CHAPTER-2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION:-

“To awaken the people it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.” Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

The term empowerment has meanings in different socio-culture and political contexts, and does not translate easily into all language. The term include self-strength, control, self power, self reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capable of fighting for one's rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awaking and capability to mention only a few. Empowerment can be broadly categorized as: Economic Empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. In general sense Women Empowerment refers to empowering women to be self dependent by providing them access to all the freedom & opportunities, in specific sense-enhancing their position in the present structure of society.

In Indian politics the Panchayat have always a major role to play and the panchayati Raj institutions have the responsibility to give good governance in rural areas. Women representation in gram panchayat is visualized as an impact of 73rd Constitutional Amendment which advocates for one-third to 50 per cent of the seats to women members in Gram Panchayat. It was a land mark decision in different initiatives of women empowerment through political means because the socio-economic status of women in patriarchal society of India is still not improved even after six decades of Independence.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:-

It is essential for the researcher to be well informed about the problem under investigation and various studies already conducted by the various researchers. It gives an insight into the problem and helps the investigator to acquaint him with the techniques and methodology followed by earlier investigators to find an answer to the various aspects of the problem under investigation. Moreover it brings enough
explanations of doubts, one finds in the process of study and also generates sufficient guidelines which enable the researcher to conduct his study without experiencing complications.

A number of studies related to political participation of women has been conducted which depict various dimensions and aspects of political empowerment of women. The conceptualization of political participation has been undergoing drastic changes. Such changes will have a direct impact upon different modes of political participation. Citizens can participate in different and alternative ways to influence the government and the political system. Until recently most survey studies of political participation confined their enquiry to a relatively limited set of political acts. Most of them asked whether a person had voted or not and some went on to ask about such behavior as attendance at political meetings or rallies, working for a party, making a monetary contribution or seeking a public office (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). However, these alternative ways of political participation depend on the types of citizens who participate, the way in which they act, the amount of pressure they can to exert and the system's response towards their activities. Thus political participation is more than the vote and more than an activity in the electoral system. Verba and Nie grouped into four broad modes of participation the alternative activities by which citizens can participate in politics, i.e., voting, campaign activity, co-operative activity and citizen-initiated contact (Verba & Nie, 1972).

Milbrath and Goel add protest and communication to these modes mentioned by Verba and Nie, which relate individuals to the polity. They are also of the view that political acts could be hierarchically organised from the least difficult to the most difficult, if a person performed a more difficult act, he was likely to perform those that are less difficult as well (Milbrath & Goel, 1977).

It is useful to consider political participation in a hierarchical sense, but it should also be born in mind that some levels of participation may be absent in some political systems (Rush & Althoff, 1971). Not all political system have elections or a form of voting, some systems severely restrict or ban public meetings and demonstrations, while others forbid the formation of political parties and other types of political or quasi-political organization, and so on (Rush & Althoff, 1971). Explaining the extent of political participation Michael Rush and Philip Althoff
added that apathy, alienation and the use of violence vary clearly and considerably from system to system, but remain quite important factors in any examination of political participation (Rush & Althoff, 1971).

Examining the modes of political participation Schonfeld has mentioned ten types of activities which include (I) running for or holding public or party offices, (2) belonging to a party or other political organization, (3) working in an election, (4) attending political meetings or rallies, (5) making financial contribution to a party or a candidate, (6) contacting a public official, (7) publicly expressing a political opinion to convince others, (8) partaking in political discussion, (9) voting, and (10) exposing oneself to political stimuli (Schonfeld, 1975). Political participation is the mother and politics is the child. The former creates and determines politics and hence is of utmost importance both for the nation and the individual. The politics of the nation is determined therefore, by political participation in all its processes (Bala, 1999).

The socio-economic environment will have a direct impact upon political participation. Socio-economic variables include education, occupation, income, age, caste, religion, sex, family background, residence etc. "Political participation", says Robert Lane, "IS a function of age, sex, education and status (Lane, 1959). Thus generally, participation tends to be higher among better educated, members of higher occupational and income groups, middle aged, dominant ethnic and religious groups, people with political family background, settled residents, urban dwellers and members of voluntary associations (Closky, 1968). However, the correlation between political participation anti some of these socio-economic variables may vary from culture to culture in different political contexts and their effect on political participation may not be sable.

Ideology can affect political participation, positively or negatively. Normally, those who have firm faith in democratic ideology positively respond to political participation. On the other hand, persons having contempt for democratic ideology show little inclination for political participation. Political participation is associated with political awareness i.e., actual knowledge of political affairs. Awareness is highly connected with interest. In every society the number of citizens who can be described as 'aware' is extremely small. Awareness affects both the
quality and amount of participation (Das, 1997). It is to be noted that the three sets of variables are closely linked and intermingled. A change in any of them, can, therefore, increase or decrease the level of political participation.

The present study is concerned not with political participation in general, but it is only a micro-level study concerned with political participation of women that too at the grassroots levels of political functioning. Participation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local governments has been an area of much interest in India. Participation in the local government institutions has been viewed as essential in promoting women's consciousness and development at the local level as well as in training them for participation in the wider politics. Democratic thinkers have in general linked liberty to the people by the process of political participation. Participation is maximized in local government because, "local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within people's reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it (de Tocqueville, 1966). Karl Marx stood in favour of mass involvement in the process. To him political participation by the masses is at once a process of education and of building up of a capacity for governing the new society (Sheshadri, 1976). It is a fact that woman herself is an important variable capable of determining the nature and scope of political participation and as a result the whole political system in turn.

The attempt to assess and evaluate the level and extent of political participation of women become very much relevant as to the nature and functioning of the political system as a whole. It is particularly more beneficial to political parties and political leaders due to the natural qualities of women such as honesty, affection and sense of duty. The mobilization of women in large numbers weakened the bondage of tradition and encouraged them to develop a perspective on the wider socio-political problems (Kumar, 2000).

In India, there is a continued dominance of the upper class in education, administration and structures of government. The eighty-fourth constitution Amendment Bill meant to provide one-third reservation of seats to women in states and central legislative bodies and the controversies around it mirror the contradictions of Indian society (Raman, 2002). The protagonists of the Bill
highlight the traditionally sanctioned exclusion of women from the public sphere as crucial. Undoubtedly, women’s suppression, in history, has been very important in maintaining upper-class exclusivity and hegemony. Affirmative action for women would certainly play a role in undermining male and upper-caste dominance. There is also a strong resistance on the part of a considerable number of political leaders to ‘encroachments’ into what has been a traditionally male preserve. The media has characterized the debate as a battle between ‘feminists’ and ‘casteists’ (Raman, 2002). In India, the 73rd and 74th amendments passed in 1992 have been instrumental in ensuring a strong representation of women in local government institutions for women in local government and the provision for one third chair persons to be from among the women but there is no reservation of seats for women either in the State Legislative Assembly nor in parliament at the national level. The demand for reservation in the parliament by women’s groups has raised many eyebrows and severe criticism. Many times the bill was taken in parliament but failed. Women activists wanted to get this bill passed before the elections to the state assemblies and parliament to be held by the end of 2008. At least once a year a few members of parliament debate the need to reserve 33 percent of seats for women. The bill comes up when the parliament convenes but soon gets shelved with all the ensuing acrimony (Times of India: 2008).

Political participation of women has gained momentum in India as gender mainstreaming in political institutions has been supported by political activists. The role of women in freedom struggle and feminist movement has been significant however; their representation in political institutions and decision making process is still to be low. Women’s share in local governments has no doubt has increased significantly due to the process of decentralization and reservation provided to them. However, their share in higher level political institutions and decision making bodies is still low. The recent debate for the reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies has no doubt created political conscious among the political activists for providing increased opportunities for women in political institutions and decision making bodies. However, most of the political parties and leaders are still in doldrums for providing quota to women for their political empowerment. Though women representation in local governments has significantly increased in post 73rd
and 74th Amendment Acts, however, their political participation is still low.

The following studies have been reviewed to get insight regarding the topic research.

1. **Doddamani (Dr.) K.N. (2014)**, Empowerment of Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institution in Gulbarga District in Karnataka.

The study covered one Zilla Panchayat Gulbarga, Three Taluka Panchyat Aland, Afzalpur and Gulbarga and all the Gram Panchayats to find out the socio-economic and political background of the elected women representative in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the extent of their knowledge regarding the structural and operational dimensions of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and to explore their role in the decision-making process.

The education profile shows that, a considerable number of women are still illiterate because the level of female literacy remains rather low in rural areas. However, some of the illiterate members/office bearers have learnt sign to the papers after getting elected in the Panchyats at various levels. Interestingly, while looking into the family structure of the respondents, it was noted that 65 per cent of them were from nuclear families. This shows that joint family system has broken down due to the impact of modernization. As many as 75 per cent of the women representatives have affiliation with a political party in the Gulbarga district in Karnataka state. The remaining 25 percent are not aligned with any political party. This shows that women representatives in Karnataka have political awareness. It was also noticed that 10 per cent of the respondents were not aware of the quorum required for meetings. A large number of them were aware of the electorate at block and Zilla Panchayat level.

A large majority of the respondents do not know about the required number of Gram Sabha meetings, the quorum for those and the person responsible for preparing the agendas. Large number of women, however, responded correctly when they were asked regarding the person who keeps Panchyat record. As many as 50 per cent of the women members were also not aware of taxes imposed by the Panchyats and still a higher percentage(56 per cent) did not know about the schemes that are implemented by the Panchyats. It was sad but not shocking to find that even
the functions and duties of Gram Sabha are not known to a large majority of the respondents. About 80 per cent of them were not aware. How to make success of rural development schemes like MGNREGA and the funds received under this scheme, maximum amounts drawn and used for drinking water, watershed development, rural road, sanitation under it. Dependence on their husbands, low level of education, lack of interest, inadequacy of training, etc. appear to be the causes of their low level of awareness.

The reservation has led only to formal and not real empowerment of women in the Panchyats. It has also been found that the participation of women in meetings is not satisfactory. However, they did get cooperation from their family members. Participation of the women in preparing budget and plan was also not to the desired extent. It has also come to light that their participation in the mobilization of funds for developmental activities and how to use of MGNREGA scheme most them said only repair of road and ponds they donot know the overall development of villages and role in identifying beneficiaries in the Gram Sabha was highly dissatisfactory. Although their participation in the identification of BPL beneficiaries is encouraging, participation in the organization of community programmes is far from satisfactory.

2. **SharmaRaj Kumar and SharmaPankaj (2014):** Women Empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institutions - A Case Study of Solan and Kandaghat (Himachal Pradesh), India

The study was confined to Solan district only and data collected from its two blocks, i.e. Solan and Kandaghat. The focus of the study is Women Empowerment in PRIs with special reference to 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Study is confined to women representatives (Members and Pradhans) elected in December, 2005- 2010 PRI'selections in Kandaghat and Solan block of Solan district. Himachal Government has taken a decision in 2008 to give 50 percent reservation for women in PRIs. Due to reservation gradual increase is found in women participation in 2011 PRI's election (57%) to lead political empowerment in Himachal Pradesh.

The major finding of the study shows that It is essential to analyse the socio-economic background of the respondents to understand the pattern of relationship
between the leader and the environment. The age wise analysis of respondents shows that middle age group has dominance over the Panchayat leadership. Education wise analysis shows that middle and metric women are in majority. Surprising figure in parts of this study shows that illiterate women are very few in numbers. Graduate and Post graduate women are also doing participate in political activities. Caste factor plays a vital role as the study shows that scheduled caste category dominates in both the blocks. Reservation plays an important role in this context. Occupation wise analysis shows that more than 70 per cent of the families of the respondents are involved in agriculture. 15 per cent of women respondents are housewives.

The political party affiliations of women leaders show that about 47 per cent of respondents are not affiliated to any political party and do not believe in the strict political bias. Study also reveals that in Himachal Pradesh there is no scope for the third party. Participation in Panchayat meetings shows that there is a surprising that 90 per cent attendance of elected women representatives who regularly participate in their routine meetings in their Panchayats. This shows that the march towards political empowerment of women is on right track. Opinions about reservation in Panchayats, Parliament, State Legislative elections, are in its favour. But, some educated women said that there is no need of reservation because reservation shows the weaknesses of women, and need of some support. Opinions about party base elections, shows that about 72 per cent women respondents are against party–base election. Majority of women know their duties. Only two cases are found as proxy case.


The study was conducted in two blocks of Karauli district of Rajasthan i.e. Hindaun and Nadoti with the objective to Assess the level of awareness of the elected women on their roles and responsibilities and various development programmes, the involvement and problems faced by elected women representatives in decision making and the factors influencing participation of women in panchayati raj institution. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample of 41 elected women representatives.
As per the analysis of the data the main finding of the study is that 44 per cent EWR didn’t have any sort of participation and out of those who have any participation only 27 per cent participate regularly and are active. The key causes mentioned for poor participation of EWR includes male dominance (34 per cent), lack of political experience (22 per cent) and gender discrimination (17 per cent).

Women Representatives are getting limited opportunities and freedom to participate in socio-cultural and educational activities. The women among upper castes and those belonging to economically well-off families have more participation in the panchayat activities as compare to other backward castes and poor women. However, on the issue of women empowerment the voice was strong as 57 per cent has favored it. Also, 56 per cent told that they are handling issues independently.

In-depth analysis prevailed that only 5 per cent were aware of the 73rd constitutional amendment. The awareness about discharging the responsibilities was also very much varied as only less than one fourth (22 per cent) shared their role in identification of the problem of the GP, though 39 per cent EWR said that they raised problem in the meeting and the problem have been solved. Around one fourth (24 per cent) opined that their role is to link people to Government Projects & schemes, whereas 6 per cent EWR thought that their role is to take initiation to complete the incomplete project.

The finding of the study revealed that education is such a powerful parameter, which is necessary for any value judgments, any political participation or any decision making. Because decision power effected by the educational level of the member. Better understanding of rules, regulations and procedures of the panchayats and the various schemes are equally important for the women members to take proper decision at the panchayat level and these understanding from education.21 percent illiterate member involve in decision making where as half (51 percent) of them are educated up to primary level, where as 18 per cent were found to be secondary and only 3 percent are graduate. It clearly indicates that the participation of respondents with below secondary education tends to be more in a decentralized democracy.
It is an accepted fact that the overall educational status of female is quite low in all the GP. Majority of elected women representatives handle issues self and other 18 percent work with the support of other and same as nuclear family 47 percent work self and other 22 percent of nuclear family member work with the help of other. Hence it clearly indicate nuclear family member work self as compare to joint family because in joint family there are lot of social constraint.

4. Ansari Md. Imam Uddin (October 2014) :Women Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Case Study of Barak Valley Research Scholar, Dept. of Political Science, Assam University, Silchar, India

In India, Panchayati Raj Institutions assume great importance from the point of view of democratization in the political system. Article 40 of the Indian constitution lays down that the state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. The architects of Panchayati Raj Institutions envisaged that not only men but also women should participate in the village panchayat. The 73rd and 74th amendment act is an important event in the Indian history in which 33 percent reservation has been given to women at the Panchayat and Municipal level. The reservation for women in panchayats have provided possibility for demolishing traditional gender, caste and religious biasness but it is a long and difficult process for bringing about social change. The question remains: whether the constitutional amendment will be able to contribute to women’s empowerment or will the existing patriarchal structures continue to dominate in the society. This paper is an attempt to understand the case of elected women in Panchayat level representation and how far these types of representation lead the way to their empowerment.


Women’s empowerment means entitlement of women to have and enjoy power over their lives both as individuals and members of social system. The empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and supported by economic independence. In determining the
empowerment of women, factors such as role in the decision-making power in the family and community, their educational status, their participation in social and political activities, their position in various professions. Here, this paper examines the Empowerment of schedule Tribe Women and Panchayat Raj Institutions with reference Chitradurga district of Karnataka state. In conclusion it may be remarked that Tribal women must get greater social and political exposure so that they can be dynamic in active politics. If they take active participation, they can contribute a lot to the all-round development of their regions. They must be provided with better education facilities and offered necessary training at all the levels. Efforts must be made to bring about a thorough transformation in their attitude and mindset. Only then the process of empowerment of Tribal women through political representation becomes meaningful and realistic.


Over viewing some of the empirical workson empowerment of women in Panchayatiraj System in Odisha, specially works of Snehalata Panda (1996, 1999), Bidyut Mohanty (2002), Sachidananda Satpathy (2002), Dayanidhi Parida (2010), it is revealed that the women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibility. Due to strong caste feelings women belonging to upper caste have not come forward to represent the Panchayat which provided an opportunity to the women from the labour and lower caste to emerge as a potential force in village politics. About 80-90 percent of women attend the Panchayat meetings regularly. Given the sure number, one might conclude that the democracy has become participatory than before at least at the grass root level. The socio-economic background of these women showed that majority of them came from the lower income group particularly at the village Panchayat level. The working culture of the Panchayat has changed because of the presence of the women. A part of the increase of the female literacy rate can attribute to the presence of the women in Panchayat and their willingness of get educated. The standard of political institution at the grass root level has not been lower because of women reservation. Women are not only working for women’s development but
also really putting their interest in general matters and getting success also. So, the concept that women can not lead in developmental process is found wrong. With great effort the women leaders did the development works and the files were maintained perfectly and the government institutions were followed with greatest care. The involvement of women leaders in different developmental works definitely increased their awareness and confidence in themselves.


The main objective of this study was to explore the awareness, interest, and involvement of women in Gram Panchayat elections, to know the leadership qualities of women, to assess the perception of women about the panchayat in general and their role in particular and to find out the factors which overtly or covertly tend to promote or prevent women member from performing their roles.

The present study is mostly based on empirical methods. For this study, schedules were employed to collect data from the sample respondents. Only one block was selected i.e. Hindol Block in Dhenkanal district where there are 36 Gram Panchayats (GPs). Out of 36 GPs, only 5 GPs i.e. Baunshpokhari, Kantamila, Hatura, Gulehi and Karanda have been selected on random basis. Again, from these 5 GPs, 125 sample respondents were selected, 25 sample respondents from each GP.

The main finding of the study was shows that women have very little awareness about the electoral process and they have no idea about their rights, liberties and their own position in the society, during the survey a very interesting thing have been collected from the respondents that some of them don’t know about the different political parties functioning in our country, but they only know the symbols which they voted. In other words, they are the mere instruments in the hands of the political parties. Respondents have very little sense about the provisions like voting age, voting age of a person to contest in the election, the period of elections, the provision of fundamental rights, the reservation of seats for women in Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, Assemblies and Parliament etc. Their interaction with the gram panchayat is quite less and they never put troth their
demands before the Gram Panchayat about the facilities and privileges meant for them. This is because of their lack of consciousness and low levels of education. Finally, so far as the performance of the Gram Panchayat is concerned they are least satisfied with that.

Analysis shows that it is quite obvious that a number of reasons are responsible for their apathy and indifference attitude towards political participation. The reasons like illiteracy, poverty, traditional pattern of society, narrow attitude of the members of the family and to some extent, the irresponsible and neglected attitude of the Gram Panchayat. As a result, the women in this block, not only politically, but also socially, economically, culturally and educationally very backward.

8. **Nagpal Ritesh (2013)** *Womens Empowerment in Haryana: Role of Female Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institution.*

The main objective of the study is to assess the women’s empowerment in terms of participation of the female representation in panchayati raj institutions. The district Sirsa has been comprised of seven development blocks namely Ellenabad, Nathusuria Chopta, Odhna, Baragudha, Dabwali, Rania and Sirsa. Of the total seven development blocks for the purpose of study, fours blocks were selected. For the present study, both primary and secondary data was used. For the purpose of collection primary data, a sample of 93 elected female representatives was picked up from the selected 15 Gram Panchayats and 4 Panchayt Samitis along with the Zila Parishad of the Sirsa district. All the female elected representatives of PRIs comprising of 4 Sarapanches and 64 Panches of Gram Panchayts, 20 members along with the Chairpersons of the four Panchayats Samitis and 7 members along with the Chairperson from the Zila parishad of the select Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishad constituted the sample of the study.

As per the analysis of data collected the major finding of the the study is that high proportion of female representatives very rarely attended the general meetings of PRIs. The high proportion of female representatives didn’t attended the meetings as they were busy with the family work. The high proportion of female representatives very rarely raised issue in the meetings of PRIs. Participating in PRI meetings provided the opportunity to majority of female representatives to express
their views on important issues and make efforts to meet the needs and demands of the people of their area. The respondents who were graduate/post graduates (41.70 per cent) and those respondents who were technical degree/diploma holder (50.00 per cent) opined that the participation provided them are opportunity to work for a welfare of the people. The majority of female representatives (above 50.00 per cent) either always or very often addressed the grievances of people who approached them. The majority of female representatives (above 50.00 per cent) depended on their husband or family members to help the people. The high proportion of female representatives very rarely met the Panchayati Raj officials related to their area.


The study was conducted by a voluntary organization SAHAAS and Submitted to Ministry of Women and Child Development Govt. of India. The main objective of the study is to “explore and enumerate the problems faced by women representative in Panchayat in six district of Himachal Pradesh in conducting her statutory obligation.” This study has focused on Six Districts in the state of Himachal Pradesh, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The districts covered are Solan, Hamirpur, Kullu, Shimla, Kangra and Kinnaur. The conducted research was Non-Experimental research since it aimed to find out socioeconomic and political factors responsible for influencing decision making power of women pradhans in the panchayati raj system of Himachal Pradesh.

The major findings of the study to show that how far the electoral reservation for rural women at Panchayat level has contributed in development and empowerment of women in Indian society. Recommendations are made, to make there servation policy more successful to bring the gender equity and social justice. The findings from the study of six districts of Himachal shows that reservation for women, have given them the equal representation in terms of number as they occupy, more than 50% of seats and had some positive effect on development and empowerment of some women of different caste groups. Although, women representatives are actively involved in social work, but they are acting like, agents of implementing the government schemes rather than the leader of local self-
government. Moreover, women members have reported of family interference, especially from the husbands in making Panchayat decisions which further restricts the autonomy of the female representatives in Panchayat. Not only this, often the families have to face enmity from other villagers because of women entering into the political space. Familial obligations and perceptions about inefficiency of women have raised questions about the efficiency and purpose of these reservations at grassroots level. Apart from the social barriers what really came out from the study was the political interference in the so called “democratic” and “independent” Panchayats. The research brought forward the fact that, although political parties support females affiliated to their parties at the time of elections but Political parties are at the center of promoting gender discrimination when it comes to conferring decision making power to female representatives and most of the times dictate the elected women members and interfere in their functioning, thus, curtailing the decision making power of the women. One of the reasons, that came out from the study is the ineffectiveness of the existing training program being organized by the government agencies. The women members who attended the training program could not follow the lectures and considered that duration of the training need to be enhanced to acquire the sufficient knowledge on the subject. But the study was successful in giving an insight into the extent to which political barriers restricted the performance and activities vis-à-vis social barriers, and how former was more obstructive in nature than the latter.


Shri Vikas Nandal a researcher conducted the study at the village level of Sonipat District of Haryana with the objective to know the awareness and constitutional knowledge of women in PRI’s. for this study, both primary and secondary data was used. Primary data which was the base of our study was collected by interview schedule. In order to select the respondents from the different wards of the village Stratified Random Sampling method was used. The data was collected by the investigator from field. Simple statistical tools were used in the while tabulation and analyse of the data. Secondary data was collected from various government records and other sources.
An interview schedule was framed to collect the primary data. Village Anwali was divided in 14 wards. The study was on micro level, so out of 14 wards, 50 respondents were analyzed, 25 respondents from each ward. Here, random sampling method has been adopted for the selection of sample respondents. To understand the socio-economic background of respondents we would analyze the age, education, caste, family type, family size, family income, of the respondents.

The study shows that participation of women in the affairs of Panchayat Elections is not up to mark. They have less awareness about the Panchayati Raj Act 73rd Amendment and the working of gram Panchayats. Even Our respondents have very less knowledge about there servation of seats for women in Panchayats, Assemblies and Parliament. Our respondents also don’t know about the various sources of the gram Panchayats. So, in the light of the above analysis, it is quite obvious that a number of reasons like illiteracy, poverty, traditional family values and pattern of society, male dominance society etc. are responsible for their less participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.


The present study was an effort to know the extent of participation of women elected members in Panchayati Raj institutions. Total fifty women representatives randomly selected from all the Panchayats of Pusa Block of Samstipur district of Bihar. The tool used for collecting information was an interview schedule.

The findings revealed that majority of women respondents 45 out of 50 respondents were punctual in attending meetings and 40 out of 50 women remained present during the meetings throughout its deliberations. Clearly the provision of reservations for women has contributed greatly in increasing the presence in panchayat meetings. This is in contrast to the observation of many regarding poor attendance of women members or their representation by their husbands or male family members. Extent of participation of women members in Gram Panchayat: On the basis of the participation scores obtained by the respondents, participation index was calculated with the help of formula described in methodology. The observations thus obtained indicated that 34.0 per cent women members subsequently had low
level of participation. The result of path analysis supported the contention advanced earlier that the intensity of participation by a member in the proceedings of Gram Panchayat depends on her availability solely for this institution. A divided attention due to additional membership to other organization worked negatively towards their participation in Gram Panchayats. Further, caste and family status as usual played key role in participation of women members.

12. Research in Government of India-UN Women Programme, ‘Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia’ (2012) -Opportunities and Challenges of Women's Political Participation in India A Synthesis of Research Findings from Select Districts in India

The Study was conducted by ICWR UN Women Programme, ‘Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia’ in the selected district Mysore (Karnataka), Alwar (Rajasthan), and Gajapati (Odisha). There are two main purposes of the research component of the programme –that To build a body of knowledge on women’s political leadership and governance in India and South Asia – this is especially significant since no on-going programme on women’s political empowerment in the South Asia region is working at the grassroots level – down at the level of the village councils and as we build this body of knowledge, the data gathered from field experiences will in turn help to inform programme implementation and fine tune the intervention strategies as the programme progresses. Such a large and complex programme is, by nature, dynamic, and hence useful feedback in terms of baseline data, focused studies such as barriers and promoters of women’s political leadership and governance in India and South Asia throughout the course of the programme will be useful for the programme interventions.

In consultation with UN Women and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, ICRW selected the following three districts representing different social and demographic contexts for research: (1) Mysore (Karnataka), (2) Alwar (Rajasthan), and (3) Gajapati (Odisha). Methodology primary data was collected from elected representatives at all three tiers of governance using quantitative and qualitative methods. GP members in each of the study districts completed a cross sectional, quantitative survey. To make the study’s representative
as possible, the sample included GPs from all blocks of each district. The final samples are 1,006 GP members in Mysore (500 women and 506 men), 1,000 members in Alwar (502 women and 497 men), and 975 members in Gajapati (463 women and 512 men). A range of qualitative methods was used to collect data from men and women from the same villages where the selected GPs are operating.

The major Findings of the study is that The GP members state varied reasons for wanting to contest elections. In both Gajapati and Mysore, the community appears as a critical factor influencing both women and men’s decision to contest, in conjunction with their own interest. In Gajapati, the role of the community is most pronounced. In contrast, in Alwar half of the women report that they decided to contest elections because “my family wanted me to”, and this was the highest reported reason, followed by their interest to work for development. For men, the community and personal interest remain the top two stated reasons across all the districts, though it is interesting to note that family was cited as a reason by one-third of men in Alwar as well. In Mysore, the reasons for entering into politics at the local level are more to do with self motivation for both male and female members, while it is the least so in Gajapati where the influence of ‘others only’ is most pronounced. The impact of motivation on raising of specific issues within the panchayat and member's aspirations to re-contest elections will be detailed in the following sections. Irrespective of who or what influences the decision of GP members to contest elections, encouragement from spouse merges as one of the primary reasons attributed to success in the elections by women across the districts and by men in Mysore. Women GP members in Mysore and Gajapati attribute their success equally or more to support from women in the community. This is in line with the community being cited as an important factor influencing their decision to contest. For men in Mysore, support from the family – both nataland marital– is cited as the other important factor after spousal support. On the other hand, for men GP members in Alwar none of these figure in the top two reasons attributed to a successful win. Here 80 per cent of the men cite support from a political party, followed by 72 per cent who mention educations a factor. In Mysore too, support from political party is mentioned by a substantial proportion (53 per cent women and 41 per cent men GP members).

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The study findings affirm the variations in the socio-political scenario at the Gram Panchayat level in the districts of Mysore, Alwar and Gajapati. Though most GP members are first time entrants into local politics, the terms of their entry vary with regard to whether they contest from reserved/general seats and whether they face opposition or not. Variations on key aspects of gender responsiveness are found not only across districts but also often among male and female members of the same district. The following conclusions emerge from the study: The affirmative action and space provided to women is slowly translating into political gains for women in several ways, though the pace and contexts are varied across districts. Historic gender disparities in terms of education, ownership of resources and continual biased attitudes still act as barriers for GP members. However, within the specific district contexts, women are equally likely to contest from general seats; and many women do report entering into politics only because of their own interest and motivation around development concerns. The community emerges as a strong influence in women’s decision to contest elections. This calls for attention of programmers and policy maker son engendering the discourse around community participation and their attitudes and expectations of community of their elected representatives and bodies.

While the community supersedes the family as a determinant of entry, success and participation require family support, and for women, specifically spousal support. Lack of education and exposure to public life contribute in part to this, and this is noted significantly among the sarpanch and at higher levels of PRIs. These are also levels that are perceived of as having more power and influence. This support also becomes a necessity given the women’s immense burden of household responsibilities and the need for help and support from members of the extended family, besides the spouse. These very tasks limit many women from wanting to re-contest again. However, involvement of the family in panchayat-related work is not a norm for women GP members. The study finds evidence of wide variation across districts where 27,43 and 72 per cent of women members in Mysore, Alwar and Gajapati respectively report no involvement of family in panchayat-related work.

A Committee On Empowerment of Women (2010) (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) under the chairperson of Smt. Chandresh Kumari M.P. Lok Sabha and consisting of 10 Lok Sabha Women Member of Parliament and two Rajya Sabha Women Member of Parliament submitted a report on Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj Institution which was laid down in the Rajya Sabha in May 2010. The Parliamentary Committee find that after introduction, the said bill has been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development for examination and Report. Since the Committee strongly believe that gender equity and inclusiveness will lead to better delivery of public services, such as health, sanitation, early childhood care, drinking water etc. and make the PRIs more accountable to the rural populace, they desire that the Constitution (One Hundred and Tenth Amendment) Bill, 2009 providing for 50% reservation for women in the third tier of governance should be expeditiously enacted as a law on priority basis without much delay.

The Committee note with serious concern that in many States, the relatives of elected women representatives interfere in the official activities of EWRs. the Committee recommend that the officials of the Panchayats may be made responsible for preventing proxy participation and strict action may be initiated against them for violations in this regard. Need to enforce special quorum of women in panchayat meetings Reservation of seats alone cannot ensure the active participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Illiteracy, patriarchal values, inexperience, responsibilities at home, lack of access and control over income and other resources, restrictions to public spaces and insensitive legal system etc. keep women away from the Panchayat meetings and continue to impair their effective political participation. Many of the decisions are taken in their absence leaving their concerns unaddressed. To help them overcome such hurdles and to carry the concept of empowerment forward, certain provisions should be made which mandates a minimum quorum of women in every Gram Sabha meetings. The Committee are happy to note that the States of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh,
Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have provided for quorum for women in Gram Sabha meetings. Since the Committee strongly feel that such acts of positive discrimination will help women to change their perceptions about themselves and to gain a sense of empowerment, they recommend that the Government should make necessary amendments in the law to provide for special quorum for women in the panchayat meetings, especially Gram Sabha meetings.

Need to extend the rotation cycle of reserved seats for women to two terms. The provision for the rotation (between constituencies) of the reserved seats means that these change from one election to the next. This generally works to the detriment of women and their opportunity to craft a political career. Even if they have performed effectively in their first term, they are unable to reap the benefits of these achievements in the next election, as the constituency they nurtured in the first term gets de-reserved and the women candidate may have to shift to another constituency. A study among the Elected Women Representatives in PRIs shows that a large proportion (83.4%) of those interviewed have contested only one election in their career while only a small proportion (12.4%) have attempted a second and third round (4.2%) of elections. The main reason cited by female respondents for not contesting elections for a second time was the de-reservation of their seats. A study needs to be conducted by the Panchayati Raj Ministry to find out a proper solution in regard to the question of extending the rotation cycle of reserved seats for women. At the same time, the Committee desire that the rotation cycle of reservation of seats for women may be extended to two terms and the same methodology may be followed by all States.


The present study was an effort to know the extent of participation of women elected representative in Panchayat and the problems faced by them. Sample consisted of 33 women elected representatives from two Districts of Jammu and Kathua. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample from different blocks. The tool used for obtaining information was an Interview Schedule. The interview schedule and focused group discussions were used to elicit the
required information. The interview schedule comprised of three sections viz (a) demographic profile of the respondents (b) factors affecting women members from performing their roles (c) expectations and suggestions for better leadership.

The findings of the study revealed that neither the reservation for women or their actual presence in the Panchayat have become any more sensitive to the problems related to the village women. The women who are elected are not always treated with due respect. Many elected women complained that their suggestions were not considered seriously nor were they consulted while decisions were being made. Some felt that their views were ignored only because they are women. At times they were pressurized by their husbands to approve their decisions made by the male dominated Panchayats.

The study shows that the significant number of women elected representatives attended Panchayat meetings regularly but few members have full freedom of speech and expression in the Panchayat meetings and they usually raise their points. Ten respondents mentioned that their views were not considered. The major reason being patriarchal set up and thereby non co-operation. As a reaction the respondents got frustrated and choose to abstain from the further meetings. However a fraction of members from within the Panchayat thought of overcoming the awkwardness of the situation by organizing themselves to attend meetings as usual to face and challenge the somewhat a critical face. They build confidence among themselves to establish their self-entity. A minimal number of the WERs revealed that they no doubt received support from the government officials and administration. Whereas a majority held the opposite view reason being that the male members would not encourage any progressive measures for the women and they were not in any way prepared to reconcile with either a superior or even an equal position for their women members. However, it is gratifying to observe that women representatives ignored the non co-operative behavior of their colleagues and pushed further their own efforts to resolve the problems of the area. The data indicates how the panch members feel about increasing and accelerating the efficiency of working in the Panchayats. They feel that their should be practically no interference from the family and community stalling the independent functioning of the panch women members. The panch members complained that they get no
assistance and help from family members in the discharge of their domestic work. A majority of the respondents revealed that financial assistance is a necessary ingredient for their self esteem, their independent functioning and their committed concern and approach to the needs and urges of the people of the area.

In conclusion it may be considered that to achieve the women empowerment, advancement can be facilitated with the co-ordination of different sections of the society such as male gentry, religious heads, political leaders who should come forward and shun their interpersonal interest even ego to understand and appreciate that the women are equally as important segments of society as men. Male chauvinism must go the sooner so much the better. Unless the male ridden society is transformed and replaced by a better socio-economic set up where men and women are equal co-workers, the future of human set up appears to be bleak.


Education plays the key role in the entry of women in politics. Mass literacy programmers are to be adopted for the eradication of illiteracy. If more and more women are educated, it will enable to bring more women in the mainstream politics. An Awareness Campaign about women’s political and legal rights should be organized twice or once in a month mainly in the rural areas. Women leaders should inspire women to participate in the political, rallies, election companying, meetings etc and this will increase women’s interest in politics. Political training should be imparted to both man and women legislators. There in an urgent need to create a political will to change the attitude of the people as ‘Politics is social work’. Women should be encouraged to participate in the grass root administration and through participation they will be trained and experienced. These women must be given a chance in the decision-making process. Criminalization of politics and character assassination are the greatest hindrances to women’s entry and it was felt that the increase in the number of women in the decision-making bodies would help in countering these problems. Women should take active role in the political parties. Their leadership capabilities will force the political parties to project more women as candidates for election. Women should join in the trade unions, pressure groups, and other women organizations and service to these organizations will import leadership
ability among them. To join access to high-level political decision-making, one needs to have an extra ordinary strength and will and determination. It may mean sacrificing personal pleasure and happiness women politicians have to work hard, twice as hard as their male counterparts in order to be recognized and to make their presence felt. Political parties should be liberal towards women. They must consider women as fittest candidates. Deprived by the political parties women are bound to contest election as independent candidates where there is less chance of winning. After entering in the administrative bodies, women should not limit themselves within the party politics. They must engage themselves to the various committees and prove their proficiencies. Strengthening the linkage between women politicians and women’s organization is also needed. The Government and all political parties should take initiative to pass the women reservation bill in the Parliament to make 33% reservation into practice. Only then we can hope for a handful number of women into politics. Agencies for better political communication should be established from where accurate political, economic and educational information can be given.

From the Analysis, observation as well as field data the important findings emerges that Illiteracy and woman empowerment are of great concern not only to India but also to most developing countries. It was seen that 29 percent are illiterate and only 38 percent have been taking education up to the level of higher secondary standard and only 13 percent upto postgraduate level. Political participation means participation in the exercise of power, the power to effectively influence decision-making processes and policies, to reverse the existing situation wherever they are disadvantageous and to bring about necessary social changes. It is untenable to argue that a substantial increase in the representation of women will automatically lead to greater promotion of women’s interest. There are various factors, which are responsible for the low participation of women in politics. The causes behind low participation of women in politics include poor educational level, poor economic condition, shyness, less support from guardians, family as well as society. Failure in politics is caused due to mostly family burden followed by poor education and poor economic condition. There is a gradual increase in the number of female contestants in the Assam Legislative Assembly Elections since 1991, however, till now it is not
upto the mark. Reservation policy for women in the Assembly and in the parliament would provide at least a greater opportunity for women to come into mainstream of politics.

16. **Panchayati Raj in India, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, New Delhi. (2008).**

   Study on elected women representatives in panchayati raj institutions. New Delhi: IMPR.

   This study analyzed issues related to elected women representatives vis-à-vis their male counterparts. It investigated their socio-economic characteristics, tracked their political careers over the past three rounds of election, and examined the quality of their post-election participation in terms of performance of their roles. A total of 23 states, 114 districts, 228 blocks and 1368 gram panchayats were selected for the study. The responsibilities that accompany a higher position in panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) are reflected in the higher proportion of Pradhans, as compared to ward members, spending the greater part of their time in panchayats related works. In case of women representatives, prior association with any form of politics was low, and for most women the act of contesting the first election signalled their entry into active politics. Whatever prior association they had was of a limited nature. Overall, 93% male pradhans reported performing their primary role of organizing and attending gram sabha meetings. Though in smaller numbers than male pradhans, 86% female pradhans reported executing this important role of being a local panchayati raj functionary. However, the participation of women citizens of the village was quite low (less than 25%). The selection of beneficiaries for different schemes is usually done during gram sabha meetings (56%). But at least one-third (31%) of the time, these lists are prepared ahead of the meetings and are present for mere approval by the gram sabhas. Elected representatives (81%) mentioned that most of the time the programme guidelines related to drawing up the list of beneficiaries appear to be adhered to. However, the community’s perception about beneficiary selection for different schemes and its implementation were not that high. Training in ‘Rules and Regulations of Panchayats’ and in ‘Roles and Responsibilities of Panchayats’ are very critical for better performance, but these were attended by only 57% and 43% of the representatives respectively. Irrespective of gender and position, three-fifths apparently felt the need for training on ‘Rules
and Regulations of Panchayats’. It was found that overall elected women representatives were functioning within an enabling environment at the level of the village, community and the household. The positive impact of working as a panchayati raj functionary is evident from the fact that a sizeable proportion of women representatives perceive enhancement in their self-esteem (79%), confidence (81%) and decision making ability (74%). While no gender discrimination in panchayats was mentioned by 60% of the elected women representatives, acceptability in panchayat meetings and enabling them to raise issues freely was mentioned by 94% women members. The performance of women representatives who belonged to the younger age category (21-35 years) was better than those who were above 35 years. Educated women representatives showed a significant positive correlation with better performance than those who were illiterate. It was suggested that younger and educated women should be encouraged to join politics. 43% of the women elected did not receive any training. Hence training should not only be made mandatory for all elected representatives, but it should also be organized regularly. Women can become better performers by virtue of being politically more aware and experienced, thus effort should be made not only to maintain the representation of women in politics in terms of their percentage, but also their ability in politics.

17. NAYANA (2008): A Minor Research Project on “Empowerment Of Women Representatives Ingram Panchayats – A Case Study Of Udupi District

It is with a view to making an in-depth study of the Empowerment of Women Representatives in Gram Panchayats, that this study was undertaken with the specific objectives i.e. to study and assess the level of awareness of the elected women members about their roles and responsibilities and various development programmes, to study the involvement of elected women members in decision-making and the problems and difficulties faced by the elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats. In the completion of the dissertation, historical as well as empirical methods have been adopted.

In the light of the view of the objectives and on the basis of analysis the study indicated that in all the thirty two panchayats, it has been found that women are fairly young in age, which indicates that the younger generation of women have
realized the value of political participation. It has been observed that the participation of respondents with below secondary education tends to be more in a decentralized democracy. Regarding the caste profile, one third of the representatives belonged to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. The reservation of seats for these groups ensured their participation in Gram Panchayats. It is found that the Christians had a better representation than Muslim members in the Gram Panchayats. It reveals that majority of the respondents are married and are able to balance their roles in family life and political life. An overwhelming majority of the respondents come from joint-family background. The occupational status of the respondents’ shows that, majority of them were housewives engaged in the household related activities.

A majority of the respondents belonged to low income groups. Most of the women are from non-political background and entered politics due to the pressure of political parties, husband and family members. Social status of the family tends to bear a strong influence in determining women empowerment in Gram Panchayat than the economic status of the family. Majority of the respondents are only the members in Gram Panchayats.

It is found that a majority of the Gram Panchayats are headed by male presidents. Majority of the respondents have represented their wards for the first time. It indicates the lack of experience, skill and ability of participation on the part of members. The members have secured self-satisfaction and self respect and also acquired a new identity because of their participation in welfare services.

Most of the respondents knew that reservation of seats had been made for women from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and they were in favour of the Bill. This shows that the awareness level of women in Gram Panchayat is quite high. Majority of the respondents have awareness of their roles and responsibilities. They always visit the ward and interact with people to identify the problems of the wards. The nature of participation by the respondents in Panchayat proceedings and the ward sabha are quite encouraging. Involvement of women in the public activity is important for empowerment of women. Majority of the respondents have strong consciousness of their role in Panchayats and are capable of handling issues independently. The respondents in most of the Gram Panchayats discuss village
problems in meetings, interact with people to identify the needs of the community and implement developmental programmes. Majority of respondents have made specific contributions in the form of taking initiative to provide basic infrastructure and water connection forward. Decision-making role is important for empowerment. Majority of the respondents have involved themselves actively in decision making process. They have also exhibited potentiality to emerge as decision makers. Large proportions of respondents present the problems in the meetings and get the approval. They are aware of their responsibilities and discharge their functions in Panchayat independently. Dominance by male members still exists in the Panchayat. The respondents think that only illiterate and ignorant members are dominated by male members.

A majority of respondents have shown interest in continuation in politics. A large proportion of the respondents’ opinion is that women leaders have got extra responsibilities towards women. Most of the respondents are of the opinion that training should be imparted to newly elected representatives. The problems faced by majority of the women in politics are balancing family life and professional career, lack of previous political experience, lack of knowledge of the Panchayat Act, lack of awareness, inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence.


This study was conducted by Shri Shiva Kumar Lal in Allahabad District of Uttar Pradesh with the objective to examine the fact as to whether inadequate representation and participation of women in the Panchayat Raj institution is one of the major factors that has contributed to the low status of women in the rural areas, to identify the causes and obstacles that infringe the participation of women in the Panchayat Raj institutions, to examine as to how far the participation of women in the political process has made a dent in the grim issues and challenges before women. The survey was conducted of 20 development blocks of Allahabad district (Uttar Pradesh) consisting of 710 women gram pradhans out of 1408 total gram pradhans.
After analysis of the study shows that nearly all the SC gram pradhans and about 85% of the other women gram pradhans are illiterate with very poor understanding and knowledge of the gram panchayat manuals, their rights and responsibilities, poverty alleviation and employment generating schemes which are currently operational in the rural areas. They are even unaware of the major sources of revenue of the gram panchayats. Almost all the SC women gram pradhans and nearly 30% of those hailing from other backward classes (OBC), are dummy gram pradhans in the sense that either they avoid participating in the meetings of the Gram Sabha altogether or simply sit through the meetings of the GP without any active participation in the deliberations whatsoever. Only those women gram pradhans who belong to the general category and a very small percentage from the backward classes actively participate in the meetings of the gram sabha and are involved in the decision making process.

Most of the women pradhans who were sympathetic and conscious towards the problems, plights and issues faced by the village women community were nonetheless pathetically indifferent towards raising the issues in the meetings of the gram panchayat. Political participation of women in the local rural bodies has hardly made any noticeable dent in terms of raising their social and economic status, improving the literacy ratio, providing health, maternity and sanitation benefits to women and ameliorating violence, oppression, menace of dowry, rape, discrimination etc. Political consciousness in general and awareness regarding women’s status and related issues in particular are more marked in the developed blocks of Handia as compared to Shankargarh block (which is primarily a backward block).

Almost all of the women gram pradhans were of the view that lack of education, male dominance, degraded social status, family workload, immobility and ignorance of rules and regulations etc are serious impediments in their performance. Almost all the women gram pradhans agreed that granting reservation and thus paving the way for political participation in the rural local bodies is a praiseworthy step towards women empowerment but about 80% held the view that employment and asset generation for women will prove to be a better and a more effective delivery vehicle for empowerment.
Women in rural areas have proportionately the least possessions, personal wealth, assets, land, skills, education, information, social status, leadership traits and capabilities for mobilization, which determines the degree of decision making and power, and as a result, their dependence on men increases. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985) was a landmark for the cause of women, wherein the concept of ‘women and development’ was introduced for the first time. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment providing 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj was a step taken to promote their role in decision making process at the grass root level. Rajasthan was the first State in India to inaugurate Panchayati Raj on 2nd October 1959. Four districts of Rajasthan, namely Baran, Sikar, Pali and Alwar were studied to probe the nature of participation of elected women representatives (EWRs) at the gram panchayat level. In this study, the total sample of elected women representatives was 117, among whom 27 were Sarpanches and 90 were ward members. More than half of the EWRs were illiterate, 33 (28%) were functionally literate, approximately 16 (14%) had been to school up to Standard V, and very few (only 8) had studied up to Class X. More than 50% worked in their own fields and very few had to work as labourers in others’ fields. Regarding work experience, only 16% had experience of any social activity in the village. About 38% EWRs were aware of the responsibilities associated with their participation in governance. Among the Sarpanches 59% and among ward members almost 33% women were aware of their responsibilities. Half of the EWRs did not have any collaboration with NGOs, and this showed that their relationship with voluntary agencies is an area which needs to be probed and looked into seriously. Panchayats in India suffer from lack of funds for development. As 67% of the funds flow through government schemes like Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Integrated Rural Development Programme, etc., and 14% of the EWRs did not know about the source of funds, in many Panchayats, the functionaries were not able to manage the fund situation with regard to the Gram Sabha. The power to financially handle and monitor the Panchayat should be transferred to the community. It would give an outlet to Women Panches for redressing grievances against the Panchayat. Government and non-government
organizations need to cooperate and collaborate with Panchayati Raj Institutions for offering technical assistance, support services and training to Panches and to the Gram Sabha. Financial rights should be given to people at the PRIs. The participation of common people in panchayats needs to be enhanced. The role of women in Panchayati Raj depends on the power structure in place and the resulting hierarchies which decide the actual space of women, and the facilities/provisions related to nutrition, health, livelihood opportunities, education exposure, decision making, etc. available to them. Constitutional amendments are needed, but more important is the dynamics prevalent at the grass root level. If due space is not made available to women, any provisions are not going to work. Women have to realize their potential as an individual, and people at all levels have to not only accept it, but make efforts to accept that space.


This study conducted in 2003 in Haryana, investigated the socioeconomic and political background of elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions, the extent of knowledge and awareness about Panchayati Raj System; and their role in the decision making process. It covered 2 Zila Parishads, namely Jind and Kurukshetra, 4 Panchayat Samitis and 16 Gram Panchayats. Data was collected through questionnaire method. It was found that 63% women representatives were in the age group 21-30 years, 60% were from the upper castes, 21% of them had studied up to primary level, and 17% were educated upto high school. A majority of respondents earned less than Rs.5000 per month. Nearly 71% women were from nuclear families and only 18% had affiliation with a political party in the state. Haryana Government had launched a large-scale training programme for elected representatives, but 97% respondents had not attended any type of training at any level. More than 80% women were not aware of the clause for 33% reservation for women in Panchayat, but all of them were aware of their 5 year term. 61% respondents were not aware of the quorum required for meetings. 80% women members were not aware of the taxes imposed by Panchayats, and 86% was unaware of the schemes implemented by Panchayats. About 80% participants were not aware of rural development schemes like SGRY and the funds received under
this scheme. The reasons for their low level of awareness were dependence on their husbands, lack of interest, illiteracy and lack of training, etc. It was suggested that there is a need to train women leaders at regular intervals, and interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected women leaders should be encouraged. There should be chapters on Panchayati Raj and women's empowerment in all classes at school level, and compulsory questions should be set in examinations. The media, both print and electronic, can play an important role in creating awareness in rural society. Women leaders need to be encouraged by publicising their leadership qualities, and giving them honour in public meetings. Different NGOs should undertake the tasks of training, encouraging, organising, mobilizing and guiding elected women representatives.

21. Nambiar (2001) in her study of ‘Making the Gram Sabha Work’ noted the difference utilities in organizing the Gram Sabha. Majority of women reported that they were not informed or invited to the meetings. While other were hesitant in participating in meetings in the presence of a large number of elder members. However, they have to forego their day’s wages or household duties just to identify beneficiaries as to convey what the gram Panchayat would do in future.

22. Pai (1998) according to his field notes in Meerut District ‘Pradhans in New Panchayats’ revealed that many of the Pradhans were illiterate and only able to put their signatures on official papers. Regarding their roles, the study revealed that they were almost insignificant in the functioning of Gram and Block Panchayat bodies. As they belonged to better off families in the villages, they do not work outside their homes. They agreed to stand for elections due to family pressure and also the decision of their community and not because they were keen to do so. The reservations provided by the Government had forced them to contest elections; provision of reservation has not led them to participate in decision-making in local bodies.

23. Palanithuri (1997) in a case study ‘New Panchayati Raj System at Work: An Evaluation of Tamil Nadu’ reported that they were not informed or invited to the meetings in male headed Gram Panchayat. Women members have always projected the issues relating to women. It is common that the husbands of the members used to accompany them (women) when they come to attend the meetings.
CONCLUSION

A number of literatures and so many research works have already been done in this field. G. Palanithuri (1997) in his case study of Tamil Nadu reported that women were not reported or invited to the meetings in male headed Gram Panchayat. Husbands of the members used to accompany them (women) when they come to attend the meetings. Nambiar (2001) in her study of ‘Making the Gram Sabha Work’ noted the difference utilities in organizing the Gram Sabha. Majority of women reported that they were not informed or invited to the meetings. S. Pai (2001) in her field notes in Meerut District found that Pradhanis in Panchayats were illiterate and only able to put their signatures on officials papers. The women representatives contest for election due to family pressure and also the decision of their community and not because of their own interest. Shiva Kumar Lal (2007) Almost all of the women gram pradhans were of the view that lack of education, male dominance, degraded social status, family workload, immobility and ignorance of rules and regulations etc are serious impediments in their performance. Dr. Sing (2004) presents the findings of an empirical study of the elected women representatives of the PRIs of Haryana for exploring the extent of their empowerment as a result of the implementation of 73rd Amendment Act. Ms. Nayana (2008) Large proportions of respondents present the problems in the meetings and get the approval. They are aware of their responsibilities and discharge their functions in Panchayat independently. Dominance by male members still exists in the Panchayat. The respondents think that only illiterate and ignorant members are dominated by male members Kaul and Sahni (2009) tries to explore the extent of political participation of women elected representatives in Panchayats and the problems faced by them in two districts of Jammu and Kathua. Patnaik (2005) finds out the participation of elected representatives belonging to weaker sections in the functioning of four gram panchayats in Orissa’s Dhenkanal district, in order to observe the extent to which numerical representation has been successful in the actual exercise of power by these sections. Sahaas (2013) Although, women representatives are actively involved in social work, but they are acting like, agents of implementing the government schemes rather than the leader of local self-government. Moreover, women members have reported of family interference, especially from the husbands in making Panchayat decisions which further restricts the autonomy of the female representatives in Panchayat. Sadhu1 Goutam,
Sharma Chandra Bhushan (2014), Women Representatives are getting limited opportunities and freedom to participate in socio-cultural and educational activities. The women among upper castes and those belonging to economically well-off families have more participation in the panchayat activities as compare to other backward castes and poor women.

On perusal of the review of the literature related to the present topic / area of research, it is clear that the empowerment of women has been the main focal concern of the researcher in India. Most of the studies has been conducted in the different parts of the country, covering different aspects of women Empowerment at different levels. Although a few studies have been conducted in the State of Haryana also like Nagpal (2013), Vikas Nandal (2013) Singh (2004). The study conducted by Nagpal (2013) confined to Sirsa district of Haryana and Nandal’s study a sociological study and conducted in only village of Sonipat district. The study of Singh (2004) was also conducted in two districts of Haryana mainly to know the knowledge and awareness among the women representatives of PRIs. Moreover the study was conducted 11 years back since then a lot of changes in socio- economic and political situation of the state has taken place. Moreover, these studies are conducted at small level and have not covered various aspects of women empowerment. Since enactment of 73rd Constitutional amendment in 1992 a lot of experience exposure has been gained by the women in the area of politics because of reservation. Despite reservation for women, effective participation in PRIs have failed due to misuse and manipulation by the local power broker. Ignorance of women about their rights and procedure and about their potential and responsibilities have kept them far behind men in the local body. Keeping above situation in view the researcher attempted to have a study on this topic to explore and investigate the level of performance exhibited by the women heads of PRIs in fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted by the Panchayati Raj act, and to explore the various problem and challenges being faced by them.