004). The educational status of Pakistani women is quite low. Women had a literacy rate of 28.5 per cent, as against 53.4 per cent for men in 2002 but the rate for rural women is reported to be only 7.3 per cent (ESCAP, 1997).

Pakistan has reduced its public expenditure proportion on education from 2.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1990 to 1.8 in 1999-2001 (UNDP, 2004). Although women play an active role in economy, their contribution has been grossly under-reported in various censuses and surveys. For example, 1991-92 Labour Force Survey revealed that only about 16 per cent of women aged 10 years and over was in the labour force and in comparison, the male’s participation rate was 84 per cent. But, 1990-91 Pakistan Integrated Household Survey indicated that the female labour force participation rate was 45 per cent in rural areas and 17 per cent in urban areas (ESCAP, 1997). Overall, 36.3 per cent of women were reported to be economically active in 2002 and the female rate as proportion of male rate was 44 per cent (UNDP, 2004).
According to 1991-92 Labour Force Survey, agricultural and allied industries absorb the largest proportion of employed persons, both women and men, particularly in the rural areas. However, the proportion of the women engaged in the agricultural sector is higher in rural areas (73%) and female rate as percentage of male rate in agricultural was 164 per cent in 2002 (Arunachalam and Kalpagam (ed.), 2007, p.18). Pakistan is faced with a difficult task in human resource development. The Human Development Index (HDI) rank of Pakistan was 142 of 177 countries in 2002, indicating low life expectancy at birth, low educational attainment and low income (UNDP, 2004).

1.2 The Conceptual Framework

Gender inequalities throughout the world are the most pervasive. Gender equality concerns each and every member of the society and form the very basis of a just society. While sex is the biological and physiological difference between men and women, gender is socially constructed, partly through the process of socialization, and partly through positive and negative discrimination in the various institutions and structures of society (religion, economic structure, law, legal system, cultural beliefs and practices, media, education etc). The importance of women in development process has been the focus of much debate in the last three decades.

The beginning of UN Decade for Women (197-85) created a keen interest among researchers, policy makers, international organizations and economists in gender issues throughout the world. Gender equality was declared as a fundamental right in charter of the United Nations signed in 1945. The UN General Assembly adopted: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” on

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1 It manifest itself in particular, rather than universal forms, being defined and elaborated by other social categories like ethnicity, class, race, religion, culture, economic, and political system. It is dynamic rather than static, taking different forms in different times and region.
December 18, 1979 which came into force on September 3, 1981. Further, the target 4 of Millennium Development Goal 3 (emanating from the UN Millennium Declaration, 2000) binds all the 189 committed members-countries (of UN), including India, to do more to promote gender equality and empower women as its aims at eliminating gender disparity under the categories of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger achieving universal primary education, promotion of gender equality and political empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, improvement of mental health, combating HIV/AIDS, and other diseases, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development, preferably by the year 2015 (Arunachalam and Kalpagam (ed.), 2007).

For the emancipation of women in every field, political empowerment is paramount importance and equal emphasis must also be laid on the total development of women, creating awareness among them about their rights. In this context, empowering women at local decision-making process can be an effective.

It is now widely accepted that self-governing institutions, particularly at the local level, are essential for national growth, for effective people's participation as well as an indispensable part of the democratic process as a whole. These institutions, based as they are as small units of government, enable people to feel a sense of responsibility and to inculcate the core values of democracy. At the same time, it also offers a unique opportunity for them to participate in public affairs, especially developmental work. In most of the developing countries today, more emphasis is being laid on the need for empowerment of women and their active participation in the mainstream developmental process. It is also recognized that apart from managing their households and bearing children rural women bring income from activities ranging from working in the fields to factories or running small and petty
businesses. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to make rural women empowered so as to enable them to be at the centre of the developmental process.

Women's empowerment is a process of building awareness about their situation, discrimination, rights and opportunities, as a step towards gender equality. Kamla Bhasin and N. Said Khan (1993) hold that empowerment has now become a struggle for the achievement of equality, dignity and freedom of choice for women and to have control over their lives and bodies, within and outside their home.

Various streams of feminism, in the present day, seeks to root out the causes of women's oppression, empower them to take part in decision-making at all levels of society and include women’s perspectives right at the onset of policy formulation. For empowerment, therefore, it is crucial for women to participate in policymaking process as decision-makers.

Of the seven countries of South Asia, the three of them (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan,) have a large number of Muslims. Yet, they provide reservation for women in the local self-government, involving them in development programmes of the community, society and nation. No country can develop without the full-fledged participation of women in public as well as in the private sectors. Since the society is not ready to give women what is due to them, the government can come to the forefront and assist them by taking certain initiatives. Moreover, it is a demand of the globalization era that women should be given equal opportunities.

The choice of Mewat is very relevant because it is a region in north India dominated by Muslims. The proposed study will try to ascertain how rural Muslim women of Mewat are achieving empowerment through local self-government. Though the available literature does throw sufficient light on the issues of women’s political
participation and empowerment through local self-government in South Asia, no systematic study has yet been done on Muslim women of rural areas of South Asia. This study will try to fill the gap in contemporary debate on women's empowerment. After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1996, it was for the first time that Muslim women of Mewat came to the forefront of politics through local self-government. This study has indicated the extent of rural Muslim women's political participation in local self-government and how their experiences can be compared with other South Asian countries where the majority of rural Muslim women are also grappling with similar issues of women's emancipation.

This study seeks to make a contribution to the current debate on Muslim women empowerment it has examined whether local self-government and reservation can facilitate an effective role for Muslim women, particularly the poor and disadvantaged living in rural areas. In recent times, social scientists have come to increasingly focus on the participation of women in local self-government, which affects the political dynamics of a country. This topic is relevant, therefore not only to Muslim women's involvement at the local level, but also to their involvement in politics as a whole.

Thus, this study aims to understand the various factors of Muslim women's political participation in local self-government and focuses attention on their increasing role in the overall political culture of the global South especially in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

1.3 An Overview of the Chapters

The thesis is arranged in four main chapters apart from the introduction and concluding chapters. All chapters are analyzed from a wide perspective with the help of census and survey data. Chapter one, the introduction deals with the basic
premises of the study and methodology adopted for the research. It outlines the conceptual framework of the proposed study.

The second chapter of the thesis is based on the status of Muslim women in South Asia (particularly Bangladesh, India and Pakistan). This chapter discusses some of the historical events that have had deep-rooted effects on the current status of Muslim women of South Asian Countries. A holistic appreciation and current status of Muslim women is possible only when their situation is analyzed in entirety. Furthermore, it is essential to understand the religious and legal prescriptions relating to the status of Muslim women. This chapter argues that Muslim women’s image in South Asian countries is of growing importance today.

The third chapter looks into the women’s political empowerment through gender quota. This Chapter shows that the implementation of gender quota in South Asia form part a long history of constructing post-colonial citizenship but that they are also part of current governmental strategies for addressing issues relating to the status of the nation within the international community. This chapter argues that quota touch upon many fundamental principles in feminist theory, in political science and in contemporary political debates.

It deals with the importance of women’s political participation in governance in South Asian countries. This chapter observed that does women’s absence in political process harm good governance or global progress. It shows that reservation at local level is helping women to get political empowerment and what led the governments of South Asian countries (particularly Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan) to initiates several changes in regarding to increase women’s participation at local level. Furthermore, the third chapter is related to a comparative analysis of local self-government in these countries. The second chapter analyzes the
extraordinary experiments to introduce 33 per cent quota for women in local politics in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This chapter concludes that quota in politics can only form one part of a multi-facetted strategy for empowering women.

The fourth chapter of the thesis is based on a comparative analysis of local self-government in South Asian countries. It looks into the concept, definitions, importance and perspectives of local self-government. It gives an historical overview of local self-governments of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This chapter highlights the symbiotic relationship between effective functioning of local self-government through women’s participation as well as the changes that reflected in the status of women in their society by taking part in local self-government. This chapter further discusses the changes that have been brought in local self-government in India and draw comparison with other two South Asian countries, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It also looks upon regional and country-wise strategies for increasing women’s involvement in local self-government.

The fifth chapter is devoted to a crucial question of the study: Does the reservation for women really lead to their empowerment? This chapter is an empirical study of the political participation of women in Mewat. The study is based on the data regarding Muslim women’s general political awareness and their attitude and their involvement in organizational and development activities.

The chapter is an enquiry as to Muslim women’s participation in the meetings of Gramsabha. The institution of Gramsabha, which resulted from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, represents an attempt at the restoration of the concept of direct democracy at the grassroots level. In India, Gramsabha has long been recognized as the lowest unit of democracy in one form or the other. Muslim women’s awareness about the institution of Gramsabha, the factors that motivated
them to participate in it and the level of their participation were enquired into as part of the study.

The main emphasis of the study would be on the perception of women respondents regarding the level of their political empowerment, their role in the decision-making process as well as its impact on the social, and particularly the patriarchal ethos in the villages. It also assesses into the views shared by the village women regarding their elected representatives and whether the policy of reservation has indeed been beneficial.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter. In the light of empirical study based on direct interactions with the respondents, with the help of detailed questionnaire, on different aspects and dimensions of Muslim women’s political participation, attitudes and involvement in the grassroots level democratic institutions and political processes. Also, it examines the extent to which women have gained knowledge, confidence, gender awareness, an interest in politics and the decision-making process since their entry into the local self-government. Therefore, the chapter concludes the finding of the study by compare India’s political empowerment of women based on the case study of Mewat, with that in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

In the conclusion, this chapter returns to the discussion of the relationship between social consciousness among Muslim women and their political empowerment in South Asia and also contains the observations and findings of the study. In fine it dwells upon some of suggestions and recommendations with a view to ensuring maximum Muslim women’s political participation in rural democratic institutions.
1.4 Objectives of the Study

The chief objectives of the study were:

- To plot the socio-economic profile of elected Muslim women representatives.
- To analyze the political career of elected Muslim women representatives over the past three elections.
- To measure the quality of participation of elected Muslim women representatives in Rural Local Self-Government.
- To assess the empowerment of elected Muslim women representatives with the household and at the community level.
- To ascertain the development outcomes of Muslim women Panchayat leaders, and whether their leadership has had any impact on the performance of development activities.
- To analyze the elected Muslim women representatives’ perception of their own successes and their satisfaction levels with their own role in decision-making process.
- To obtain an understanding of the role of customary Panchayats as gatekeeper/facilitators.

1.5 Hypotheses

1. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has brought Muslim women’s empowerment down to the grassroots.
2. Reservation of seats for women in PRIs helps Muslim women in their internal awakening and external effectiveness.
3. The political institution of Gramsabha acts as a valuable means for women’s empowerment and political participation.
1.6 The Universe of the Study

This study is a comparative analysis of rural Indian Muslim women, as participants in local self-government with the rural Muslim women participants of local self-government in Bangladesh and Pakistan and the difference they have made in the international arena. It seeks to analyze their contribution in their respective country’s development, especially with the involvement of poor, illiterate women at the grassroots level and consequently, to understand their level of awareness about their role and responsibility in the carrying forward the developmental agenda. This study is based upon a field survey of one of the most backward district of India; Mewat is in the state of Haryana.

The universe of the study constitutes thirty-two Gram Panchayats in the district of Mewat in Haryana. Selecting of them care was given to see to it that the panchayats selected for the study belonged to different blocks and that twelve of them had Muslim women as president, the selected panchayats were: Rsika and Huchperi in Hathin block, Ghasera and Kawarsika in Nuh block, Jhimrawat and Bhadas in Nagina block, Godhala and Shikrawa in Punhana block, Rangla and Goyala in Tauru block, Bobalhedi and Neemkhera in Firozpur Jhirka block, and twelve of them had men as president, the selected panchayats were: Rupraka and Malai in Hathin block, Palla and Firozpur Namak in Nuh block, Mohammad Nagar and Mandi Khera in Nagina block, Akbar Pur and Khera Punhana in Punhana block, Shikarpur and Sundha in Tauru block, Mohammad Bas and Hirwadi in Firozpur Jhirka, and twelve of them had Muslim women as ex-president, the selected panchayats were: Mirka and Himsika in Hathin block, Palla and Malabh in Nuh block, Badarpur and Ghagas in Nagina block, Badai and Gulatta in Punhana block, Jhrota and Kharkari in Tauru block, Ali Pur Tigra and Ahmad Bas in firozpur Jhirka.
In pursuance of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, the Haryana State Legislature enacted the new “Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994”. The act has provided detailed powers and procedure of local self-government.

Mewat is one of the Haryana’s most backward areas. This is, despite Haryana being one of the most prosperous states of the country and the farthest point is no more than 145 Km from the national capital, Delhi. It has a high level of poverty incidence, according to 2001 census, where 62 percent of rural households are below the poverty line, compared with only 37 percent of Haryana as a whole. Mewat, like the rest of Haryana, has a patriarchal set up, where the status of women is very low and is clearly brought to the forefront when one observes the sex ratio for Haryana in 2001 census – 861 female per 1000 males.

The implementation of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 by the Haryana government has brought some hope to women and people belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes, who have so far remained marginalized. In the 285 Panchayats present in Mewat, 107 women are Sarpanches and 791 Panches. Also, in 101 Panchayat Samitis, 34 members are women whereas 8 women are members of the Zila Parishad in Gurgaon, 3 of them hailing from Mewat. In 1996, it was the first time when large number of women in Mewat had entered the political arena, after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came into force.

1.7 Study Approach & Methodology

A combination of various research techniques was adopted in the present study. The methodology chosen followed a two-pronged strategy, including quantitative and qualitative approach. This was done with a view to producing a richer set of finding.
The quantitative survey was conducted to obtain precise and mostly pre-coded responses from each respondent individually. The structured schedules used in the fieldwork offered many benefits, e.g. biases were controlled and probable errors reduced. On the other hand, the qualitative method generates information that was used to corroborate the quantitative findings.

1.7.1 Research Approach
The study was undertaken in four steps. The first three steps were preparatory in nature, followed by the main fieldwork. In the first step, a comprehensive desk review was carried out, which included a review of literature, internal group discussion and interview with key stakeholders. The purpose of this background study was to obtain a complete understanding of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment act, the status of Muslim women in Panchayats, their roles and participation levels. With this knowledge, the study moved to the next level of developing a log-frame. In this step, the appropriate research tools were identified, as also the indicators to measures the different dimensions of the study. This exercise enabled the researcher to secure greater control over, and a better understanding of, the issues under review. From the fourth step, the migrated to the main phase, this included field survey and monitoring, preparation of data entry programme, data entry, analysis of data and finally report writing.

1.7.2 Research Tools vis-à-vis Target Respondents
As part of the study methodology, it was decided to carry out both quantitative and qualitative survey with identified target respondents. For quantitative survey, it was decided to interview Sarpanches (female as well as male), Panches (both sex), ex-elected Muslim women representatives, Panchayat Secretaries and members of the community (local citizen and group). For the qualitative survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the community, as well as in-depth
interview with Block Development Officers (Government officials) and reviews of the Minutes of Meetings (MoM) of Gram Sabhas.

The following schedules were devised for the **quantitative Survey**:

- Schedule for female and male Sarpanches/Panches.
- Schedule for ex-elected Muslim women representatives.

The Semi-structure schedules devised for the **Qualitative Survey** were:

- In-depth discussion with government officials.
- Review of MoM.

### 1.7.3 Broad Study Indicators

The research tools included broader themes and indicators such as:

**Social-Demographic and Economic Profile of Elected Women Representatives**

- Social category, religion, age, education, marital status, average family size, type of family, primary occupation, economic category (APL/BPL), household assets, etc.

**Political Career of Elected Muslim women Representatives**

- Age at which entered into active politics.
- Social constrains, e.g. freedom of mobility, caste factor, economic dependence, resistance within the household and community.
- Institutional constrains, e.g. community, religion and official behaviors.

**Enabling Environment**

- Support from spouse and other family members.
- Supports from community.
Quality of Participation of Muslim Women Representatives

- Elected Muslim women representatives’ awareness regarding norms for development programmes, rural development programmes, welfare schemes.
- Participation in community mobilization activities.
- Elected Muslim women representatives’ attendance in Gram Sabha meetings, nature of issues raised, specific work done for women and girl children.
- Number of meeting held with local stakeholders.
- Interaction with government officials.

Impact of Women’s Empowerment

- Freedom to meet people, attend gatherings, talk to unrelated persons
- Control household and own income.

Satisfaction of Elected Muslim Women Representatives with their Role and Performance

- Their awareness as a change agent.
- Self-respect and self-esteem within community.
- Self-respect and self-esteem within household.

1.7.4 Sampling Design

A multi stage stratified random sampling design was adopted for field survey. Hence, state followed by district, blocks and finally Gram Panchayats were selected.
1.7.5 Selection of Mewat

Geographically, Mewat is situated between 26 degree and 30 degree north latitudes and 76 degree and 78 degree East longitudes covering a position on the Indo-Gangetic Plain and South West of Delhi in the Southern part of Haryana. The area has an uneven topography of plain and undulating patches of land dotted with hills hillocks of the Aravalli mountain range. Mewat is predominantly Muslim rural area of India, covering an area of 1874 sq. Kms. The population of nearly ten lakh people inhabits 491 villages and six blocks: Ferozpur Jhirka, Hathin, Nagina, Nuh, Punhana and Tauru.

1.7.6 Sample Coverage

On the basis of random sampling six villages were selected in each block. six Gram Panchayats were selected from each block on random sampling. Twelve female headed Gram Panchayats and twelve male headed Gram Panchayats and twelve ex-Sarpanches were selected. Thus the total selected villages are thirty six.

1.7.7 Quantitative Sample

The total numbers of respondents were seventy two. It includes twelve elected Muslim women Sarpanches, eighteen Muslim women Panches, twelve elected Muslim male Sarpanches, eighteen Muslim male Panches twelve ex-elected Muslim women representatives of GP. Two Block Development Officers were also interviewed. To get the information on elected Muslim women, fifty households were covered during the field survey. A total of twenty five local women were interviewed. The objective was to understand their motives behind contesting elections. It was planned to cover two elected Muslim women representatives and two elected Muslim male representatives from each block. It was planned to cover individual households from each Gram Panchayat. The objective of the households was to triangulate the information gathered from the Sarpanches and Panches male
and female representatives’ schedules. An attempt was made to obtain a list of elected male and female representatives indicating their ward name/number from the Block Development Officers.

1.7.8 Qualitative Sample

In qualitative sample, it was planned to conduct in-depth interview (IDI) with block level officials and as such two BDOs and six Panchayat Secretary were interviewed. The minutes of meeting was also examined at Gram Panchayat level. This period was within the working period of a selected Sarpanch.

1.7.9 Presentation of Study Findings

The profile of elected women representatives has been described in chapter 4, which present their broad profile, the age groups they belong to, chief occupations and sources of income, educational backgrounds, the caste and religion to which they belong and type and size of families they hail from. All these attributes provided the necessary background to understand the trends of awareness, participation and performance of elected Muslim women representatives.

The political career of elected Muslim women representatives throws light on various aspects like the age of women representatives entering active politics, the constrains they faced and the enabling environment which helped them in getting elected, also considered the issues they raised, their interface with officials and local people across social categories and so forth. Finally, the impact of elected Muslim women representatives’ participation in their own and their community’s development is evaluated.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study was done with a purpose to understand the extent to which Muslim rural women can be involved in attaining political empowerment in South Asia through reservation. But due to lack of communication with elected Muslim women representatives of Bangladesh and Pakistan, field survey of these countries was not to be done.

Moreover, the sample size is not very large; therefore, it cannot be representative of entire South Asia. Hence the conclusion can be best representing a glance in Muslim women's political empowerment. On the basis of these findings one can understand the role of women reservation in empowering Muslim women.