REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous studies on Empowerment of Women in India covering variety of problems and issues, micro, macro and regional levels, and almost all general aspects of related to women empowerment have been studied by social and political scientists. Main findings of these studies have been discussed in following pares:

Chandrakala Hate: 1969

Only 24 out of 1,036 i.e. 2.31 per cent women has been married in castes other than their own. Existence of caste in Hindu society which traditionally limits marriages, contacts within certain groups, rules against marriage within gotra, clan and lineage, regulations about not marrying certain types of close blood relations and customs which enjoin or indicate reference for marriage between certain types of relatives or groups, make arranged marriage the most desirable form of marriage. ()

Alfred De Souza: 1975

The struggle of women for better economic status and the structure of employment opportunities for women in rural as well as urban area, he revealed that, in spite of over two decades of planned economic development the structure of employment opportunities for women in the rural areas remain relatively unchanged. Nearly 80 per cent of the total female workforce is employed in agriculture but very little attention has been paid in practice by social planners to improve the social situation of these women.

Kumud Sharma & Vina Mazumdar: 1979

The issues relating to women's studies, they raise important questions about the changes in perceptions and in academic research regarding women's contribution to society and their need in the context of modernization, development social change.

They mentioned three areas of theoretical concept for understanding for women's situation, that, determinants of women's status as perceived by women themselves and by others, the link between family, sex roles, values and socialization process and women's perception of oppression and the need for change.

Ashok Mitra: 1979
The march of literacy failed to keep pace with the growth of population and the total number of illiterates among males and females at the end of each census decade exceeded the corresponding number at the beginning of the decade, although the percentage increase in literacy for the year was substantial. These studies, revealed that the problem of literacy in India is embedded more in illiteracy among females than among males and the problem here is compounded by a variety of cultural, economical, sociological and even anthropological factors to keep women in economic subjection as long as is possible.

**Chandan Mitra: 1984**

The necessity to women organization to educate and mobilize the women folk has been realized by a section of people since the earlier part of this country, but owing to political limitations of all the political parties, name of these organizations could turn the women movements into a movement of real emancipation of women from all feudal bondages and capitalist values.

**Neera Desai & Maithirey Krishanraj: 1987**

The status of women from pre-independence period to modern period and changing pattern of society. It reveals that during the pre-independence period, two major movements which affected the position of women were the social reform movement of nineteenth century, and the nationalist movement of the twentieth century. Both these movements raise the question of equal status of women. This further resulted in creating contradictory image of middle class educated women participating in long urban agglomerations, generate an impression that Indian women’s status has improved substantially but in actual scene the problems of educated urban women become more serious since the discrimination and disabilities operate in a more subtle and covert ways.

**Sanjit Roy: 1987**

The world is fast changing, but as far as perception of role of voluntary agencies is concerned the expectations are limited and outdated. He found that little effort had been made in any of Five Years Plans of Government of India to the Sixth Five Years Plan to define the role of voluntary agency. Voluntary organizations are emphasizing repeatedly and which has been
recognized right from the First Five Year Plan to the Sixth Five Year Plan, credibility gap between the planner and the implementer must be reduced.

**The National Commission on Self Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector: 1988**

The working and living conditions of poor women in poverty with the changing social and economic conditions, has taken up various issues, like gender inequality, technology, invisibility, health, legislation, housing, political approach etc; revealed that awareness has spread with education, through slowly in the country, awareness of their rights and they being protected somewhere by someone is there in the back of their minds.

**VanajaDhruvarajan: 1989**

The reasons for the ambivalent status accorded to women in Hindu society, remarked that as such female principle is worshipped along with male but women in flesh and blood are humiliated, depersonalized and subordinated. Women and Society is one of the most important area of study among the researchers to analyse the social process and changing pattern of society, affecting Indian women in different ways. Any assessment of the status of women cannot be made outside the social structure. Social structure, cultural norms, and value systems are important determinants of women’s roles and their position in society.

**LeelaDubePaliwala, R.D. Bhagat: 1990**

Though education and occupational opportunities are providing women with new roles outside the home, their social position in the family remains largely unchanged because the system of arranged marriage reasserts the authority of caste norms and the obligation of conformity to the traditional image of women as wife-mother with low ritual status. The emphasis on education was for equipping women to carry out their multiple roles as citizens, house-wives, mother, contributors to the family income and the builders of the new society.

**KamlaBhasin, SudhirVerma, Bine Sharma: 1991**

Girl’s education in India is influenced by several factors and forces and in turn exerts a strong influence on many development variables. Working women and other attitude to work have attracted attention of the researchers. Number of surveys has been conducted on the attitude of working women to work, the reasons for their choice of employment and problems of
working. It appears that women from high socio-economical families are encouraged to work for reasons like challenge, use of education, skill etc. Whereas women from lower socio-economical families work for economical necessity.

**Suman Singh and Manisha Goel: 1994**

A study was conducted in Girwa Panchayat Samithi of Udaipur District, Rajasthan to assess the existing modalities of the operation of DWCRA Programme through beneficiaries, officials involved in the implementation of the programme. It covers 58 beneficiaries from 10 DWCRA groups in Girwa village. The study found certain important bottlenecks and constraints in the implementation of the programme. The major problems are inadequate staff, lack of baseline survey to identify viable trades depending on the local resources, skills and markets, lack of coordination among banks and DRDA Officials, inadequate support facilities to the beneficiaries, short period of training, time lags between training and starting of trade by the beneficiary, lack of cooperation among members, non-availability of adequate quantity of raw-materials, and inadequate provision of backward and forward linkages in production and distribution of DWCRA products and so on.

**Sujatha Prasad: 1995**

The author made an attempt to examine how far the strategies adopted in DWCRA restructuring and reordering of power structure at the local level for decentralization of decision making; and management of resources based on the local needs, skills, resources, and local implementation, have been successful by examining two cases of DWCRA scheme operating in Bihar. The two groups are Diamond cutting and polishing and the nursery raising the findings reveal that the posts APO lady Extension Officer and Gram Sevik as remain unskilled leaving the implementation tier of the programme crippled beyond measure. The programme faces severe fund constraints. Political and bureaucratic apathy in timely sanctions leads to delay in the flow of funds from D.R.D.A. to women's groups. Credit has also been a major constraint since group lending is not profitable for banks and recovery rate is also low. Cumbersome procedures, inordinate delays in sanctioning of loans, and under financing are the other problems.

**D. Jayalakshmi & G. Janaki: 1998**
The role continuity in the maternal role obligations remains intact with slight role adjustment. Despite the economic empowerment of women, hierarchical role structure within the family remains unchallenged and the idealized mother role has not undergone any change. The predominance of role continuity of mothers with younger children and the higher degree of egalitarian role sharing in the case of older children reaffirm the Person's sex role syndrome of expressive and instrumental roles. The role sharing by husbands is associated with the activities that are cognitive and rational oriented while women are culturally made responsible for the activities that are affective in character. The role continuity may be attributed to the ideological notions of maternal instinct dictated by reproductive determinism and the natural relationship between mother and child determined by biologically based psychology. Thus women are forced into mothering by ideology and cultural pressure of sex role stereotyping. The supposed economic empowerment has seldom allowed women to redefine their own role as cultural ethos restrains their bargaining power for role change.

NarasimhanSakuntala: 1999

Women likewise have failed to share proportionately in the fruits of progress, and in addition, whatever betterment they obtained, has not addressed the issue of their socio-cultural handicaps. While there has been much talk of the need to empower women, this has not resulted in specific, workable or sustainable measures that would help create a social order based on gender justice. Strategies for empowering women must focus beyond economic restructuring, to include restructuring of social relations which constrain and restrain women. Rural SC/ST women who form a subset of the rural poor population, lack not only money incomes and skills but also more vitally self-assurance and motivation. Project for economic amelioration have not improved their status in the family or community, because they do not think of themselves as participants and as citizens who though poor and illiterate, still have fundamental rights, to fair treatment, justice, dignity, a commensurate share in the fruits of development, and above all to information about their entitlements and the alternatives available to them to make decisions about their own lives.

Sarojiyer: 1999

The judiciary his continued to play a crucial role in dispensing justice and moulding public opinion. Notwithstanding the progressive judgments, there is, undoubtedly, deep-rooted
gender bias in the judiciary. This is obvious from the many judgments in women-related cases like dowry death and rape which have many a time led to nationwide protests by women's organisations. 'Sexism And The Judiciary', a comparative analysis of various judgments, discusses how the same law is interpreted differently by different courts allowing scope for personal 'bias'. This needs to be eliminated. All people have certain inherent rights by birth. Women are no exception to the universal entitlement of human rights. It is hoped that this study will expose the abject failure of the government and society to ensure equality and gender justice even after 50 years of Independence and provide an impetus to change this. Women, indeed, deserve a more humane and gender-sensitive world. The 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the world commemorated recently will hopefully spur us to recommit ourselves to guarantee women's human rights.

R. Arunachalam: 2002

Analyzing the National level as well as Tamil Nadu level growth rate in women population, male-female ratio, composition of women, employment in terms of sectors as well as by industrial classification, this study brings out the highly vulnerable conditions of women. They are in terms of their uncertain employment, income and their dependence on men. The author's field visits based observations on the determinants of empowerment of women clearly show that in India how it is a multifaceted issue, being influenced by socio-economic, political and cultural factors. Throwing light on socio-economic and political factors which affect women empowerment in day-to-day life, the study also brings out how traditions and conventions, institutions of joint family system and marriage most often are biased in favour of men than women. Discriminations of women based on gender, education, class, religion, abound in the society.

Akhilesh Kumar: 2003

It has been revealed that apart from liberalization, globalization and privatization, a social revolution and liberalization of minds toward greater gender equality has taken place. In sum, one must conjure up a vision of a society, which treats men and women equally in all matters. A step toward that goal would certainly take up toward newer heights in the process of nation building.
P.K. Kalhon: 2004

Study of women sarpanches in 20 villages from 10 blocks of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts of Punjab. On the basis of the study, it was found that majority of women representatives, particularly Jats, belonged to the family of ex-sarpanches or panches. This has strengthened the grip of existing rural elite. Even if they do not belong to well to do families (as it was in case of SC women sarpanches), the rural elite i.e. the ex-sarpanches of these villages were instrumental in getting them elected as village head. That is why they are acting as de-facto sarpanches. Being illiterate, they are totally dependent not only upon their husbands but also on formal sarpanches. Ironically, none of the women respondents were aware of the various aspects of 73rd Amendment, related to their reservation. If they have to go outside to village for panchayat work, they have to take permission from their parents or family members. This shows that in spite of all provisions for women empowerment the real power still remains in the hands of men.

MohantyBedabati: 2005

Dowry torture is more prevalent among women in the lower age group and the same gets less manifested in the later part of life. The reasons for such decline in the incidence of dowry torture are accommodation of demands of in-laws by the parents, development of a positive understanding between the victim and the husband, changing family environment because of the responsibility of offspring and above all acceptance of harassment as a part of life and not reporting about the torture. Dowry torture is not confined to a particular segment of the society, but pervades all castes. It is no longer confined to higher castes only but has spread to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes as well. Education of girls is an important positive element in prevention and control of dowry menace arid higher level of education ensures low incidence of dowry torture. However this inverse relation between education and dowry torture is less prominent in developed areas compared to the backward areas.

Manjusha Sharma: 2005

Karnataka experiences also indicate that women in the younger generation show an interest in the PRIs. The majority of them are married but the significance attached to marital status seems to be declining. Illiteracy among female members is higher at the gram panchayat level, while female members at the zillapanchayat level were graduates. The women members
had a little exposure to mass media compared to men, particularly in newspaper reading, perhaps due to lower literacy rates among rural women. The participation of female members in youth associations, mahilamandals, cooperative societies, etc. was low compared to male counterparts. The participation of female members increase from gram to the zillapanchayat level. The lack of previous political experience was higher among female than in male members. The motivators for women were mostly family members, village community and self. Social justice is the ideology of the majority of male and female members at all levels? The women members particularly preferred family planning and health to education. The reverse was the case with male members.

K.D. Gaur, Rachita Rana & Munish Gaur: 2005

It has been emphasized that the women’s participation in governance is still to reap its fruits due to various social obstacles. The violence committed against women is a prevalent phenomenon irrespective of social or economic class. It is different to acquire data because of barriers (legal, culture, social) and the amount of sensitivity involved. Other side of the coin is that the woman has to look after her domestic chores, children and the work in agriculture setup.

Sujata D. Hazarika: 2006

The study emphasized that implementation of 73rd Amendment in Assam at this point, seems to have just about managed to increased participation of women in politics only numerically, without really contributing in a changing governance qualitatively, however, its significance in long term participation of women in mainstream politics and decision making cannot be ignored. This study highlights an undeniable feature that with better access to the knowledge of the Panchayat Act, its rights and duties, training and capacity building of men and women alike, the institution cannot only be the most viable means of rural upliftment but could also bring the marginalized rural society closer to mainstream development.

K. Sreelakshmana: 2008

Government has a vital role to play through enhancing expenditure on education and social awareness through voluntary Organisations. It is suggested that some important points may be taken into consideration while planning and implementing programmes for the betterment of women. These points are: (i) The selection of beneficiaries for these programmes
should be done evenly, (ii) The due publicity should be given in different regions, (iii) The infrastructure required for proper implementation of various schemes under the programmes should be adequate according to the need of community, (iv) The government should set up a separate cell at various levels to monitor welfare programmes. Planners and policy-makers will have to devise methods for building up the commitment of beneficiaries in successful implementation of the programme through social awareness and according to the need of the women. It is suggested that a complete package of infrastructure facilities to run the schemes successfully by voluntary organizations may be provided. Evaluation of the programme from time to time and monitoring them may be done effectively to ensure efficient performance of the programme implemented by voluntary organizations.


The study revealed that during the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Election in 2000, women have entered Panchayati Raj Institutions in large numbers. Women representation in Uttar Pradesh has shown a similar trend of being weak and inefficient leaders at different places. There are instances where women have ended up becoming dummy candidates put up by her male relatives or other dominant people and at some places they have proved their ability as a leader. It was seen where women have taken initiatives to evolve as an able leader, with the support of family, self-confidence and society were the major factors promoting her. Leadership of women in the context of Uttar Pradesh is still at a growing stage. They are still in the learning process to take up leadership role.

Gulshan Kaur: 2010

The study revealed that Panchayats and Women Panchayat leaders can play an important role in ending violence against women, in rebuilding the social values and in eradication of social evils like infanticide, sati, dowry etc. The development of the society would be incomplete without the contribution of women. It is therefore essential for women to participate more effectively in administrative activities and take leadership roles. It was resolved to take back the lessons to their family and community, and work towards ending violence against women.
A.T. Kittrur and M.V. Shidaganal: 2010

It was revealed that at the socio-economic conditions of the streeshakti women in the study area had increased after joining the streeshakti groups. Women members of streeshakti groups are able to purchase new household amenities, and new agriculture implements due to change of their occupation and income bringing capacity. The implementation of streeshaktiself group of Karanataka is able to improve socio-economic of women members in the study area. And the scheme is able to develop the human dignity among the rural poor women.

AshaKashappa and G. Sreeramulu: 2010

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their lives, communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define and as important. Empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological, economic spheres and at various levels such as: individual; group, and community, and challenges our assumptions about status quo, asymmetrical power relationship, and social dynamics. Empowering women puts the spotlight on education and employment, which are essential elements to secure sustainable development. They further remarked that the concept of self-help groups is one of the components of development in India. Women have become the center point in the development or welfare. In the process of development, in the beginning, the women were not considered and as a result of failure of the other programmes of development the shift has taken place. Therefore, the present self-help group programmes are a boon for the development of the Indian society.

Om Prakash: 2010

The 85th Constitutional Amendment Bill pending in the parliament, providing reservation for women, is the most urgent need to move forward. This will provide space for women to ensure that their concerns and perspectives are incorporated while planning for action. Assurance for an enabling environment for women in the elected bodies is another necessity. Women must be taken seriously in their elected post by allotting important portfolios. There should be special mechanisms to induct women at all levels of decision-making to ensure, that they form a critical mass to contribute and influence administrative planning and policy measures. The Representation of Peoples Act needs to be amended making it mandatory for every political party to have one-third of its cadre to be women. Non-Governmental
organizations are to create awareness amongst women through mass media about the electoral process and also the candidates contesting for election, thereby eliminating powerful men taking advantage of the ignorance of women and controlling their decisions in exercising their right to vote. Also it is required to disseminate information on the functions and responsibilities of the elected representatives. It is necessary to earmark special funding assistance to enable women to contest elections. Media should endeavour to put out stories of best practices, i.e. success stories of elected women who are performing their political duties. The Right to Information campaign Act can be very useful as far as empowerment of women is concerned.

AshaBhandari, IswaryaBalakrishnan& V. Reddy Sindhu: 2010

It is hoped that the potential contribution of political parties to ensure effective participation of women at the decision-making level is capitalized upon in the light of the fact that merely giving women a reservation will not be effective unless the political atmosphere is conducive to their growth. This will be the sole factor that will help in removing the dichotomy of gender equality and gender bias in the Indian legislatures.

D. SaiSujatha and K. Dhana Lakshmi: 2011

Women’s equal participation in political life plays an immense role in the general process of the advancement of women. Their equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interest to be taken into account. The authors examined the dimensions of political empowerment and factors impeding women’s political participation socio-economic factors, organization, infrastructure awareness, access to information, personal/familial, training, media sensitivity and gender sensitization. They also suggested strategies for strengthening women’s political participation. For example, women do not have easy access to financial resources as they are denied property rights. They have no control over their earnings and form the low-waged or non-wage strata of society. Therefore, it is necessary to earmark special funding assistance to enable women to contest elections. It was concluded that the women’s organizations, NGO’s and citizens organizations when acting in a concerted manner, have considerable power to attend both cultural and situational conditions to expand political empowerment of women.

At the social level the traditional outlook of the society and certain practical hurdles come in the way of women’s participation, as it is a society in which the birth of girl child is not welcomed and preference is for sons. After independence the democratic welfare state adopted the constitution and conferred various fundamental rights to all Indians irrespective of race, religion and sex. Indian women are the beneficiaries of these rights in the same manner as Indian men. The presence of women in Rajya Sabha has been only slightly higher, probably due to indirect elections and nominations of some women members. All major national parties in recent years have declared through their manifestos that they would implement 33 per cent reservation for women in all legislatures. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 ushered in a new mass awakening and upsurge in the political scene of the entire country. Thus, the latest 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Act are a major milestone in the process of local-self government. The author concluded that special measures are needed to accelerate the process of political participation of women. Various women’s organizations should impart political education to the women, to make them aware of their political rights and civic duties, through an organized movement.

K. Yedukondalu: 2011

Women empowerment is the ability of women to exercise full control over one’s actions. In recent years many steps have been taken so as to increase the participation of women in the political system. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The United Nations Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of 30 per cent women at all levels of decision making by 1995. The constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. India also ratified various International Conventions and Human Right Instruments like CEDAW in 1993. The author points out some issues in this concern like quantity, quality, cultural stereotyping, legislation, women parties, constitutional engineering etc. policy prescriptions like judicial legal systems, decision-making, were also mentioned. It is pointed out that women’s collective oppose all forms of patriarchal values within us and would strive to change the attitudes to achieve gender equality. It is concluded that there is so much of need to organize workshops as an informal round table discussion to bring to better female politicians and representatives of women networks from all over the world.
N. Sushma: 2011

The Indian Constitutional Provisions of equality gave political rights by legitimizing their roles for participation in public life. Within the formal and legal framework women at every level are excluded from decision-making at every stage, starting from the family. It has taken more than five decades and 15 LokSabha for the percentage of women members in the House to move up partially from a mere 4.9 per cent in 1951 to 10.68 per cent now, a figure that is far below the average of around 15 percent in countries which have elected legislatures. Though numerically the strength of women members in LokSabha has been increasing, their participation in the decision-making position is slightly smaller. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Bills provide 1/3rd reservation of seat for women to be filled by election in Gram Panchayats and Municipalities respectively. Women’s Reservation Bill in Parliament is yet to see the light of the day. Women in politics should be able to change both the political culture and the laws. Today, there is a general agreement in principle or as a matter of justice, the women ought to have their share of the political seats. New strategies and mechanisms need to be developed to increase women’s access to decision-making positions within different political power structures. It is concluded that a strong group of women in politics can make a different by bringing women’s perspective to all issues in political agenda.

D. Syamala Devi and N. Kedareswari: 2011

Constitution guarantees equality to women along with men, but due to various reasons they are not able to take place in politics. Empowerment as a methodology is often associated with feminism consciousness rising. Women empowerment as a concept was first introduced at the International Women’s Conference at Nairobi in 1985. In India only 8 per cent of Parliamentarians are women. West Bengal has the highest percentage of women MLAs in the country nearly 13 per cent in a 294 member assembly. One of the most puzzling features of this depressed level of women’s political representation is that it seems to have no direct correlation with literacy and other apparently related indicators. A comparison between the States of Kerala and Rajasthan whose literacy rates are at opposite ends of the spectrum demonstrates this clearly. The constraints for the participation of women in politics include wrong social and cultural values, lack of education and awareness, patriarchal values and norms, visualizations, lack of family support, lack of institutional support and economic dependency.
P.V.V. Subramanyam and I. DosagiriRao: 2011

Political empowerment of women is at the centre-stage of all discourse on women’s issues at every level from local to international and has become a global concern. In India, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) has been proclaimed as the vehicle of socio-economic transformation in rural India. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1993 are in the direction of political empowerment of women in India in Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies. The study area is Kakinada division of the East Godavari District. The women representatives are curious and critical about the implementation of the rural development programmes like JawaharGramSwarojgari (JGSY), JawahrRojgarYojana at the Panchayat level. Because of the social attitudes and practices, women by and large have not been able to be independent decision-makers, particularly at the local levels in the country. Objectively the political and administrative leadership should provide for the fair participation of women representatives in the day to day affairs of the local bodies.

V.V.S. Ramakrishna and V. Govindu: 2011

Empowerment of women in the lowest level political institutions aims not only at enhancing their ability in the decision-making process but it also implies their participation beginning from voting to holding office and thereby share power to effectively influence policy formulation. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 (adopted in 1993) gives formal Constitutional recognition to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and reserves 33 per cent of seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. But, active participation in the form of involving in the decision making process, budget preparation, planning etc. was found to be rare in case of women representatives. There are so many factors upsetting the process of participation and level of performance of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, both internal factors and external factors. The government has given greater focus to issues relating to women through creation of an independent Ministry of Women and Child Development. It is concluded that the formal reservation of women in Panchayati Raj Structures, through reservation of seats, elections etc. is not a sufficient condition for their effective participation unless and until it is supplemented by measures which help in solving the socio-economic pressures inhabiting them.

G. PaidiRaju: 2011
Empowerment of women means enhancing the self-respect, self-dignity of women, recognizing women’s contribution, becoming economically independent, self reliant and controlling resources like properly. Women constitute half of the population and their contribution to the country’s economy is tremendous. But their number in the Parliament is just around 8 per cent which is highly minimal. The successive election statistics show that the number of women who exercise their franchise has increased from election to election. For the two decades almost equal numbers of men and women have gone to the polling booths to vote. In recent years there have been increased participation of women at the lower centers of decision-making i.e. female representation appears to be increasing at the local and minimal at the central level. Karnataka introduced amendments in the Panchayat Act wherein No Confidence Motion was prohibited within a period of one year of assuming office and the post to be reserved only for women even in case of subsequent motion being passed. The author concludes that without proper representation of women in the legislative bodies and political participation at all levels, issues concerning women would remain neglected.

C. Prahlad: 2011

Women empowerment means increase women’s power, not to decrease men’s power on democratic level, and every society accepts existence of right to women based on democratic values. Government of India declared year 2001 as Year of Women Empowerment, Women’s political participation considered as major measure of women’s empowerment. The empowerment of rural women is crucial for the development of Rural Bharat. Bringing women into the mainstream of development is a major concern for the government of India. With reference to women, the power relation that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels family, community, market and the state. The National Perspective Plan of 1988 proposed 30 per cent reservation to all elective bodies to be filled at least in the initial years, by nomination or co-option. The provision of 33 per cent reservation in the 73rd Amendment endowed rural women with a platform to enter into the purview of decision-making and planning. The author makes some suggestions for the real empowerment of women at the grass roots level to be meaningful like NGO’s role to pursue cases of violence against women, proper education and training rural women, decentralization of Panchayat Raj Institutions, role of media, disseminating necessary information to women representatives and networking women members. It was concluded that women Panchayat members in spite of all the stumbling blocks are trying hard to make space for themselves in political arena.