INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Panchayats are the backbone for the development of Indian villages. In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi had aptly said that the Indian Independence must begin at the bottom level and every village ought to be a republic with powers. His dream has been brought into reality with the introduction of the three-tier panchayati raj system to ensure people’s participation in rural reconstruction. The greater power of the panchayats is better for the people (Bhatt and Gopal, 2006). The aim of the panchayat raj system is to foster democratic participation, to involve villagers in the development activities and to ease the administrative burden in the states. In 1957, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee stated that Panchayat Raj would act as the representatives of the village and ensure the development of the village as well as participation of villagers in development activities. Decentralization of power led to the local bodies to take active participation in all socio-economic and political activities. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) provide the opportunity to the rural masses to involve themselves in the political process of the national front from grassroots level (Das, 2014). The committee was particular that women should find representation in the rural political institutions. This paved the way for political empowerment of rural women.

On April 24th 1993, 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments were implemented with the intention to develop both rural and urban India. This is a landmark in the history of political empowerment of women. These amendments ensured 33 percent political reservation for women in local bodies in villages and cities. The political reservation for women has changed the face of male-dominated mainstream politics in India (Ghodke, 2011). Besides, it removed the widespread wrong notion that women are incapable to shoulder political responsibilities and it enabled the environment in which women gained not only social status and self-confidence but also successfully fought against the centuries old oppression and exploitation (Pillai, 2005). The more the participation of women in politics means the more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics (Jyothi et.al, 2012). Deeply entrenched interests are opposing
local democracy and women’s rights. They are directly and indirectly working to undermine the reservation for women in political institutions.

Removing this cultural impediment requires a social transformation and a lasting battle. These women struggled against enormous odds to improve the lives of their families, villages and nation. They are the key changing agents for future India.

Elected women representatives, both as members and as Sarpanchs, continue to face several institutional and social barriers. At the institutional level, the capacity of members to implement reforms, institutionalise accountability systems, decentralise functions and active engagement of them play a role in determining whether women are able to emerge as political agents and actors (Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Social barriers include lack of education, lack of respect for women in PRIs, physical violence against women in the public and domestic spheres, oppressive patriarchal and caste structures (Jayal, 2006).

Although inclusive provisions have been given to the marginalised communities, the active participation of dalits (people belonging to lower social strata in Indian society) and women are being questioned. The traditional dominant communities in our society oppose the opportunities and provisions given by the judicial system (Inbanathan, 2001).

Caste has played an instrumental role in raising the issues related to the more marginalization among women. In a highly hierarchical society, women belong to the lower castes have lesser access to public fore which is compounded by their gender (Jyothi et.al, 2012). Political participation of dalit women in governance is ridden with serious deep rooted problems that are inter-twined in caste and patriarchy (United Nation, 2013). The nature of the crime against dalit women is always different. A study on the ‘Political participation of Dalit Women in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat’ conducted by Navsarjan Trust and Evidence - an NGO highlights the incidents of challenges faced by elected dalit women representatives. The challenges faced by the elected dalit women are clear indications of the backlash of violence. In spite of being constitutionally elected, dalit women panchayat representatives are abused, threatened and murdered. It is always associated with verbal and physical abuses and these abuses are laced with casteist tones. The issue in political
participation of dalit women emanates from a web of related issues of socio-cultural practices and ineffective implementation of protective measures. The solution will also come from an all inclusive approach with focus on specificities of implementation (Mangubhai & Irudayam, 2008).

1.2 Political Status of Women- A Global phenomenon

United Nation’s four important conferences are the milestone in the political empowerment of women throughout the world. The first world conference on the status of women was convened in Mexico City by United Nations General Assembly to correspond with the 1975 International Women's Year. It observed that discrimination against women which continued to be a persistent problem in international community.

The conference was organized to focus international attention on the need, to develop future oriented goals, effective strategies and plans of action for the advancement of women. The three key objectives that become the basis for the United Nations to work on women are: full gender equality and elimination of gender discrimination, integration and full participation of women in development and increased contribution by women in strengthening world peace. The World Plan of Action, a document that offered guidelines for governments and international community to follow for the next ten years in pursuit of the three key objectives set by the General Assembly.

The Plan of Action set minimum targets to be met by 1980, that focused on securing equal access for women to resources such as education, employment opportunities, political participation, health services, housing, nutrition and family planning. International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women to provide the institutional framework for research, training and operational activities in the area of women and development are established as a result of the conference.

Copenhagen Conference

In 1980 second world conference on women was organised in Copenhagen by United Nations. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women was adapted by General Assembly in December 1979 is a most powerful instrument for women's equality. The convention has been termed as ‘the bill of rights for women’, which legally binds 165 States. The conference identified variety of factors for the discrepancy between legal rights and women's ability to exercise their rights, including:

- Lack of sufficient involvement of men in improving women's role in society and insufficient political will.
- Lack of recognition of the value of women's contributions to society and lack of attention to the particular needs of women in planning.
- A shortage of women in decision-making positions and insufficient services to support the role of women in national life, such as co-operatives, day-care centres and credit facilities.
- Overall lack of necessary financial resources and lack of awareness among women about the opportunities available to them and national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, child custody and loss of nationality are addressed in order to achieve above issues.

**Third World Conference in Nairobi**

United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace were convened in Nairobi in 1985 and the conference was called as ‘birth of global feminism’ with 15,000 representatives of non-governmental organizations attending the Forum. The Nairobi conference has introduced a wider approach to the advancement of women and given the consent to overcome the obstacles for achieving the decade's goals such as equality, development and peace.

The conference developed and adopted a blueprint for the future of women and declared that women's participation in decision-making is recognised as the social and political necessity. The three basic categories of measures are identified as constitutional and legal steps, equality in social participation, equality in political participation and decision-making.
Fourth World Conference on Women

Fourth World conference on women held at Beijing in 1995 which unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, an agenda for women's empowerment and stands as a milestone for the advancement of women in the twenty-first century. The Platform for Action specified twelve critical areas of concern, decided to represent the main obstacles for women's advancements and it required concrete action by Governments and civil society.

They are women and poverty, education, trainings, health, violence, armed conflicts, economy, power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, media, environment and girl child. The Beijing conference is considered to be a great success, both in terms of its size and outcome. It was the largest gathering of government and NGO representatives ever held, with 17,000 in attendance, including representatives of 189 governments. As a result of the above conference, women are able to access the local governments throughout the world after many hurdles in political sphere.

As a result, more number of women being elected to local government councils, which changed the status of women and they had shown great deal of involvement in various countries. Women in local government accelerated the pace of change, promote collaborative styles of leadership and decision-making, broaden perspectives and moved communities forward (Drage, 1997). Women also have a strong focus on women’s issues and a human rights flavour in their goals for local government suggesting that changes in local politics will lead to changes in society, less discrimination against women and greater flexibility in work and childcare.

1.3 Millennium Development Goals

The United Nation’s assembly in 2000 along with 189 nation’s framed Millennium development Goals in order to free people from extreme poverty and multiple deprivations. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped in bringing out a much needed focus and pressure on basic development issues which in turn, led the governments at national and sub national levels to do better planning and implement more intensive policies and programmes.
This pledge became the eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. In September 2010, the world recommitted itself to accelerate progress towards these goals. They are eight millennium development goals that have to address myriad development issues (MDG, 2015).

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education
Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality
Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB
Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability
Goal 8: Develop Global Partnership for Development

**Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

According to Millennium development goals in India, Gender equality and empowerment of women will be achieved only when women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. This means sharing equally, the power and influence, and having equal opportunities in economic and social spheres. Gender equality demands the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. When women are empowered, the whole family benefits, thus benefiting the society as a whole and these benefits often have a ripple effect on future generations (MDG in India, 2015).

**Proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament**

Proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament is the one of the significant indicator of gender equality in India. The country has witnessed 16 General elections to the Lok Sabha of Nation’s Parliament so far. As in January 2015, India, the world's largest democracy, has only 65 women representatives out of 542 members in Lok Sabha while there are 31 female representatives in the Rajya Sabha.
out of 242 members i.e., at present 12.24% seats of Indian Parliament is held by women (MDG in India, 2015).

Table 1.1: Proportion of seats held by Women in National Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference year</th>
<th>Number of Women members</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lok Sabha</td>
<td>Rajya Sabha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>45 of 554</td>
<td>28 of 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>47 of 554</td>
<td>25 of 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>59 of 545</td>
<td>21 of 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>60 of 544</td>
<td>26 of 241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>62 of 543</td>
<td>28 of 242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>65 of 542</td>
<td>31 of 242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, 2011

1.4 Panchayati Raj Institutions

The word panchayat is derived from the word pancha, panchasvanusthitah, has references in the existence of Grama Sanghas or rural communities. Historically, the institution of panchayat has been an integral part of rural Indian polity and society. Since ancient times, the panchayats have played a key role in organising and maintaining social order in Indian villages. These informal institutions are responsible for regulating and governing village society according to the socio-political norms of the times. Indian villages, remote and disconnected from the centres of state power, primarily decided their agenda of development and management of the society and its resources through the institution of panchayats.

In 1952 as soon as India got independence in 1952 the first five year plan was initiated as Community Development Programme. It was conceived as a programme ‘of the people by the people and for the people’ with a reasonable amount of technical and financial assistance from the central government. But unfortunately the Community Development Programme failed to encourage people’s participation in its working. The 1957 Balwantrai Mehta Committee was constituted to assess the economy and efficiency of the Community Development Project and to study the
efficacy of the programme in utilising local initiative and creating local institutions to facilitate the process of socio-economic development.

According to the committee it was imperative to give power and responsibility to the community for the successful continuation of the process of development. Consequently, statutory elective local bodies with adequate resources, power and authority were recommended. On the basis of these recommendations the PRIs were established for people’s participation and the effective implementation of Community Development Projects. The institutions of local-self government held out a promise of effective cure against the twin ailment of stagnation in the Community Development Programme and the dangers to democracy. It was increasingly felt that, if these local government institutions were properly developed and strengthened, they could not only provide a firm base to our democracy but would also accelerate the process of development (Bhatnagar, 1978).

The term ‘panchayati raj’ originated during the British administration. 'Raj' literally means governance or government. Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are basic units of administration. From October 2nd 1959 when the first panchayati raj was launched, to April 24th Rajasthan was the first State to pass legislation authorising the constitution of a new style of panchayat, another was soon set up at Shadnagar in Andhra Pradesh, and by 1959 every state had passed a panchayati raj act and some sort of panchayat was thereafter established in every village (Gowada, 1996).

Gandhiji’s dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier panchayati raj system to ensure people’s participation in rural reconstruction. The inclusion of the panchayats in the constitution gave a new impetus to the growth of these institutions. Most of the states enacted panchayat acts with a view to democratize the structure of village panchayat and also to vest more powers of rural development in it. The government of Punjab, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh set up separate directorates for them. There was a rapid expansion in this sphere. Special departments are also established to organize the panchayats and to look after their workings.
### Table 1.2: Important Committees that Strengthens the Panchayati Raj Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Balwant Rai Mehta</td>
<td>Suggested measures for economy and efficiency in implementation of community development programmes and National Extension Scheme programmes.</td>
<td>Recommended democratic decentralization. The Committee proposed a three-tier structure of local self-government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Ashok Mehta</td>
<td>Suggested measures for revitalising the Panchayat Raj institutions</td>
<td>Abolition of the block as an administrative unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>G. V. K. Rao</td>
<td>Reviewing the administrative arrangements for rural development programmes and poverty alleviation schemes</td>
<td>Need for regular elections to the Panchayats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Singhavi</td>
<td>Reviewing the functions of Panchayati Raj</td>
<td>Greater financial resources should be made available to these Gram Panchayats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj (commuted)

### Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Ministry of Panchayati Raj was created as separate ministry on 27th May, 2004 with the vision to attain decentralized and participatory local self government through PRIs. Empowerment, enablement & accountability of PRIs to ensure inclusive development with social justice, and efficient delivery of services are the main objectives of the ministry. The mandate of the ministry of panchayati raj is to oversee the implementation of Part IX of the Indian constitution, the provisions regarding district planning committee as per article 243ZD, and the Panchayat Extension to Schedule Act.1996.
Ministry of panchayati raj fulfills its mandate by:

- Providing funds through Government schemes for key activities.
- Creating and supporting the creation of knowledge about panchayti raj to articulate issues more closely and to formulate effective strategies to strengthen panchayati raj.
- Creating a platform for advocacy and having strategies to strengthen panchayats.

Table 1.3: Panchayat Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panchayats</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gram Panchayats</td>
<td>2.39 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block Panchayats</td>
<td>6904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Panchayats</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.51 lakhs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi 2012

Figure 1.1: Three Tier Systems of PRI

The three tier system of PRIs is structured like a pyramid

Source: Ministry of Rural Development
Zilla Parishad - District Level

The Zila Parishad consists of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and the general members. Besides, the Chairman of Panchayat Samities at the block level and all the members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly from the district are the Ex-Officio members of Zila Parishad.

Functions:

a) Preparation of development plan for the district. Compilation of administration reports of village panchayats and panchayat union councils of the district and preparation of annual report for the district.
b) Planning and review of agriculture, land development, animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, fisheries and rural industries etc.
c) Planning and review of rural housing programmes particularly housing for SC/STs. Identification of major water supply schemes.

Panchayat Samiti - Block Level

Each Panchayat Samiti consists of elected members, a Block Development Officer, and other officials ordinarily stationed at the block. Chairman is the head of the body and is elected directly by the panchayat samiti members. The block development officer of the respective block is the executive officer of the Samiti. The main functions of the panchayat samiti are planning, execution, and supervision of all developmental programs in the block. The panchayat samiti also supervises the works of gram panchayats within its jurisdiction.

Functions

a) Construction, repair and maintenance of all panchayat union roads.
b) Construction of water works for the supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing purposes
c) Construction and maintenance of elementary and middle schools.
d) Control of fairs and festivals under the control of the panchayat union.
e) Opening and maintenance of panchayat union public markets.
f) Implementing various centrally sponsored and state schemes.
g) Preventive and remedial measures connected with any epidemic or with malaria.

Gram Panchayats – Village Level

The Gram Panchayat is the primary unit of PRIs. Its main function is to implement different developmental work within its jurisdiction. Accordingly, the Government of India issued an order for promotion of health and family welfare services as an obligatory part of their duties. Panchayat members are responsible for carrying out the following important functions:

a) Construction, repair and maintenance of all village roads and extension of village sites and the regulation of buildings.

b) Lighting of public roads and public places in built-up areas.

c) Construction of drains, cleaning of streets, improvement of the sanitary condition of the village and construction and maintenance of public latrines.

d) Sinking and repairing of wells, the excavation, repair and maintenance of ponds or tanks and its construction and maintenance of waterworks for the supply of water.

e) Maintenance of burial, burning grounds, parks and reading rooms

f) Implementation of schemes such as Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and other duties as the Government may, by notification, impose.

1.5 73rd Amendment Act in India

PRIs play a crucial role in ensuring inclusion of the weaker sections in the decision-making processes. The PRIs provide village women, the opportunities for leadership and to take part directly in the decision making in the process of development. It will also help in managing the violence against women. On April 24th 1993, 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution came into force and it ensured the reservation of one third of the total seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies in both the rural and urban areas. Out of this, 17 percent seats are reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes.
This amendment is significant as for the first time it brought women into elected bodies which also bestowed on them decision making powers. One third of the seats in local bodies, gram panchayats, village panchayats, municipalities, city corporations and district boards are reserved for women. The 1993-94 elections which soon after the 73rd amendment brought in 8,00,000 women into the political processes in a single election. That was a big step indeed in enfranchising women.

Table 1.4: Number of Elected Panchayat Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Panchayats</th>
<th>Total No. of Elected Representatives (in Lakhs)</th>
<th>% of Elected Women</th>
<th>% of Elected SC’s</th>
<th>% of Elected STs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gram Panchayat</td>
<td>27.32</td>
<td>43.81</td>
<td>22.99</td>
<td>10.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Block Panchayat</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>40.03</td>
<td>19.39</td>
<td>7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Zilla Panchayat</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>43.19</td>
<td>16.57</td>
<td>10.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Indian Institute of Public Administration, 2012

1.6 Women Panchayat Leaders

After the 73rd constitutional amendment act was implemented, almost one million women participated in the first election to panchayats. About 40% of women elected and got the opportunity to represent the marginalized section of the society (Tiwari, 2012). Since the PRIs have potential to start the process of women empowerment from the village level, it can change the social scenario of the village (Nandal, 2013).

The rural women leaders who have emerged through the panchayats can alter their own lives and society. They have shown a great degree of dedication and honesty in their activities and performed a number of welfare programmes benefiting community (Palanithurai, 2015). Their status, as elected representatives, has changed the social attitudes towards women and their aspiration.
The participation of women in panchayats tends to have dynamic things on the socio-political arena, positive effects on the general functioning and responsiveness of panchayats to people’s needs (Reddy, 2003). Through the implementation of reservation policy in panchayats, women have got an opportunity to raise their presence and voice their opinion in PRIs. Studies have highlighted that elected women representatives articulate and emphasise priorities that are different from men, although these priorities largely remain within the framework of development (Basu, 2006). Such priorities, at best, serve women’s practical gender needs and not their strategic gender interests.

1.7 Participation of the Dalit Women in Panchayats

The dalit women consist of one-fourth of the total women population in India. They constitute the major workforce doing hard manual labour and engage in agricultural operations. Dalit women are thrice alienated on the basis of class, caste and gender. They are not only the victims of gender discrimination but also victim of casteism. Moreover, the lives of dalit women are spiralling downward from bad to worse (Nepal Human Rights News, 2012). The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination in 2013 states that the quota system in India makes dalit women to participate in the local panchayat, but the role of dalit women is consistently subordinated to their male counterparts and they are excluded from decision making. They are not in a position to exercise their power. Wherever dalit women have contested, they face tough opposition and even been brutally attacked. The 73rd amendment makes reservation mandatory for dalit women in the local governing bodies (Unheard voices, 2007). They are elected but unable to exercise their power and when these women have endeavoured to exercise their role, it has met with resistance even to the extent of physical violence.
Table 1.5: State-wise Elected SC, ST and Women Representatives in Panchayats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>46,755</td>
<td>21,078</td>
<td>85,154</td>
<td>2,54,487</td>
<td>33.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>9,356</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>9,356</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>9,903</td>
<td>26,844</td>
<td>36.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>22,201</td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>68,065</td>
<td>1,36,130</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>19,753</td>
<td>63,864</td>
<td>86,538</td>
<td>1,58,776</td>
<td>54.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1,559</td>
<td>32.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>8,340</td>
<td>23,719</td>
<td>39,206</td>
<td>1,18,751</td>
<td>33.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>14,684</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>24,876</td>
<td>68,152</td>
<td>36.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>7,467</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>13,947</td>
<td>27,832</td>
<td>50.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>5,870</td>
<td>18,136</td>
<td>31,157</td>
<td>53,207</td>
<td>58.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>17,723</td>
<td>10,275</td>
<td>41,577</td>
<td>95,307</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9,907</td>
<td>19,107</td>
<td>51.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>59,537</td>
<td>1,07,167</td>
<td>1,98,459</td>
<td>3,93,209</td>
<td>50.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>22,175</td>
<td>30,211</td>
<td>1,01,466</td>
<td>2,03,203</td>
<td>49.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>48.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>16,390</td>
<td>22,240</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1,00,863</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>26,937</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>29,389</td>
<td>84,138</td>
<td>34.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>18,807</td>
<td>13,777</td>
<td>54,673</td>
<td>1,09,345</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1,099</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>28,655</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td>41,790</td>
<td>1,19,399</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>1,508</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>5,676</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1,85,159</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3,09,511</td>
<td>7,73,980</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>12,230</td>
<td>2,067</td>
<td>34,494</td>
<td>61,452</td>
<td>56.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>17,605</td>
<td>4,168</td>
<td>19,762</td>
<td>51,423</td>
<td>38.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>5,68,181</td>
<td>3,42,157</td>
<td>13,64,154</td>
<td>29,21,381</td>
<td>46.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.8 **Historical perceptive of Panchayati Raj in Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu has a long history of local self-governance as it is evident from the Uthiramerur stone inscriptions in Kancheepuram district. Tamil Nadu, in those days, was a land of village republics, with community groups undertaking many activities for their area development. This tradition reached its peak during the 10th and 11th centuries under the reign of Cholas when village councils used to levy taxes, improve community life and administer justice in their limited area. These village councils had effective links with the Chola rulers. “Kuda Olai Murai” was the name of the secret ballot method exercised to elect members to the village councils.

With the downfall of Cholas, the state experienced a decline of the village autonomy and rise of the centralized feudal administrative system. This continued till British rulers introduced local self-governance primarily as an administrative convenience for the imperial Government. In the post independence era, the first enactment in democratic decentralization in the state was the Madras Village Panchayats Act, 1950. Pursuant to the White Paper on the Reform of Local Administration in 1957, the Madras Panchayats Act, 1958 and Madras District Development Council Act were enacted with the following salient features: A two-tier system of village panchayats and panchayat unions.

- **a)** Creation of Panchayat Unions co-terminus with the Community Development Blocks
- **b)** Village Panchayat Presidents to become ex-officio members of the Panchayat Union Councils with the Chairperson of the Panchayat Union Council directly/indirectly elected.
- **c)** Entrusting the Panchayat Unions and Village Panchayats with a large number of developmental and welfare functions. Abolition of District Boards.
- **d)** Creation of District Development Council as an advisory body.

This two-tier system operated very well till 1975 and elections were held regularly. Subsequently, the tenures of the panchayat unions and village panchayats were extended from 1977 to 1979 respectively. Thereafter, Special Officers (Block Development Officer for all the Village Panchayats in a Block and Divisional
Development Officer for all the Panchayat Unions in a Division) managed the rural local bodies till the next elections in 1986.

The elected rural local bodies continued in office till March 1991. The Government of Tamil Nadu have, for a long while had the view that there should have been a single consolidated amendment to the constitution covering both rural and urban local bodies instead of two amendments – one covering rural local bodies and the other urban local bodies.

This ‘compartmentalization’ of two has resulted in a scenario whereby the District Panchayat – instead of being a nodal body responsible for coordinating and monitoring all the rural and urban local bodies in the district – finds that its jurisdiction is confined only to the rural areas. A system whereby all the chairpersons of panchayat unions, municipalities and town panchayats are ex-officio members of the district panchayats, with the chairman of the district panchayat being either directly or indirectly elected would have been more meaningful and credible. This weakness has been sought to be overcame through the District Planning Committee which has members drawn from both rural and urban local bodies, but its composition is flawed because there is no representation for panchayat union and village panchayat members on it. The state government would pressurise for such amendment to the constitution. The 73rd & 74th Amendments to the Indian constitution, mandating local governments in all the states of the Indian Union, have been hailed as revolutionary efforts towards decentralized and participative democracy.

1.9 New Panchayat Raj System in Tamil Nadu

Following the central amendments, which came into force in 1993, the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act was passed in 1994. The 1994 act replaced the earlier Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1958 and brought about major changes in the functioning of the local bodies. They are three-tier system of local government at the village panchayat, panchayat union and district panchayat levels and new system of quota for representatives of dalits, tribals and women.
The act paved the way for

1) The panchayats and unions to plan for their developmental needs.
2) The constitution of a District Planning Committee, to prepare a development plan for the district, based on the plans given by the panchayats and panchayat unions.
3) The constitution of a State Election Commission, as an independent body, for conducting elections to local bodies.
4) The constitution of a State Finance Commission to lay down policies for devolution of financial powers and allocations to local bodies.
5) The revival of Gram Sabhas

In the light of the experience gained and the short-comings that has been observed, the 73rd amendment of the constitution was enacted in 1992, to enshrine in the constitution certain basic and essential features of PRIs to impart certainty, continuity and strength to them. A number of fundamental changes were brought about in the panchayat raj system by virtue of this act. Some of the important changes brought about by the 73rd Amendment to the constitution and the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994 are listed below:

a) Introduction of a three tier system and to conduct local body elections every five years and conduct elections before the expiry of the duration of the local body or before the expiry of a period of 6 months from the date of its dissolution.
b) Introduction of reservation of seats and offices for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in every local body with provision for rotation of the reserved seats and offices.
c) Introduction of reservation of one third of total number of seats and offices for women with provision for rotation.
d) Constitution of a State Election Commission as an independent body to conduct elections to both rural and urban local bodies regularly.
e) Establishment of a quinquennial State Finance Commission to recommend devolution of resources from the State Government to the rural local bodies.
f) Constitution of a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the rural and urban local bodies in the district with a view to prepare a comprehensive development plan for the district.

g) Introduction of the concept of ‘Gram Sabha’ comprising all registered voters in a Village Panchayat Local Body Elections

Though the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act was enacted in April 1994, only after the change of Government in May 1996, the first ordinary elections were held to rural and urban Local Bodies in October 1996.

The second ordinary elections to the local bodies were conducted during October 2001. The third ordinary elections to the local bodies were conducted in October 2006. In the 1996 elections, following the 1994 Panchayat Act, about 1,17,000 representatives were elected for the three different tiers of local Government across Tamil Nadu. The 74th Amendment to the Indian constitution paved the way for setting up urban local bodies in the various states of India.

In Tamil Nadu, the urban local bodies were excluded from the purview of the Act and were brought under the Nagarpalika Act. Even though the 73rd & 74th constitutional amendments visualize the local bodies as “Institutions of self-governance”, the framing of the act provides so many loopholes to block such independent functioning on the part of the local bodies. Much of the hope generated by the constitutional amendments has already evaporated. There have been frequent and well-documented criticisms about the very way the 1994 Tamil Nadu Act has been visualized. The very casual manner in which the act was rushed through the State Assembly and passed within a day, with absolutely no discussions, has raised serious doubts about the seriousness of the State Government. Later events seem to confirm such fears indeed.

Reservation of Seats and Offices and Rotation

Article 243 D of the Constitution relates to reservation and rotation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women in rural Local Bodies. The relevant provisions of Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994 are Sections 11, 20, 32 & 57. These are supplemented by the Tamil Nadu Panchayats (Reservation of Seats and Rotation of Reserved Seats) Rules, 1995. The Rules provide for the reservation of seats by
adapting a list of wards or panchayats arranged in the descending order of the percentage of SCs, STs and women and applying a ‘cut off’ at the point where the number of reserved seats and offices is equal to the prescribed ratio. The periodicity of rotation is also fixed under the rules. The Government amended Rule 7 of the Tamil Nadu Panchayats (Reservation of Seats and Rotation of Reserved Seats) Rules, 1995 in 2006 by virtue of which the posts of presidents of village panchayats and chairpersons of panchayat unions and district panchayats reserved for SCs, STs and Women were rotated - after 10 years - for the October 2006 elections. While the posts of ward members of all the 3 tiers reserved for women were rotated - after 10 years – those reserved for SCs and STs were not rotated.

**Administrative powers**

The Village Panchayat President themselves have been designated as the Executive Authority. Cheques for payment have to be signed jointly by the president and vice-president. Where the relationship between the two is not cordial, the Collector, in his capacity as inspector of panchayats, can designate any other member of the village panchayat as joint cheque signing authority along with the president.

The Government have brought out Tamil Nadu panchayats (Preparation of Plan and Estimates for works and Mode and Conditions of works) Rules, 2007 wherein the village panchayats have been empowered to give administrative sanction and execute individual works up to Rs.2 lakhs from their general funds. Previously the village panchayats were empowered to give administrative sanction for works up to Rs.1 lakh only.

For all works costing more than Rs.2 lakhs but not more than Rs.50 lakhs, the District Collector is the competent authority to give the administrative sanction and for works costing more than Rs.50 lakhs, the Director of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj will be competent to accord administrative sanction. However, the Collector’s prior administrative sanction is necessary in respect of all Centrally sponsored and State funded schemes. Village Panchayats have also been given freedom to execute urgent works up to Rs. 2,000 at a time and up to Rs. 5,000 for a year without any technical approval. The President can draw self cheque up to Rs. 500 to meet contingent expenditures.
The Village Panchayats have been given necessary delegation of powers to enable them to attend to repairs and maintenance of hand pumps, power pumps and street lights promptly. They can spend Rs.600 per hand pump per year and up to Rs.7,500 per power pump per year without reference to engineers for preparation of estimates or passing of bills. They can buy street light materials meeting the prescribed quality norms on their own.

Table 1.6: Evaluations of the Panchayati Raj Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of the Committee</th>
<th>Purpose of Committee</th>
<th>Recommendations of the Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>L.C. Jain</td>
<td>On the entrustment of powers and functions to the three tiers of Panchayats</td>
<td>Recommended 12 notations and 29 items for demarcating roles and functions of Local Bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Ko. Si. Mani</td>
<td>To recommend more devolution of powers and functions to the panchayats</td>
<td>1209 recommendations are made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>M.K. Stalin</td>
<td>To study the duties, functions and powers of rural and urban Local Bodies</td>
<td>99 recommendations categorized under 39 subjects are made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994

State Finance Commissions

As per the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Tamil Nadu was one of the first States to establish the State Finance Commission. So far, three State Finance Commissions have been constituted for devolution of funds to the Local Bodies. The first State Finance Commission was constituted for the period from 1997 to 2002. The second State Finance Commission was constituted for the period from 2002 to 2007. The third State Finance Commission was commissioned for the period from 2007 to 2012. The Government have constituted Fourth State Finance Commission in 2009 to review the financial position of the rural and urban local bodies such as village panchayats, panchayat union councils, district panchayats, town panchayats, municipalities and municipal corporations.
Village Panchayats

There are 12,524 Village Panchayats in the state spread across the 32 districts and the 414 blocks. Among the three tiers, village panchayats assume a pre-eminent role in view of the wide variety of civic duties and other functions entrusted to them under Sections 110 and 111 of the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994.

This Government have always taken efforts to empower the village panchayats further in order to enable them to perform their functions in an effective manner. Various efforts have been taken by this Government to improve the finances of the village panchayats. Since the village panchayats in Tamil Nadu vary widely in population from below 500 to above 25,000 and as the devolution of State Finance Commission grant is mostly linked to population, the smaller village panchayats got less grant and the bigger village panchayats got more.

While the needs of the bigger village panchayats are also greater, it is a fact that there are certain fixed costs associated with the running of a village panchayat irrespective of the size and the SFC grant to a village panchayat should be sufficient to cover at least the fixed costs, if not the variable costs. There were cases where some village panchayats found it difficult to pay their electricity bills on time; a few couldn’t pay the salaries and wages of their employees on time.

The SFC recommended the earmarking of certain percentage of the grant as ‘Equalisation Fund’ to assist such weaker Village Panchayats. The Government have allocated floor amount of Rs.3 lakh which has been earmarked for each village panchayat irrespective of the population and only after the allotment of this amount, the remaining amount is distributed among the village panchayats in proportion to population. By virtue of this decision of the Government, the huge disparities in the income of the village panchayats has been reduced and at the same time weaker village panchayats have been empowered further towards self-sustainable growth.

The Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department is responsible for the implementation of various Centrally-sponsored, State-funded, and Externally-aided schemes for poverty alleviation, employment generation, sanitation, capacity building, women’s social and economic empowerment, Tsunami rehabilitation, apart from provision of basic amenities and services.
The department is also entrusted with the responsibility of enabling the various PRIs to function as effective units of local self-government. There are 12,524 village panchayats, 385 panchayat unions (co-terminus with Blocks) and 31 district panchayats under the purview of the department.

**Grama Sabha**

The Grama Sabha is the grass root level democratic institution in each village panchayat. A vibrant grama sabha is essential for the effective functioning of village panchayats by promoting transparency and accountability in administration, enhancing public participation in the planning and implementation of schemes and in the choice of beneficiaries, and paving the way for social audit. The Government have ordered the conduct of grama sabha meetings a minimum of four times a year, i.e., on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August and 2nd October. In order to streamline the procedure for the conduct of grama sabha, Government brought out suitable amendments to the Tamil Nadu Grama Sabha Rules, 1998 and specified that the grama sabha shall meet in each of the village panchayat wards by rotation. Since a quorum of 10% of the voters were unattainable and unwieldy for the bigger village panchayats, a reduced quorum based on the population of village panchayats have been prescribed as below:

**Table 1.7: Revised Quorum for Gram Sabhas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Population of a Village Panchayat</th>
<th>Quorum for Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Up to 500</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>501-3,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3,001 -10,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: tamilnadu.gov.in

It has also been specified that out of the quorum, at least 1/3rd shall be women and the number of SC/ST participants shall bear the same proportion to the quorum as the population of SCs/STs bears to the total population of the village panchayat.

Recording of grama sabha attendance and proceedings through proper registers and keeping photographic record have been made mandatory for the conduct of grama sabhas. It has been decided to make the grama sabha a forum for the conduct of social audit of all schemes for the welfare of the people.
1.10 Elected Women Representatives in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu was once the most orthodox state where Hindu culture was largely followed by women. It made women to play the role of ‘help mate, wife, mother etc’. It did not help them or inspire them to enter into politics. After Independence, there has been a change in the political participation of women in Tamil Nadu. After the regional parties came to power in Tamil Nadu, it increased the women’s political participation (Rajalakshmi, 1985).

Women’s education has infused confidence among women and enabled a large number of women to enter into social services like working for prison reforms, fighting against alcoholism, female infanticide and reforms in marriage and divorce laws. Moreover and more educational and employment opportunities were thrown open to women. Exposure to reformist movements, economic independence, Indian National Movements and influence of western feminist movements all have helped women to go a long way in bringing about drastic changes in their position and attitudes. These were the important factors which facilitated the political participation of women in Tamil Nadu. The women leaders of Tamil Nadu also did their work effectively and successfully (Prasanna, 2000). Most of the women’s organizations are now becoming more and more concerned with socio-economic programs rather than to solve the political problems confronting women.

As in the past, irrespective of the political parties in power in the State, women’s organizations must continue to take interest in political activities so that the political status of women may improve. One third reservation of seats for women in local bodies through the constitutional amendments has opened a channel in the power structure for women from different strata of the society to occupy a legitimate space (Palanithurai, 2001).

These provisions of reservation of seats in the local bodies make the women as well as the society to move out from the traditional perception track. But in reality, despite several weaknesses, the elected women leaders are in a position to discharge the earmarked responsibilities with varying degree of success. There are some issues in the implementation of the act. The reservation of seats for women has been looked at from many perspectives. The women leaders who are in the local bodies should
have a clear perception about the objectives of the reservations. There are other notions on the same issue perceived by the people and the functionaries who are working with the women leaders at the grassroot level. One could see the incongruity and ambiguity in perceiving the role properly (Palanithurai, 2003).

1.11 Barriers for Participation

Political representation is an important step in democratising and engendering local governance. However, it has not been adequate to ensure women’s leadership and their effective participation in local governance, (Sharma and Sudarshan, 2010) as elected women representatives, both members and Sarpanches, continue to face several institutional and social barriers. At the institutional level, the capacity of local governance structures to implement reforms, institutionalise accountability systems, decentralise functions and facilitate women’s active engagement plays a role in determining whether women are able to emerge as political agents and actors (Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Several impediments women leaders have to face in order to execute their rights in panchayats.

Dual Role

The moment women representatives filed their nominations in panchayat elections, their workload doubled. At every stage, the elected women representatives have to tackle problems of the family and panchayat. The family burden, coupled with the workload in the panchayats created a stressful situation for these women. Their efficiency could neither be exhibited nor improved as they had no time.

Illiteracy and Shyness

Illiteracy is a basic problem of the elected women representatives. They are not able to write and read but they are allowed to file their nominations. After they are elected to positions, they feel annoyed about their inability to read and write. They have the aspiration for reading and writing and are prepared to undergo training. But, their work load and husbands prohibit them, which in turn affected their performance in grassroots. Apart from illiteracy, due to the fact that women are secluded traditionally from public spaces, they face difficulties in interacting with men in office and in public life, after being elected to PRIs. Especially those who do not have
previous experience of working with both men and women of the community was nervous during public meetings.

**Male Domination**

Generally men think that women are not elected on their own merit but because of their support. This sort of attitude leads to male domination and it is very difficult to change since the women too are in false consciousness that they have been elected to panchayat institutions only because of the influence of their husbands or by the other members of the family. As a result, male members of the women representatives take decisions and impose on them. In some cases, women are not able to address the problems of the village in time and they are not permitted to do so by their husbands or in-laws if they want to go to police station or hospital at night.

On such critical occasions, women representatives have to depend and listen to the male folkways. Initially the men in the family, in the guise of helping women representatives, accompanied them to officials and public places. Over a period of time, women learnt the art of administration through interaction and training.

**Raising Issues**

Elected women representatives are not having courage to put forth gender issues in public forum. The family members of elected women representatives prevent them from articulating women’s problems in public and there prevails a lack of the adequate skills to handle such issues in panchayats.

All elected women representatives do not have the required skills, ability, capacity as their socioeconomic and political conditions have not enabled them to acquire such skills and capabilities. Apart from that, they have certain difficulties and they come across certain barriers confronted by them in the community, offices, family and political parties that hinders the rising gender and other important issues.

**Attitude of Officials**

Most of the officials feel that elected women representatives are in positions simply because of the reservation policy and that they do not have any opinion or vision of their own and assume that women representatives are ready to accept
whatever the advice they give consequently. This type of mindset of the officials affects the women members in larger extent and it is difficult for them to convince officials in government offices and women representatives, with aspiration and expectations, feel frustrated. Apart from this, elected women representatives from backward class and caste suffer a lot.

Sometimes officials circulate information booklets and details only among men and not among women and elected men representatives are not willing to share their knowledge with women representatives.

**Political Party**

Normally women in the panchayat do not have any political identity and hence they look at issues on the basis of reality. On the contrary, party men want elected women representatives to look at issues from the party angle, failing which they face problems from party high command.

When a seat is reserved for a woman, a male in the party gets permission from the party to fill his wife or sister in that place. Hence the elected women representatives feel that their responsibilities and duties are adhered to dictum of partymen at local level of the party. Such women representatives who are elected through political party are compelled to work under party. Apart from that elected women representatives face other problem in administration, i.e., interference of MPs and MLAs.

They feel that everyone has his or her own domain of action. Roles are different for representatives of different institutions. MPs and MLAs feel that the panchayats are under their control and that local body leaders have to accept whatever they say regarding rural development. This has been raised in many forums (Palanithurai, 2000).

**Tokenisms**

The caste divisions in village are another kind of hindrance to elected women representatives. Caste has entrenched itself everywhere and become a barrier to the smooth functioning of the panchayats. Elected women representatives often find themselves in trouble because they look at issues beyond the perspective of caste. In
local politics muscle and money powers have an upper hand. Hence, all activities are planned in the context of managing the muscle and money.

In order to overcome this problem, women have to rely on the family/caste/party leader. At a later stage, whosoever comes to the rescue of the women representative comes to the panchayat for personal favours and obligations. When such obligations are denied, women representatives are criticised and castigated. It is the design of the Hindus to elect a poor dalit woman so that the women could be easily co-opted in their design, where economically sound dalit women do not succumb to them for exploitation since they have livelihood options.

The caste Hindus do not allow elected women dalit presidents to carry out programmes earmarked for dalits as they also need such programmes for which there are no sanctions from the government. Even the allotted work for dalits cannot be carried out in rural areas. Hence, dalit president tend to acquire a poor images among the people of their caste. They get the support of neither dalits nor non-Dalits. Another significant attempt made by (caste) Hindu leaders in their panchayats is non-cooperation. Whenever elected women dalit representatives agree to cooperate with caste Hindus, they are allowed to carry out certain works which are not favourable to the marginalised.

Caste Panchayats

The system of caste panchayat is prevalent in Tamil Nadu. This system is also called as ‘Khap panchayat’ in North India. Nearly 167 villages in five districts of the Tamil Nadu have caste panchayats. In the name of caste panchayats, higher caste people commit brutal atrocities against the lower caste people in the villages. The caste panchayat is a social institution that claims that to delivered social justice but at the same time thus indulge in social injustices. Higher caste people in the name of caste panchayat never allow the victim of caste panchayats to approach police station or court or any other organization to get social justice. Instead, they themselves declare judgement like judges. To overcome the problems posed by the community panchayats, the elected representatives expect the support of the State government. But the machinery of the state government does not extend any help to the formal panchayats. As a result they have to confront the traditional panchayats on their own.
1.13 Chapterisation

The whole process of the present research is organized and presented under five chapters.

**Chapter I Introduction**

This chapter deals with the background of the study, statement of the present research problem, significance of the study, political status of women, panchayat raj institution, 73rd Amendment Act, women panchayat leaders, participation of the dalit women in panchayats, historical perceptive of panchayat raj in Tamil Nadu, new panchayat raj system in Tamil Nadu, elected women representatives in Tamil Nadu and barriers for women participation.

**Chapter II Review of Literature**

This chapter deals with studies on political participation of women in local self governance. The reviewed studies are classified and presented under:

1) Nature of women’s participation in panchayati raj institution.
2) Role of facilitating factors enhancing women’s participation in panchayati raj institution
3) Factors affecting women’s participation in panchayati raj institution and theoretical framework.

**Chapter III Research Methodology**

In this chapter, objectives, hypotheses, research design, variables, field setting, universe and sample size of the study, profile of the Kancheepuram district, pilot study, field survey, tools of data collection and data analysis, limitations are presented.

**Chapter IV Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In this chapter, data collected on the socio-economic and political background of the elected women in the local self governance and their performance are analysed and presented in table formats.

**Chapter V Summary, Conclusion and Suggestions**

In this chapter, an attempt is made to summarize the entire research process of the present study. Major findings and recommendations are also presented in this chapter.