

**The Role of Women Representatives in the  
Local Self Government ( Panchayat Raj)with  
special reference to Thane District – A Study**

**Synopsis Submitted to Madurai Kamaraj University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Award of the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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November 2018

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **The Role of Women representatives in the Local Self Government ( Panchayat Raj) with special referee to Thane District – A Study**

#### **Introduction**

Women in many countries still lack right to inherit property, own land, get education, obtain credit, earn income or work outside home, control their fertility. They are still widely under-represented in decision-making at the household or social level. Empowerment by means of modest income generation projects is clearly insufficient to ameliorate the prospects for a high quality of life for women.

The World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction, and as a primary development assistance goal. The Bank has also made gender mainstreaming a priority in development assistance, and is in the process of implementing an ambitious strategy to this effect. The promotion of women's empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing, and that women's empowerment is a means to other ends. A recent policy research report by the World Bank (2001a), for example, identifies gender equality both as a development objective in itself, and as a means to promote growth, reduce poverty, and promote better governance. A similar dual rationale for supporting women's empowerment has been articulated in the policy statements put forth at several high-level international conferences in the past decade (e.g., the Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing+5 declaration and resolution, the Cairo Programme of Action, the Millennium Declaration, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]).

In India the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of India (in the Preamble and fundamental rights) where by the constitution upholds and grants the quality to women. The National commission for women, which was set up in 1990 through an Act of Parliament to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women, is considered to be the apex body to ensure rights and work towards the women empowerment. The successive five year plans have made efforts towards

making women economically strong. However, in social hierarchy, women, mostly in the rural areas continue to remain in a lower strata compared to the men. The efforts over the decades have also been changing steadily over the years-from social, Economic empowerment to political empowerment.

In India female literacy rate is as low as 39.42 percent as compared to 63.86 percent of men and education remains the catalyst towards empowering women in rural India. The major problem in the villages is that disadvantaged women are unaware of their right and privileges. Empowering women will ensure better justice, better living, and a stable society.

Concept of 'Bharat Nirman', 'Shining India', 'Feel Good', 'Rainbow', 'Socio-Economic Development', 'Mainstream', 'National Building process', 'Grass Root Administration' and 'Good Governance' is not possible without participation and empowerment of rural downtrodden women.

According to Amartya Sen, "Women are less likely to secure favourable outcomes for themselves in household decision making processes. They feel that their long term security lies in subordinating their well being to that of male authority figures".

Nearly whole of Mahatma Gandhi's life was dedicated to struggle for the freedom of the country. Not only did Gandhi desire to free the nation from foreign exploitation, he also wanted to remove the bonds of superstitions and ignorance, which had made the society static. In such a society, the position of women was very bad. That is why Gandhiji took up the cause of the women. As an ardent lover of humanity, he was an enemy of injustice and inequality. He had an understanding of women and their problems and had deep sympathy for them. Gandhiji's efforts towards liberation of women were reflections of his beliefs and attitude towards them

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of constitution of India in 1993 are landmarks to ensure political empowerment of women.

## **Political Empowerment of Women**

Mahatma Gandhiji would have insisted upon women's equal participation and devotion of power to the institutions of local Self-Governance and the Village Panchayat. The Panchayat Raj Act provides for people's active participation in the local administration by granting them power to question and by requesting their participation in planning for development of their villages. The Self-Help Group women are mentally ready now and have moral courage to contest the local and Legislative election. There is every possibility that the growth of Self-Help Group in the future will provide large number of women leaders in India. The Government of India, the State Governments and many international agencies like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF have been involved in developing programmes to deal with child labour. Using the Self-Help Group to empower the mother and the child for the eradication of child labour is being given serious thought. The processes have been going on for the last few years and as of now 384 Self Help Groups have been formed for eradication of child labour. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Indian Constitution is considered as a breakthrough towards ensuring equal access and increased participation in political power structure for women.

## **Economic Empowerment of Women**

Economic independence or access to an inherited or self-generated income is considered to be the major means of empowerment of women. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (India) was a major step towards protective legislation and establishing the principles of equality, as it provides for equal remuneration to men and women workers and prevention of discrimination against women in the matter of employment. According to the New Policy Initiative known as "Vision 2000: Policy for the Advancement of Women in Tamil Nadu," each and every project and programme in Tamil Nadu was decided to be designed in a manner that will re-define the roles of women and men, such that it will enable them to work as equal partners. The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women was established to act as a nodal point for bringing women into the mainstream in all programmes and projects. This policy has been disseminated through all avenues to all organizations,

governmental and non-governmental, which work for the cause of women. Self-Help-Group's main activity is the establishment of savings and credit. Savings encourages people to plan and for future needs. The group members have open discussions and think about various options. Such discussions help in strengthening the analytical and problem solving skills of the members. Enterprising attributes are initiative, creativity, flexibility, leadership, independence, problem solving, persuasive, calculated risk taking, need for achievement, hard work and learning from mistakes.

### **Panchayati Raj**

The Panchayati raj is a South Asian political system found mainly in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago<sup>[1][2][3][4]</sup>, and Nepal. It is the oldest system of local government in South Asia, and historical mentions date to the c. 250 AD period. The word *raj* means "rule" and panchayat means "assembly" (ayat) of five (panch). Traditionally panchayats consisted of wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there were varying forms of such assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and between villages.

The leader of the panchayat was often called the mukhiya or sarpanch, an elected or generally acknowledged position. The modern panchayati raj of India and its gram panchayats are not to be confused with either the traditional system nor with the extra constitutional khap panchayats (or caste panchayats) found in northern India.

Mahatma Gandhi advocated panchayat raj as the foundation of India's political system. It would have been a decentralised form of government where each village would be responsible for its own affairs. The term for such a vision was *Gram Swaraj* ("village self-governance"). Instead India developed a highly centralised form of government.<sup>[9]</sup> However, this has been moderated by the decentralisation of several administrative functions to the local level, empowering elected gram panchayats.<sup>[10]</sup> There are significant differences between the traditional panchayati raj system, that envisioned by Gandhi, and the system formalised in India in 1992.

## **Panchayati Raj in India**

### **Ancient Period**

In the time of the RigVeda (1700 BC), evidences suggest that self-governing village bodies called 'sabhas' existed. With the passage of time, these bodies became panchayats (council of five persons). Panchayats were functional institutions of grassroots governance in almost every village. The Village Panchayat or elected council had large powers, both executive and judicial. Land was distributed by this panchayat which also collected taxes out of the produce and paid the government's share on behalf of the village. Above a number of these village councils there was a larger panchayat or council to supervise and interfere if necessary. Casteism and feudalistic system of governance under Mughal rule in the medieval period slowly eroded the self-government in villages. A new class of feudal chiefs and revenue collectors (zamindars) emerged between the ruler and the people. And, so began the stagnation and decline of self-government in villages.

### **Medieval Period**

During the Sultanate period the sultans of Delhi knew that it would be impracticable to govern a vast country like India directly from the centre. So they established various local bodies for smooth governance. Panchayats were prevalent in villages in the medieval period. Agricultural Produce from villages was the main source of the revenue of the state.

Maratha governance also constituted local self-government institutions in rural and urban areas during the role of the pashas in the present day Maharashtra.

### **British Period**

Self-governance was not the objective of the British-government. Their main objective was the protection of imperial interests. It was only with such as object that the powers were given to the local level. More attention was paid to urban administration rather than rural areas.

During 1883-85 the local self-government acts were passed in many provinces. Local boards could be superseded in case of abuse of powers. The British bureaucracy did not consider Indians as experienced enough for local self-governance.

During the ancient time the village Panchayat worked successfully. There was effective state control and management and this was the only local agency for the village.

### **Post-Independence period**

Panchayat raj had to go through various stages. The First Five Year Plan failed to bring about active participation and involvement of the people in the Plan processes, which included Plan formulation, implementation and monitoring. The Second Five Year Plan attempted to cover the entire countryside with National Extensive Service Blocks through the institutions of Block Development Officers, Assistant Development Officers, Village Level Workers, in addition to nominated representatives of village panchayats of that area and some other popular organisations like co-operative societies. But the plan failed to satisfactorily accomplish decentralisation. Hence, committees were constituted by various authorities to advise the Centre on different aspects of decentralisation.

At least in part to provide the Gandhian goal of direct political participation of people at the grass root level, in 1956, the National Development Council appointed a committee under Balwant Rai Mehta, which submitted its report in 1957 in which it recommended:- » A 3-tier structure consisting of Zila Parishad at the District level, Panchayat Samiti at the Block level and GramPanchayat at the village level.

The failed attempts to deal with local matters at the national level caused, in 1992, the reintroduction of panchayats for their previously used purpose as an organisation for local self-governance. There are about 250,000 gram panchayats in India, that are being gigabit-broadband enabled under the BharatNet and Digital India initiative.<sup>[4] [5] [6]</sup>

## **Structure**

Gram panchayats are panchayats at base level in panchayat raj institutions (or PRIs), governed by the 73rd Amendment, which is concerned with Rural Local Governments

- Panchayat at District (or apex) Level
- Panchayat at Intermediate Level
- Panchayat at Base Level

The gram panchayat is divided into wards and each ward is represented by a Ward Member, also referred to as a Panch or Panchayat Member, who is directly elected by the villagers. The panchayat is chaired by the president of the village, known as a Sarpanch. The term of the elected representatives is five years. The Secretary of the panchayat is a non-elected representative, appointed by the state government, to oversee panchayat activities.<sup>[9]</sup>

## **Panchayat Raj in Maharashtra State**

Rural governance in India is based on the Panchayati Raj system. It is a three tier system, with the Zilla Parishad at the district level, Blocks at the middle level and Village Council at the lowest level. It is governed under the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act 1961' act of Maharashtra State

### **Zilla Parishad**

Zilla Parishad (commonly known as ZP) is a local government body at the district level in India. It looks after the administration of the rural area of the district and its office is located at the district headquarters. There are 34 Zilla Parishads in Maharashtra

### **Panchayat Samiti**

Panchayat samiti is a local government body at the Tehsil or Taluka level in India. It works for the villages of the Tehsil or Taluka that together are called a

Development Block. The Panchayat Samiti is the link between the Gram Panchayat and Zilla Parishad.

There are 355 panchayat samitis or block panchayats in Maharashtra.

### **Gram Panchayat\**

Gram panchayats are local self-government bodies at the village level. They are a cornerstone of the panchayati raj system. A gram panchayat can be set up in villages with a population of more than five hundred. There is a common gram panchayat for two or more villages if the population of these villages is less than five hundred, whereupon it is called a group-gram panchayat. There are 28,813 gram panchayats in Maharashtra.

### **Election**

After every five years, Maharashtra State Election Commission conducts elections in all local bodies.

### **New Panchayat Raj Institutions**

The 73<sup>th</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) of the Indian Constitution have served as a breakthrough towards ensuring equal access and increased participation in political power structure for women. The PRIs play a central role in the process of enhancing women's participation in public life. The PRIs and the local Self Governments are actively involved in the implementation and execution of the National Policy for Women at the grassroots level.

### **73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment historical milestone for women's political participation**

To protect the interests of the disadvantaged segments of the population, notably women, the scheduled castes (SC) and the scheduled tribes (ST), and to ensure their participation in democratic decentralization process, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments was passed with the provision of reservation on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1993. The Act reserved one-third of all seats in the local self governing bodies

for rural (all three levels of Panchayats) and urban areas (Municipal body) respectively for women and reservation for SC/STs proportionate to their population. Though reservation for SCs and STs are in place in other elected bodies (national and state legislative assemblies), the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment is the first one in India that mandated women's reservation in local body election. Article 243D of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act covers, in detail, the manner in which reservations are to be provided to women and others belonging to the SC/STs in the local Panchayat election at all three levels.

**Reservations to elected seats are mandated by the Constitution in the following pattern**

- i) One-third of the total numbers of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat are to be reserved for women. This is inclusive of the reservation provided for women belonging to the SC/STs (Article 243D (3))
- ii) Within the reservation provided for persons belonging to the SC/STs as detailed above, not less than one-third of the total number of seats that are reserved for different categories in each Panchayat are to be reserved for women belonging to the SC/STs (Article 243 D (2))
- iii) These seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies within a Panchayat (243D (1) and (3)).

**Statement of the Problem**

Gender equality and empowerment of women is recognized globally as a key element to achieve progress in all areas. In order to promote development of women, the UN adopted Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1979, which came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1981.

In the Indian Constitution framed after independence and in subsequent Amendments thereafter this factor was continuously and always realized that women's participation in public sector needs to be enhanced. On the basis of the

recommendations of Balwant Raj Mahta committee in 1959, a three tier-Panchayat Raj system was adopted. Then, it was accepted that overlooking of women development, could not carry out the overall development of the country. For these reasons, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment was passed in 1992 to ensure one third participation of women in Panchayats which would strengthen Panchayati Raj System. With the passing of this Amendment, the Constitution of Gram Sabha (Village Committee) became mandatory and the total number of women members in Panchayat became one-third of overall strength. This change in the system had miraculous effect bringing forth lakhs of women in Panchayats for leadership. With the adoption of this Amendment, the Panchayati Raj System got recognition as the third stage constituent of the democratic administration of the country, on one hand and on the other hand, the rights of the entity of women was also duly accepted. This Amendment of the Constitution was a relevant step to bring forth the hidden potential of women. It has envisioned women's participation in the process of planning, decision-making, implementation and delivery system the village Panchayats in India.

In India, nationwide study on Elected Women Representatives commissioned by the ministry of Panchayat Raj in 2007-08 had concluded that the earlier notions of women being made proxies for male relatives have gradually coded space to the recognition that given the opportunity to participate in the political system, women are as capable as their male counterparts. Women Elected Representatives have used their office not only to main stream gender issues but also to address the development needs of the community as a whole and also issues such as health, sanitation, early childhood care, drinking water etc., that have special impact on the lives of women. This shows the positive development towards the women leaders in Panchayats. On the other side women are pushed forward into the local political arena through the method of reservation of seats and this is how they form "critical mass" which ought to result in governance more responsive to women. Even through the process of women development is ongoing, this space for women in politics has become an important area of analysis, because the socialization process has created differences between men and women both positively and negatively and has placed men at the

top of hierarchy, who would not allow women to exercise their political power. This problem is multifaceted and single solution cannot be offered since complex factors and situations form the core of the problem.

The status of women in Indian Society is far below than the man. Though the size of the female population is more or less 50 percent in any society, their participation in the developmental aspects is very less due to, socio- cultural values of the women in particular community. Due to the overall changes in the society, participation of women in public sphere is also increasing, thanks to statutory provisions for women

The researcher aimed at studying the prospects and problems of women representatives. Hence, he has chosen the topic the role of Women representatives in the Local Self Government ( Panchayat Raj) in the field of Rural development and also study their political awareness in Thane district, Maharashtra State.

### **Research Design**

The research design of sociological research can be said to be the plan of action, the strategy and the structure of overall procedure to gain more knowledge of a specific problem or a specific aspect of the society (Defender Tagore, 2003, P.163). Descriptive Research Design has been adopted by the researcher as it is considered to be suitable design for the study.

The purpose of this research design is to describe the individuals, community, society and any other units under investigation. The basic thrust of this study is to gain familiarity and the insight to the role of women representatives in the Panchayat Raj Institutions for rural development in Thane district, Maharashtra State. The researcher has focused his attention on studying the role of performance on the basis of their knowledge about the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

### **Universe of the study**

Thane district has been selected as the universe of the study. It comprises fifteen taluks and thirteen panchayat unions. From these thirteen panchayat unions

the researcher made a study among the female panchayat presidents at village level in Thane district.

### **Sampling Design**

In Thane district there are 960 village panchayats. The total number of women panchayat presidents is 325 in which 166 came under general women quota, 90 came under SC/ST category and 69 came under general quota of men and women. Since, the numbers of women presidents are large in size that is 325, the researcher selected only women quota village panchayat presidents that is 166 as respondents for the study.

Hence, the sampling method used in this study is Census method. Total of 166 women village presidents were confined to be the unit of study.

### **Sources of data**

Apart from the primary sources of data collection, secondary sources were also used. The secondary data were collected from different sources such as books, journals, documents and news papers to substantiate the primary data and to add validity to the analysis. Information was also collected from the records of the village administrative officers, collectorate of Thane district and through internet source.

The primary sources of data were collected from the respondents with the help schedules furnished to the Women Representatives of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in Thane District, Maharashtra .

The researcher met the respondents in their house and office. The interview method was very useful to collect data from the respondents.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To realize the above interest, the following objectives were formulated.

1. To study the socio-economic background of the women representatives
2. To analyze the political awareness among the women representatives in

## Local Self Govt. (Panchayat Raj) Institutions

3. To examine the problems faced by the women representatives in Panchayat

Raj Institutions

4. To assess the role of women representatives in rural development

### **Review of Literatures**

Reviewing the available literature helps the investigator to have knowledge on the present status of the present field of research and research gap to be fulfilled in future. The investigator visited many libraries and collected information from books and journals. The literature which is very much relevant to the present study is kept under various headings.

Various research studies have been conducted to study the women leadership at Panchayat level in different states. The women's representation has been very encouraging in states like West Bengal, Haryana, and Rajasthan. In fact, in Kerala and Karnataka Gram Panchayat elections, not only 33 percent seats but over 43 percent have been captured by women. Even in state of Orissa a large number of women have come to power at grassroots level, and this achievement becomes all the more spectacular when it is seen against the backdrop of a low literacy level of women in the State, which is 29.1 per cent only. The outcome of these studies is of mixed nature.

The studies in different states reflect that women were used as proxies. The proxies suffer from certain characteristics:

- (i) The display lower level of political awareness
- (ii) They owe their primary loyalty to their family.
- (iii) Their role of an elected representative is merely an extension of their role as a housewife.
- (iv) They serve the patriarchal interests of the family

- (v) They enter the political arena for protecting the constituency of their male relatives and are prepared to vacate the same, once de-reserved, literacy is considered as the major cause for women to be used as sheer proxies.

A Study of the role of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh found that a majority of women Panchayats were housewives and were either illiterate or educated up to the primary level. In large number of cases the decision to participate in the election was not their own. If a seat was reserved for a women, the men who were politically active convinced their wives, mother, sister-in-law to contest the election, in order to keep the family's presence alive in local politics. And it is the men who are exercising the power by proxy today. The Institution of "Sarpanch-pati" or "Adhyaksha-Pati" might not have any legal sanction, but it is thriving in many Panchayats in the State of Madhya Pradesh, Similar observation was made by another study in Uttar Pradesh, where female illiteracy and lack of independent voting rights did not allow women to play active role in the village politics. The Pradhanis played an almost insignificant rule in the functioning of the gram and block Panchayat level bodies. They have never attended any meeting or made any decision about allocation of funds to individual and schemes.

It was also observed that the male members in the family often dominated the women panchas. It has been found that male relatives usually coach women to speak at meetings, or actually do the necessary paper work when the women are illiterate. A survey in Rajasthan showed that women Panchas were not interested to contest again as they felt that the male members in their family did not allow them to function independently. A Study of women elected representatives to Karnataka Panchayat Raj Institutions between 1987 to 1990, conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences at a time when the Zilla Parishads had just come into being revealed that majority of the women elected members had no experience of active politics; usually a male member of the family had been instrumental in persuading the women to contest, and in many cases women continued to have all their time for household chores as usual, because the men in their families were involved in discharging the political

responsibilities on their behalf. However, it has been reported after two years when the same Zilla Parishads were studied, changes were evident.

### **Profile of the study area**

Thane is among the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the Indian peninsula. It is an ancient and prestigious city in the India state of Maharashtra.

Thane District forms a part of North Konkan Region which lies between the Sahyadri hills in the east and the Arabian Sea in the West. It has coastal line of about 113 K.M. It lies Between 18°42' and 20°20' North latitudes and 72°45' to 73°48' East longitudes in eastern part of the state Its East-West spread is maximum at the South which is about 100 K.M. The North-south length is approximately 140 K.M District head quarter Thane is about 25 K.M from the international airport and 35 K.M from the main down town of Mumbai City. The district is divided into three parts on the basis of its topography

The central portion having Sahyadri ranges and its slopes is mainly forest area, The Central Region covering mostly paddy fields and Western part along the West coast, where horticulture, cultivation of high quality fodder and vegetables are agricultural practices.

### **Hills**

The Sahyadri ranges, having unbroken boundary run North South in the Eastern region of the district. There are also spurs running laterally to the main ranges. The heights of the mountains are maximum on the East and diminish gradually Westwards. The mountain ranges also spread unevenly in the Central

region of the district. But none of them rises higher than Sahyadries. Yeoor Hills or Mama Bhanja Hills is a hill station in Thane district. This naturally beautiful and pollution free area attracts lot of people.

### **Soil**

The soils of thane district can be conveniently divides into three catagories , Block Soil containing s and Red soil in the eastern region mostly on the slopes and

Brownish-black soil in the patches of the valleys mostly lying between the coastal plains and the hilly slopes of Sahayadri. The first type of soil, which is found in Dahanu, Palghar, Vasai and Thane tahsil, is fertile and useful for horticulture, Paddy cultivation and vegetables. Whereas, the second type which is found in Mokhada, Talasari and some parts of other tahsils on the Eastern slopes is useful for growing coares millets like Nagli and Varai. The third type of soil found in Bhiwandi, Kalyan and Shahapur tahsils is useful, particularly for Paddy cultivation

### **Climate**

The district is distinctly different on the coastal plains and on the eastern slopes. Being fully tropical, the climate on the coast, the coastal strip including Thane, Vasai, Palghar and Dahanu tahsils is very humid and warm. On the other hand, the climate on the eastern slopes and in the plains at the foot of the slopes is comparatively less humid. However, variation in temperature in the eastern region is more than that on the coastal strip. The maximum temperature lies between 28.0 to 35.2 centigrade and the minimum temperature lies between 16.3 to 26.5 centigrade.

### **Rain fall**

The district gets assured rainfall of 2000 to 4000 m.m. from the South-West monsoons during the months June to September. Generally highest rainfall is recorded in the month of July. It is considerably more inland than on the coast. It is also less towards the North more inland than on the coast. It is also less towards the North than towards the South.

### **Govt. Schemes**

The following are the development programmes implemented in Thane district through village Panchayat. Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudan Yojana, Indira Gandhi National old Age Pension Scheme, Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme, Shrava Bal Seva Rajya Nivruthi Vetan Yojana, National Family Welfare Scheme, Jalayuta Shive Yojana

## **Analysis of the Study**

The data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Statistical Analysis was done using Statistical methods of tools which enhanced the data by various means.

Education is one of the important indicators to identify the quality of the leadership. 33.1 percent of the respondents had completed the secondary level of education and 25.3 percent of the respondents had the primary level of education and 18.1 percent of them were illiterates. In this study, the researcher found that the level of education of women representatives was lower.

Interpreting the impact of the media relating to creating awareness of the political affairs it was found that 55.4 percent of the respondents said that they became politically aware by reading news paper, 97.5 percent of the respondents by seeing films and 60 percent of the respondents became politically aware by listening to radio.

53 percent of the women representatives in the study area got information regarding the political matters through the family members as the family members discuss the political matters often in the family. 25.9 percent of the respondents received the information through television.

50.6 percent of the respondents had competed in the elections due to the family pressure. It indicates that participation of women in the election was governed by the choice of family members. 36.1 percent of the respondents contested in PRI election only because of women's reservation policy.

An analysis has been attempted to examine the participation rate of women elected representatives in the meetings. 84.9 percent of the women elected representatives attended the meetings along with their male family members.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of above findings, the following conclusions are drawn.

The Indian Constitution has enshrined equality as a fundamental principle and special efforts have been made to give equal opportunities to women in the social, economic and political spheres. The nation, therefore adopted a new Agenda to bring about equality. Hence, the Panchayat Raj System envisages political and administrative decentralization as embodied in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment. In the contest of this Constitutional Amendment, rural leadership particularly women has assumed great significance and their leadership plays a vital role in making and implementing various developmental programmes. It is a sign of growth, happiness and prosperity not only for the women but also for the entire nation.

The mandatory provision of reservation for women is the step towards their political awakening and empowerment. But, in reality due to this reservation policy, many women are legally and situationally compelled to come to politics. Since, they are inexperienced and not exposed to politics they are reluctant to attend meetings. Lack of confidence also prevents them from asserting their powers, rights and performing their duties. The realization of their capabilities, potentialities and role in society and nation would definitely strengthen their self image and foster in them confidence to take action effectively. Therefore, the women representatives need to be politically awakened, enlightened not only about their rights and duties but also the nature of the Constitution, democratic processes and values of Panchayat Raj Institutions, 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment and its provisions, significance of this Amendment Act and various developmental programmes is needed to articulate their capacity to be creative and effective to achieve the necessary change which the Amendment Act and planners have dreamt to achieve through this powerful

The reservation policy will be more effective if the male members of their family do not interfere in their duties as Panchayat leaders. Non-interference of male members should be brought into force by taking severe action against such male members. The political parties should take the responsibility of preventing male-interference in the affairs of elected women representatives and above all each

political party should willingly come forward to adopt the reservation policy within the party itself.

On the basis of the data collected and the conclusions reached in this study, it is observed that the women representatives need to be politically socialized by way of making them participate in an exclusive political oriented occasions. This would certainly pave the way for building up of their own self-confidence and thereby the overall control over the subordinates shall be maintained. This will be of great moral boost for the women representatives in order to fulfill their commitments in tune with expectations of rural masses in the respective pockets.

The process of rural development lies not only in terms of full-fledged satisfactory level of economy, education, medical facilities etc., but also the dynamic role performance of the elected women representatives on rural infrastructure facilities as far as the universe of this study is concerned. In this context, it is manifestly observed that the women representatives in Panchayat

### **Chapterization**

This study has been divided into IX chapters as follows:

The first chapter deals in detail with the introduction of the study. The second chapter explains the review literature.

The third chapter explains the methodology adopted for the study. The fourth chapter deals with Area profile. The fifth chapter discusses the socio-economic status of the women representatives.

The sixth chapter analyses the level of political awareness among women representatives. The seventh chapter deals with the role of women representatives in Rural Development.

The eighth chapter describes the problems faced by women elected representatives at the village panchayat. The final chapter is the concluding part with the summary and conclusions of the study.