CHAPTER -V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

In order to analyze the various factors contributing to the empowerment of Dalit and Non-Dalit women Presidents elected from the election held on 16\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} of October, 2001 for the Village Panchayats and also to assess their role and performance in the Panchayati Raj System in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu, out of 1104 Village Panchayat Presidents in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu during 2001, 224 Women Village Panchayat Presidents (Respondents) were fixed as sample (Sampling fraction being 20.29 per cent) for the present study. It comprises 112 Dalit and 112 Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents

5.1 Empowerment of Women Index (EWI)

- A little below one-fifth (19.6 per cent) of the Women Village Panchayat Presidents had a low level of empowerment.

- Similar findings were seen among the Dalit and Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents.

- The proportion of the respondents having medium and high level of empowerment was 53.6 and 26.8 per cent respectively. The percentage of the medium level of empowerment among Dalit respondents (58.0 per cent) was higher than that of the Non-Dalit respondents (49.1 per cent).

- A higher level of empowerment was found among the Non-Dalit respondents (32.8 per cent) than Dalit respondents (22.3 per cent).
5.2 Standard of Living Index (SLI)

- In Villupuram District, 3.8 and 79.5 per cent of the respondents had low and high level of Standard of Living Index (SLI) respectively.

- The proportion of the respondents having low SLI (6.3 per cent) and high SLI (84.8 per cent) among Non-Dalit respondents was more than the proportion of Dalit respondents having low SLI (5.4 per cent) and high SLI (74.1 per cent).

- The percentage of the respondents who had medium level of SLI in Villupuram District was 14.7.

5.3 Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Women Village Panchayat Presidents

In this section, the findings with regard to the Socio-Economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized.

5.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Women Village Panchayat Presidents (Respondents)

- The mean age of the respondents in Villupuram District was 34.54 years while it was 36.23 and 32.85 years for Dalit and Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents respectively.

- In Villupuram District, the highest percentage of the respondents (60.3 per cent) was found in the age group of 30-39 years followed by 20-29 age groups (24.1 per cent) 40-49 age group (10.3 per cent) and 50-59 age group (5.4 per cent).

- Similar patterns were noticed among Dalit and Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents.
• The majority of the respondents in Villupuram District were married (94.6 per cent) and a similar pattern was observed among Dalit (92.9 per cent) and Non-Dalit (96.4 per cent) women Village Panchayat Presidents.

5.3.2 Social Characteristics of the Respondents

• The majority of the respondents were Hindu (93.3 per cent) and the remaining were Muslim (0.9 per cent) and Christian (5.8 per cent).

• A similar pattern was observed among Dalit and Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents.

• The proportion of the Hindus among Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (94.6 per cent) was a little higher than among the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents.

• The proportion of Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents who had studied High school (57.1 per cent), Middle school education (21.4 per cent) and Higher Secondary school education (3.6 per cent) was higher than that of the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents who had studied High school (56.3 per cent), Middle school (17.9 per cent) and Higher Secondary school (1.8 per cent). It may be due to provision of reservation in education for Dalits.

• The proportion of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents having their occupation as Housewife (17.9 per cent) was less than the proportion of the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (54.5 per cent). This may be due to Panchayati Raj System.

• The proportion of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents having their occupation as Agriculture (25.9 per cent), Non-Agriculture (38.4 per cent), Private employment (4.5 per cent), Self Employment (4.5 per cent) and Tenants (7.1 per cent) was higher than the proportion of the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents having their
occupation as Agriculture (20.5 per cent), Non-Agriculture (10.7 per cent),
Private employment (3.6 per cent), Self Employment (2.9 per cent) and
Tenants (3.6 per cent).

- The proportion of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents having
their occupation as Government Employment (4.5 per cent) was higher
than that of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (1.8 per cent).
It is presumed that the reservation system was not utilized properly by
the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents

- The majority of of Dalit (96.4 per cent) and Non-Dalit (92.0 per cent)
women Village Panchayat Presidents were living in nuclear family.

- A little below two-thirds (66.1) of the Non-Dalit women Village
Panchayat Presidents were living in the Pucca houses.

- The proportion of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents living
in Pucca houses was 58 per cent.

- The percentage of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents living
in Colony (9.8 per cent) and Tiled houses (32.1 per cent) was more than
the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents living in Colony
(6.3 per cent) and Tiled houses (27.7 per cent).

5.3.3 Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

- The mean annual income of the respondents was Rs136732.14 while it
was Rs.116794.64 and Rs.156669.64 for Dalit and Non-Dalit women
Village Panchayat Presidents respectively.

- A little above three-fifths (60.7 per cent) of the Dalit women Village
Panchayat Presidents were in the annual income group of Rs.50,000 to
1,00,000 whereas it was 27.7 per cent for the Non-Dalit women Village
Panchayat Presidents.
• The percentage of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents in all the annual income groups was less than the percentage of the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents.

• One-fifth of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents did not own any land whereas the proportion of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents not owning any land was 15.2 per cent. The percentage of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents owning wet land (52.7 per cent) was more than that of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (38.4 per cent).

• One-fourth of the Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents owned dry land whereas one-eighth of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents owned dry land.

5.3.4 Possession of Modern Facilities

• The proportion of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents possessing Refrigerator (82.1 per cent), Two-Wheeler (62.5 per cent) and Car/Others (39.3 per cent) was more than that of Dalit Village Panchayat Presidents possessing Refrigerator (73.2 per cent), Two-Wheeler (53.6 per cent and Car/Others (29.5 per cent).

5.3.5 Respondents’ Exposure to Mass Media (Newspaper and Radio)

• The proportion of the Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents who had the habit of reading Newspaper and listening to Radio (57.1 per cent) was more than the proportion of Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (53.6 per cent).
5.4 Respondents’ Awareness of Constitutional Provisions Relating to Panchayati Raj System and Their Participation

In this section, the findings with regard to the respondents’ awareness about the origin of Panchayat, Balwant Rai and Ashok Metha Committee’s initiative in the Panchayati Raj System, Implementation of Panchayat Act, and Constitutional Provision of 73rd and 74th Amendment. Schedule and subjects entrusted to Panchayat Raj Act, Panchayat Raj Act 1994, Women Reservation, Old and New Panchayat are summarized.

5.4.1 Respondents’ Awareness about Panchayat Raj System

- The proportion of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (24.1 per cent) who were aware of the origin of Panchayat Raj System was more than the proportion of Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (12.5 per cent).

- With regard to their awareness about Balwant Rai and Ashok Metha Committee initiatives in Panchayati Raj System, the percentage of Non-Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (36.6 per cent) was more than that of Dalit women Village Panchayat Presidents (31.3 per cent).

5.5 Respondents’ Association with Social Institutions and Political Parties

In this section, the respondents’ positions in social institutions, affiliation with organizations, association with political parties, their position in the political parties, their membership in political parties, their family members’ association with political parties, their family members’ position in the political parties, their family members’ years of membership in the political parties and their family members’ nature of participation in the political activities are summarized.
5.5.1 Respondents’ Positions in Social Institutions

- The proportion of Non-Dalit respondents holding office bearer positions (26.8 per cent) was more than Dalit respondents holding office bearer positions (10.7 per cent).

- The percentage of Dalit respondents who were the members of social institutions (77.7 per cent) was more than that of the Non-Dalit respondents. The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents was 11.6 and 10.7 per cent respectively.

5.5.2 Helpfulness of Respondents’ Association with Political Party to Perform Their Activities at Present in Panchayat

- The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents who had reported that their association with political party helped them perform their activities at present in the Panchayat was 88.4 per cent and 89.3 per cent respectively.

5.5.3 Respondents’ Position in Political Party

- The proportion of Dalit respondents holding Party Membership (76.8 per cent) was more than Non-Dalit respondents holding Party Membership (62.5 per cent).

- The percentage of Dalit respondents who were the Executive Members of Political party (10.7 per cent) was less than that of the Non-Dalit respondents (26.8 per cent).

5.5.4 Respondents’ Membership in Political Parties

- The proportion of Dalit respondents who were members of AIADMK (28.6 per cent) and Viduthalai Siruthai (24.1 per cent) was more than that of Non-Dalit respondents (AIADMK 16.1 per cent and Viduthalai Siruthai Nil).
• The proportion of Non-Dalit respondents who were members of DMK (26.8 per cent), Congress (15.2 per cent) and BJP (13.4 per cent) was more than the proportion of Dalit respondents (DMK 14.3 per cent Congress 4.5 per cent and BJP 1.8 per cent).

5.5.5 Respondents’ Family Members Association with Political Party

• The majority of the Dalit (92.9 per cent) and Non-Dalit (96.4 per cent) respondents’ family members had association with political parties.

5.5.6 Respondents’ Family Members Years of Membership in Political Parties

• The proportion of the Dalit respondents’ family members holding membership in political parties for more than 10 years (31.3 per cent) was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents’ family members (17.9 per cent).

• The percentage of Non-Dalit respondents’ family members holding membership for 1-5 (49.1 per cent) and 6-10 (22.3 per cent) years was more than that of Dalit respondents (1-5 years: 46.4 per cent; 6-10 years: 15.2 per cent).

5.5.7 Respondents’ Family Members’ Nature of Participation in Political Activities

• The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents’ family members’ participation in political activities was almost the same or with a little difference only.

5.6. Factors Influencing Their Emergence and Support for Participation as Leaders in Panchayat

• In Villupuram District, the respondents participated as Leaders in Panchayat due to the factors such as personal qualities (24.1 per cent), prior participation in socio-political activities (23.2 per cent) and Situational factors (20.5 per cent) and possessing all these three qualities (32.1 per cent).
The proportion of Dalit (35.7 per cent) respondents possessing Personal Qualities, Prior Participation in Socio-Political Activities and Situational Factors was more than that of Non-Dalit respondents (28.6 per cent).

With regard to Personal Quality (25.0 per cent) and Situational Factors (23.2 per cent), the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents was more than that of Dalit respondents (Personal Quality 23.3 per cent and Situational Factors 17.9 per cent).

5.6.1 Situational Factors for the Respondents to become Leaders in Panchayat

The proportion of the situational factors, as stated by Non-Dalit respondents, were more in support of Hindu Caste people (46.4 per cent), Influence of locality (41.1 per cent) and situational influence (12.5 per cent) as compared to Dalit respondents.

5.6.2 Respondents’ Participation and Their Reasons for Not Participating in the Previous President Election Prior to 2006

The proportion of Dalit respondents who were the members (17.9 per cent) and Presidents (13.4 per cent) was less than that of the Non-Dalit respondents (Members 26.8 per cent and Presidents 35.7 per cent).

The percentage of Dalit respondents who had not participating in the President election prior to 2006 was about 69 whereas it was about 38 for Non-Dalit respondents.

None of the Non-Dalit respondents reported lack of support from the family and predomination of caste-Hindu/traditional leader as reasons for not participating in the President election.

The Dalit respondents reported that reasons for not participating in President election prior to 2006 were lack of economic background and Predomination of caste-Hindu/traditional leader (17.9 per cent each), lack of support from the family (13.4 per cent), lack of awareness (10.7 per cent), directly contesting in the President election and not interest (4.5 per cent each).
5.6.3 Number of Times the Respondents Elected as Leaders in Panchayat

- In the case of Non-Dalit respondents, the proportion of them elected second time as Village Panchayat President (11.6 per cent) was more than that of Dalit Village Panchayat President (9.8 per cent).

5.6.4 Number of Candidates Opposed the Respondents in the Election for Village Panchayat Presidents

- The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents who had no contestant was 6.3 per cent and 7.1 per cent respectively. The proportion of Dalit respondents who had 1-5 contestants (51.8 per cent) was more than that of the Non-Dalit respondents (35.7 per cent).

- The percentage of Non-Dalit respondents (57.1 per cent) who had more than five contestants was more than Dalit respondents (42.0 per cent).

5.6.5 Respondents’ Inspiration for Contesting Election

- The proportion of Dalit respondents who contested through reservation and their family members’ persistence (11.6 per cent), political party leaders’ insistence (29.5 per cent) and self-interest (24.1 per cent) was less than that of Non-Dalit respondents (family members’ persistence: 13.4 per cent; political party leaders’ insistence 31.3 per cent, and self-interest 26.8 per cent).

- The percentage of Dalit respondents who reported that they were compelled by their friends and relatives (21.4 per cent) to contest in the election was more than that of Non-Dalit respondents (18.8 per cent).

5.6.6 Supporting Factors that Influence the Respondents to Participate in Panchayat Activities

A high proportion of both Dalit (43.8 per cent) and Non-Dalit (50.0 per cent) respondents reported that prior consultation with family members before taking any decisions in the Panchayat activities was the supporting factor which influenced them to take part in Panchayat activities.
• Other supporting factors which influenced the respondents to participate in Panchayat activities were decision taken with the help of Ward members\ Vice- President (Dalit 17.9 per cent; Non-Dalit: 16.1 per cent), decision taken by themselves after consulting in public meeting (Dalit 14.3 per cent; Non-Dalit 21.4 per cent), consultation with Panchayat officials (Dalit 12.5 per cent; Non-Dalit 5.4 per cent) and discussion with ex- Presidents and ex-ward Members/ traditional elders (Dalit 11.6 per cent; Non-Dalit 7.1 per cent).

5.7. **Respondents’ Association with Political Party Help to Perform**

**Their Activities at Present in the Panchayat**

• The majority of Dalit (92.9 per cent) and Non-Dalit (96.4 per cent) respondents reported that their association with political parties helped them acquire leadership qualities.

• A high proportion of Dalit (91.1 per cent) and Non-Dalit (92.9 per cent) respondent stated that they were able to mobilize resources and co-operation from government officials because of their association with political parties.

• The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents who stated that their association with political party helped them implement the programs without any hurdles was 90.2 per cent and 91.1 per cent respectively.

• An equal proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents mentioned that their association with political party had improved their problem solving capacity and they easily received message from the party about Panchayat development schemes and this helped them to solve problems with the support or party (80.4 per cent).

• The proportion of Non-Dalit who stated that their association with political parties made them get more programs from higher authority (87.5 per cent) and easily achieve in all activities (40.2 per cent) was
more than that of Dalit respondent (to get more programs from higher authority 80.4 per cent; to easily achieve in all activities 22.3 per cent).

5.7.1 Respondents’ Perception of Reservation Policy

- A little more than one-fifth of the respondents said that the reservation policy helped them for Students’ education /recommendation for bank loan for SHGs (20.5 per cent) and for solving some inter-group clashes and effect unity (20.1 per cent).

- A higher proportion of Dalit respondents said that the reservation policy was very much beneficial for students’ education /recommendation for bank loan for SHGs (23.2 per cent as against Non-Dalit respondents: 17.9 per cent), for solving some inter-group clashes and effect unity (20.5 per cent as against Non-Dalit respondents 19.6 per cent), able to submit petitions to government /to help to get ration card (17.9 per cent as against Non-Dalit respondents: 16.1 per cent) and for settling family disputes (12.5 per cent as against Non-Dalit respondents 10.7 per cent).

- The proportion of Non-Dalit respondents who mentioned that reservation policy was much helpful for the poor girls’ marriage/ old age people for getting old age pension (17.9 per cent) and for the people to get government certificates (17.9 per cent) was more than that of Dalit respondents (helpful for the poor girls’ marriage/ old age people for getting old age pension 10.7 per cent and for the people to get government certificates 15.2 per cent).

5.7.2 Respondents’ Participation in Income Generating Activities for the People

- The percentage of Non-Dalit respondents (14.3 per cent) who helped the people to market the SHGs products was more than that of Dalit respondents (8.9 per cent).
5.7.3 Respondents’ Plan of Action Done

- Twenty-one per cent of Dalit respondents constructed drainage and threshing floor as against (15.2 per cent) Non-Dalit respondents.

- The proportion of Dalit respondents who created a model herbal plant (16.1 per cent), constructed OHT and provided drinking water tap connections to individual households (14.3 per cent) and laid cement road in all the streets in the villages (17.9 per cent) was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents who created a model herbal plant (10.7 per cent), constructed OHT and provided drinking water tap connections to individual household (12.5 per cent) and laid cement road in all the streets in the villages (15.2 per cent).

- An equal proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents (10.7 per cent each) created market center in the villages.

5.7.4 Respondents’ Awareness about Organization of Training and Celebration of Important Days by the Village Panchayat

- The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents who said that the Village Panchayat celebrated important day such as World women’s day, Mother’s day, Mothers’ feeding day, World AIDS day, World environment day etc, in collaboration with NGOs and government departments was 25.0 per cent and 26.8 per cent respectively.

- An equal proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents (16.1 per cent each) stated that the Village Panchayat also organized health and eye camps for prevention of diseases.

5.7.5 Respondents’ Participation in the Village Panchayat Meetings

- The proportion of Dalit respondents (53.6 per cent) who participated regularly in the Village Panchayat meetings was less than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (78.6 per cent).
• The percentage of Dalit respondents (35.7 per cent) who took part in the Village Panchayat meetings was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (12.5 per cent).

• A higher percentage the respondents not participating in the Village Panchayat meetings was found among Dalit respondents (10.7 per cent) than Non-Dalit respondents (8.9 per cent).

5.7.6 Respondents’ Opinion on the Existing Audit System

• The proportion of Dalit respondents (28.6 per cent) who considered the audit system as essential to carry out the future plans of the Village Panchayat was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (26.8 per cent).

• The proportion of Non-Dalit Women Panchayat Presidents who said that the audit system might be useful to understand the performance of the programs (14.3 per cent) and to analyze the strength and weakness of the financial condition of the Village Panchayat (17.0 per cent) was more than the proportion of Dalit respondents (to understand the performance of the program; 13.4 per cent and to analyze the strength and weakness of the financial condition of the Village Panchayat 16.1 per cent).

• An equal proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents said that the audit system would be useful to maintain and update the accounts (24.1 per cent each) and to avoid corruption and exploitation (17.9 per cent each).

5.7.7 Respondents’ Confidence in Winning the Election without Reservation

• Sixteen per cent of Dalit respondents were confident of winning the election without reservation.

• Fourteen per cent of Non-Dalit respondents had their confidence of winning the election.
5.8 Empowerment of the Respondents After Village Panchayat President Election

In this section, findings on (i) respondents’ source of acquiring knowledge on Panchayat Development Programs, (ii) respondents’ participation in Training Programs, (iii) respondents’ Intra – Household Economic Power, (iv) respondents’ decision making power in the family (v) respondents’ development of Leadership Qualities after becoming Village Panchayat Leaders (vi) programs carried out in the Village Panchayat by the respondents, and, (vii) Respondents’ Future Ambitions are summarized.

5.8.1 Respondents’ Source of Acquiring Knowledge on Panchayat Development Programs

- The proportion of Dalit respondents who acquired knowledge through Union and Assistant Director of Panchayat development (35.7 per cent) and Orientation training on Panchayati Raj development conducted by Block Development Office (BDO) (35.7 per cent) was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (Union and Assistant Director of Panchayat development 32.1 per cent and Orientation training on Panchayati Raj development conducted by Block Development Office (BDO) 30.4 per cent).

- The percentage of Non-Dalit respondents who had enhanced their knowledge on Panchayat development programs through Gandhigram Rural Institute, SIRD and SRC at Chennai providing training on Panchayati Raj Development (21.4 per cent) and meetings at DRDA arranged by MLAs and MPs (16.1 per cent) was more than Dalit respondents (Gandhigram Rural Institute, SIRD and SRC at Chennai providing training on Panchayati Raj Development 17.9 per cent) and meetings at DRDA arranged by MLAs and MPs 10.7 per cent).

5.8.2 Respondents’ Participation in Training Programs

- A little more than two-thirds (67.0 per cent) and a little less than one-third (33.0 per cent) of Dalit respondents participated in Training program on Panchayati Raj System and Administrative Training program respectively.
• The proportion of Non-Dalit respondents who participated in Panchayati Raj System and Administrative Training program was 53.6 per cent and 24.1 per cent respectively.

• The percentage of Dalit President who attended Leadership Training program (9.8 per cent) was less than that of Non-Dalit respondents (10.7 per cent), whereas the percentage of Dalit respondents (8.0 per cent) who participated in Awareness training program on Panchayati Raj was more than that of Non-Dalit respondents (2.7 per cent).

5.8.3 Respondents’ Intra - Household Economic Power

• In Villupuram District, 58.9 per cent of the respondents, as stated by them, had acquired knowledge on Panchayat development programs. A little more than two-fifths of the respondents (41.1 per cent) had their control over the jewels More than half of the respondents (54.5 per cent) were working and earning their income.

• An exactly half of them had taken Insurance Policy in their names. A little more than one-fourth of them (25.9 per cent) had their Bank accounts in their names.

• About 28 per cent of them had freedom to spend money for their needs or for their family members whereas 7.6 per cent were keeping money with them or giving money to their husbands or to their family members.

5.8.4 Respondents’ Decision Making Power in the Family

• In Villupuram District, as stated by the respondents, decisions making power in family in respect of participating in function, number of children they wanted to have, adoption of family planning to limit children, children’s education and visiting hospital to see the sick women were done jointly with their husbands whereas decision making power in their family on purchase of plot/land was done by husband only.
• About 36 per cent of them had their decision making power in their family to purchase jewels.

• Thirty per cent of them stated that they could take their decision to help their parents / sisters / brothers and twenty-nine per cent of them had their decision making power to purchase cloths.

• Nineteen per cent of them said that they could take decision to visit relatives / friends.

• An equal proportion (35.7 per cent each) of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents had their decision making power in their family to purchase jewels.

• The proportion of Dalit respondents who stated that they had their decision making power in their family to purchase of cloths (26.8 per cent), to visit their relatives/friends (17.9 per cent) and to help their parents/sisters/brothers (26.8 per cent) was less than that of Non-Dalit respondents (purchase of cloths: 31.3 per cent; to visit their relatives/friends 19.6 per cent and to help their parents/sisters/brothers 33.0 per cent).

5.8.5 Respondents’ Development of Leadership Qualities After Becoming Village Panchayat Leaders

• An equal proportion (10.1 per cent) of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents had developed their leadership quality of participating in all the Panchayat development activities scheme implementation and Gram Sabha meetings.

• The proportion of Dalit respondents who said that they had developed their Leadership qualities such as attending periodical training programs (15.2 per cent), rendering social services (10.7 per cent) and establishing good rapport with community leaders, political leaders and government officials (22.3 per cent) was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit
respondents (attending periodical training programs: 13.4 per cent; rendering social service 8.9 per cent; and establishing good rapport with community leaders, political leaders and government officials 16.1 per cent).

- The percentage of Dalit respondents developed leadership qualities like exposure visit (12.5 per cent), active participation in politics and acquiring day to day information (11.6 per cent) and evolving strategies for solving issues and formulating action plan with the help of colleagues (17.0 per cent) was less than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (exposure visit 14.3 per cent; active participation in politics and acquiring day to day information: 17.9 per cent and evolving strategies for solving issues and formulating action plan with the help of colleagues 18.8 per cent).

5.8.6 Programs Carried Out in the Village Panchayat by the Respondents

- An equal proportion (81.3 per cent) of the respondents stated that the programs in animal husbandry, dairying and poultry and in Markets and fairs were also carried out in the Village Panchayats of Villupuram District.

- More than four-fifths of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondent carried out the development programs such as poverty alleviation programs and welfare of weaker sections and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

5.8.7 Respondents’ Future Ambitions

- About one-fifth of Dalit respondents (19.6 per cent) had the ambition to become an MLA and MP.

- About eleven per cent for Non-Dalit respondents wanted to become an MLA and MP.
• The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents having no plan about their future ambition was 17.9 per cent and 16.1 per cent respectively.

• The percentage of Dalit respondents (8.9 per cent) having the future ambition of retaining the same position permanently was less than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (17.9 per cent).

• The percentage of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents expressing their future ambition to become a District Panchayat Chairman and to improve the status in politics was 53.6 and 55.4 respectively.

5.9 Problem Faced by the Respondents

Findings on the problems faced by the respondents are summarized in this section.

5.9.1 Respondents’ Reasons for Inability To Win the Election Without Reservation for Women

• The proportion of Dalit respondents who faced the problems during the election campaign (28.6 per cent and) and were unable to spend more money as well as not able to meet the political parties’ tortures (28.6 per cent) was more than that of Non-Dalit respondents (23.2 per cent).

• The percentage of Dalit respondents (42.9 per cent) who said that their husbands and family members were not allowing them to contest the election was less than that of Non-Dalit respondents (53.6 per cent).

5.9.2 Respondents’ Reasons for the Problems Faced by Them During Election Campaign

• An equal proportion (46.4 per cent) of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents had the problem of personal enmity.
About twenty-nine per cent of Dalit respondents had the problem of caste animosity of other caste people as against Non-Dalit respondents (1.8 per cent).

One-fourth of Dalit respondents stated that they had no problems while as it was 51.8 per cent for Non-Dalit respondents.

5.9.3 Problems Faced by the Respondents In Carrying Out Development Programs

The respondents had faced problems while carrying out development programs in their Village Panchayats of Villupuram District.

Problems were troubles given by the Vice-Presidents (35.7 per cent), misunderstanding between the Presidents and the Ward Members (10.7 per cent), and development programs to the caste groups (8.9 per cent), contractors demanding more commission (16.1 per cent) and all the above mentioned problems (12.5 per cent).

About 13 per cent of them said that they had no problems. None of the Non-Dalit respondents reported that development programs were implemented to caste groups while compared to the proportion of Dalit respondents (17.9 per cent).

The proportion of Dalit respondents who faced the problems such as troubles given by the Vice-Presidents (25.0 per cent), misunderstanding between the Presidents and the Ward Members (7.1 per cent) and Contractors demanding more commission (14.3 per cent) was less than that of Non-Dalit respondents (troubles given by the Vice-Presidents: 46.4 per cent, misunderstanding between the Presidents and the Ward Members: 14.3 per cent and contractors demanding more commission: 17.9 per cent).
• The proportion of Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents who faced all the problems was 21.4 per cent and 10.7 per cent respectively.

• The percentage of Dalit respondents (14.4 per cent) who had no problems was more than that of Non-Dalit respondents (10.7 per cent).

5.9.4 Non-Dalit/Male Controlling the Respondents

• In the Village Panchayats of Villupuram District, forty-nine per cent of the respondents were controlled by Non-Dalits/Males.

• A little more than three-fourths of Dalit respondents reported that they were controlled by Non-Dalits/males whereas it was reported by twenty-two per cent of Non-Dalit respondents.

5.10 Respondents’ Perception on Various Aspects of Women Empowerment

• In Villupuram District, both Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents had perception on Women’s Rights, Indian Penal Code, Human Rights Commission, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and 33.33 per cent seats reservation for women.

• Half of the respondents had perception on gender equality.

• The proportion of Dalit respondents (44.6 per cent) having perception on gender equality was less than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (55.4 per cent).

5.11 Respondents’ Opinion on Gender Issues

• In Villupuram District, all the Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents strongly agreed with the statement, “compared with the male counterpart, women should undertake more responsibility in looking after children, cooking and cleaning,” whereas all the respondents disagreed with the statement, “higher education is not necessary for girls”.

247
• The proportion of the respondents who had strongly agreed and agreed with the statement, “Some problems can be performed only by men (Working late in night),” was 13.4 per cent and 26.8 per cent respectively.

• None of Non-Dalit respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “compared with the male counterpart, women should undertake more responsibility in looking after children, cooking and cleaning,” whereas the percentage of Dalit respondents who had strongly agreed with the statement was 26.8 per cent.

• The proportion of Dalit respondents who had strongly agreed and agreed with the statement, “A woman should give up her job if the husband demands it,” was 26.8 per cent and 17.9 per cent respectively whereas none of the Non-Dalit respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

• None of the Non-Dalit respondents agreed with the statement, “Marriage should not be the ultimate aim in a girl’s life for upgradation of social movement,” but it is interesting to note that 26.8 per cent of Dalit respondents agreed with this statement.

• About 89.3 per cent of Dalit respondents strongly agreed with the statement, “Man should have a superior position in the family,” and none of the Non-Dalit respondents strongly agreed with this statement.

• None of the Non-Dalit respondents agreed with the statement, “It is better for everyone in the family if man is the achiever outside the family and women take care of the family,” 89.3 per cent of Dalit respondents agreed with this statement.

5.12 Respondents’ Awareness about Indian Constitutional Acts

• The proportion of Dalit respondents (71.4 per cent) who were aware of RTI Act was less than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (80.4 per cent).
• The percentage of Dalit respondents (64.3 per cent) having awareness about Domestic Violence Act was less than the percentage of Non-Dalit respondents (82.1 per cent).

• About 63 per cent of Dalit respondents had awareness of Free Legal Act whereas about 45 per of Non-Dalit respondents were aware of this Act.

• The proportion of Dalit respondents (13.4 per cent) who were aware of Criminal Law was less than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (45.5 per cent).

• Seventy-one per cent of Dalit respondents had awareness of Special Marriage Act whereas the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents who were aware of Special Marriage Act was 37.5 per cent.

• A high proportion of Dalit respondents (89.3 per cent) comparing to Non-Dalit respondents (13.4 per cent) had awareness about Code of Civil Procedure The percentage of Dalit respondents who had awareness about Equal Remuneration Act (26.8 per cent), Hindu Succession Act (71.4 per cent) and India Evidence Act (10.7 per cent) was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (Equal Remuneration Act 24.1 Per cent; Hindu Succession Act 28.6 per cent and India Evidence Act 8.9 per cent).

5.13 Respondents’ Willingness to Function Under Female Leadership

• The proportion of Dalit respondents who were willing to function under female leadership was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (75.0 per cent).

5.14 Respondents’ Opinion on Better Administration Provided by the Female than the Male Leaders

• The proportion of Dalit respondents (37.5 per cent) having the opinion that female leaders could do better administration than male leaders was a little more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (35.7 per cent).
• The percentage of Dalit respondents (12.5 per cent) who said that female leaders would never create any problems for higher officials and subordinates in order to run the administration smoothly and transparently was less than the percentage of Non-Dalit respondents (28.6 per cent).

• About one-fifth of the Dalit respondents were having the opinion that female leaders could utilize the allotted funds properly and timely, but the male leaders would misuse the funds whereas it was 10.7 per cent for Non-Dalit respondents.

• The proportion of Dalit respondents (30.4 per cent) who stated the opinion that the female leaders could provide better administration than male leaders was more than the proportion of Non-Dalit respondents (25.0 per cent).

5.15 Respondents’ Suggestions for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions as People Panchayat for Effective Administration

• Almost all the Dalit and Non-Dalit respondents suggested that for strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions as People Panchayat for effective administration, the women Village Panchayat Presidents should have good behavior/experiences (94.6 per cent); good economic background (94.6 per cent); education/involvement in social service/serve as a member in various forums Personal interest; Training/Oratorical capacity/Timely decision making equal treatment of sections of the people/identification of problems and resorting to solutions in time; Corruption free administration/mobilise the local resources; ability to assess people’s felt needs and fulfill their requirements; More awareness on geographical jurisdiction/good awareness about Govt. development programs; Implementation of programs with the consensus of colleagues and local people; and, Allocation of funds properly for the target groups.