CHAPTER-6
CONCLUSIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Through the study, after reviewing many books, articles, periodicals, news articles, speeches and conventions on women leadership and empowerment., it can be concluded precisely that women have an important gap to fill throughout world and in India particularly as it can be seen from the ‘World Classification’ table in Chapter-2 where India is ranked 117 in terms of women representation below China 62\textsuperscript{nd} and US at 85\textsuperscript{th}. It is a pathetic situation for women in India composing of 50\% of the population, only 11\% of them are representing the Lower and Upper House of the Parliament. Since Indira Gandhi, India has not seen any women Prime Minister which is not a good fact considering the fact that women leaders are good at administration, and overcoming challenges considering the case of Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Dilma Rouself, of Brazil and Angel Merkel of Germany

Women face several obstacles in participating in political. Structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women’s options to run for office. Capacity gaps mean women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders. Comprising over 50 percent of the world’s population, women continue to be under-represented as voters, political leaders and elected officials. Democracy
cannot truly deliver for all of its citizens if half of the population remains underrepresented in the political arena.

6.1 Women’s participation has increased due to 73rd CAA

Though the Pachayati Raj was introduced in 1959 which had tremendous impact on rural India, it had little effect on women empowerment considering the fact the community development programmes started just around the same time. The impact was minimal, the data from 1952 – 1996 reveals that women participation in politics was minimal and this could be attributed to various reasons.

The 73rd CAA has given new dimension to the process by giving one third reservation of women in PRIs apart from giving constitutional powers and responsibilities for range of issues including resource management, family planning, education and health. With the participation of women in PRIs, interpersonal relations with their families have changed for better and this political process has heightened women’s perception of their own capabilities.

6.2 Increase in women leadership since 73rd CAA

Leadership among rural women is a recent phenomenon. The real seeds of women leadership were sowed in the year 1993 by the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. This Amendment had facilitated to reserve certain seats at grass-root level to SCs, STs, BCs and Women. The reservation of few seats exclusively for women has paved the way for the emergence of women
leadership in rural areas. This sort of constitutional guarantee has assured women to step into politics and thus women leadership has picked up its roots at the grass-root level of democracy. Studies have shown that inhibits around women’s participation in public life are slowly diminishing and many of these women have begun to get autonomy with the gain of political experience. 73rd CAA has resulted in giving more power to women through reservations in PRIs and since then women are more actively participating in local and national politics. The experiences of Medak districts and case studies referred at Annexure-I reveal the fact that women are making a positive mark in the political arena and doing great development in their society which is evident from the data analysis in Table No. 5.17 where respondents reported that women leaders have taken various developmental works in their constituency or area.

6.3 Challenges faced by women leaders

Nevertheless there is lot of literature available analyzing the problems of women in various domains and politics especially, But devoid of other studies, primary data collected during this study from 46 mandals of Medak District reveal that women leadership is in crisis because they face several challenges, both internally and externally. Being a women leader and novice in this field which has been dominated by male for decades, women leaders in politics are not able to address huge public meetings, nor able to communicate effectively and strategically to present the problem in from of their superior so that the
problems or challenges pertaining to their area or especially women related issues are solved.

A form of violence focused on women in politics is character assassination. "If nothing wrong can be found professionally, female politicians are immediately found wanting in their character," says Dr. Rebecca Tavares, the UN Women's representative for India. Unlike their male counterparts, female politicians are much likelier to be slandered on who they are personally and it can be much more damaging to them than to men. As a Bengaluru politician pointed out, "character assassination of women is the easiest and most common form of violence".

While there are lot of challenges for women in politics, the above statement clearly reveals the sorry state of affairs for women in politics for which they need to be aware of their constitutional powers and rights. And as suggested by respondents (160), women should not fear and should be able to communicate effectively with officers and public at all the times constantly.

6.4 Importance of reservations

Reservations play a crucial role in breaking the stronghold of the traditionally dominant sections on the Panchayat Raj Institutions Leadership which is no longer confined to a particular class, caste or gender. The new system has given scope for the vulnerable sections of society to enter politics and it has been responsible for the emergence of a new leadership. In other
words with reservations to SCs, STs, BCs and Women under the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitution Amendment major changes have occurred since its implementation.

Reservations for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Women have been built into the system to ensure equitable participation of all sections of society. It is known from the review that India is the first country to recognize this social fact and to have taken concrete measures to draw women into leadership positions and thereby into politics by giving them one third reservations. It is evident from the political profile of Medak district that reservation system has increased the prominence of women in politics and it is also evident from the case studies since the 73\textsuperscript{rd} CAA, many male politicians have encouraged their wives to enter politics to fill the reservation gap. Nevertheless, the decision making, in some cases lie with the husbands, the situation of women in politics is changing for good since the amendment but not at the pace, all would actually want it to happen.

6.5 Significance of Women Leaders at the Grassroots Level

The equality guaranteed by the Constitution of India, demands active political participation by women which is integral to the whole issue of the progress of women. Women constitute 50 percent of the rural population. This gives them the legitimacy to play an important role at the grassroots level. Such participation is important primarily due to following reasons.

1. To initiate, formulate and implement policies and programmes which will benefit women. It has been observed that in most of the Panchayats the
decision-making has been in favour of men, and the needs of rural women
go unnoticed.

2. To bring in a feminine perspective to the process of planning, policy
formulation and execution of rural development programmes, it is
expected that more women would change the focus of rural
administration towards important facets of life like health, nutrition,
children’s welfare, family care, drinking water etc.

3. Election of more women to Village Panchayats would play a major role to
empower women. Empowering women refers to strengthening their
innate capacities through acquiring knowledge, power and experience.
Power here means not power to dominate but power to reduce
helplessness and dependency. Thus women’s access to power structures
would help them in overcoming inequality and subordination they have
been experiencing for ages.

4. The entry of more and more women into the realm of grassroots politics
suggest that their increased number will offer them equally increased
opportunity to influence the local decision-making. Once a group reaches
a certain ‘critical mass’ then its position, power and influence is likely to
increase. Thus increase in number will help women in becoming an
effective pressure group through the instrument of collective bargaining.

5. Women are the active agents of socio-economic transformation in rural
areas. They have the potential for effective networking and pooling of
resources. They can understand their problems, identify them, give priorities and preferences, and are aware of strategies towards their solution. Hence their active participation will not only enhance the status of women in the village, but will also help in development of the village.

6. The elected women can act as an intermediary between the government and the women in rural areas. Their accessibility to other women in the village, their contacts at the grassroots, and their awareness of the needs and interests of women will improve the condition of women in rural areas.

7. Larger participation will provide women an exposure to outside world. Their participation would improve their status in society as well as at home. It would also give them an opportunity to work in groups on projects of common interest and associate themselves with ongoing programmes.

8. It will provide a platform for women to gain experience, overcome their fear and build self confidence; break the shackles of patriarchy and orthodoxy. It will provide an access to women at state and national level politics.

6.6 Role of Women Representatives: People’s Perceptions

Awareness of perceptions on the implementation of any scheme or programme will always lead to a correct, modified, perfect or suitable style to
implement the strategy to be adopted. Hence a structured questionnaire was administered to 500 ruralites identified from 46 mandals (50 persons in each mandal) in the district to record their perceptions on the role of women leaders and their pattern of functioning in constituencies. An interview schedule was also employed with women elected representatives to record their personal views over the reservations of seats to women in rural local bodies.

Majority of the respondents expect that the women leaders should function without fear and concentrate on developmental work. They should not forget women who voluntarily voted for their success in elections. A peculiar quality of women leader is found that she is influenced by her own family members and they rule the constituency sitting behind the screen. Women leader will simply sign on the decision-making papers. If women are illiterate, entire paperwork will be done by so called relatives and she will sign on those papers without knowing much what is written on those papers. Public perceptions have gone to extreme by saying that they are threatened by male elected counterparts and upper caste people for their own personal interests.

Since the women leaders elected newly under reservations are not able to handle the charge on their own either her husband, son, brother or any close relative or friend guide her in discharging her routine duties. If she is influenced in this way, policy decisions would naturally be affected. Majority of the respondents opined that women leaders are not capable to solve their problems. They do not have either capacity to convince the bureaucracy or has self-
confidence to influence the authorities. Then what is the purpose of reservations made for women? However, it is admitted that certain developmental works like road formation, construction of culverts, water supply, grant of old age pensions, loans etc. were provided and executed by women leaders.

Only few women leaders are able to organize public meetings in their respective constituencies, whereas most of the leaders do not have such talent. Moreover, very few people are able to address the gatherings. These are the inabilities found in women elected representatives. Majority of the respondents welcomed the 33% reservations for women. According to them reservation of seats for women is necessary as they are representing 50% of the total population in the country. They can raise the important issues pertaining to women on the floor and see that justice is done to them. But, coming to the practicality, very few respondents agreed that some developmental activities were undertaken in their constituencies. Otherwise, in majority of cases no development works are done in the constituencies where women leaders are representing. It has happened due to their inability, inexperience, fear etc.

The perceptions of women elected representatives over their role has been quite different. They have expressed their happiness about the reservations made for women in grass-root politics. It is understood that women leaders are not functioning under the influence of anybody. Since they are new to the political field, they wanted to take some sort of help from the experienced persons among
their relations. Otherwise, they are functioning on their own and taking decisions after fully analyzing the situation.

It has been informed that women elected representatives are not treated by their male counterparts on par with them. Similarly, the upper caste people also are not treating them as equals. The drawback is due to the gender equation. However, women representatives expressed their overall satisfaction about their role and functioning. It is observed that women folk in the constitution are also happy with the functioning of women leaders.

6.7. Hypotheses Testing

6.7.1. Hypothesis I: The 73rd CAA has resulted in empowerment of women with increased political participation at the grassroots level

The findings from the data of women participation in India from 1952 to 1997 reveal that women participation in India has stayed stagnant at around 4% which has increased to 11% in 2011. The data though is not appreciable but an increase of 6% in a decade is good consideration in the participation in five decades. In case of Medak District, as explained above and is rightly evident in other areas as well, that even male politicians, since reservation, have transferred or encouraged women of their house to take over the political reigns. This is evident from the case studies of the elected representatives which have documented and presented in Annexure I where it is revealed that most of the women have carried out various developmental works and attribute most of their growth in politics to the 73rd CAA which has allowed them to play an important
role in Panchayat Raj politics. In case of Medak District, all the women reserved seats are filled and no such gaps exists devoid of any challenges and issues. Hence, in such scenario, hypothesis is found to be true and can be stated that the amendment in 73rd CA has given more scope to empowerment and encouraged political participation at grass root level with due encouragement from their relatives and family members.

6.7.2. Hypothesis 2: Increasing women participation in PRI has improved the functioning of the local bodies

Women participation in politics has been gradual and since the implementation of 73rd CAA, the rate of women participation has been not so appreciable except in certain societies. However, in areas, where women have been elected as their leaders, various studies reveal that women are honest in fulfilling their duties and carrying out their objectives. Various studies like UN and others reveal that women elected representatives play an important role and perform well at the grass root level by connecting with the local elite and addressing the developmental issues. The table no. 5.17 reveals the elected women leaders in Medak District are carrying out their primary responsibility of development with lean. There is discomfort among certain respondents who believe that women leaders are not able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. This can be revealed in Table 5.23 where respondents state that development under women leadership is not upto the mark and they are not satisfied. However the respondents believe that women leaders work under fear,
and innocence which is correct in so far as women have entered into politics and joining hands with other male counterparts who have dominated this sphere for decades. Thus it is understandable that respondents believe that development under women is not good and attribute it to various factors highlighted under Table No. 5.16. Thus basing on the data provided, it is found that devoid of various challenges and issues facing leadership in local bodies, women are constantly trying to perform better and address various issues of society at large and individual in particular. Experiences from the life of women leaders presented as case studies in Annexure I show how women leaders are changing the paradigm of society and local bodies by making several development initiatives for the betterment of society. *Thus, it can stated that increasing women participation in PRI has improved the functioning of local bodies and hence the statement is true.*

6.7.3. **Hypothesis 3: Despite reservations for women, male dominations to an extent has prevented women from entering politics**

This statement is proved false because 73rd CAA has empowered the women and given them the constitutional right to exercise their right to vote and contest elections. Moreover, the case studies of women leaders provide enough evidence those erstwhile male politicians who contested elections before 73rd CAA, have encouraged the wives or daughters to take centrestage and contest elections so that power remains within the family. Though there are instances where male is the decision making authority even when the women has been
elected constitutionally, most of the women in the Medak District have gained complete autonomy and garnered experience in carrying the administrative and development work. The data from Medak district reveals that all the reserved seats for women have been constitutionally occupied by women candidates which is big success attributed to 73rd CAA. Thus, the statement that male domination has prevented women from entering politics is false in the context of Medak District and is assumed that the situation is same elsewhere.

6.8 Concluding Observations and Findings

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act provided a new constitutional platform which ensures the representation of one-third women in the PRIs. This legislation accelerated the process of the participation of women in the policy making bodies. In many areas of social and political development women now a days are accorded more and more importance. It might be regarded as a traditional, benevolent point of view to state that women promote value codes and encourage in their own way a humane society, no matter whether this perspective can be taken at face value. It also has to be emphasized that women equally with men implement democracy as a way of life and generate economic resources. Hardly any country in the world has yet succeeded in fully implementing the equality of women and men. In India, women are the first and most to suffer from poverty and illiteracy from oppression and violence, from disasters and the infringement of human rights. Over and above, the same Indian women have proved on many occasions that they can be more accountable,
equally skilled and less corrupt than men. Confronted with all possible social and political problems, they have demonstrated their social competence and their own income generating capacity.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act marks a watershed in the field of advancement of Indian women as they ensure one-third of total seats in all elected bodies of PRIs. This provides an opportunity to about one million rural women to enter as leaders and decision-makers at the grass-root level and enter public life through the existing 0.25 million bodies-rural and urban. Of these 75,000 will be chairpersons at the village, block and district levels. The participation of often illiterate rural women in the process of grassroots democracy has attracted both positive and negative views. The allegations are that these institutions are being misused by the predominantly male political structure which keeps women away from meetings, take their signature at their residence well before the meetings and operate through dummy candidates. Nevertheless, even the worst critics have acknowledged that this has caused some activity among rural women who were so far dormant. The fear that women’s participation would not automatically lead to greater decision-making powers in the PRIs is not justified. This is manifested in the elections to the PRIs held in different states especially in the northern part of India.

To make the participation of women in the PRIs really meaningful, it would be desirable that the percentage of reservation has to be raised to the proportion of women population. Further, conferment of judicial and police
powers would go a long way in elevating the status and authority of the PRIs. Lack of education in the rural areas, social and family barriers and preoccupation with household duties prevent women from actively participating in the political process. However, it appears that defector women’s participation in grassroots democracy will make its mark on the democratic structure of the nation sooner rather than later. The most significant aspect of women’s participation in the decision-making process at the grassroots level is that it would throw up a trained younger leadership for the political mainstream, which has hitherto been restricted to men and a few elite women.

The experience of the working of the PRIs in various states during the last one decade shows that very few states have transferred all the powers given in the 11th schedule to the PRIs. Even the powers that have been transferred, in reality, continue to be exercised by the functionaries under the supervision of the state government. The recommendations of the State Finance Commissions have also not been fully implemented in most of the states. The PRIs have also been reluctant to raise the resources of their own by using the powers of taxation given to them. In this context it is generally argued that this has happened because of the loopholes in the provisions of the Constitution in which the word ‘may’ has been given instead of ‘shall’ in the Article 243G. This has left it to the discretion of the states to devolve or not the 29 functions given in the 11th schedule. This is why it is argued that the word ‘may’ should be replaced by ‘shall’ by amending the Constitution. It has also been argued that in addition to
the Union, state and concurrent lists, a list on the powers of the PRIs has to be inserted in the Constitution to ensure unambiguously the devolution of the functions on the PRIs. In this context, it should be obligatory for the state governments to accept the recommendations of the SFCs within 6 months of the submission of their reports. Further the state should earmark 50% of their budgetary allocation for the PRIs. Moreover the distribution of the resources among centre, states and the PRIS should be made on the recommendations of the Finance Commission appointed by the President instead of leaving it for the SFC to recommend the distribution of the resources between the states and the PRIs. Over and above, the PRIs can neither really be empowered through the amendments in the Constitution nor by the statues enacted by the state legislatures and notification issued by the state governments.

PRIs can be genuinely empowered only after the rural masses and the elected leaders in the PRIs themselves put strong pressure on the central and state governments for implementing the aforesaid subjects. For this, they will have to sink petty political differences and unite, organize and struggle for a common cause. To conclude, it is expected that the present United Progressive Alliance government initiatives some concrete steps towards enabling panchayat leaders in becoming proficient riders and performing their role effectively by getting adequate skill, knowledge and attitudes for local governance, planning and development on priority basis. It is hoped that carving out a separate ministry of Panchayati Raj from the Rural Development and the recently held
conferences of the Chief Ministers and State Ministers on RD and PR on the theme of poverty alleviation and rural prosperity through PR held in New Delhi may be a strategic and innovative step towards this direction.

6.9 Suggestions for further research

1. An important requirement for bringing about empowerment of rural women is to bring about an attitudinal change in both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household activities and bearing children needs to be replaced by a feeling of equal partnership of women and men. To inculcate this, they should be imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both.

2. Studies on women in politics have emphasized the contact with outside in the political process. There could be two ways of doing it. Firstly, interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected women leaders be encouraged. Secondly these women could be taken out to the urban areas and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives be arranged.

3. There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of Panchayats at all the levels. This is needed to promote and enhance their leadership qualities and self-confidence. It will help them to perform better in the Panchayats to ensure their participation in the meetings. Attendance of all women must be made compulsory from Gram Panchayat to Zilla Parishad.
4. Incentives play a vital role in ensuring the participation of elected representatives in decision making. It has been noticed that there are very active and enlightened women leaders at all the levels of Panchayat, who have been successfully implementing the developmental scheme and have ensured overall development of their constituencies. Such leaders need to be encouraged by publicizing their leadership qualities and honoring them in public meetings. It will certainly encourage other women representatives and their success stories and good practices will get publicised.

5. The unfinished agenda of Women Empowerment be finished by enacting an Amendment for providing reservation for women in the National Parliament and State Legislatures. The reservations at local level are not enough for the Women Empowerment.

6. Women leaders should not become proxies. Proxies suffer from some negative characteristics which affect the functioning of leaders and demotivate them.

7. Women Leaders should be in a position to organize public meetings and address the gatherings to convey the messages to the public and canvass the government policies and programmes.

8. It is the duty of concerned officials to cooperate with the elected representatives irrespective of their party affiliation, gender, caste. It is observed that such cooperation is lacking in the case of women leaders.
Hence the officials should be instructed to extend cooperation to women leaders.

9. It is observed that woman representation is not showing interest in the redressal of grievances of common public. She should come out from the shelves and discuss with the concerned official to sort out the problems of public. If necessary she can approach the top level political officials for getting things done.

10. While listening to the problems of public, women leader should give top priority to the problems pertaining to women. It is against the background of neglect of women, the reservations for women have come-up to help women folk.

11. Since women leaders are new to politics, there is an acute need to train them in the subject. As soon as they are elected, they must be trained in a reputed training centre about the characteristics and nature of politics, methods of bureaucracy, addressing the gatherings etc.

12. Further, they should be trained in identifying the problems, nature of problems, specific requirements of particular constituency and how to deal with the public whenever they approach with grievances.

13. It is a fact that after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, awareness, particularly political awareness has increased among women folk. The constitution has opened a channel to women to participate in elections and to become as deciding factor in Indian politics.
6.9.1 Limitations of the study

This study was intended to analyse the impact of 73rd CAA on women participation in Indian politics, both central and state. The study has been limited to socioeconomic profile and political linkage of women leaders in politics because additional data in regard to women’s reservation in politics which, its impact and analysis on other factors apart from family, gender and social discrimination like little known portfolio’s being assigned to women while male heading important portfolio’s like home, finance, defence, etc. have been avoided due to limited time constraints. The limited scope of the study was taken to address the research question, achieve the objectives of the study while testing the hypothesis lay out during the study.

6.9.2 Further studies

It is evident from the above limitations that researcher has avoided certain key aspects like discrimination in portfolio assignment. There is further scope in the area of women politics and leadership concerning their position aftermath 73rd CAA and how it can be implemented and executed to the effect those women leaders are given equal opportunity, important portfolios and how the increased reservation status can help the women to achieve that equality and eliminate discrimination. A diagnostic study is suggested on identifying and analysing the effect of increased reservation on women’s role in politics and leadership.