CHAPTER - 7
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In the present research an attempt has been made to study the empowerment of women through the participation in grassroots politics. Therefore an intensive empirical investigation of the socioeconomic background of the women representatives of PRIs and their participation in the Panchayat activities and their role performance to implement the developmental policies and schemes has been made. We have drawn the sample of a sufficiently representative nature with a logically tenable intensity of generalization. The study is largely sociological in nature and we have basically generated primary data in the research for analysis. Our study is a humble attempt to examine the recommendations of different committees, legislations and constitutional amendments since the time of independence with regards to participation of women in PRIs. An attempt has been made to understand the socio-economic and political background and characteristics of women representatives and to scrutinize whether the socio-economic determinants could bear some impacts on the emerging women leadership particularly aftermath of the 73rd C A Act. We also made an attempt to examine the role performance and the constraints of political participation of the women heads of PRIs. Observing all these points we have taken up an empirical study on women representatives with special reference to the women Heads of PRIs in the state of Haryana.

The study findings are based on a survey of 422 women Heads of PRIs and qualitative data on select themes collected from women Sarpanches, Chairpersons of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad in the four randomly selected districts of Haryana. This chapter presents the synthesis of key findings and highlights overall conclusion and recommendations.

MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS

I. Profile of the Respondents

- Most of the respondents were from the age group of 31-40 years and from General castes. However, proportion of women respondents from Backward
communities and Scheduled Castes was also reported to be significant. Above 90 percent respondents were from Hindu communities and a few are also from Muslim Community.

- Most of the respondents were married around 5 percent respondents reported that they got married before the age of 18 years.

- However, their educational levels were reported to be poor as about 6 percent respondents were graduates and above. Majority of the educated respondents reported that they received their education from co-educational institutions.

- Majority of the respondents were from joint families. The family main occupation was reported as agriculture and labour. Most of the respondents were housewives while rest are in the profession of cultivation and labour. Agriculture, petty business, labour and private service were the main profession of the spouses of respondents.

- About 1/5th respondents revealed that they do not own agriculture land while majority of the respondents reported that the size of their landholdings is small. Majority of the respondents further revealed that their monthly family income is less than Rs. 30,000.

- Most of the respondents reported that they were elected for the first time. This was found more pronouncing for Zila Parishads and Village Panchayats.

- Most of the respondents further reported that they were elected as reserved candidates in the Panchayat Elections however; about 29 percent respondents were from General categories. More than half of the respondents reported that they were elected against the seats reserved for women. Majority of the respondents reported that they do not have experience in active politics while majority of the respondents having political experience said that they have experience of only a few years.

- Only 2/5th respondents reported that they are affiliated with political parties. However, the influence of their spouses in Panchayat election was recorded significantly high.
Our study establishes the fact that the myths associated with the entry of women into leadership position that would be hindered by socio-economic profile in terms of their age, caste, occupation family income, land holding and education are disproved. Field data have clearly substantiated that women would definitely fit into the hard patriarchal social framework. Thus, women of Haryana have been socially and politically empowered through grassroots politics especially through the PRIs. The political profile of the women representatives has been studied through the broad parameters such as political affiliation, involvement of the family members in political parties, linkages with voluntary organizations and political awareness etc. Observing the data we find that large majority of the respondents are the first time entrants in PRIs as none of their family members formerly held any political position in the PRIs or in any other higher political bodies. Thus, we infer that a large majority of women representatives of PRIs are lacking in previous political experience. They are new entrants and hence we assume that the new dispensation has greatly attracted women to come to grassroots politics. We have drawn inference that previous political and representational experience is not necessary for women to become a leader in the newly constituted PRIs.

II Roles and Responsibilities of Women Heads of PRIS

Gram Panchayats

- Majority of the women heads are aware of the rural development schemes like Old Age Pension, Widow Pension, Ladly Scheme and Indira Awas Yojana. The awareness level about other rural development schemes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Scheme, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Member Of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme has been recorded less than 50 percent.

- Almost all the heads of PRIs admitted that they attend the meetings of Gram Sabha and participated in the decision making process.

- Around 50 percent of respondents reported that development of agriculture is being ensured under their leadership through development of waste land.

- Similar number of respondents reported that they assist in development of ground water resources.
• More than three fourth of the women heads of PRIs worked on plantation and forest conservation and implementation of Indira Awas Yojna in their areas of jurisdiction.

• Women Heads of Gram Panchayats are more interested in providing basic amenities in their respective village i.e. Provision of Drinking Water, Development of Rural Electrification, Development of Health and Sanitation

• More than two third of the respondents are interested in doing the work related to welfare of the weaker section, disabled, women and children. Public Distribution System is also an important area of their interest

• Women heads of Gram Panchayats are less interested in implementation of Poverty Alleviation Programmes.

• Majority of the respondents were found in favour of devolution of more powers to Panchayats.

Panchayat Samiti

• About 1/3rd respondents were found aware about the different types of committees of Panchayat Samitis. These committees are General Committee, Finance Audit and Planning Committee and Social Justice Committee.

• Only half of the respondents reported that elected members of Panchayat Samitis are the members of the above committees.

• Less than half of the Women Chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis took interest in Agriculture Development, Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Poultry

• Majority of the respondents in Panchayat Samities took interests in works like Development of Social Forestry, Development of Drinking Water Resources, Welfare of Weaker Sections, Health and Family Welfare

• Around 40 percent of the respondents reported that they are securing dismantling of dangerous buildings, distribution of relief for natural calamities and construction and repair during natural disasters.
Zila Parishad

- The awareness level was found higher for the programmes like Old Age Pension, Total Sanitation Campaign, 13th Finance Commission, Widow Pension and Ladli Scheme, while the awareness level about Haryana Rural Development Fund was reported low.

- Majority of the respondents reported that the matters are resolved in Zila Parishads through majority of members present.

- The data reflect that the elected women members in higher institutions of Panchayati Raj are more active in participation of the meetings and taking decisions.

- About 2/5th Heads of Zila Parishad were found engaged in social welfare activities. This was found mainly in terms of preparation of annual action plan, holding monthly meetings of Monitoring Committee and providing technical assistance for sanction of action plan for Village Panchayats.

On the basis of above findings we can infer that in Haryana the women representatives of PRIs have sufficient time to participate in panchayat activities. Despite having regular household responsibilities women found adequate time to perform their usual duties as heads of PRIs. We find that a large number of women representatives are active participants in all the panchayat meetings and in decision making as such that manifests their democratic consciousness. The data reveal that a large majority of women representatives not only regularly attending the meetings but they are also able to voice their opinion on different issues figured in regular Panchayat meeting agenda.

III Problems and Challenges Faced by Women Heads of PRIS

- The main reasons for poor involvement of Panchayat members in implementation of development programmes were reported to be indifferent attitude, ignorance of their importance and lack of awareness about the development programmes as well as gender bias.

- Most of the respondents reported that they are taking decisions independently with consultation to the members of Panchayats.
• Above 80 percent respondents in all the three tier reported that they consult their spouses and other family members for taking decisions in Panchayat meetings.

• About 2/3rd respondents reported that their spouses are taking care of their health while more than 26 percent respondents reported that they are themselves taking care of their health.

• Majority of the respondents reported that they are free to visit their parental house and their relatives and market and other places outside of the community.

• More than half of the respondents reported that women are involved in decision making process in Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samiti as they are contributing significantly. However, about 10 per cent respondents reported that women are not involved in decision making process. Heads of Zila Parishad are fully involved in the decision making process.

• The attitude of male members of Panchayat towards women Panchayat members has been reported to be good and very good. However, a small proportion of respondents revealed that male members of Panchayat are indifferent towards them. Thus, most of the respondents were in favour of devolving more powers to Panchayat and enhancing the budgetary allocations to local governments besides creation of awareness regarding development programmes and schemes.

• About half of the respondents reported that they are themselves convening the meetings of Panchayats however; they need support of family members while attending the meetings of Panchayat. More than 40 percent of the respondents also revealed that the meetings are convened by their husbands. This number is more in Gram Panchayats.

• Most of the respondents reported that villagers are approaching directly to them and their relatives for their problems. Most of the respondents revealed that they are also visiting the villages for understanding of problems and developmental issues.
• More than half of the respondents reported that they are themselves taking decision for spending of money earned by them however, their spouses and sons are also taking decisions for spending money earned by their wives or mothers. About 62 per cent respondents reported that they own separate bank account for their earnings. About 40 per cent respondents reported that they are taking decisions for spending money earned by their spouses.

• Majority of the respondents reported that their opinion is being sought while purchasing the major household items. The family members including husband, son and in-laws are also taking care the health of women at home. The same number of respondents also revealed that they have rights to take decision about family planning and they feel free to visit their parental house, relatives and markets.

• Elected women are actively participating in decentralized rural governance and decision making process. Majority of the elected women are aware about the rural development programmes, composition and types of committees and the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

• The elected women are also active in implementation of centrally and state sponsored schemes for rural development however, a variation in perception of elected women emerges across the districts and levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

• About 2/5th respondents reported that they are feeling changes in the attitude of their family members after elected as Sarpanch/Chairperson. They are also receiving assistance in performing of household chores and caring of children.

• Most of the respondents reported that reservation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has really helped in empowerment of women. Most of the respondents were of the view that reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions is necessary for their empowerment and upliftment.
Elected women Sarpanchs and Chairpersons face problems and challenges in performing their assigned duties and responsibilities. They face role conflicts as they have to perform the dual role both at domestic and panchayat fronts. The influence of family members in convening, conducting and decision making in panchayats is still high while villagers are directly approaching to the family members of elected women panchayat members for solving their problems. The household responsibilities and duties are no doubt shared by other family members, elected women members also enjoy freedom for visiting their relatives and parental house however the participation of women representatives in child centred and money centred decisions in family is still restricted. The attitude of family towards women representatives still need to be changed a lot.

CONCLUSION

I. Women Participation in Political Institution have significantly increase in post 73rd constitution amendments Act, however the political participation in State Assemblies and Parliament is still low. As per information available on March 2013, the women constitute 46.7% in Panchayati Raj Institution In India. The proportion of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions was reported high in the state of Jharkhand (58.6%), Uttrakhand (56.1%), Kerala (51.9%), Madhya Pradesh (50.5%) and Himanchal Pradesh (50.1%), Bihar (50%) and Haryana 36.5% (Source Ministry of Panchayat Raj Govt. of India). Women participation in PRI in Haryana is continuously increasing after 73rd amendment in case of women panches it has increased 36.9% (2005) to 39.2% (2010) and Sarpanches 34.14% (2005) to 37.6% (2010). At Block level in Panchayat Samiti women representation has increased from 33.95% (2005) to 38.6% (2010). At District level in Zila Parishad the share of Women participation has also increased from 35.15%(2005) to 40.9% (2010) (Source State Election Commission Haryana). Thus the share of the women in Panchayati Raj Institution in gradually increasing since enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Hence the data confirm the first hypothesis of the study.

II. No doubt that that the number of women heads who are fully involved in decision making process is increasing day by day, but about 1/3rd women are
not fully involved in decision making process. Even a significant proportion of Sarpanches in Village Panchayat (7.7 per cent) are not at all involved in decision making process.

Some women heads at village level also facing indifferent attitude of the other male members towards them. Second Hypothesis is also supported by the above findings as the problems from their male counterpart are still there in execution of the roles as women head.

III. There is a positive change in the political landscape due to reservation of women in local government. They are creating a dent in the male dominated political scenario. Around half of the women sarpanches are convening the meeting independently at their own. This number is even higher in the Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad.

- More than 80 percent women Sarpanches are confidently taking decisions for the development of their areas. This figure is higher the case of Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad. Therefore Third hypothesis is also confirmed.

IV. No doubt there are some elected women representatives are illiterate but still a significant number of women heads are educated upto primary, middle and matriculate level. The study has revealed that despite of their low educational status the women heads are aware of the schemes being implemented in their area which include the poverty alleviation programmes, housing schemes and other welfare programmes.

- A significant number of women heads of all the three tier are also aware of the manual of the institutions i.e. number of meeting held, procedure to pass the resolution, constitution of various committees etc. Therefore the findings negate the fourth hypothesis.

V. Only 2/5th of the women heads are feeling the changes in the attitude of their family members after being elected as Sarpanch and Chairperson.

- More than half of the women sarpanches are taking decisions themselves for
spending their earned money. This number is higher in Zila Parishads and Panchayat Samitis. They are also maintaining separate bank accounts for their earnings.

- Almost all the women heads are participating in decision making process related to purchase of household items in their family.

- The study also revealed that the husbands are becoming more caring for their wives. In about 2/3rd cases they are taking care of the health of their wives.

- Majority of the women heads are free to visit their parental house and their relatives, market and other places outside of the community

- Only a negligible proportion of women heads is facing domestic violence. Therefore on the basis of above findings it can be stated that political participation of women in the local rural bodies has made a noticeable dent in terms of raising their social and economic status, providing health, and ameliorating violence, discrimination etc. So the findings negate the fifth hypothesis of the study.

The findings of the study also confirmed the various indicators of women empowerment such as Participation in crucial decision-making processes; sharing of domestic work by husbands and other family members; feeling and expression of pride and value in her work; Self-confidence and self-esteem; and Ability to prevent violence.

SUGGESTIONS

Women’s participation in the developmental activities, due to reservation of seats in PRI, has also brought them out of the ‘Dahlij’ of their household to participate in the outer world which was earlier prohibited for them. However, empowerment of rural women requires developing the overall personality of women from her very childhood. Most of the women participating in the Panchayats have grown in the traditional rural, patriarchal ethos and therefore their adaptation to the changed requirements of their administrative role in PRI is always full of difficulties and challenges. The researcher suggests the following:
• Training and capacity buildings - Women representatives need training and capacity building for enhancing their leadership quality, independency culture and self confidence besides awareness about the Constitutional rights and functions and duties as provided to PRI’s representatives under Panchayati Raj System, nature of Indian democracy and Constitutional policies and programmes for women, rural development and social welfare programmes and schemes, etc.

• Gender sensitization of male members and officials through orientation programmes - The attitude of male members towards women’s entry into politics has to be changed through orientation courses and training programmes for officials and elected representatives, both males and females. Besides, there is a need to train the women leaders at regular intervals to enable them to manage the responsibilities assigned to them in the Panchyats at all the levels. These programmes can be organized by involving social scientist or by Deprt. of Social work.

• Formation of Mahila Mandal and Self Help Groups- Promotion and encouragement of the formation and strengthening of social institutions such as Women’s Associations, SHGs, Mahila Mangal Dal, Mahila Manch, Women Headed Civil Societies, etc. will create opportunities for women empowerment and ensure the participation of women in different developmental activities. Govt. should involve professional social worker, social scientist, women activist and bankers such as NABARD.

• Functional Coordination and Linkages among all three tiers of PRIs- Panchayati Raj Institutions is third tier of Governance of Indian democracy PRIs has also three tier (Village Level, Block Level and District Level) but it lacs coordination and linkages in planning and execution of development and welfare programmes. Coordination and linkages among three tier of Panchayati Raj Institution will definitively empower women heads of PRIs. State Govt. should develop mechanism for coordination and linkages among all three tier of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
• To ensure the effective enforcement of legislations and constitution provisions, budgetary support should be given to create and strengthen the required infrastructure.

• There is need to increase efforts required for real empowerment of rural women to bring about an attitudinal change in both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household activities and rearing children needs to be replaced by a feeling of equal partnership of women and men.

• The women should also be encouraged to organize themselves. The Mahila Mandals in the villages can be effectively used as instruments to mobilize them for this purpose. Some successful women’s organizations can also act as catalytic agents for encouraging women’s participation in social and political activities. The government should provide finance and infrastructure to some of the successful women organizations to take up the responsibility of encouraging the women elected representatives.

• The genuine Voluntary organizations should be identified for entrusting them the tasks of training, encouraging, organizing, mobilizing and guiding the elected women representatives. National Literacy Mission and other organizations engaged in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan should also be assigned the responsibility of educating the rural masses in general and the rural women in particular regarding the significance of Panchyati Raj and empowerment of women.

• Gender Sensitization of Media personnel- The media, both print as well as electronic, can play an important role in creating awareness in the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender quality and gender justice. Govt. should organise workshop for gender sensitization of Media Personnel so that the success stories of women working In PRIs could be highlighted.

• There should be criteria of minimum qualification for candidates willing to contest the Panchayat election both for Sarpanch and Chairperson of Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad. Educated women representatives in local governments are expected to play crucial role in decision making process and implementation of rural development programmes.
• Govt. should take initiative to liberate Panchayati Raj Institution from the control of Bureaucracy. Govt. official should be helping hand to provide technical assistance to the women functionaries of PRIs instead of controlling e.g. power of suspension of elected sarpanch of Gram Panchayat should not vest with Deputy Commissioner. The power of suspension or removal should be given to some committee, which should include elected representative of PRIs.

• women reservation in parliament and the state legislatures- The unfinished agenda of women empowerment should be finished by enacting an Amendment for providing reservation for women in the national parliament and the state legislatures. The reservations at local level are not enough for women empowerment.

Now, by examining the role performance, political participation, nature of emerging women leadership, socio-economic background features of women, and their family members, perceptions of male representatives and the civil society on women leadership we find that though women are not fully successful in playing their role as development participants in the PRIs, their participation and spirit of involvement in grassroots governance is highly impressive. We find that political decentralization to the grassroots governance with reservation of seats for women has been fully effective as adequate number of women have been elected to the PRIs which is in fact a landmark in the history of evolution of decentralized democracy in India.

Moreover, post – decentralization scenario in Haryana has amply revealed that reservation of women to the grassroots political institutions, the PRIs, has brought about a new revolution of women political empowerment in India that reflects drastic political changes in the rural societies of the country. Thus, we conclude by saying that though women are socially and politically and somehow economically empowered through the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Hence, the mission and objectives of democratic decentralization and empowerment of women through the grassroots governance at the village level by the new dispensation aftermath of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act 1992 have not been fully realized.