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Subject
“Study on the Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institution in Anand District”

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INTRODUCTION

Panchayati Raj is not a new phenomenon in the country. Its illustration in history goes back to more than a 1000 years. It has its roots in Ancient Indian Institutions when the villages were little republics governed by their Panchayats. During this period, it was not that women could not join politics, but the fact was that they did not take interest in it due to a patriarchal set up. The British through their ruthless method of revenue collection and the introduction of zamindari land tenure system almost destroyed these ancient republics and as well the involvement of women in politics. The British were of the view that “Vote of Women” would be premature in the Indian Society and continued to enforce purdah and prohibition against women’s education. (Bhagat 2005). After Independence, despite having a constitution, which embodies lofty, ideals like equity and equality, social justice could not be achieved so far. Even when India had a woman Prime Minister for quite a number of years, the situation of women at large did not change for the better. Women’s participation in politics remained quite insignificant in India even after 59 years of self-rule. (Nanda 2006)

From October 2nd 1959 when the first Panchayati Raj was inaugurated, on April 24, 1993 after the 73rd Amendment Act came into force it has been an uncertain and undulating journey for Panchayats. The structure and process of Panchayats are equally pivotal as they bring to bear and entitle role member therein to perform. If the overall scenario of Panchayats was largely despairing, another disquieting aspect is that almost one half of rural population was virtually kept out of Panchayat arena. In the traditional Caste Panchayats, Village Panchayats and in the British Scheme of local governments women remained entirely excluded. (Nagendra 2004) In establishing Panchayats most state government apprehend the provision of co-option of two women in case no women could come through direct
elections. Prevalent practice during 1960’s and 1970’s was the co-option of two women at best for each PR body, as women could not come through direct elections, even though the requirement of co-option of women was not followed uniformly for all PR bodies and in every state, for instance Uttar Pradesh Jammu and Kashmir, did not follow the scheme (Institute of Social Studies Trust 1995). From the outset, women’s involvement in PRIs was dominated by two inter-related themes: representation of women in these bodies and effectiveness and outcome of their participation. Co-option of few women was the only available option for women to participate and it was a travesty for it could not produce the desired and verify no results at all. The co-option method, of course provided one convenient scope for the dominant caste/class leaders to install their family women such as wife; mother as their yoke and the very purpose of the policy was led to fall flat. It took 43 years to realize and recognize that women are yet another disadvantaged group and they also require a solution to their discrimination. Women have received a preferential consideration and that too only in the sphere of political representation and that again in local governments (Rao 1996). Women are changing the governance in India. They are being elected to local councils in an unprecedented numbers as a result of amendments to the constitution that mandate the reservation of seats for women in local governments. In India, we call this new system the Panchayati Raj Institution System (PRI). The women whom PRI has brought into politics are now governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district. This process of restructuring the national political and administrative system started as recently as January 1994, and thus it is too early to assess the impact of women’s entry into formal structures of the government. The sheer number of women that PRI has brought into the political system has made a difference. The percentages of women at various levels of political activity have shifted dramatically as a result of the constitutional change,
from 4-5% before to 25-40% after. But the difference is also qualitative, because these women are bringing their experience in the governance of civic society. In this way they are making the state sensitive to the issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice 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. Pai (1998) according to his field notes in Meerut District ‘Pradhanis in New Panchayats’ revealed that many of the Pradhanis 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. 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. In this context, the present study was undertaken.

To Know the Leadership Qualities
(i) To know the obstacles for women in Panchayat and role performance in Panchayat.

(ii) To highlight the factors which overtly or covertly tend to promote or prevent women members from performing their roles.

(iii) To know the nature and extent of participation and role performance in decision-making.

Women constitute more or less than half of the population of any country. But their involvement in politics is insignificant compared to men. Many psychological, social and physical factors hold women back from active political involvement. This is true as far as the state and national level politics is concerned. A democratic country cannot progress if energies of its half population are concerned in the kitchen only. After attaining independence Indian constitution ensured gender equality through various provisions and regulations. It was presumed that these rights would automatically get translated into political development of the women in the country. The issue of women’s participation in politics cannot be viewed in isolation from the general position of women in a society but despite their vast strength, women occupy a marginalized position in the political system.

This step was based on the premises that there can be no true democracy or no true people’s participation in governance and development without equal participation of women in all spheres of life and at different levels of decision-making and then the goals of development cannot be fully realized without women’s full and active participation not only in the development process but also in the shaping of its goals. It is well known that parliamentary democracy is the rule of majority and by ignoring nearly fifty per cent of women’s population; no country can march
towards attaining the goals of justice, liberty and equality under the socialist, egalitarian and democratic framework of India’s Constitution.

Political status of women implies a degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in sharing of power and importance given by the society to the role of women in the political system. The equality and active political participation are inseparable. Participation of women in political arena is integral to the advancement of women. Their political participation means not only using the right to vote, but also power-sharing, co-decision-making, and co-policy-making at all levels of governance of the State. Women’s equal status in every sphere is inextricably linked to country’s progress and development. Political participation of women in India has been neglected even since independence. Though our country has adopted democratic system of government and the women constitute 48.9 per cent of population of the country, but their political participation is very low. Due to various constraints they could not occupy the positions of power and assume leadership roles. Women’s participation has been increasing rapidly but it is not satisfactory. They are also denying opportunities to participate in the administration, even in the making of decisions that affect their life and welfare. Though Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi had believed that women had a positive role to play in the reconstruction of society and the recognition of their equality was an essential step to bring about social justice. This added to the massive participation by the women in the freedom movement and had a direct impact on the political and social elite, including women. After independence, when the constitution was adopted women like Smt. Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Renuka Roy, Durgabai Desmukh etc. took part in the constitution-making. In our Constitution there is guarantee of equality and dignity of the individual and it claimed the fundamental rights of women to political and legal equality and guaranteed non-discrimination in employment and office under the states. Our
Constitution had provided many channels for the development and progress of the women. The preambles of the Constitution, the chapters of Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of the State Policies etc., are the specific objectives of this purpose. These constitutional provisions are meant to empower 48.9 per cent women population in India. Many government and non-government agencies are working for the development of women but in practice we find a wide gap between the stated social objectives and achievements, between the legal framework and imperical realities, between the symbolism and actuality. And this is the reason that after these constitutional safeguards and legal frameworks, the participation is still very low. There are three indicators to assess the political participation of women. i. Participation in the political process as the voters and candidates in election. ii. Political attitudes such as awareness commitment and involvement in politics and autonomy in political action and behaviour. iii. Their impact on the political process. The credit goes to Narsimha Rao government when 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992 Panchayati Raj Act, which not only, provided autonomy to the grassroots but it also provided reservation of one-third of seats for women in every Panchayat and municipality, not less than one-third seats shall be reserved for women belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. This may be allotted by rotation from the constituency to constituency. Till the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Amendments no one was sure about the role to be played by the women in the process of development of the society and women themselves. Since the PRIs have potential to start the process of women empowerment from the village level, it can change the social scenario of the village. The PRIs provide village women, the opportunities for leadership and to take part directly in the decision making in the process of development. It will also help in managing the violence against women. So the following factors had attracted to take the problem of women empowerment
through PRIs for this work. These are: i. To create a healthy environment to exercise women’s rights equal with men in rural areas. ii. For equal participation of women in decision making bodies for their development and welfare. iii. To prepare women for political participation in Parliament and Assemblies also with 33 per cent reservation. iv. To adopt an integrated approach for empowering women through effective convergence of the services, resources, structures and manpower in related sectors. v. To organise women into groups as self help groups for economic empowerment of rural areas. vi. To generate political awareness and political participation in village politics by women through PRIs.

Constitutional provisions: The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard. Constitutional Privileges: i. Equality before law for women (Article 14), ii. The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i)), iii. The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3)), iv. Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16), v. The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d)), vi. To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in
any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A), vii. The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42), viii. The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46), ix. The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47), x. To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)) xi. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3)), xii. Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4)), xiii. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3)), xiv. Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4)).

Women’s Position in Society:

In India, during the Vedic and the Upanishadic period, women enjoyed equal status with men. The Indian civilization produced great women ranging from
Brahma Vadinis (Lady Rishi) to stateswomen, from ideal wife to warrior queen. Hindu mythology showed that the status of the Hindu women during the Vedic period was honorable and respectable. In the same age, women had sufficient freedom to attend fairs, festivals and assemblies. During the post-Vedic period, they started losing their status in the society, which they attained in the Vedic age. They lost their independence and became a subject of protection. Manu, the progenitor of the Hindu race stated that a woman should be kept day and night in subordination by the males of the family- the woman had to be protected by her father in childhood, by her husband in young age and by the sons in old age. He did not treat woman on par with man. He believed that there was a vital structural difference between men and women, each suited for different types of work. He regarded women as more emotional and less rational by nature than men. Men were responsible for hard work, earning the bread and women for household duties. The rigid institution of caste reinforced these notions.

During the Mughal rule, the socio-economic status of women was further deteriorated. Social evils like purdah system came into force. Child marriage was prevalent. Incidents of female infanticide and the custom of sati could be witnessed. Lack of education, early marriage, absence of absolute property rights, non-existence of employment opportunities were the main causes of inequality of sex in the socioeconomic field. Basically, economic dependence made the women socially more backward. In the successive periods, the existence of joint family system and caste considerations made the social position of women more critical.

With the initiation of the British rule in India during the second half of 19th century, the newly educated section of the Indian society realized that the western society was dazzling with the idea of equality, whereas that of India was full of discrimination based on caste and gender. The most vulnerable component of the
society was the women section. Even the colonial rulers themselves criticized the Indian social system. With the assistance of a handful of Indian educated elite, the British ruler took up the task of bringing out the more orthodox dimension of rigid Indian cultural life and thus women’s issues became important. The social reform movement about the status of women started in India in the latter half of the 19th century. The reformist group realized that without uplifting the position of women, it was not possible to attain the all round development of the society. They crusaded against the evil practices like sati, purdah, child marriage, female infanticide, widowhood, polygamy, Devadasi and the like as well as deplorable condition of formal education. Prominent among them were Raja Rammohan Rai, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Durga Ram Mehtaji, Behramji, M. Malabari, D. K. Karve, M. G. Ranade, Gopal Hari Desmukh, Karandas Mulji, K. Altaf Hussain Hali, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, R. Venkata Raman Naidu e.t.c. They were inspired by the liberal ideas of the West and the glorious traditions of ancient India. It was during that period when Jyotiba Phule raised his voice against the tradition of tyranny over the education of the oppressed classes and the women. Gopal Ganesh Agarkar also took up the right of women on ground of equality. The colonial ruler adopted certain progressive legislations like the Abolition of Sati Act, 1829, Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, Age of Consent Bill, 1893 etc. Those legislations played a great role in ameliorating their deplorable conditions. Eminent women reformers participated in that movement as well as religious reform movement of that period. Pandita Ramabai’s crusade for the upliftment of women in the field of education and for widow remarriage was a glorious chapter. Sarla Devi started the Bharat Stree Mahamandal for the education of women. Swarna Kumari Devi started the women’s organization “Sakhi Samiti” in 1886 for widows and she was one of the two delegates elected from Bengal to represent the state at the 1890 Congress session. Those were some of such examples. Those
activities accelerated women’s participation in public spaces which paved the way for their entry into the independence struggle.

**Women’s Struggle for Political Rights:**

Participation in Freedom Movement: Indian women’s entry into politics started like their male counterparts with India’s independence movement. However, the Indian women’s entry into political arena was more a matter of design and accident than a matter of plan and premeditation. The active participation of women in the freedom struggle simultaneously developed among them an increasing sense of awareness to organize themselves and lead the cause of their liberation from oppression and subordination. The struggle for freedom, broadly speaking, marked the beginning of a political awakening among the women in India. In the revolution of 1857, when the Indian soldiers protested to follow the orders of the British officials, Queen of Jhanchi Laxmibai fought bravely against the British soldiers and laid her life for the cause of the nation. At the initiative of Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant, Indian women got encouraged to participate in the various stages of the freedom struggle right from the Swadeshi movement in 1905.

**Post Independence Situation:**

In the post independence period, when the Constitution of independent India was adopted, gender inequality was sought to be eradicated by providing equality for both the sexes in all the spheres of state activities. However, in reality in spite of the promises incorporated in the Constitution in terms of political participation, a big gap was distinctly visible between the male and the female halves of the population. Now in independent India, women are holding important political and administrative positions like those of the President, Prime-minister, Governors,
Chief Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Justice of the Apex Court and other top officials. But still their representation in the national parliament and the state legislature remains at a very low level. As V. Rajalaxmi writes, “an enormous disparity exists between women’s formal political equality and their meaningful exercise of political power.” After six decades of national independence of India, women are still in a marginalized position in state politics. A woman’s individual identity or independent personality is not easily recognized. Although population wise women have a large stake in politics as large as that of men, they do not have their appropriate share in exercising political power. However, since 1952, Indian women have been participating in formal political structures as voters, party workers, candidates and legislators and even as ministers. However, only a very few women have been able to achieve the decision making position.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES
The present study is going to focus
- To Know the Leadership Qualities of Women
- To know the obstacles for women in Panchayat
- To highlight the factors which overtly or covertly tend to promote or prevent women members from performing their roles.
- To know the nature and extent of participation and role performance of women in decision-making
- Significance of the study
Through Present study, I want to investigate the present condition of Women in Local Self Government after 73rd and 74th Amendment. Due to this study I wish to study the present scenario of Women’s of Anand District. The study will try to justify the above stated questions.
Methodology:

Research Design: As mentioned below.

Universe: Anand District

Sample: Four Taluka out of Eight Taluka

Sample Size: 64 Women

Tools of Data Collection: Questionnaire
Criteria of Measurement:

1. Women’s Participation in Panchayati Raj.
2. Women’s Participation in Decision Making.
3. Role of Women in Development of Village.

Procedure of Collection of Data: Visit the Village; convince the respondent, aware them about research and collecting data.

Method of Analysis of Data: Using appropriate percentile statistical method.

Results and Discussion: Finding as per the analysis.

(i) Year-wise Plan of work


2015-2016: Analysis of data, finding and conclusion and report writing.
The study by Dunn, Dana, (1993) on ‘Gender Inequality in Education and Employment’ of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes of India’ reveals that Dalit women are worst sufferers of discrimination on gender and caste leading to minimal subsistence. Dalit women strive not for equality but for their survival. Due to strong notion of patriarchal value system, Dalit women continue to be discriminated. The protection that has been ensured to these Scheduled Castes has not substantially improved their position in the hierarchical social system of Indian society.

Vijay Lakshmi V. and B.K. Chandrasekhar, (2000), have in their study on ‘Gender Inequality, Differences and Identities: Women and Local Governance in Karnataka’ analysed the process of decentralization and the impact of gender inequality on the process of empowerment of women due to quota system in the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Smitha K.C, (2007) in her work ‘Socio–Economic Determinants of Women Leadership at the Grass Roots’ critically analyze and evaluate the emergence of women leadership in Panchayat Raj Institutions particularly after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in Andhra Pradesh. This work has covered the socio - economic determinants of the elected women and its consequent influence on the emerging women leadership in Andhra Pradesh, examine how far socio-economic aspects have impaired or given opportunities to raise the issues and other social and economic problems in a formal forum and thereby adequately ensure the improvement in all spheres of life. This analysis establishes the fact that many myths associated with the entry of women into leadership positions that
would be hindered by socio-economic profile in terms of their age, occupation, family income, land holdings and education have been disproved.

In an edited volume entitled ‘Women and Society: The Developmental Perspective’ by Amit Kumar Gupta, (1986) presents 14 articles written by various scholars. The contributors have identified a number of major issues such as changing status of women in various fields, gender inequality, political socialization, women and urban poverty and also concerning women’s participation in the economic and social processes in Indian society which is undergoing rapid social transformation.

Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, (2006) in their work on ‘Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Four States’ have attempted to study the emerging patterns of rural leadership in relation to the Dalit leadership and how quota system has helped Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular to gain rational legal authority in local governance and what impaired them to participate effectively in it.

The study ‘Affirmative Action and Dalits: Political Representation in Panchayats’ by Inbanathan, Anand (2003) reveals that the political representation in terms of quota system in PRI’s is not effective in case of Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular as they are weak collectivities in the rural political structure.

Vijay Laksmi V and B.K. Chandrasekhar (2003) in their work ‘Authority, Powerlessness and Dependence: Women and Political Participation’ analyzed that affirmative action has enabled the representation of women in panchayats and enhanced their political status in local government. While they now possess authority through being incumbents of elective positions, this has not been translated into power (i.e., the ability to actually affect outcomes). Gender and
other social differences hinder the exercise of power by women representatives, and have reduced their effectiveness as political representatives. Thus what is required is an alternative conception of power which is centered not in the position but on the individual.

Prem Prashant, et al. (1996) in their work ‘Popular Participation in Rural Development’ has made an attempt to understand the pattern and nature of emerging leadership. They observed that the traditional leadership is being replaced as a result of the 73rd Amendment Act. This study notices that a large number of Panchyat Raj leaders are younger and hails from the weaker sections of the society. It further found that these leaders are having small landholding and low annual income. Thus, the authors argue that the new legislation is path breaking one as far as the participation of weaker section of the society have started enjoying fair deal in the development matters as a sizeable number of people from these communities are represented in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. The study concludes that the Panchayat Raj legislation that has provided for the reservation of weaker sections like SC’s ST’s and women has widened the social base of the popular participation in the village decision making process.

Hazel D’lima (1983) conducted a study in Maharashtra on ‘The Role of Women in PRI’s particularly in Local Bodies of Maharashtra’. The study covers 4 divisions i.e. Vidarbha, Marathwada, Pune and Bombay. Priority has been given to the role of women in the upper tiers namely Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti. Her study reveals the social emergence of women in the country, a movement which follows the ebb and elbow of socio-political events, socio-economic and political background of women members in the panchayat samitis and zilla parishads, social outlook and participatory pattern of women members. However D’Lima has studied only the social background, social awareness and outlook of women.
members. Dilip K. Ghosh, (1997) in his study ‘Grass Root Women Leaders: Who are they? A Study in a West Bengal Distric’ makes an attempt to understand the socio-economic backgrounds of the women leaders of panchayats. The study tries to understand the profile of the panchayat women members by analyzing the caste pattern, age group distribution, marital status, educational attainment, family income and land holding of the families. The study reveals that a fair representation is ensured to the women members (61.76%) are of the age group up to 30 years. But only 4.42% members are above 45 year age group. This implies that though new generation women (younger age women) prefer to grab the scope provided by seventy third Amendment, elderly women are not so much interested to break the traditions, in other words, few of them feel the urge to evolve a new society where the existing gaps and discriminations are fought to be alleviated some of these elderly women expressed that the burden of family was so rigorous that they even had no time to think of change. For obvious reason, the political parties prefer younger women to become the agents of change. The analysis of the caste composition of the age groups shows that out of 118 members up to 25 years of the age about 40 percent from SC, 24 age group 16 percent from ST, Muslim community and the remaining 20 percent from other castes. Similarly the percentage of SC/ST members is very high in the age groups above 25-30 years and 30-45 years in comparison to other caste members. The reverse trend is visible in the case of age group above 45-50 years where more than 61 percent members belong to the upper castes. Ghosh observes that as all the members are new to the system, inclusion of younger people from SC/ST may lead to the biased interaction when the members of other castes influence the thought process of the weaker sections. He opines that the younger women members of SC/ST community do not participate effectively in the deliberations of the gram
panchayat meeting rather they remain as the salient spectators and listeners of the ongoing process.

C.K. Shymala and Pujar, (2000), ‘The Socio-Economic Profile of Women Members of Zilla Panchayats in Karnataka’. Data for this study were collected from 250 women zilla panchayat members belonging to all sections of communities from all districts (20) of Karnataka who came to the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore for training during 1995-96. The study reveals that the younger generation has shown keen interest in participating in local institutions of governance. This study also reveals that a majority of women members are inexperienced and are not exposed to politics.

Abdul Aziz (1998), in his work ‘An Outline of the Contours of Panchayat Raj’ discusses the working of Panchayats and nature of leadership in Panchayats before the introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 and after its introduction. He observes that the Panchayat bodies had come to be dominated by the rural elites especially the landed gentry, who happened to be members of the dominant communities. Members of the weaker sections-SC’s ST’s and Other Backward Classes-hardly had access to Panchayat membership or authority in Panchayats was skewed in favor of the strongest. This was not consistent with the participatory governance envisaged. He feels that the Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, sought to right these wrongs. It laid down guidelines for panchayat structure, composition, power and functions made the establishment of panchayat and the holding of panchayat elections with six months of their dissolution mandatory; stipulated the appointment of State Finance Commission to recommend devolution of finances as also how funds are to be assigned to panchayats; and provided for reservation of seats and authority positions in favour of weaker sections like Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward
Classes and women. The provisions have been landmarks in the history of local governance in our country.

Snehalata Panda (1997), in her work ‘Political Empowerment of Women: A Case of Orissa’ explores the rural socio-political situations and the performance of women representatives in PRI’s in Orissa with mandatory provisions of 33 percent reservation for women, provided by the new Panchayati Raj Act. The study focuses on the socio-economic background of the participants and the breaking barriers of traditional patriarchal society to enter into the political arena which gives true meaning to the grassroots democracy. Panda observes that women entered into the politics due to the mandatory provision of 33 per cent. Most of the women are having nonpolitical background and entered politics due to persuasion by their family members or pressure from the village community or pressure from the political party and some members entered due to personal interests. The important aspect of the study is that the women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness, and the increasing perception of their role and responsibilities in the later stage. The study found that mean age of women representatives was 48, which indicates that the ideal age for women to take up political office is after their relative freedom from familial responsibilities like reproduction and nursing children. The absence of younger women shows the hold of the traditional thinking about women’s role in rural areas. Even women representing PRI’s had strong reservation on entry of young women which may be due to their conditioning.

Vyasulu and Vyasulu (1999), in their study ‘The Structure of Panchayat Raj System in Karnataka and the Experiences of Women in it’ identify the barriers or impediments in the full participation of women in the political process. This study
reveals that women in Karnataka have gained valuable political experience. Between the two rounds of (different) local government system, i.e., after the enactment of 73rd Amendment Act thousands have stood for elections. Hundreds have held elective office because of reservations in important position. Authors concluded that for fundamental changes in society, much more than PRIs are required, but that does not mean PRI’s are not important. If gender justice is to become the norm, much more will be needed and it will take time.

Mukta Banerjee (1998) in her work ‘Women in Local Governance: Macro Myths, Micro Realities’ present case studies of four women representatives of Karnataka Panchayats, studied as part of project sponsored by the Ford Foundation undertaken by the Institute of Social Studies Trust shortly after the seventy- third Amendments Act which provides reservation for women in Panchayats. The study talks about the story of Basamma who became the president of Karnataka’s only all women’s Panchayat in Mydolalu, Bhadravati taluk, Shimoga District. Basamma learnt the ropes from her male mentors and went on to be as Panchayat president. One of her project was a ban on the sale or consumption of country liquor in the three villages of the Panchayat. The village sanitation programme which provides a toilet in every home was another of Basamma’s project. Another case study of a women municipal councilor reveals that women leaders are work oriented and are unlike male counterparts never involve much in politics .In this case Gangavva, a women municipal councilor was committed to tackling the problem of water scarcity which affects the women more adversely and her other priorities were that of cleaning garbage and collections of taxes.

George Mathew(1998), in his work ‘Restructuring the Polity with Pan’chayat Raj as a Cutting Edge: The Background, the Issues and the Ground Realities discusses some aspects of panchayats and the democratic issues involved in the village
politics like elections and patterns of leadership. He opines that elections to panchayats in India have been an excellent barometer of functioning democracy. He quotes the studies done on the Panchayat election process in Karnataka in 1995 and Tamil Nadu in 1996 and observes that caste and religion, which had been playing a prominent role in deciding the outcome of the elections in the last fifty years, have shown signs of decline in Panchayat elections in some states. In Tamil Nadu, for example, during the 1996 Panchayat elections, a growing democratic consciousness among the people was clearly evident. Nearly 81 percent the respondents of the survey says that religious or caste leaders did not direct the people to exercise their voting right one way or the others. To a direct question of whether caste affinity was important in voting a candidate to power, an overwhelming majority of 73.6 percent of the respondents, the caste of candidate did not matter, 44.9 percent said they voted for a particular candidate because he or she was good person. He concludes that voters in local elections gives priority to welfare and development activities, and transcend caste or party politics, for the village voter, the track of the record of the candidates was more important. However, he raises concern about the panchayats themselves is being used as oppressive instruments. Absence of land reforms, low level of literacy and patriarchal system are working against the interests of the weaker sections.

S.N. Chaudhary, (2004), in his work ‘Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats’ made an attempt to understand the nature and patterns of leadership among Dalits and Tribals in Madhya Pradesh. The study reveals that both Dalit and Tribal Panchayat leaders in Sehore and Betul Districts are in the age group of 25-44 years and are mostly illiterate engaged in agriculture activities. It is also found that most of them are wage workers and belonged to BPL group. The study concludes that lack of basic amenities is serious problem among these communities. Thus, the Dalit and Tribal leaders lack social capital to manage the Panchayat affairs
meaningfully. Chaudhary feels that continuous training with regular interval should be conducted exclusively for Dalits and Tribal Panchayat representatives.

Shanti.K.(1998)(Ed), in her collection of articles ‘Empowerment of Women’ narrates about the existing empowerment strategies and their shortcomings. Six papers deals with case studies and rest of them deals with need for the social, legal and cultural empowerment of women. This volume discusses various issues such as socio-political, cultural and economic empowerment, reservation for women from Parliament to Panchayat, role of education in empowerment, employment as an important tool for Empowerment, and the role of government and Non-government organizations in the development and empowerment of women.

Jogdand P.G.,(1995) (ed), in his collection of articles ‘Dalit Women: Issues and Perspectives’ has made an attempt to construct the theoretical perspective of Dalit women, their position and fundamental problems faced by them as women and as Dalit women, who are subjected to deprivations and discriminations based on the caste and gender. This volume gives us insights into specific position of Dalit women’s, ‘bottom most oppressed’ in the hierarchical society. It also tries to explore the specificities of Dalit women in India.

Singla. Pamela, (2007), ‘Women’s Participation in Panchayat Raj: Nature and Effectiveness’ analysis the process of the political participation of the women in the light of 33 percentage reservation for women due to the 73rd Amendment Act. The land mark 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India has definitely empowered the women in terms of numbers. From the miniscule figure of 2/4 percentage in most of the Indian States, the Amendment has for the first time brought 33-40 percent rural women into the sphere of the decision making process. But, being in large numbers in not enough as reservation provides only the possibility of a voice for women, it does guarantee it. This is also because the
backdrop in which the reservation has been introduced in the country is marked by such factors as illiteracy, male dominance, casteism, deep rooted cultural beliefs and values, which do not encourage women’s assertion but retain them in their traditional roles of dependent spouse, mother and housewife amidst such social and cultural constraints, it becomes important to study the nature and effectiveness with which the women members are able to participate in the PRI’s specifically their ability to address the women’s issues at the local level.

Joshi R.P and G.S. Narwani (2005), ‘Panchayat Raj in India: Emerging Trends Across the States’ is a well documented work that the deals with the various issues of Panchayat Raj Systems and its potential role in providing opportunities to the people to participate in the decision making process at grass root level. Authors have pointed out that the Panchayat Raj Institutions in a system of government which is most viable and proper mechanism of realization of democracy at grass root level. The current debate is not on its desirability but on strengthening it by identifying its weaknesses and taking care of the lacunae which are inbuilt despite the Constitutionalization of Panchayat Raj Institutions through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

Dhaka, Sunita and Rajbir S.Dhaka, (2005) ‘Behind the Veil: Dalit Women in Panchayat Raj’ has identified the patterns and process of social mobility among Dalits and its impact on the political participations in the changing scenario after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. They have made attempts to identify the major issues of empowerment of the women, SC’s and ST’s and more so Dalit women in the light of 33 percent reservation in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Despite the constitutional guarantees the Dalit women continue to be discriminated by caste, gender and patriarchy leading to the marginalization of them. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is a revolutionary step in providing equal access to
the women, SC’s and ST’s and more specifically Dalit women to the political structure. This has raised several questions. The problem of participatory management of welfare schemes can be solved only when the marginalized section come to play a major role in decision making.

Nagar.N.S, (2008) ‘Women and Politics’ deals with the political roles the women have played and continue to play in world politics. The body of politics is made dominant and the women have been sidelined as if this power play is not suitable to them. Within the structure for power play that politics, one group of people, however have been grossly under represented especially in propostion to their number in society: women. For the longest period of time, women have had to countend with their subordinate position with respect to men, excluded even from exercising the right to vote. Author explains the saga of the women who fought for the equal representation in politics. Further she makes it clear that this book is not a feminist manifesto, but is rather a manual on politics which takes a stance, endorsing the need for women to gain powerful position as members of political parties and contribute significantly and visibly to the changing needs and duties of politics.

Sather Krishna (1997) in his article ‘Women and Panchayat Raj: The Law, Programme and the Practices’ observe that the 73rd Amendment Act has ensured enough representation of women in the PRI’s. However, he feels that the quality of participation of women members in these PRI’s is not satisfactory. In the beginning of PRI experiment with reservation of seats for women in Karnataka, it was a common sight to find women occupying back seats during the panchayat meetings. Even in training programmes where members of the both sexes were present, women were seen sitting away from the front benches. Some panchayats members were however, bold enough to ‘reserve’ the front seats for the women. Over the years, the situation has gradually changed, though equality of treatment
in such basic matters is still far from fully achieved. Another observation has been that the women members depend considerably on their men folk for decision-making. It is a common sight to find their male relatives not only hanging around the panchayat offices, but also taking active part in official activities. He attributes the following-factors responsible for this dismal situation. One reason is the social tradition, where all such matters had been assigned to men. Second is the legal tradition of inheritance of property by male progeny, to the exclusion of the married (some times even unmarried) daughters. Third is the lower literacy of women as compared to men.

Mishra Sweta (1997), in her articles ‘Women and 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act: A Critical Appraisal’ analyses the marginal position occupied by the Indian women in the society and also in the political process due to socio-economic constraints. It outlines the evolution of the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI’S). It then gives us a brief account of the position of women in the PRI’s before the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Finally, it examines the probable role of women in the context of the 73rd Amendment Act. It examines whether women will be able to exercise political power through this system, what hurdles are there on their way, and finally how they overcome these?

Shashi .S. Narayana .(1998), in her articles ‘Gender Equality through Reservation in Decision Making Bodies’ tried to discuss the need for political empowerment of women through reservation in its decision making bodies like The Parliament and State Legislatures in the same like as at Panchayat [village ] level in India. The current economic and socio-political maladies along with increasing violence against women and children are attributed to the failure of male oriented polity. Representation of women in higher bodies of political authority has been considered a prerequisite for the success of democracy at the grass-root level.
However the need for the accountability and sense of commitment on the part of the elected women representative is stressed. This requires higher degree of awareness among women regarding health, literacy, gender and other relevant social, economic and political issues.

Reddy, T.Chandra Mohan and U.R.Kaliappan (1987) in their article ‘Status of Scheduled Castes in Rural Power Structure: An Analysis’ have attempted to study the rural power structure from the stand point of Scheduled Castes. The Scheduled Castes in Indian society occupy unique position. As the bulk of their population is concentrated in rural areas and most of them being lagging behind when compared to other communities in terms of socioeconomic and political development, their integration with the main stream of development is an urgent need. Without that egalitarianism in Indian Society cannot be achieved. In order to improve the conditions of these sections of population a great number of measures have been initiated by the Indian Government at different levels. This paper makes an attempt to ascertain their position and participation in the rural power structure in the light of changes that have taken place in the recent past.

Mahi Pal, (2004) in his article ‘Caste and Patriarchy in Panchayats identified the inter link between caste and particularly and how both act as impediments for Dalit women to exercise their rational legal authority as elected representatives at PRI’s. The caste and patriarchy still exercise a stranglehold on Haryana’s Panchayat Institutions making a mockery of decentralized governance. The woman elected representatives need adequate support systems as well as education to make them effective leaders.

Yashoda, T (2007), in her article ‘Women Leadership in Grama Panchayats: A Field Analysis from Hassan District’ attempted to analyze the political empowerment due to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993. The main focus of this empirical investigation has been to study or examine the knowledge of role performance of women leaders in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Since the rural women for the first time were given opportunity to enter the local political institutions through the provision of the reservation policy introduced by the Karnataka State. The 73rd Amendment Act has provided reservation for women which have created political space. This presents women with unpredicted opportunities for political participation and decision making at the grass-roots level. In this context it is pertinent to examine the knowledge of statutory role, functions and duties of Grama Panchayats and awareness of local governance and precisely this paper made an attempt to assess social and political background of women leaders in Hassan District.

Sutar, Anil,S, (2007), in his article ‘Caste and Patriarchy in the emerging Women’s Leadership in Panchayats: A Study from Karnataka’ discusses the bearing of the primordial institutions of caste and patriarchy on the emerging women’s leadership in panchayats in Karnataka. The Karnataka State is a pioneer in introducing this Act and this has enabled larger participation of women and deprived sections of our society in the grass root level governance. However, the caste and patriarchy have larger implications in the emergence and performance of women leaders who hail from lower stratum of the society, are more democratic and people-centered, whereas those from the upper castes are more conservative and family-centered. The lower caste women leaders out number their male counter parts in the panchayats which provides an explanation for the presence of more than one third women elected members in panchayats.
Limbadri.R, (2007) in his article ‘Grass Roots Democracy: The Experience of Dalits in PRI’s’ has made an attempt to analyse the empowerment of marginalized sections i.e., Dalits. This article is based on detailed field notes on the experience of Indira, a Dalit women president of Navipet Mandal, Nizamabad in Andhra Pradesh. It also, combining recorded evidences from other empirical studies, analyses how inadequate the space provided for Dalits, in spite of the constitutional guarantees in a caste ridden society.

Hazarika.Sujata D, (2008) in her article ‘Democracy and Leadership: The Gendered Voice in Politics’ has made an attempt to evaluate the empowerment of women due to the 73rd Amendment. In Assam, be it the Maomaria revolt, nationalist movement, or a more recent constitutional mandate for political participation, women have seldom transcended institutionalized patriarchy. Most often, voices of change come from agencies of male politics where the politics behind conventional definition of the ‘political’ is never questioned. A fuller grasp of women as political subjects or agents must, therefore, draw on a more complex conceptualization of the field of power than the routinely encountered today. In this article attempt made to evaluate the political empowerment of women in Assam after the implementation of the 73rd Amendment, which facilitate the representation of women in politics.

Sharma, Anjouri, (2010) ‘Dalit Women in India: Anatomy of Caste and Gender – Based Exclusion’ in this paper seeks to highlight the vulnerable position of the Dalits (the former untouchables) in India in general and the Dalit women, in particular, in a fastly globalizing world. Poor People in the developing countries are likely to suffer most. In India Dalit women are likely to be more disadvantaged than their men folk because of their caste and gender based exclusion. It is suggested that they must assert their separate identity and launch their own self-emancipation movement apart from
both the women’s rights movement dominated by the caste-Hindus women and the Dalit rights movement controlled by the Dalit males.

Jain, Nisha (2010) ‘Subjection of Women in India: A Theoretical Perspective on Patriarchy’. This paper explores the nature of patriarchy in India. Marginalization and powerlessness of women is deep-rooted in India’s patriarchal society. In India, an upsurge of interests in women’s issues had started with the publication of a report ‘Towards Equality’ by the Government of India’s Committee on the status of women in 1974, followed by the observation of the International Decade for women in 1975. While women continue to face oppression, the gender sensitivity which is essential to fight and eliminate such oppression has not developed properly. The liberal democratic framework of the Indian Constitution, the whole gamut of the progressive laws, and the opening up of educational awareness have not contributed to changing the lot of women who as a group remain marginalized. There is need for systematic analysis regarding women’s situation to understand the deep-rooted ness of women’s subjectivity.

Lieten, G K, (1988) ‘Panchayat Leaders in a West Bengal District’. This study of the socio-economic background of panchayat leaders in one of the blocks in Bhirbhun district confirms that a new type of leadership has come to dominate at the lower levels in the system of political devolution in West Bengal. Poor peasants and agricultural labourers and, therefore, also the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have very much come to the fore front. On the other hand, however there is still almost complete absence of women as candidates in the panchayat elections.

Mathew George and Ramesh C Nayak, (1996) ‘Panchayat at Work: What it means for the Oppressed’? The researches have highlighted the positive signs of the first step towards the awakening of Indian villages through the Panchayat Raj. It is
clear from the life situations of Dalits that a panchayat is a micro-cosm of the society of which village forms a part. The noble ideals of ‘Institutions of self-government’ as expounded by the 73rd Constitution Amendment cannot be translated into reality in the present iniquitous society. The beautiful picture of panchayat raj cannot be drawn on the canvas of stringent caste system, feudal values, gender inequality, in human poverty conditions and the wide chasm existing between rich and the deprived.

These four case studies from Madhya Pradesh drive home the gruesome fact that despite 50 years of independence, the power structure at the village level remains oppressive. Dalit men are beaten, Dalit women are stripped naked which criminals are shielded by political parties and the state maintains a studied silence.

Gopal Guru (1995), ‘Dalit Women Talk Differently’ is an attempt to locate the issues of Dalit women in the discourse of feminism and according to the author Dalit Women, as a category of people, need a different and independent perspective. Social location which determines the perception of reality is a major factor (as we shall seen the context of argument made by Dalit women) make the representation of Dalit women issues by non-Dalit women less valid and less authentic. In view of this, the issues of representing Dalit women, both at the level of theory and politics, have erupted time and again in the discourse on dalit women. Dalit women justify the case for taking differently on the basis of external factors (non-Dalit forces homogenizing the issue of Dalit women) and internal factors (the patriarchal domination within the Dalits).
About Anand

Anand district, the name that has been inscribed in golden letters in the history of modern India because of White revolution and the largest co-operative sector development, was basically part of the Kheda district. It’s only in 1997 when Anand got its existence. So the history of the Anand district is not so old but yes as a part of "Charotar" (Another name of the Kheda district in vogue) it has very vast and rich legacy. Anand is also called "Charotar" as it’s the home of goodly land, a tract of the most fertile and well tilled soil. Even the dialect spoken by the people inhabiting here is called "Charotari". The word "Charotar" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Charu" meaning beautiful. The land is fertile and Green with vegetation and so it pleases the eye and is called Charotar tract. Though the entire area is prosperous and productive, some parts of the Kambhat Taluka and Tarapur Taluka called "Bhaal" region is having problems of agricultural productivity because of the saline land and sea coast effect. But the wheat of "Bhaal" region is very famous because of its superior quality.

Situated in central Gujarat Anand is bounded on the north by Mahisagar district, on the south by the Gulf of Cambay (Kambhat), on the east by the Panchmahals, South east by the Vadodara district and on the west by Kheda district.

Famous for AMUL, education hub Vallabh Vidhyanagar, Institute of Rural Management and NDDB (National Dairy Development Board), Anand is a home of many NRGs (Non Resident Gujaratis) as the district is having maximum number of NRG families spread all over the world.

Anand at Glance
Sex Ratio - 924

Literacy Rate - 74.13%

Total Area - 2941sq km

Population - 2092745

Headquarter - Anand city

Talukas - 08

Villages - 365

Municipalities - 11

Sample taken from villages of Anand District

- Village in Anand Taluka
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluka</th>
<th>Villages</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ajarpura</td>
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<td>2. Hadgud (City)</td>
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<td>3. Kherada</td>
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<td>4. Ode</td>
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<td>5. Taranol</td>
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<td>Sojitra Taluka</td>
<td>1. Devatalpada</td>
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<td>2. Limbali</td>
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<td>Umreth Taluka</td>
<td>1. Bharoda</td>
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<td>2. Khankhanpur</td>
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<td>4. Zalaboradi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Borsad Taluka</td>
<td>1. Bhadran</td>
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<td>2. Dali</td>
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<td>5. Nani Sherdi</td>
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<td>6. Saijpur</td>
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<td>7. Vadeli</td>
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FINDING CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Major Findings

- The majority of the respondents i.e. 59.38 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 31-40 years of the age.
- The majority of the respondents belonged to OBC category i.e. 56.26 per cent.
- The maximum respondents i.e. 28.12 have obtained up to SSC level of education.
- The majority of the respondents i.e. 51.57 per cent belong to Congress Party.
- The occupation of majority of the respondents i.e. 89.07 per cent is House Wife.
- The majority of the respondents i.e. 98.43 per cent are married
- The majority of the respondents i.e. 98.43 per cent earn less than 1 Lakh per annum.
- The majority of the respondents i.e. 81.25 per cent are the members of the of the Panchayat.
- The majority of the respondents i.e. 93.76 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that they are interested in Politics.
- The majority i.e. 90.62 per cent of the respondents do participate in the programmes.
- The majority i.e. 84.38 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that women participate less in politics due to unawareness.
- The Majority of the respondents i.e. 81.26 per cent are of the opinion that political participation gives admonition regarding ones rights and duties.
• The majority i.e. 81.26 per cent of the respondents state that they enjoy the political participation.
• The majority i.e. 89.07 percent of the respondents state that they vote during election.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 79.69 per cent of the respondents state that they vote on the base of political matter.
• The majority i.e. 54.69 per cent of the respondents state that cent per cent voting should take place.
• The majority i.e. 89.07 per cent of the respondents stated that they vote for the party they like.
• The maximum i.e. 35.93 per cent of the respondents consider education of the candidate for voting.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 59.38 per cent of the respondents do take interest in success and defeat of the candidate.
• The maximum i.e. 40.62 per cent of the respondents have the contact with the candidate of political party.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 51.57 per cent state that it is fair to keep relation with the person working in politics.
• The maximum i.e. 40.62 per cent of the respondents negate the politics being heredity.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 53.12 per cent of the respondents say that Government is worrying about political participation of the women.
• Majority of the respondents have no answer in the saying family pressure reduces the participation of women in politics.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 64.06 per cent are of the opinion that women show unconcern while voting.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 67.19 per cent state that women do consider party while voting.
• The majority i.e. 50.00 per cent of the women guide women for voting.
• The majorities i.e. 56.26 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that women do intensively run away from the political participation.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 67.19 per cent of the respondents feel that women are incompetent for political participation.
• Majority i.e. 56.25 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with 33 % of the reservation for women in politics.
• Majority of the respondents i.e. 56.25 per cent of the respondents agree that there is improvement among women due to getting 33% reservation.
• Majority of the respondents i.e. 64.06 per cent of the respondents do discuss about political matters.
• The majority i.e. 56.26 per cent of the respondents say that political proportion should be more or less according to age.
• Majority of the respondents i.e. 56.26 per cent trying to increase political awareness of women.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 93.76 state that the political participation of women is increased year by year.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 89.07 per cent are of the opinion that it is essential for every woman to participate in politics.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 84.38 per cent are of the opinion that proportion of women participation in politics is increased in present time than ancient times.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 59.38 per cent feel that efforts are not made to increase women participation in politics.
The majority i.e. 54.69 per cent of the respondents experience difficulty in participating in policies while taking benefit of 33% reservation seats in politics.

The majority i.e. 84.38 per cent of the respondents state that less education is responsible for less participation of women in politics.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 59.38 per cent are of the opinion that education is a basis for political awareness.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 70.31 percent are of the opinion that it is becoming difficult for illiterate women for participation in politics.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 68.76 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that economic position is responsible for political accountability.

That the majority of the respondents i.e. 64.06 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that political participation of women is a global problem and not only of India.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 64.06 per cent are of the opinion that political participation of women is essential to maintain democracy.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 64.07 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that that political participation of women is essential for political development.

Majority of the respondents i.e. 78.12 per cent are of the opinion that women should participate in Panchayat.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 70.31 per cent are the opinion that women are safe who participated in Panchayat.

The majority i.e. 87.05 per cent of the respondents have not answered the question.

The majority of the respondents i.e. 68.75 per cent are of the opinion that it essential to have educated women in district Panchayats.
• The majority of the respondents i.e. 71.87 per cent are of the opinion that woman should participate in politics from Panchayat to national.

• Majority of the respondents i.e. 70.31 per cent are of the opinion that women enjoy real power in Panchayats.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 67.18 per cent are of the opinion that women should also be given important place in political field as other fields.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 70.31 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that political participation of women is less in Tehsil/ District Panchayat compare to village Panchayat.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 62.5 per cent are of the opinion that it is essential to have family guidance and inspiration if women have to participate in Panchayats.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 56.25 per cent are of the opinion that political participation is essential to gain social status.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 71.88 per cent agree that the information regarding political participation of women in Panchayati Raj should be given to students from primary level.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 65.25 per cent are in the need of the respondents of husband, father or brother in travelling to attend panchayat meetings.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 64.06 per cent of the respondents assert that women of their area come to you to present their problems.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 56.25 are of the opinion that officers of Panchayati raj give sufficient cooperation.

• The majority of the respondents i.e. 65.62 per cent of the respondents do ask questions regarding women in Panchayat meeting.
• The majority i.e. 65.62 per cent of the respondents stated that they have studied laws and bye-laws of Panchayat.
• The majority i.e. 75.00 per cent of the respondents felt that they get respect in Panchayat.
• The majority i.e. 70.31 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that there should be educational qualification to obtain political post.
• Majority i.e. 60.93 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that person connected with crime should not be allowed to participate in politics.

CONCLUSION

In Indian Constitution, there are provisions for equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their social and economic status. However such provisions exist only in pen and paper for millions of economically and socially disadvantage people in India especially SC’s, ST’s and Women. In India women are in much worst position than men not only in terms of sex ratio, literacy rate, work force participation, life expectancy, but also in terms of their assess to power structure which controls and guides the development programmes of a society. Since access to political opportunities and participation in political decision making process are important components of capability and autonomy, discrimination in this respect leads to wastage of women’s talent and efficiency which are necessary for all around development of the country. One of the three variables used in the construction of the Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) is the relative share of women in administrative and managerial position (UNDP 1995). Women need to be involved in decisionmaking process in order to bring their demands in the national agenda. In order to ensure empowerment of women in political arena, the issue of reservation of 1/3rd of the seats for women in grass root levels of the organizations was taken up by different women’s organizations and social
thinkers. Accordingly, the Government of India passed the 73rd constitutional amendment, which was followed by the 74th amendment mandating reservation of 1/3rd of the seats of women in all village block and district level elected bodies. The role of female Panchyat members in the political decision making process has been examined critically on the basis of data collection by interviewing the WER’s of seven blocks of District Jammu, J&K. The present study entitled “Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions” is a study conducted to know the extent of women’s participation in decisionmaking and stumbling blocks for women in their respective roles. The study shows that the significant number of WERs attended Panchyat meetings regularly but few members have full freedom of speech and expression in the Panchyat 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.
SUGGESTIONS

1. It is evident that men’s attitude towards women’s entry into politics has begun to change from that of total rejection to limited encouragement and in some cases even to active encouragement. This trend needs to be strengthened through orientation courses and training programmes for officials and elected representatives, both men and women. Besides there is a need to train the women leaders at regular intervals to enable them to manage the responsibilities assigned to them in the Panchayats at all the levels. Since the hard up women members found it difficult to forgo their wages for attending training programmes, these must be organized at their doorstep and some of the articulate Panchayat leaders should be involved as the trainers.

2. Another important effort required for real empowerment of rural women is to bring about an attitudinal change in both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household activities and rearing children needs to be transformed into a feeling of equal partnership of women and men. To inculcate this they should be imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both.

3. Studies on women in politics have emphasized that contact with outside world makes women more alert and also active in the political process. There could be two ways of doing it. Firstly, interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected one’s should be encouraged. Secondly, these women could be taken out to the urban areas and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives be arranged.

4. The women should also be encouraged to organize themselves. The Mahila Mandals in the village can be effectively used as instruments to mobilize them for this purpose. Some successful women’s organisations can also act
as catalytic agents for encouraging the women’s participation in social and political activities. The Government should provide finances and infrastructure to some of the deserving and successful women organizations to take up the responsibility of encouraging the women elected representatives. The leaders of women’s movement in the country could also take up this task. They too can provide support to sensitize the rural women

5. Incentives play a vital role in ensuring the participation of elected representatives in decision-making. It has been noticed that there are certain very active and enlightened women leaders at all the levels of Panchayats, who have been successfully implementing the developmental schemes and have ensured overall development of their constituencies. Such leaders need to be encouraged by publicizing their leadership qualities and honouring them in public meetings. It will certainly encourage other women representatives and their success stories and good practices will get replicated.

6. The media both print as well as electronic can play an important role in creating awareness in the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender equality and gender justice.

7. An important requirement for bringing about empowerment of rural women is to bring about an attitudinal change in both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household activities and bearing children needs to be replaced by a feeling of equal partnership of women and men. To inculcate this, they should be imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both.
8. Studies on women in politics have emphasized the contact with outside in the political process. There could be two ways of doing it. Firstly, interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected women leaders been courage. Secondly these women could be taken out to the urban areas and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives be arranged.

9. There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of Panchayats at all the levels. This is needed to promote and enhance their leadership qualities and self-confidence. It will help them to perform better in the Panchayats to ensure their participation in the meetings. Attendance of all women must be made compulsory from Gram Panchayat to Zilla Parishad.

10. The women should also be encouraged to organize themselves. It can be effectively used as instruments to mobilize women of the village. Some successful women’s organizations can also act as catalytic agents for encouraging women’s participation in social and political activities. The Government should provide financial support and infrastructure to some of the successful women organizations to take up the responsibility of encouraging the women elected representatives. This task could also be taken up by the leaders of women’s movement in the State. They can also provide support to sensitize the rural women.

11. Incentives play a vital role in ensuring the participation of elected representatives in decision making. It has been noticed that there are very active and enlightened women leaders at all the levels of Panchayat, who have been successfully implementing the developmental scheme and have ensured over all development of their constituencies. Such leaders need to be encouraged by publicizing their leadership qualities and honoring them.
in public meetings. It will certainly encourage other women representatives and their success stories and good practices will get publicised.

12. The genuine NGOs be identified for entrusting them the tasks of training, encouraging, organizing, emblazing and guiding the elected women representatives. 

13. National Literacy Mission and other organizations engaged in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan should also be assigned the responsibility of educating the rural men and women regarding the significance of Panchayati Raj and empowerment of women.

14. The media, both print as well as electronic can play vital role in restructuring the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender equality and gender justice.

15. The curriculum for the students at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels should be so modified as to promote gender sensitivity among the students. There should be chapters on Panchayati Raj and Women Empowerment in all the classes at the school level and compulsory questions be set on these in the examination

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


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