PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As we approach the 21st Century, Indian polity has been striving for establishing democratic goals through modernizing its political and administrative institutions. With a change in development paradigms, the focus of development planning has shifted to participatory development with social justice and equity. It called for decentralized administration, ensuring people’s participation in decision making and giving priorities to their local needs. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts 1992 made the provision for ensuring local self governance through empowering local bodies. Thus, the units of the Local Self-Government were given statutory status and state governments were given the mandatory provisions for establishing Panchayats at three tiers. Importantly, the local bodies have become the units of the government to have a share in decision making and active participation in development process for socio-economic development of the region. Though, the provision of local bodies particularly, Panchayats may be traced out in the historical text, monuments and excavation sites. The role of Panchayats in development has been found praiseworthy in ancient period; however, the credit for strengthening of Panchayats in modern period goes to Britishers. Due to lack of financial and functional autonomy, the Panchayats could not perform well, and because of non-statutory status of Panchayats, State Governments had no mandatory powers to establish the units of Local Self Government. With the enactment of State Conformity Amendment Act 1994, the process of functional and financial devolution to the local bodies was initiated by the State Governments. The provision of reservation for women was made in Panchayati Raj Institutions for their political empowerment. Present study purports to examine the role and responsibilities of women Sarpanches/ Chairpersons and their problems in participation in decentralized rural governance.

The study has been divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1st is introductory which explains concept of women empowerment, Panchayati Raj Institutions and women representation in PRIs. Chapter 2nd deals with review of related literature. Chapter 3rd relates to research methodology. Chapter 4th provides analysis of profile of women representatives of PRIs. Chapter 5th is related with analysis of role and responsibilities of women heads of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Chapter 6th is concerned with problems of women in their participation in rural decentralized governance. Chapter 7th is concluding one, which highlights the main research findings, emerging issues and suggestions.

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