



**Mangalore University**

**SRI SHARADA COLLEGE BASRUR**

**“WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYAT RAJ - A  
CASE STUDY ON BASRUR AND GULWADY VILLAGE  
PANCHAYATS”**

*A Project Report Submitted for the partial fulfillment of the award of  
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# **WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYAT RAJ - A CASE STUDY ON BASRUR AND GULWADY VILLAGE PANCHAYATS:**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

As Gandhi often pointed out India lives in villages and unless village life can be revitalized the nation as a whole can hardly come alive. When India became independent in 1947, perhaps one-third of the villages of India had traditional panchayats and many of them were far from flourishing conditions. The congress government has made a determined effort to promote the creation of panchayats and to make them effective units of local self –government. Article 40 of the constitution clearly declares ‘The state shall take necessary actions to organize village panchayats and to endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government’.

The aim was to foster democratic participation, to involve villagers in the development of the community and to reduce the burden of higher level of administration. Though various steps were taken by successive governments to revitalize the system, gramswaraj through village panchayats remained as a distant dream till 1992. Bureaucratic apathy indifference of the people, lack of political will, lack of uniformity etc were the main factors behind the failure of the system.

Then women’s empowerment refers to the process by which women acquire due recognition on par with men, to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignity. So, why women’s role in the political process has virtually remained unchanged since independence. Broad-based political participation of women has been severely limited due to various traditional factors such as caste, religion, feudal attitude and family status. As a result, women have been left on the periphery of political life. Observing this dark picture, 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act came to provide them an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and to take active part in decision-making process in the local level.

## **Historical Background:**

The term ‘Panchayat’ traditionally implies a body of five elders in a village set – up who were responsible for resolving conflict and meting out punishment to the offenders, and the entire village held them in reverence. In this traditional conception of a ‘panchayat’, women and lower castes were not allowed membership. During the Indian national movement, Mahatma Gandhi came to champion the cause of local self- government at the village level as he considered village as the true center of knowledge. In the post – independence (1947) era the idea of village self- administration found place in Part IV of the Constitution that is known as the Directive principles of state policy .4 However, part IV of the Constitution is only in the nature of directives to the government and not

enforceable in a court of law. Hence it was not mandatory for the state government to implement its provision and set up Panchayat Raj Institutions.

The Panchayati Raj as a system of self- governance was introduced for the first time in 1959 following the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee report (1958) that recommended a three- tier structure of local self-government consisting of Gram Panchayats at the village level, Taluka Panchayat Samitis at the sub-district level , and Zilla Parishads at the district level. The Balwant Rai Committee had further recommended that at the panchayat Samiti level, there should be two women as co-opted members besides the official 20 members. However, this system of Panchayati Raj gradually lost momentum under conditions of one- party rule. The Ashok Mehta (1978) Committee (1998) was set up for further investigation in local self-government. The Committee in fact recommended greater decision-making power to the local councils.

During this phase, few states such as Maharashtra and Karnataka even went to the extent of reserving 25 to 30 percent council seats for women on their own initiative. Demands for the reform of local self- government were also accompanied by active civil society movements that agitated for greater participation with the representation of women being an important platform. The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) recommended the reservation of at least 30 percent of the total seats for women in local government institution.

The 64<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 1989, which provided for 30 percent reservation for women. However, the Bill could not pass as it was defeated by a narrow margin in the Upper House. The Bill was reintroduced in September 1991 as the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bills and they were finally passed by the Parliament on 22 December 1992. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment deals with rural local self – government (Panchayati Raj), while the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment concerns urban local – self administration.

The Acts constitutionally reserved 33 % of all seats in Panchayats and Municipalities for women .The scope of the present paper , however ,only covers the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act (Part IX of the Constitution).As per the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are divided into three tiers .At the base of this structure is the Gram Sabha that comprises of the entire body of the citizens in a village. It constitutes all the eligible voters within a Gram Panchayat area and serves as a principle mechanism for transparency and accountability. Above the Gram Sabha is the first level elected body – the Gram panchayat (GP). It covers a population of around five thousand people and may include more than one village .At the district level is the Zilla Panchayat (ZP) that is the link with the state government.

Before reorganization , Karnataka State was under Mysore State, Madras presidency, the Bombay presidency and the state of Hyderabad. In Mysore State, local Governments were working i.e. under

Mysore local bodies act of 1902 there were three tier structures of Unoin Panchayat, Taluk Boards, and District Boards .In princely Mysore State, the local governments were given limited powers. There was the provision of rural development with the involvement of weaker sections.

Under Madras Presidency, the local governments were established by the Madras District Boards Acts, 1920 and in the Madras Panchayat Act 1920. These Acts on facilitated only two tier systems of local governments i.e., District Boards were relating to education public health maintenance of roads etc. It is evident that all these powers are to concentrate on local problems and thus to achieve rural development. In the Bombay presidency the local governments were established and futher enlarged by series of amendments. Such as the Bombay Village Panchayat Act 1920 facilitated the introduction of Panchayat Raj system I n Bombay presidency. The other acts were 1928, 1933, 1939 and 1947 (Seventy Third-Amendment Act 1992). These acts extended for the local bodies with the powers to supervise and the control of primary and secondary education.

After Independence, the development of Panchayat Raj institutions in Karnataka has taken place in different phases. The recommendations of Balwantroy Mehta committee and the implementation of its reports provided a new impetus and a new rationale for Panchayat Raj. Based on the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, the government of Mysore enacted a new legislation in 1959. The act facilitated for the three-tier system of Panchayat Raj institutions in Karnataka. They are Village Panchayat, Taluk Board (these two are with directly elected representative's), the third one was the constitution of the district development council (CDC,nominated members).

This act further authorized with the powers and assigned functions only to village Panchayat and taluk development board. The functions of village Panchayats were limited and powers of levying some local taxes were also assigned. On the other hand the primary powers and functions were assigned to taluk development board (TDB). The TDB's with the intention of achieving rural development through TDB's the act provided powers to TDB's for collecting revenue. The financial powers of the TDB's were to meet the needs of rural areas only. TDB's were empowered to levy a surcharge on stamp duty. The state government transferred 50 percent of land revenue collected in the local area and 10 percent of total collection of land revenue in the state to these local bodies. During this period there was considerable popular enthusiasm among the people to wards PRI's. It is mainly because PRI's were able to make people including weaker sections to participate actively in developmental process.



## **Women Political Participation:**

The representation of elected women representative (EWRs) in the panchayat there is the highest in Karnataka as compared to the rest of the country. Women occupy one-third of the decision making positions in all three tiers. The presence of a critical mass of women in the political sphere changes the way society perceives women (from homemaker to leader). Second, as women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) began to reduce their political dependence on male patrons and are backed by women's groups at the grassroots, a gradual shift towards a politics based on women's constituency emerges.

The reservation for women in local bodies and the increased presence of women in public life and in leadership roles within the households of EWRs, as well as the interactions of EWRs with government and other agencies are important components in this transformation. A Study of women in local self-governance in Karnataka (Stephen and Raja Sekaran 2001), notes that 35.6 percent women EWRs achieved a moderate level of economic empowerment after becoming gram panchayat members while there was distinct increase in the level of self confidence in almost 97 percent. According to them, gram Panchayat (GP) members had a positive impact on their personal abilities such as communication skills and the capacity to get things done. Their fear of contacting officials and interacting with other villagers diminished.

### **Objectives of the study :**

The following specific objectives have been formulated

1. To study the involvement of elected women members in decision making
2. To study the problems and difficulties faced by the elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats
3. To identify the factors which motivate women to contest in the Panchayat election

### **Importance of the Study:**

Since independence, various initiatives have been undertaken for improving the socio-economic conditions and empowering women in India. In this context, the Constitution guarantees socio-economic, cultural and political equality and the provision of providing equal rights for availing different opportunities to all social groups of population, especially women. Increasing emphasis has also been provided for initiating variety of development schemes and welfare programmes with maximizing the participation of women in different activities during the past plans.

After independence, various initiatives have been undertaken for bringing improvements in the socio-economic status and empowerment of women. Provisions were made in the Indian Constitution to provide equal rights and opportunities of socio-economic development and betterment of living for

men and women; including different disadvantaged segment of population so as to establish an egalitarian and prosperous society.

The Constitution also guarantees freedom to speech, personal liberty to participate in every kind of welfare, social economic and political activities to all Indian Citizens.

The Constitution is its article 14 ensures equality before law and article 15 prohibits any discriminatory practices. Article 15(3) empowers states for making special provisions for favour of women and children, Article 16(1) guarantees equalities in matters relating to employment and appointment to any public office for all the citizens and Article 16(2) forbids discrimination practices on account of religion, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them in providing employment under any Government or public department is concerned.

In view of bringing improvements in the socio-economic condition of women, provisions have also been made to maximize the participation of women in different levels of education. With this notion that education is the most important instrument to bring awareness about their rights, duties, social standing and as a prime element to maximize their participation in different categories of remunerative employment etc.

The Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution has a special bearing on the status and empowerment of women. The Constitution guarantees political equality to women through the provision of adult franchise. This reorganization was certainly a radical departure from socio-cultural norms of traditional Indian society. In addition to this, the state policy in its Article 38 also directs to state to ensure justice, socio-economic and political order and to speed up and guarantee the welfare of the people.

Similarity Article 39 directly focuses on ensuring equality among men and women in providing opportunities of employment and livelihood, equal pay for similar category of work and protection of every segment of work force.

In all, our Constitution has provided increasing initiatives for minimizing the discriminatory practices which were deeply developed before independence against women and other socially disadvantaged communities. In this manner these were the initial initiatives as brought out in the form of constitutional measures approaching towards radical departure from the persisting socio-cultural backwardness and social evils disfavoring women's interests for past several centuries of foreign rule in India.

Further, in view of providing a concrete and actual shape to the initiatives and measures underlined in the constitutional provisions for social and economic upliftment of women the economic development planning introduced in 1951 had also initiated several schemes and programmes for the development and improving the socio-economic status of women.

The outcome of the constitutional and legal measures and the initiatives undertaken under the various plans in the past for bringing improvements in the socio-economic status of women and thus

achieving overall equality among men and women have certainly provided an opportunity to women to associate themselves and maximize their participation in Panchayats.

Thus it revealed that in spite of the introduction of various development programmes and different categories of legal reforms and social Acts, there has been a little progress in improving the participation of women in different social, economic, cultural and political activities due to the existence of several social and cultural foundations restricting them for availing certain facilities, which can directly or indirectly improve their socio-economic status. The biased attitude of society which is openly disfavours women for availing certain opportunities had also deeply distorted their social status in rural areas.

However, it has to be kept in consideration that for achieving goal of bringing improvements in the socio-economic status and strengthening empowerment of women through introducing reservation policy, in each of the three tiers of Panchayats for women would mainly depend upon its pattern of implementation process and the extent of flexibilities maintained in its implementation.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

In accordance with the objectives of the present study for the preparation of this project data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data have been collected through interview schedule by interacting the elected women representatives of the selected village Panchayats. The secondary data have been collected from books, research, articles, journals and government Report.

### **Review of Literature:**

There is a plethora of studies on the different aspects of Panchayati Raj institutions, structures and functioning. This chapter reviews the available literature relating to the present study. The main purpose of this chapter is to give a proper orientation and perspective to the present work. The literatures available on the women in rural local self- government taken both from primary as well as secondary sources are reviewed here.

\* Anne Phillip in her work 'The politics of Presence' (1995) speaks to a large ambition i.e, to make our decision-making assemblies more genuinely deliberative. Representation as to include both accountability and relative autonomy, otherwise we are reduced to mere aggregation of initial preferences and interests. She says that, the argument for a more equitable representation of two sexes and different ethnic groups does move in close parallel with argument for a more participatory democracy.

In 'The Concept of Representation' (1967) Hanna Fenichel Pitkin views that, a representative is both an agent of his locality as well as governor of a nation. She/he must pursue his constituent's interests, in a manner at least potentially responsive to their wishes.

\* Manin Bernard in here masterpiece, 'The Principles of Representative Government' (1997) argues that, representation is a technique that permitted the establishment of a government emanating from the people in large, diverse nation. She believes that consent constitutes the sole source of legitimate authority and forms the basis of political obligation.

'Representation and Community in Western Democracies' (2000) edited by Nirmala Rao contains several articles on representation and popular participation in democratic institutions. Representation has been seen as a means to more or less sophisticated translation of the will the people.

Iris young in here own exposition of 'justice and politics of Difference' has put the issue of group representation more firmly on the political agenda. She argues that, guaranteed representation for previously marginalized group is necessary part because it produce a legitimate communicative democratic forum otherwise they might be excluded from the whole process.

\* Katheleen B.Jones in her book 'Compassionate Authority: Democracy and Representation of Women' takes up some of the most central debates in cotemporary feminist analysis and debate concerning the nature of the categories of feminist theory. She also explicated the position of authority in both feminist theory and practice.

In 'When Are Interest Interesting' Virginia Sapiro makes a stimulating and important arguments on the issues like group interest and representation. The author discussed the questions like, a) what is political representation of women? b) To what degree and under what circumstances are political institutions and decision makers responsive to female citizens?

\* Subha K. and B.S. Bharagava in an article entitled 'Feminism and political Empowerment of Women at the Grass-root: The Karnataka Experience' (2000) widely discussed the aspects like feminism and its three main traditions, recommendations of the committees and commissions constituted to investigate the status of women in India, the need for empowering women in political, economic and social sphere and reservation as a major step and an instrument of political empowerment.

\* Manu Bhaskar in an article entitled 'Women and Grass-root politics' (2000) views that gender equality is a prerequisite for effective participation of women. Domesticity of women, masculine nature of political activity, backward consciousness, existing political culture, lack

of economic security are the major obstacles and deterrents for women's fuller participation in politics.

\* Kumud Sharma in her article 'Economic Empowerment and Women: Development with a perspective' (1995) argues that women's non-participation in politics and passivity are perpetuated by the inadequate examination of women's access to and control over resources, the product of their labour, the nature of patriarchal family and the inadequacy of existing forums of political institutions to deal with women issues in the formal arena of politics.

\* Anand Inbanathan in his working paper 'Representation and Accountability in Local Government . The Panchayats of Karnataka' (2001) widely discussed the aspects like representation, accountability affinity between representation and participation, the role of grama sabha, representatives' responsiveness to their constituency.

\*Vijayalakshmi V. and B.K .Chandrasekhar in 'Gender Inequality, Differences and Identities: Women and Local Government in Karnataka' (2000) states that, gender inequality and differences among women are important for our understanding of their participation process in local governance. They argue that the involvement of women in the public and private spheres give them 'dual identity' often giving priority to the latter. Caste and class identity, low education levels was perceived as other two important factors in women representatives' marginal participation or non-participation.

\*Vijayalakshmi V. in a working paper entitled 'Gender Accountability and political Representation in Local Government' (2001) and in 'Politics of Inclusion: Scheduled Tribe Women in Local Governance' argues that, the existing social and political environment does not encourage women's participation in politics. She further says, although, reservation of seats for women is a positive step to provide them an opportunity in politics, in practice, it is inefficacious in nurturing a political culture among women, producing one timer who went out into political obscurity once their term was completed.

\* Shaker, T.V. in his paper 'Empowerment of Grass-root Leadership in Health and Population: A Training Experience in Karnataka' (2001) makes a note that, training will increase the awareness and participation of women members. It will item bring a change in the attitude and thought process; enhance self – confidence and self-esteem among them.

A study conducted by Hazel D' Lima titled 'Women in Local Government' (1983) in Maharashtra traces the social emergence of women in the country, socio-economic background of women members in Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Panchayats. She laid more stress on social awareness and their outlook rather than the perception of officials and non-officials on the role of women members in the meetings of the institutions she has covered.

In 1988, the 'Department of Women and Child Development', conducted a study which has been published in the form of report titled National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000, found close correlation between the real participation of women members of the local Maharashtra panchayats and their educational level. Women's political efficiency is, thus, very low due to a combination of educational, social and financial constraints.

A study conducted by Manikyamba, p. entitled 'Women in panchayat Raj Structures' (1989) is an examination of the working of PRIs in general, the role of women as beneficiaries and benefactors in the socio-economic and political process of development, assessing the role of women presiding officers of the PRIs. She was of the view that given the opportunity, talented and interested women can play very effective leadership role in politics.

\*Sivanna, N. in an empirical study dealing with the PRS under the Act of 1959 argues that, the involvement of women members in PRIs was not up to the expected marks. He observes that, although there are statutory provisions to ensure their representation, their socio-economic conditions are not conducive to their effective involvement.

\* Susheela Kaushik, in her article 'Strategies for Empowering Women'(1993) suggests some significant strategies for empowering women and to ensure their fuller participation in PRIs. She views that political education, political information and political training are the three important forces for empowering women. The same views are shared by Sarala Gopalan (1993), Deepti Agarwal(1993).

\* Mukta Banerjee in her ISST occasional paper (1998)'Women in Local Governance: Macro Myths, Micro Realities' has discussed the performance of elected women members of panchayat to strengthen the participation of women members of panchayat to strengthen the participation of women in local self governance.

\*Surya Kumari, A in her article 'Strategies for Political Empowerment of Women' argues that the cultural impact affects the female behavior. It means her confinement to the home and family is the fundamental cause for their low level of participation in PRIs. As a transitional measure, the writer argues, reservation of seats in the political bodies should be adopted. Indumathi Parikh (2002), Avijit Pathak (1998) and Debal K. Singha Roy (1995) also share the same views.

The limitations of the research study and certain issues not discussed in this research work are as indicated below. In these writing no serious attempt has seen made to identify the significance of representation in the context of social, economic and cultural background. It is strange but true that no attempt has so far been made to assess the impact of these factors on women members' participation in PRIs. In Indian context questions such as how women members must try to shoulder their responsibilities effectively and what obstacles they may have to face in doing so and how to overcome

them assumes significance. There are not many studies about the role of socio-cultural environment affecting the political participation of women. Similarly we don't come across any detailed discussion in most of these research writings with reference to women empowerment through reservation. In addition issues such as how political representation and participation can make women members more pro-active, what steps have been taken to enhance their activity status and the type of training programmes needed etc., have not received adequate treatment in most of these literature. There is a need to examine and evaluate all aspects concerning women empowerment through political representation guided by reservation. The proposed research study shall cover all these aspects in its purview.

## **UNIT-II**

### **WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**



# **WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Even after more than 60 years of democratic governance, it is distressing that the government and the policy makers are lulled into complacency, by not translating de jure rights to de facto rights, to effect changes in the society. History reveals that women have had no space in the political arena and even in the political parties as decision-making partners.

## **Evolution of Women Participation in Political in India -Social Reform Movement in 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

The roots of women's participation in politics can be traced back to the nineteenth century reform movement. This movement emerged as a result of conflict between the Indian bourgeoisies, trying to wrest control from the British. This class made attempts to reform itself, mainly by campaigning against caste, polytheism, idolatry, animism, purdha, child marriage, and sati etc., perceived as elements of primitive identity. Raja Ram Mohan Roy focused on two issues, namely women's education and abolition of Sati. In the early 1850s, a campaign on widow remarriage was launched resulting in the passage of a Bill in 1856, which allowed widow remarriage. This Bill though helped the situation of widows, denied them the right to their husbands' or his family's properties. Several eminent women reformers participated in this movement as well as in the religious reform movement of this period. Pandit Ramabai, Manorama Majumdar, Sarala Debi Goshal who started Bharata Stree Mahamandal for the education of women, Swarna Kumari Debi who started the women's organization Sakhi Samiti in 1886 for widows are few examples. These activities gave momentum to women's participation in public spaces, which paved the way for their entry into the independence struggle. Swarna Kumari Debi, one of the two delegates elected from Bengal to represent the State at the 1890 Congress session is a case in point.

## **Women's Participation in the Twentieth Century:**

The Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905-8) marked the beginning of women's participation in nationalist activities. Many of the women were from families involved in nationalist politics. Middle class nationalist women contributed jewelry, money and even grain to the movement. They took active part in the boycott of foreign goods and in revolutionary activities. Sister Nivedita is reported to have become a member of the National Revolutionary Council and in that capacity, organized women for nationalist activities. Like her there were several others seen as a threat by the British including Agyavati in Delhi, Madame Cama who was described by the Government as the recognized leader of the revolutionary movement and Kumudini Mitra who started a journal called 'Suprabath' which linked nationalist politics to women's traditional power.

Madame Cama, a Parsi woman nationalist persuaded the International Socialist Congress to support the Indian Independence Movement and also began a monthly journal called 'Vande Mataram' towards this end. The movement for independence also gave rise to the question of women's suffrage. In December 1917, Annie Besant and few other women met Mr. Montague to demand voting rights for Indian women. During the same period several all-India women's organization came into being. In 1917, Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Malathi Patvardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Mrs. Dadabhoj and Mrs. Ambujamal founded the Women's Indian Association. Described as the first truly feminist organization in India, it strongly supported the Home Rule Movement. In 1926, the All India Women's Conference was formed and became extremely active on the question of women's suffrage, labour issues, relief and nationalist work.

The 1920's also witnessed a second generation of feminists who were advocates of women's rights. Rajkumari Amrit Karu, Lady Piroj Mehta, Mrs. N. Sengupta, were some of the prominent women activists of this period. Several other women were active on causes other than the Independence movement including Prabhavati Mirza (a powerful trade unionist), Kamini Roy (a social reformist), and Aghorekamini Roy (founder of a social welfare women's organization). A number of these reformist and revolutionary women were also eminent writers. Nagendrakala Mustafi, Mankumari Basu, Kamini Roy, Kasibhai Kanitkar, Mary Bhore, Godavaribai Samaskar, Kamala Sathianadan, Rameshwari Nehru, Roopkumari Nehru, Parvatibai and Rukanibai are examples of this stream of women activists who combined activism and writing.

Women who were strong leaders in the Independence movement were Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Basanti Devi. A strong supporter of women's rights, Sarojini Naidu worked with the Congress and the Muslim League. She was instrumental in the passage of a resolution to support women's franchise and became the first Indian woman to become the elected President of the Indian National Congress. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay participated in the Satyagraha movement of the 1930s. Aruna Asaf Ali's first major political involvement was in the salt march at which she was arrested and prosecuted. She was also active in the Quit India movement, edited *Inquilab* magazine of the Congress and established the National Federation of India Women. She came to be known as the Grand Old Lady of the Independence Movement and heroine of the 1942 movement. Basanti Devi took active part in anti-British activities and was arrested for 1922 presided over the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

Thousands of women joined in the salt Satyagraha, which is "generally remembered as the first time 'masses of Indian women' got involved in the struggle for Independence" (Kumar 1995, p.78). Several women's organizations were formed to mobilize women to participate in nationalist activities including processions, pickets, and charka spinning such as the Ladies picketing Board, Desh Sevika Sangh, Nari Satyagraha Samiti and Mahila Rashtriya Sangh. Beyond any doubt, the active

participation of women in the political struggles for independence consummated in a Constitution based on the principles of equality and guaranteeing equal rights to suffrage for women in the year 1947 itself.

### **Political Participation and Representation of Women in India**

Women in India raised the issue of representation in politics first in 1917. At that time it was basically a demand for universal adult franchise and political participation. By 1930 women had gained the Right to vote, which initially benefited women from elite families. Women's involvement in struggles for political and civil rights in India were however sought to be linked to nationalist movements in alliance with males against the common foreign enemy. In any case women's involvement in nationalist struggles changed their lives in that even though they were denied equal opportunities to shape the new state, they gained constitutional and legal rights. But even after the right to vote became a reality for all women, their representation in the parliament, political parties and other decision making bodies remained low even after independence, and after the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950. (Susheela Kaushik: 1993:1996, Veena (Mazumdar: 1993).

A few women no doubt attained positions as members of parliament and state legislatures and as leaders of opposition, etc. mostly through family dynasties or through male political patronage. However, the percentage of women in legislatures and decision making positions always remained low. Women do not share the power of decision-making and are not involved in policy making in Indian democracy in proportion to their numerical strength. Thus there is a gap between the formal idea of women's participation and their meaningful use of power.(Susheela Kaushik :1993). The quest for greater political representation of women is, therefore, still relevant. (Asha Kapur Mehta et al: 2001) Women in India have lesser opportunities of public influence or for entering politics. Women also lack opportunities to move within the hierarchies without patronage of male leaders or mentors.

### **Gender and Indian Constitutional on Equal rights**

The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equality and guarantees equality before law and equal protection to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth. However, these rights have remained de jure and have not been translated into de facto rights. As such, women have been denied social, economic, and civil and political rights in many spheres. Fundamental rights are guaranteed in the constitution of India. Article 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution provides for the right to equality for women. Article 16 in particular deals with equality in employment for women. Article 16(3) provides of State policy of constitution provides women equality through the article 39(a), and 42.

An important area where women have been inadequately represented is in the political sphere. Article 325 and 326 of the Constitution of India guarantee political equality-equal right to participation in political activities and right to vote respectively. While the latter has been accessed, exercised and enjoyed by a large number of women, the former i.e., right to equal political participation is still a distant dream. Lack of space for participation in political bodies has not meager numbers in these decision making bodies' issues and experiences in policy making.

### **Reservations for Women in Local Bodies**

The government of India, noting the low participation of women in politics; acknowledging the recommendations of the Committee for State of Women Report, 1974; and drawing from the pioneering experience of Karnataka which provided reservation for women in its three tier Panchayat Raj system (institutions of local self governance) in year 1983; adopted an affirmative action for providing reservation for women in these institutions in the year 1993. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act introduced not less than 33 per cent reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj institutions in the rural areas. Similarly, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act introduced similar reservation for women in Nagara Palikas and Municipalities in towns and urban areas. With these Constitutional Amendments, over three million women are now actively participating in shaping the policies and programs of the country, though only at the local levels of governance. However, such affirmative action is lacking at the higher echelons of governance at the State and Central levels.

Prior to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments, only the State of Karnataka had reservation for women in institutions of local self-governance. The Janata Party Government in Karnataka in 1991 passed a Bill to implement 25 percent reservation for women in several other states. For Maharashtra (Shah and Gandhi, 1991). Following these initiatives, the 73rd and 74th Amendments were passed. It became mandatory that elections to these bodies be held once every five years. However, many states have sought to and even succeeded in circumventing this provision. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh elections since the 73rd amendment came into force. In the case of Assam, where elections were due in 1997, they have been postponed first due to the budget session, then owing to the monsoons and, finally, because of the law and order situation in the state. Until recently, even Andhra Pradesh and Bihar belonged to the same category and held elections only after the intervention of the High Court and Supreme Court respectively. Further, states implementing the Panchayat Raj / Nagapalikas Acts show variation in their numbers as well as in their participation. Recently the reservation for women increased to 50%.

It is observed that there is a rising trend of women participation in every and subsequent general election of Lok Sabha despite their continued bondage, illiteracy, socially ostracized, social taboo, frequent child births, maternity deaths, molestation, dowry death and torture by their husbands and in laws.

Their rate of participation has been on the increase for every subsequent Lok Sabha election which works out to 2.12 percent in the case of females as against the rate of (-)1.4 in respect of males during the last 15 Lok Sabha elections. This is again supported by the fact that difference between women's participation and men's participation is getting narrowed down from a level of 41.9 in the first Lok Sabha election to 4.1 in the 15 Lok Sabha elections showing a substantial reduction in the gap.

While women's participation in formal decision making arenas has been less visible, their participation in grassroots democracy and social movements is very high. While this participation is not directly in the traditionally "male" political areas such as party and parliamentary politics, it is vital for women's issues to gain legitimacy and the visibility for women parliamentarians and politicians to even raise women-specific issues in the formal political spheres.

It logically concludes that given an opportunity women do not lag behind their male counterparts in political participation. Let us examine the progressive representation of women winners since the first.

It is observed how political parties and their leaders, who talk about gender equalities on the eve of election periods, cheated the women candidates. Despite their fragile number, their performance is far better than their male counterparts in terms of winning. Thus probability of woman candidate winning is more than that of man.

Provides percentage of women in lower house / parliament of selected countries : Except Saudi Arabia and other ten countries almost all the countries have women representatives in their parliament.

Among the 183 countries, 8 countries have more than 40 percent women representatives in their parliaments. Another 16 countries have women representatives between 30 to 40 percent. While 36 countries have women representatives in their parliaments have 20 to 30 while 56 countries have representatives between 10 to 20 percent. Thirty eight countries have women representatives less than 10 percent. In other words, more than one third countries have 20 percent or more women representatives in their parliaments.

Women's participation in formal politics is gauged by examining them in relation to the following indicators: women's participation in the parliament, Legislative Assemblies, institutions of local governance and political parties and their participation in the electoral process as constituencies as well as candidates. The analysis of these indicators reveals both that historically women have been kept away from politics and political parties as well as other formal institutions have not validated their participation.

## **UNIT-III**

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

## **Background of Research Area: About Basrur Grama Panchayath**

According to Census 2011 information the location code or village code of Basrur village is 608739. Basrur village is located in Kundapura taluka of Udupi district in Karnataka, India. It is situated 4km away from sub-district headquarter Kundapura (tehsildar office) and 47km away from district headquarter Udupi. As per 2009 stats, Basruru is the gram panchayat of Basrur village.

The total geographical area of village is 576.44 hectares. Basrur has a total population of 6,613 peoples, out of which male population is 3,163 while female population is 3,450. Literacy rate of basrur village is 79.83% out of which 84.63% males and 75.42% females are literate. There are about 1,356 houses in basrur village. Pincode of basrur village locality is 576211.

## **About Gulvadi Grama Panchayath**

According to Census 2011 information the location code or village code of Gulvadi village is 608703. Gulvadi village is located in Kundapura taluka of Udupi district in Karnataka, India. It is situated 4km away from sub-district headquarter Kundapura (tehsildar office) and 51km away from district headquarter Udupi. As per 2009 stats, Gulwadi is the gram panchayat of Gulvadi village.

The total geographical area of village is 1153.24 hectares. Gulvadi has a total population of 4,840 peoples, out of which male population is 2,314 while female population is 2,526. Literacy rate of gulvadi village is 72.48% out of which 77.44% males and 67.93% females are literate. There are about 875 houses in gulvadi village. Pincode of gulvadi village locality is 577301. Kundapur is nearest town to gulvadi for all major economic activities, which is approximately 4km away.

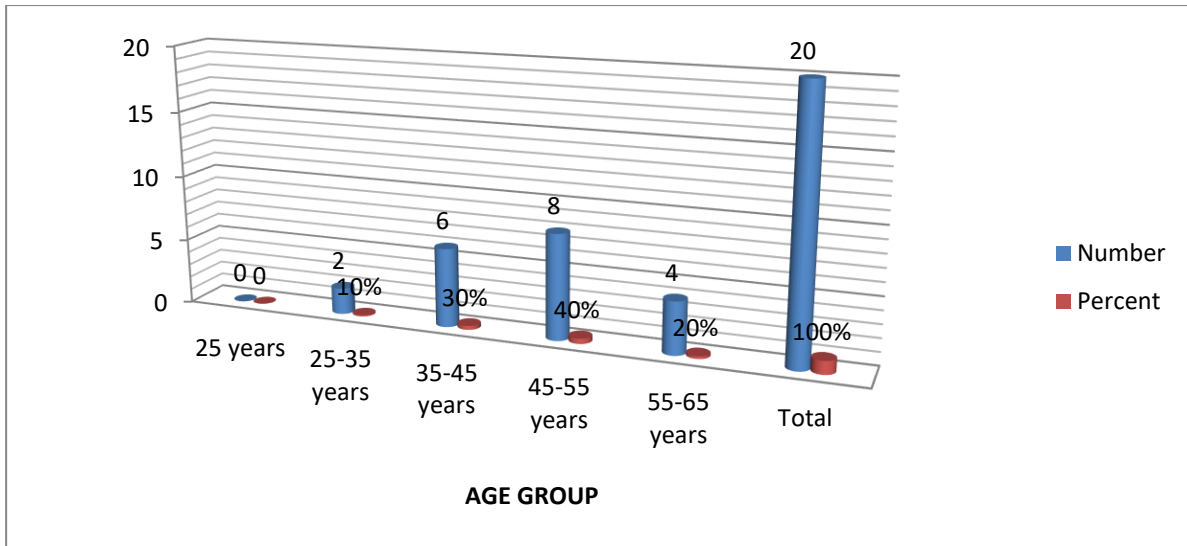
## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS:**

Socio-economic and political status of women depend much upon their basic background, characteristics pertaining to their own personality and the society in which they live. The Socio-economic profile is vital to any study as it helps in building a comprehensive and complete picture of the respondents. Several socio-economic factors have been taken into account, in this study that give a good idea about the background and the profile of the women grampanchayat members under study. For drawing up a coherent picture of the participation of women in political activities, a sample of 20 women members of gram panchayats to study the attitude of men towards women. The individual profile is derived by looking at factors such as age, caste, religion, marital status, type of the family, educational level, occupation and annual income of the respondents. The education and occupation level of the respondent's husband is also taken into account to gauge the economic status of the family.

**TABLE 3.1**

**AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS:**

Age Group	Number	Percent
25 years	-	-
25-35 years	02	10%
35-45 years	06	30%
45-55 years	08	40%
55-65 years	04	20%
Total	20	100%



An Analysis of the percent women members as presented in Table 3.1 reveals that about 40% of women were below 55 years. And 20% of women were below 65 years of age about 30% of women were below 45 years of age and 10% women were less than 35 years of age. This shows that the younger generation of women has realized the value of political participation.



**TABLE 3.2**

**EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS**

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Illiterate	04	20%
Primary	11	55%
Secondary	05	25%
P.U.C	-	-
Graduate	-	-
Total	20	100%

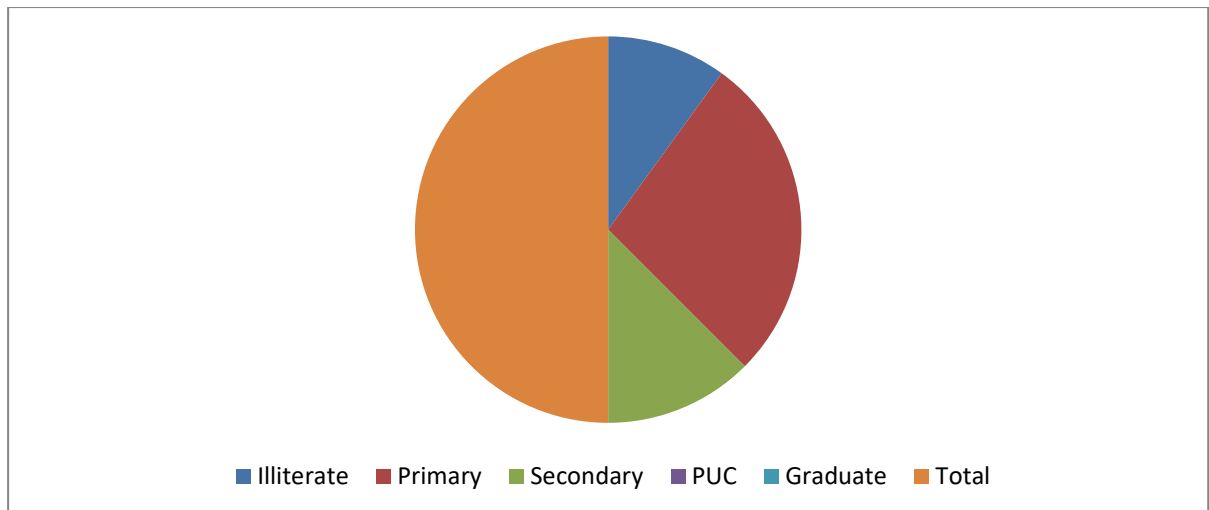
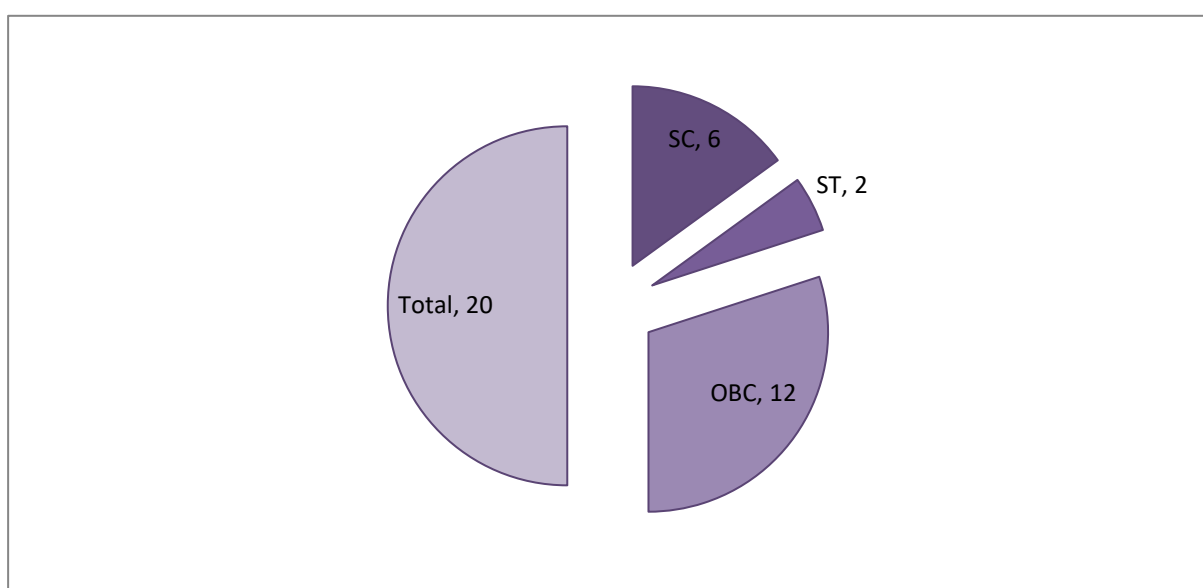


Table No 3.2 presents the education background of the women Gram Panchayat members. 3.2 shows that the 55% had education up to primary level 25% had secondary level; while 20% were illiterate if clearly indicates that the participation of respondents with below primary education tends to be more in a decentralized democracy.

**TABLE 3.3**

**CASTE-WISE CLASSIFICATION**

<b>Caste Level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
SC	06	30%
ST	02	10%
OBC	12	60%
Total	20	100%

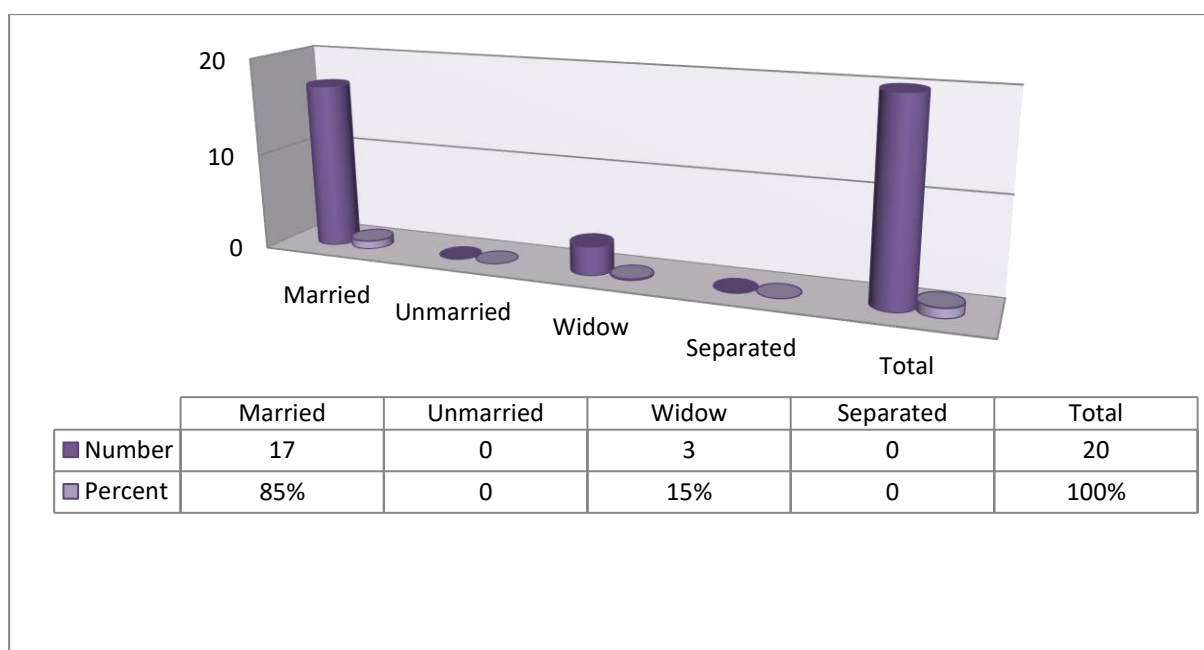


Caste structure of respondents has been depicted in Table No. 3.3. It shows that about 60 per cent of the members belonged to the backward castes. The representation for the scheduled caste is 30 percent, while scheduled tribe is 10 percent . The one-third representation of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women in the gram panchayat clearly indicates that the reservation of seats for them in general and women in particular ensured the participation of women. It may be pointed out that 73rd constitutional amendment introduced reservation of seats for women in gram panchayats. This reservation was based on population of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes. It is instrumental in bringing the socially and economically backward sections of the people to the main stream of politics.

**TABLE 3.4**

**MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS**

Marital Level	Number	Percent
Married	17	85%
Unmarried	-	-
Widow	03	15%
Separated	-	-
Total	20	100%

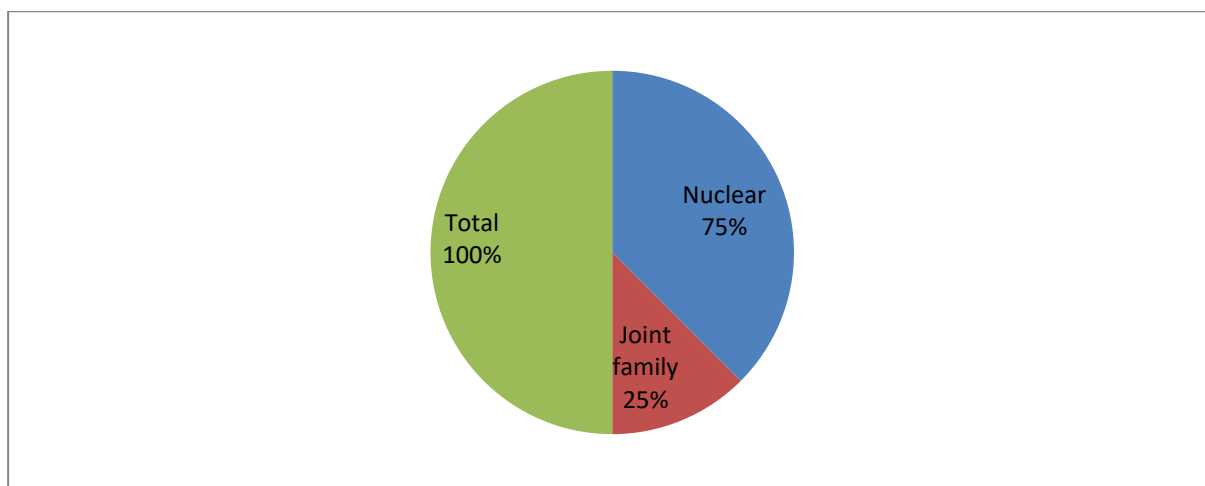


Data on the marital status of women members are given in Table and figure No. 3.4. It shows that 85 per cent of women members were married, and 15percent of women members were widows. The table reveals that majority are married women and they are able to balance their roles as gram panchayat members/vice presidents/presidents with their role in the family. The participation of widows indicates their faith in the political empowerment of women through grass-roots level democratic institutions.

**TABLE 3.5**

**TYPES OF THE FAMILY OF RESPONDENTS**

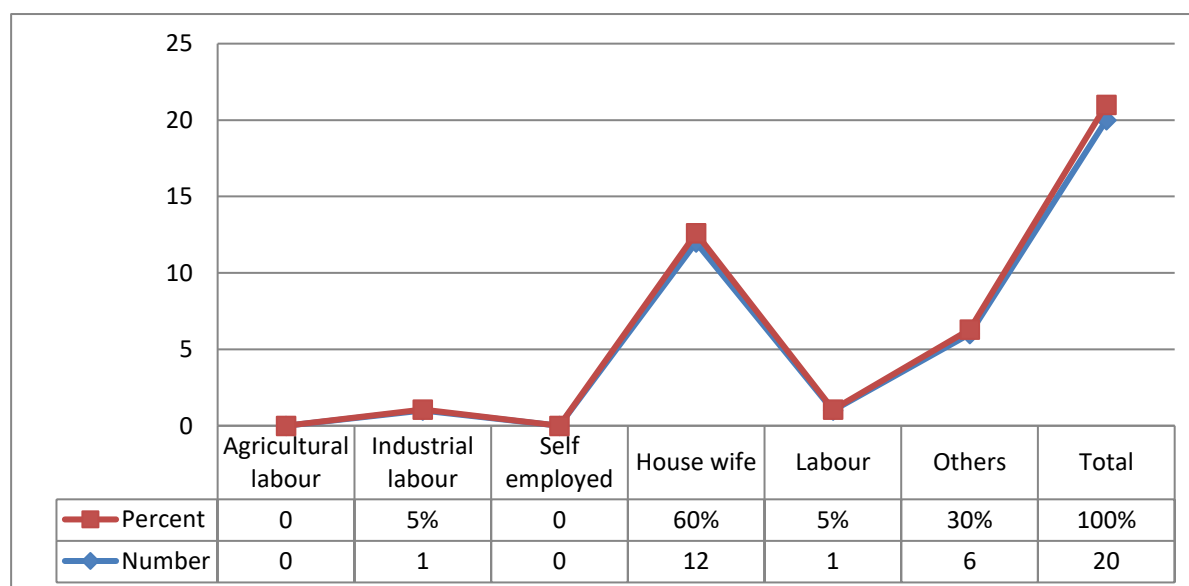
<b>Types of family</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Nuclear	15	75%
Joint family	05	25%
Total	20	100%



Classification of respondents according to the type of family has been shown in Table No. 3.5 and Figure No. 3.5. It is observed that 75 per cent of families were nuclear families, while remaining 25 per cent were joint families. An over whelming majority of the respondents is from nuclear family system. Therefore it can be concluded that respondents have other members in the family to look after the members in the family and other affairs of the family such as education, welfare of children etc.

**TABLE 3.6****OCCUPATIONAL-WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Occupation	Number	Percent
Agricultural Labour	-	-
Industrial Labour	01	05%
Self Employed	-	-
House wife	12	60%
Labour	01	05%
Others	06	30%
Total	20	100%



The occupational status of the respondents presented in Table No. 3.6. The majority 60 per cent of them were engaged in the 12 household related non-economic activities as house wives, 5 per cent of them were working as (factory) industrial workers and 30 per cent of them were engaged in labourer. This is also reflected in the income levels of the respondents.

**Table 3.7**

**INCOME-WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS**

<b>Annual Income</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lessthan11,000.00	20	100%
11,000/= to 25,000/=	-	-
50,000/= to 75,000/=	-	-
75,000/= to 1,00,000/=	-	-
1,00,000/= and above	-	-
Total	20	100%

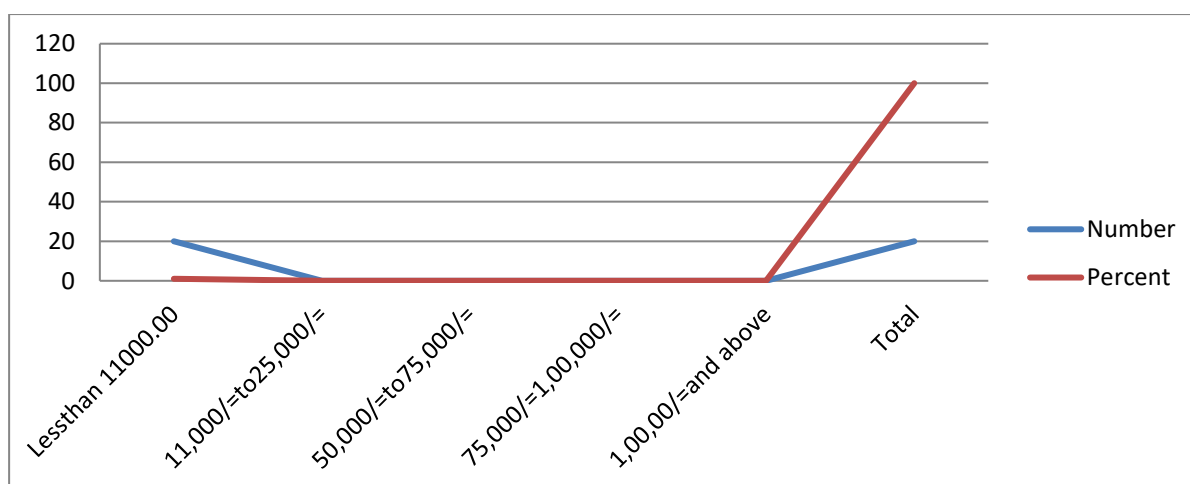


Table No. 3.7 and Figure No. 3.7 presents income distribution across members. The majority 100 per cent of the respondents has annual income of less than Rs. 11,000/- This is due to the higher number of respondents engaged as agricultural labourers and House Wives. It was found that large number of respondents fell in the low income

**TABLE 3.8**

**TABLE SHOWING THE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION**

Sources of Inspiration	Number	Percent
Family members	07	35%
Political party	02	10%
Husband	03	15%
Village leaders	06	30%
Self	02	10%
Total	20	100%

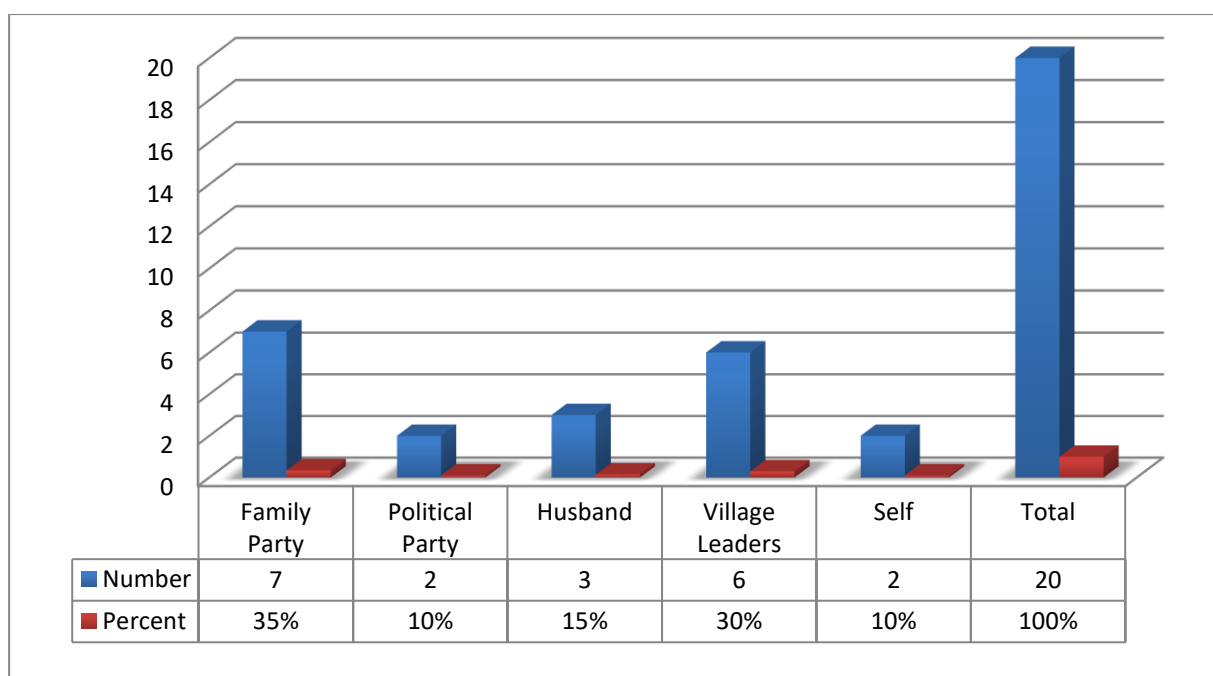


Table 3.8 and Figure 3.8 indicate the sources of inspiration of respondents into the public life due to the influence of varied factors, such as self interest, compulsion of family members and party encouragement. It is observed 35 per cent had family members, 30 Per cent of the members were made to enter politics by village leaders, and 10 per cent were motivated by their political parties. It is clear that political parties, husband and family members played an important role in motivating women to enter politics 15percent respondents were inspiration of husband and 10 percent members were self interest.

**TABLE 3.9**

**TABLE SHOWING THE PRESENT OF THE RESPONDENTS IN GRAM PANCHAYATS**

Present position	Number	Percent
Member	18	90%
Member of standing committee	-	-
Vice President	01	05%
President	01	05%
Total	20	100%

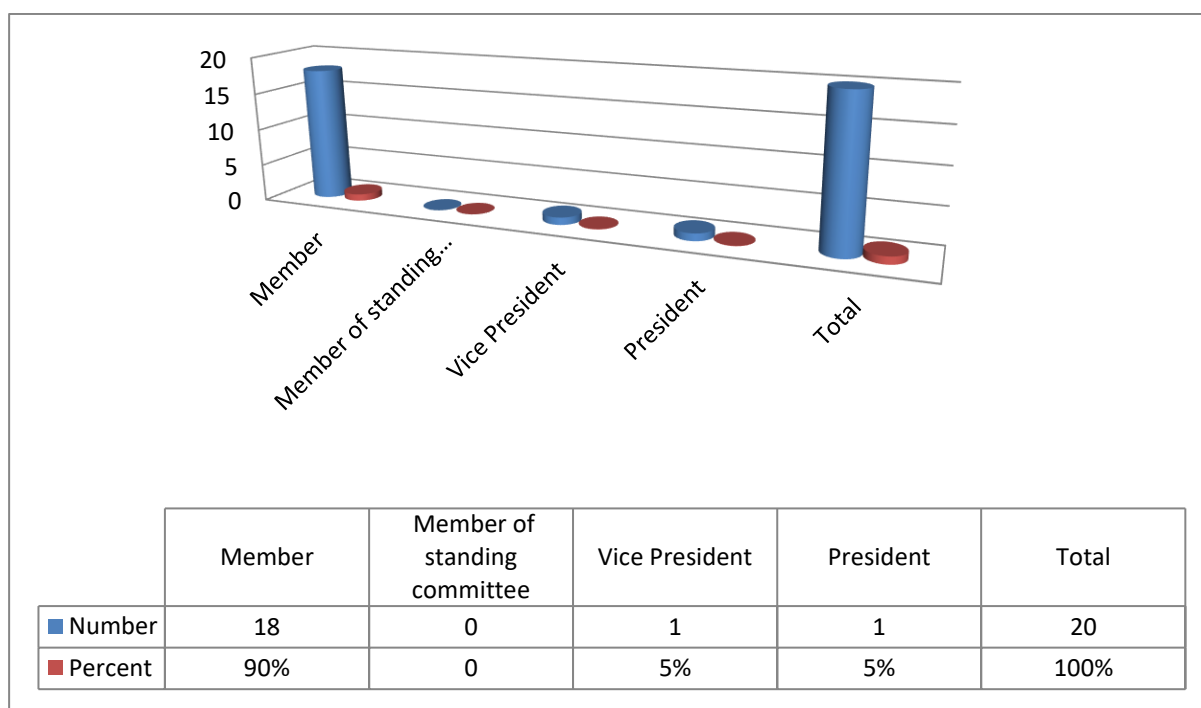


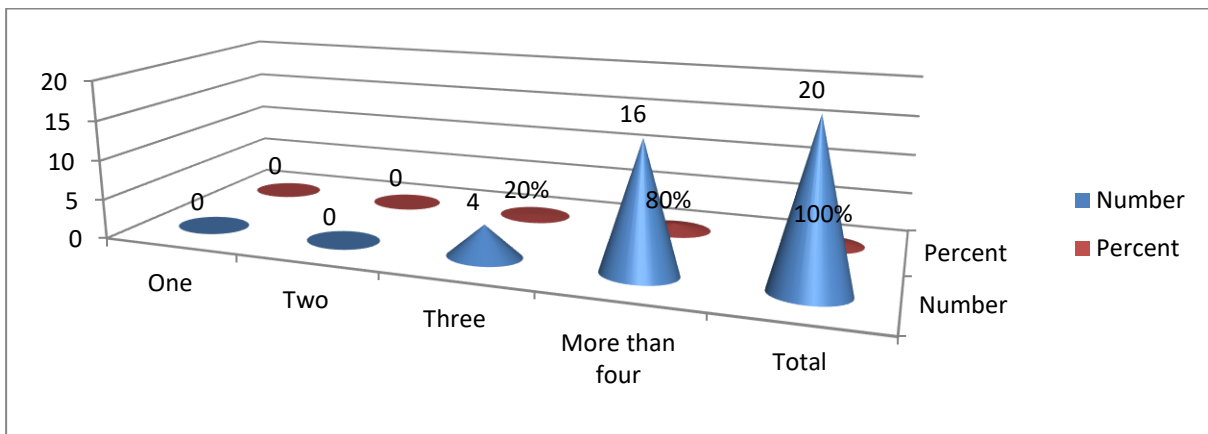
Table and figure 3.9 explains the present position of members in their respective gram panchayats. An overwhelming majority of 90 per cent are just the members in gram panchayats, whereas meager percentage of 1 enjoy the position of presidents. Slightly less than 5 per cent of the respondents enjoy the position of vice-presidents. Majority number of gram panchayats is headed by female members.



**TABLE 3.10**

**TABLE SHOWING NUMBER OF TIMES RESPONDENTS ELECTED TO PANCHAYATS NUMBER OF TIMES**

Elected	Number	Percent
One	-	-
Two	-	-
Three	04	20%
More than four	16	80%
Total	20	100%



From the above table and figure, it can be inferred that, 80 per cent are representing their ward for the more than four time, 20 per cent are representing their wards for the three time. Thus majority of the members are experienced.

**TABLE 3.11**

**TABLE SHOWING THE AWARENESS OF THE 73<sup>RD</sup> CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT**

<b>Awareness 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very well aware	01	05%
Just aware	17	85%
Ignorant of it	02	10%
Total	20	100%

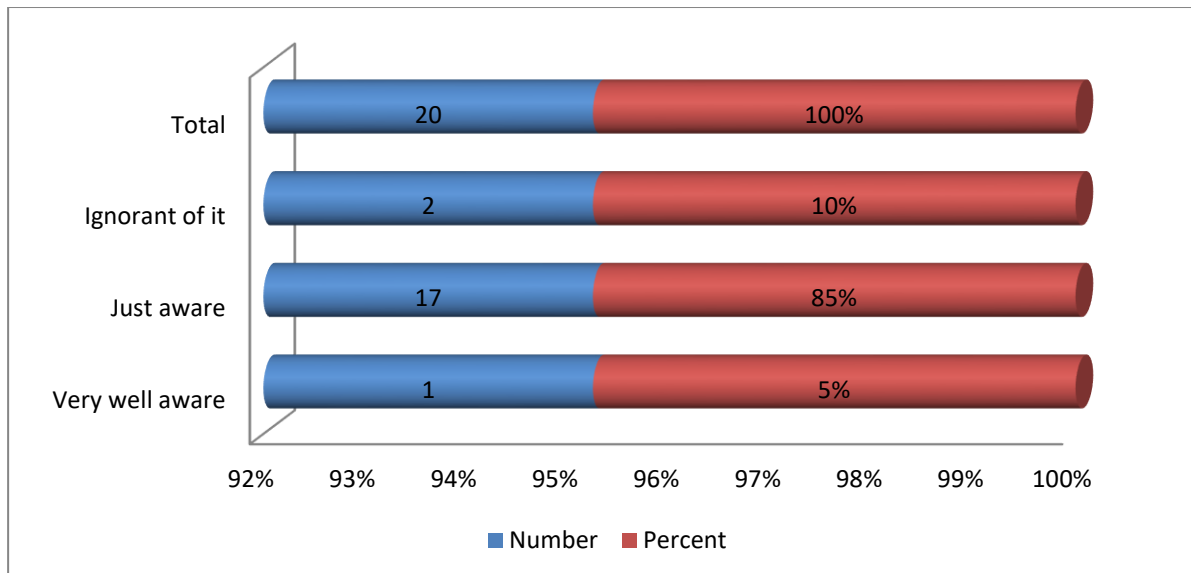


Table and figure no. 3.11 showing the awareness of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act by respondents, in which a provision has been made for 33.3 per cent women's reservation in gram panchayat. It shows that a majority of 85 percent are just aware of the 73rd constitutional amendment act, 5 per cent are very well aware and 10 per cent are ignorant of it. From this, it is concluded that most of the respondents knew that reservation of seats has been made for women as per the Amendment Act.

**TABLE 3.12**

**TABLE SHOWING THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION BY RESPONDENTS IN GRAM SABHA AND PANCHAYAT MEETINGS**

Nature of participation in meetings	Number	Percent
Very actively	15	75%
Actively	05	25%
Less actively	-	-
Passively	-	-
Total	20	100%

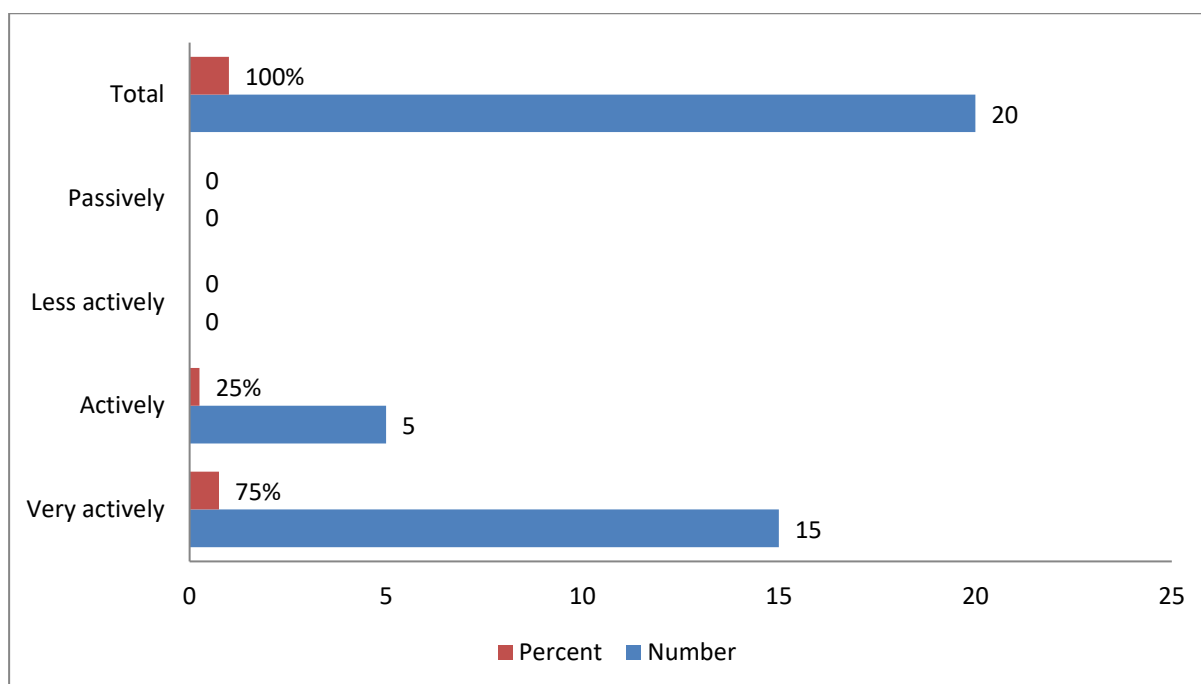


Table and figure 3.12 shows participation of women members in ward Sabha and Panchayat meetings. 75 per cent of the members take part in the meetings actively and 25per cent have reported very active participation. It is observed that majority of the members take active participation in ward Sabha and Panchayat meetings

**TABLE 3.13**

**TABLE SHOWING THE FREQUENCY OF PRESENTATION OF PROBLEMS BY RESPONDENTS IN WARD PANCHAYAT MEETINGS**

Frequency of presentation of problems	Number	Percent
Always	17	85%
Very often	-	-
Often	-	-
Less often	03	15%
Not at all	-	-
Total	20	100%

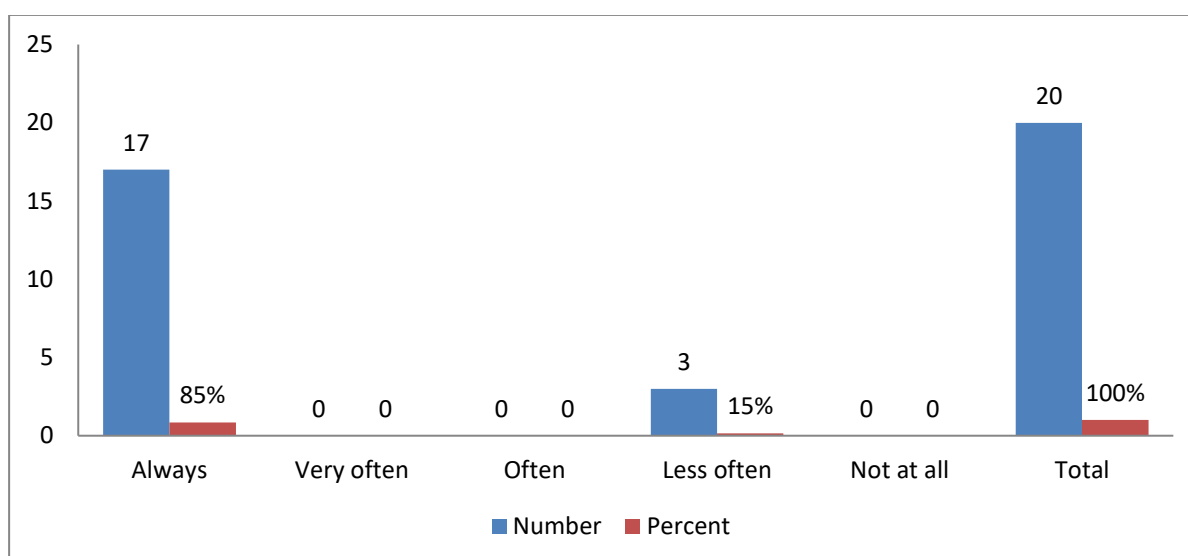


Table and figure 3.13 illustrates that the frequency of presentation of problems by respondents in ward and panchayat meetings. An majority of 85 per cent are always presenting the problems, 15 per cent of the respondents present problems less often. It follows that respondents seems to play an active role in discussing village problems in ward meetings, interacting with people to identify the needs of the community etc.

**TABLE 3.14**

**THE NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS OF DECISION MAKING BY THE RESPONDENTS**

<b>Involvement in decision making</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Actively involve	18	90%
Involve to a Moderate level	01	05%
No involvement	-	-
Less involvement	01	05%
Total	20	100%

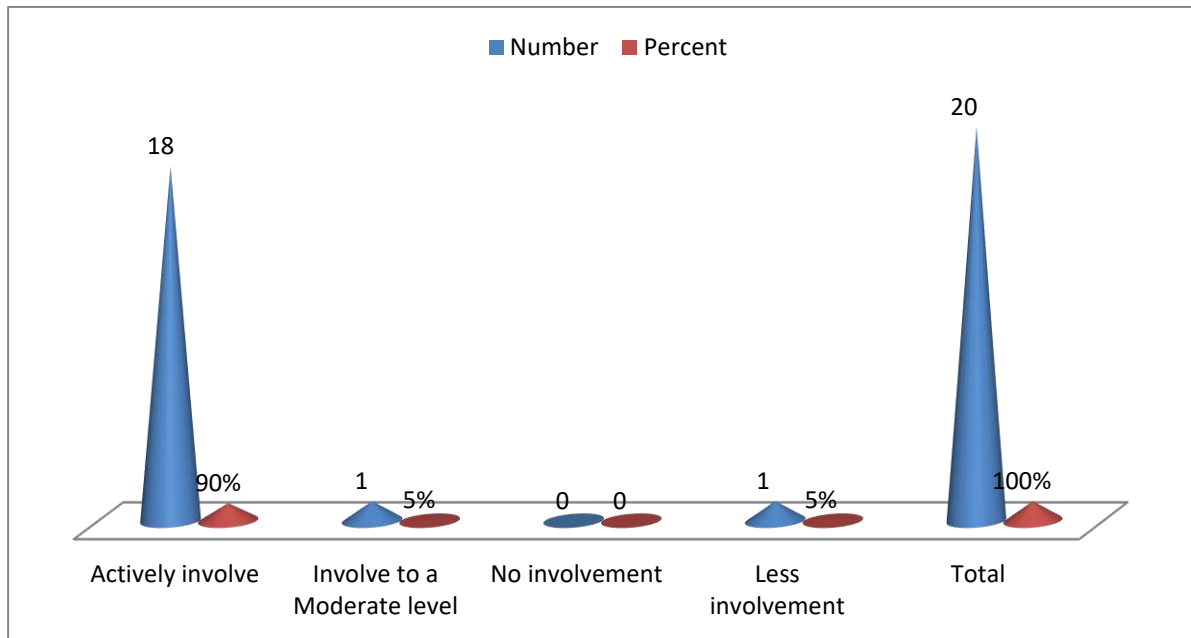


Table and figure 3.14 explains the nature of involvement of respondents in the process of decision-making. It was reported by a majority of respondents 90 per cent that they involve actively in decision-making. 5 per cent were moderate involved in decision-making process of Panchayats. 5 per cent women members just involved in the process of decision-making.. There is a lot of scope and potential for women to emerge as decision-makers. Involvement of women in decision making roles is an important tool for empowerment. Better understanding of rules, regulations and procedures of the panchayats and the various schemes are equally important for the women members to take proper decision at the panchayat level. Panchayat president and members deal with the written complaints, grievances, problems and other demands of the people of the respective area

**TABLE 3.15**

**TABLE SHOWING FREQUENCY OF VISIT BY THE RESPONDENTS  
TO THEIR WARDS**

Visit the ward	Number	Percent
Always	18	90%
Very frequently	-	-
Frequently	02	10%
Less frequently	-	-
Never	-	-
Total	20	100%

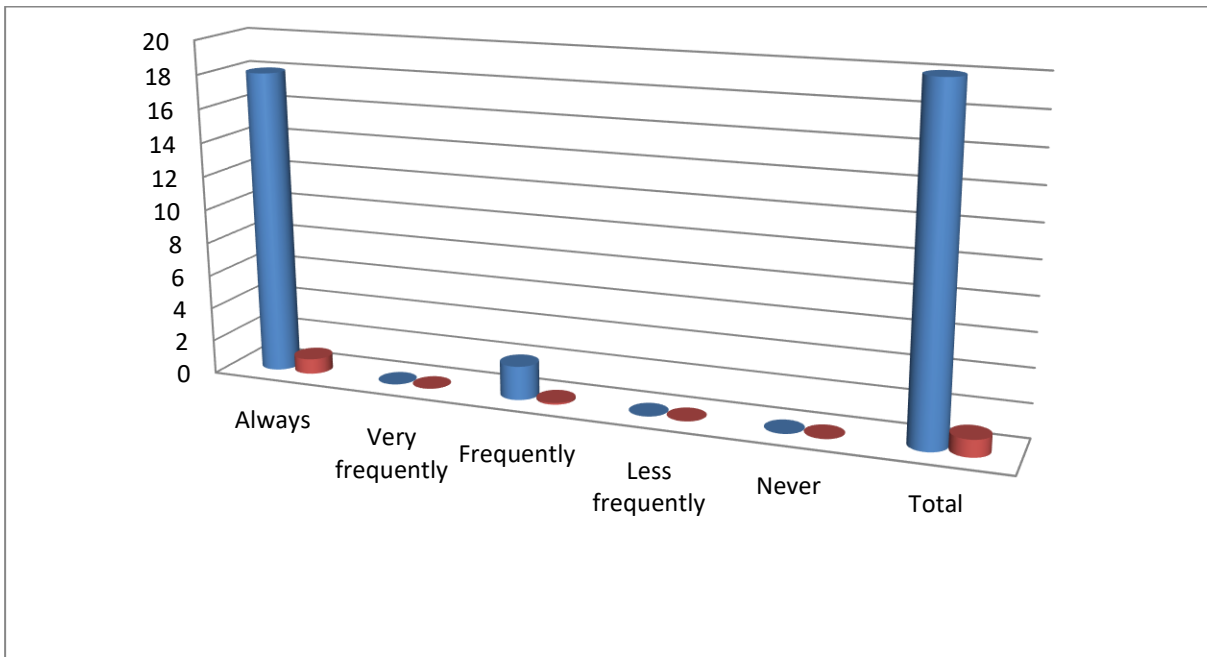


Table and figure 3.15 explains the frequency of visit by the respondents to their wards. An overwhelming majority of 90 per cent very frequently and always visit their wards, 10 per cent members frequently visit their wards, respectively. It can be concluded that majority of the respondents have the awareness of their roles and responsibilities in panchayats. They visit the ward and interact with people to identify the problems of the wards.

**TABLE 3.16**

**TABLE SHOWING THE PERCEIVED LEVEL OF DOMINANCE BY MALE MEMBERS IN THE MEETINGS**

<b>Dominance by male</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Greater Extent	01	05%
Moderate Extent	02	10%
Minimum Extent	04	20%
No dominance	13	65%
Total	20	100%

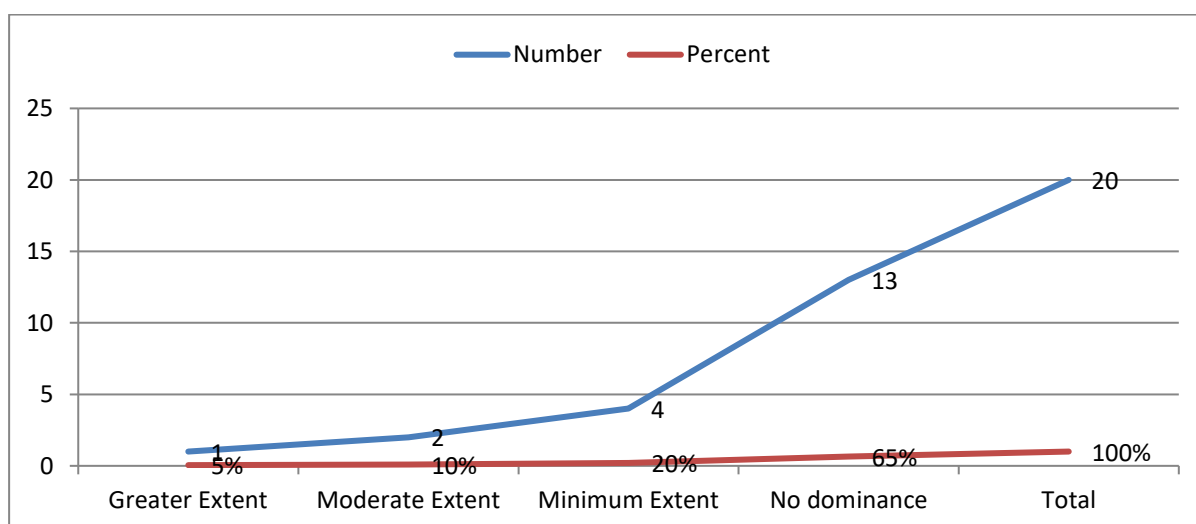


Table and figure 3.16 explains that 65 percent observed that women were in no way dominated by men. 10 per cent of respondents opinion is dominance to a moderate extent. 20 per cent respondents expressed the view that there was dominance to a minimum extent and only 5 per cent reported dominance to a greater extent. Majority of the women reported no or limited dominance by male members. However the analysis reveals that traditionalisation still exists and some, particularly illiterate and ignorant members were subject to domination in Panchayats by male members.

**TABLE 3.17**

**OPINION EXPRESSED BY THE RESPONDENTS ON THE WOMEN’S POLITICAL RESERVATION BILL**

<b>Opinion on women’s political Reservation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Absolutely essential	15	75%
Essential	03	15%
Not essential	02	10%
Not at all essential	-	-
Total	20	100%

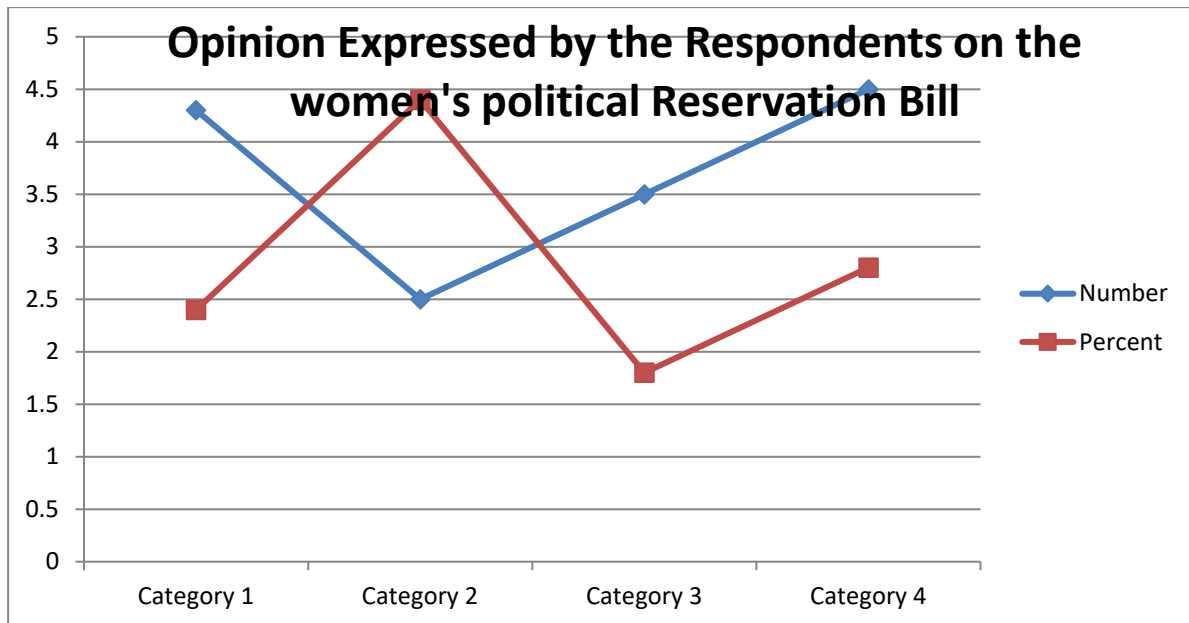


Table 3.17 and figure 3.17 explains about the awareness of respondents on the women’s political Reservation Bill. Among them 75 per cent of respondents say that it is essential, 15 per cent of respondents are of the opinion that it is absolutely essential, 10 percent of women expressed the opinion that it is not essential.



**TABLE 3.18**

**OPINION EXPRESSED BY THE RESPONDENTS IN THE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH 73<sup>RD</sup> CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT**

<b>Empowerment with 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment act</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	13	65%
No	05	25%
Can't say	02	10%
Not Known	-	-
Total	20	100%

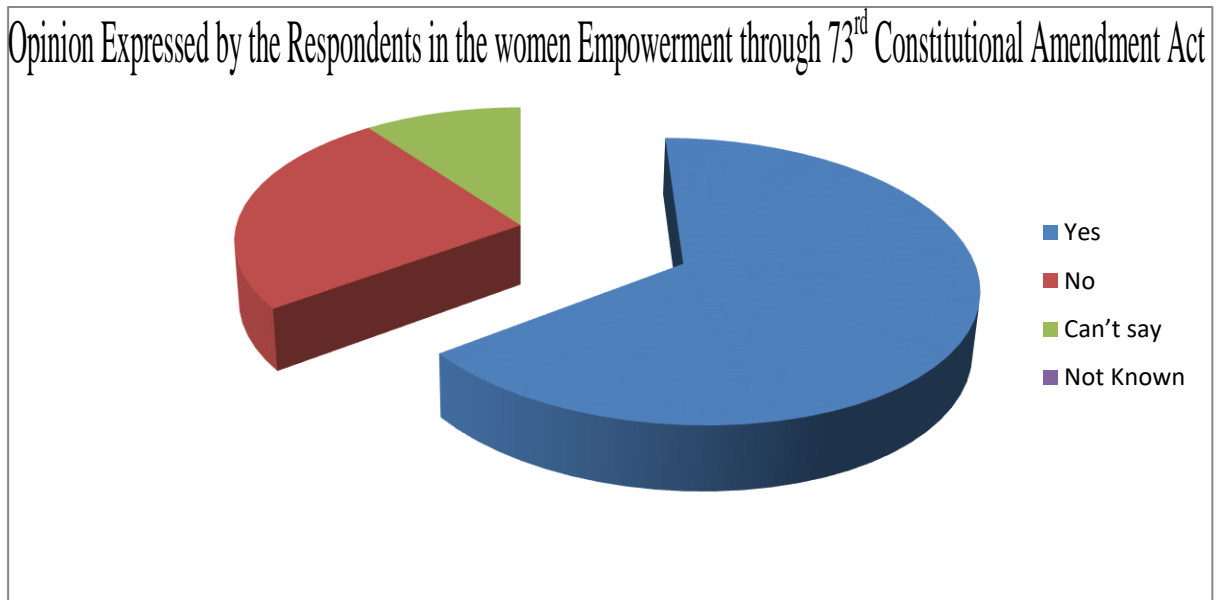


Table and figure 3.18 illustrates the opinion expressed by the respondents on women empowerment with 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Majority of the respondents i.e 65 per cent are in favour of women empowerment through 73rd constitutional amendment Act, 25 per cent of respondents are neither in favour of the Act nor in disfavour of it, 10 per cent in disfavour of the Act. It can be concluded that, majority of the respondents expressed the opinion that after the advent of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the women had been empowered in politics to a greater extent.

**TABLE 3.19**

**TABLE SHOWING THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN IN POLITICS**

Specific Problem	Number	Percent
Gender discrimination	10	50%
Family life and work life Balancing	03	15%
Male members dominate attitude	02	10%
Lack of previous political Experience	02	10%
Inferiority complex and self confidence	03	15%
Total	20	100%

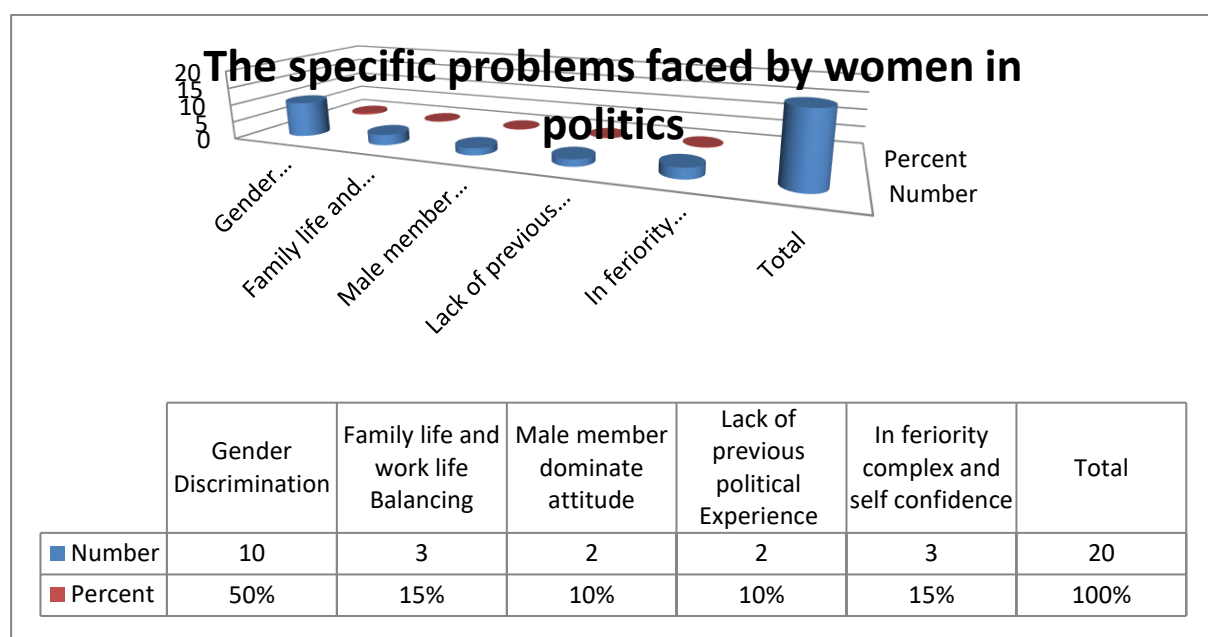


Table and figure 3.19 shows that over whelming majority of the respondents argued that they face various problems in politics. For 50 per cent of the respondents admitted male domination and gender discrimination in the society as their major problems. 15 per cent of the respondents are finding it difficult to balance their family life and political career. For 10 per cent of the respondents the problem is lack of previous political experience. 15 percent of the members the problem is lack of awareness, inferiority complex and self confidence. Domination by male members in the Panchayats was considered as a problem by 10 per cent of the members.

**TABLE 3.20**

**OPINION EXPRESSED BY THE RESPONDENTS ABOUT THE ENHANCEMENT OF STATUS IN SOCIETY AFTER THE MEMBERSHIP**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Enhanced a lot	11	55%
Moderately increased	05	25%
Decreased	04	20%
Total	20	100%

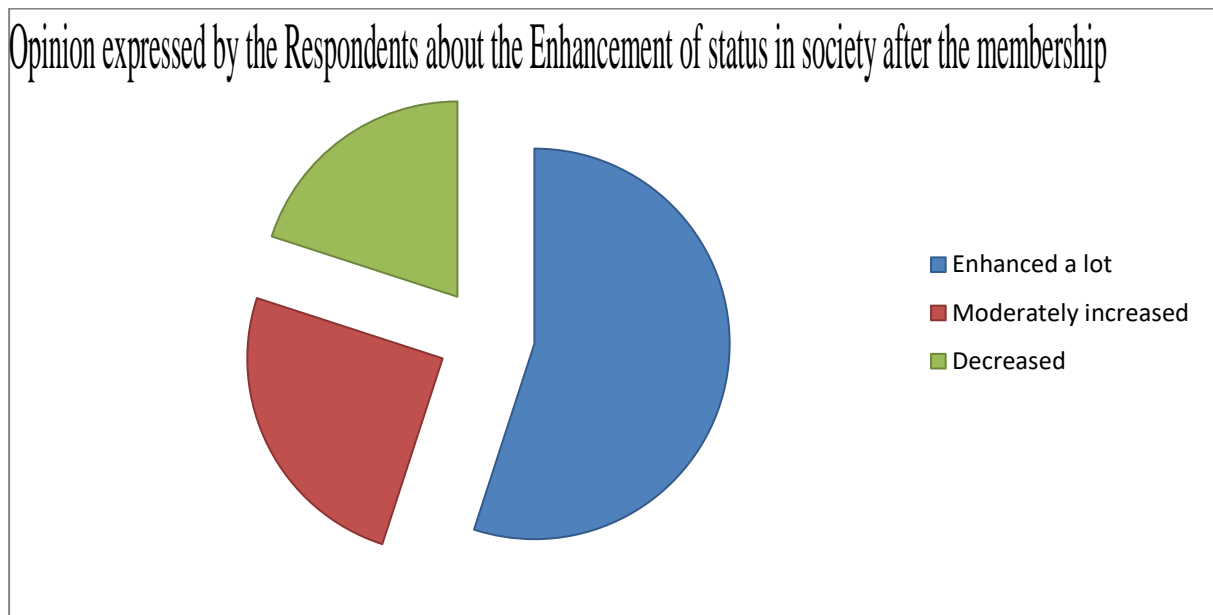


Table and figure 3.20 illustrates that opinion expressed by the respondents about the enhancement of status in society after the membership. 55 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that membership of Panchayats had enhanced a lot, their status in society. For 25 per cent of the respondents it was moderate enhancement 20 per cent expressed the opinion that decrease in social status. It can be concluded that Panchayat membership has given better status to women in public spheres.

**TABLE 3.21**

**TABLE SHOWING THE AFFILIATION OF RESPONDENTS TO OTHER SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

<b>Member of local organization</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Self Help Group	15	75%
Mahila Mandal	-	-
School Betterment Committee	-	-
Any	-	-
Other	05	25%
Total	20	100%

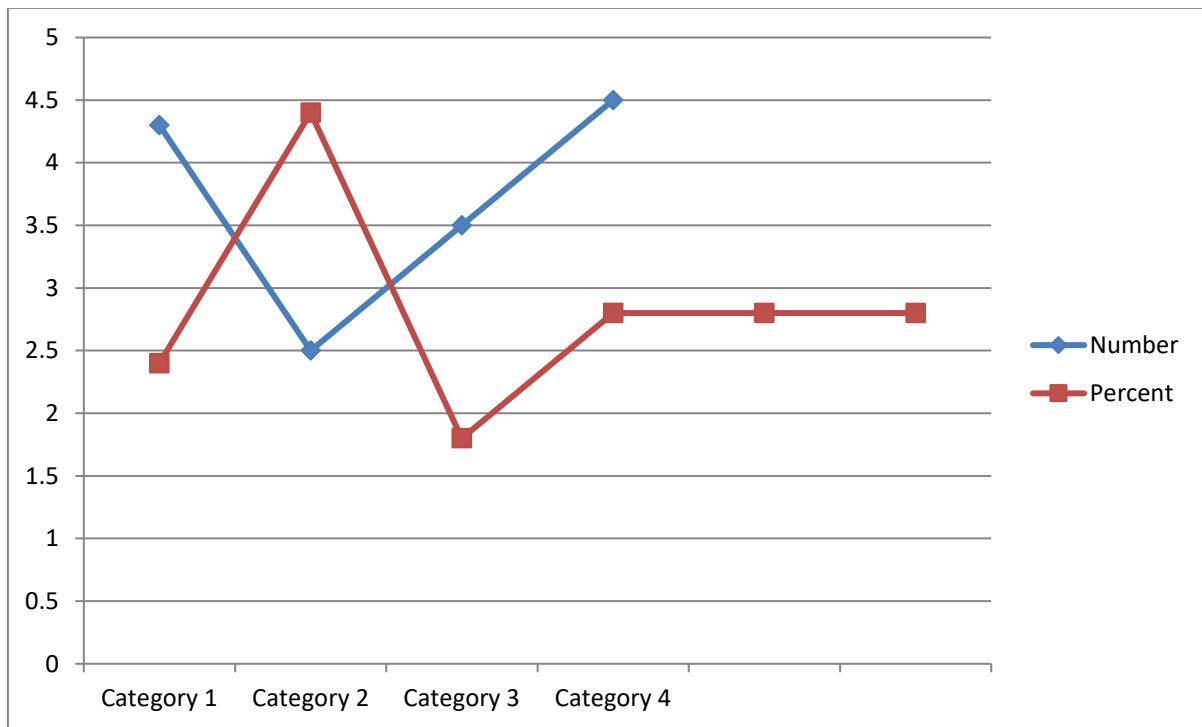
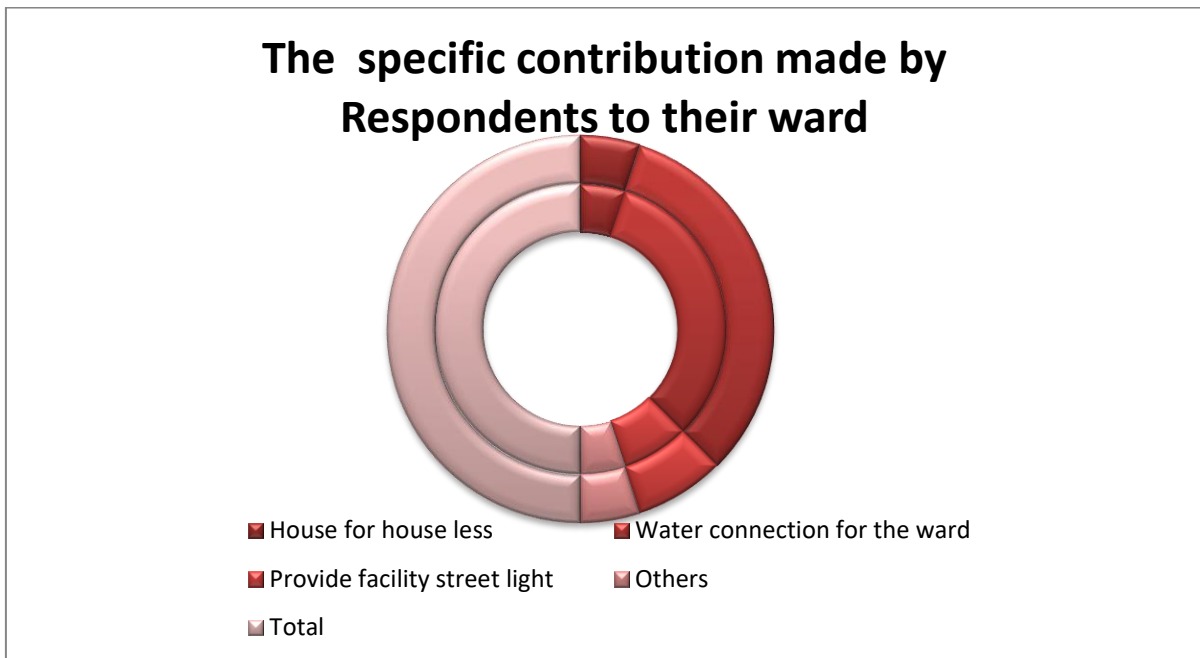


Table and figure No. 3.21 reveals that 75 per cent of the respondents are the members of self help group. While 25 per cent were the members of other social organization like Bajana Mandali, Mahila Mandal . The participation of respondents in various social organizations shows that women representatives are very active in most of these organizations. This enhances the empowerment of women members in Gram Panchayats

**TABLE 3.22**

**TABLE SHOWING THE SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION MADE BY RESPONDENTS TO THEIR WARD**

<b>Specific contribution</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
House for House less	02	10%
Water connection for the ward	13	65%
Provide facility street light	03	15%
Others	02	10%
Total	20	100%



From the analysis of the data, it is inferred that 65 percent of the respondents provided water connections in their ward, 10 per cent provided houses for the houseless and 15 per cent were engaged in provide street light, 10 per cent respondents provide for water connection of the word . It can be concluded that women members have better knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and knew the functions of the gram panchayats.

## Findings :

- It has been observed that the participation of respondents with below secondary education tends to be more in a decentralised democracy.
- Regarding the caste profile, one third of the representatives belonged to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.
- The reservation of seats for these groups ensured their participation in Gram Panchayats.
- It reveals that majority of the respondents are married and are able to balance their roles in family life and political life.
- An overwhelming majority of the respondents come from Nuclear-family background.
- The occupational status of the respondents' shows that, majority of them were housewives engaged in the household related activities.
- Most of the women are from non-political background and entered politics due to the pressure of political parties, husband and family members.
- Social status of the family tends to bear a strong influence in determining women empowerment in Gram Panchayat than the economic status of the family.
- Most of the respondents knew that reservation of seats had been made for women from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and they were in favour of the Bill. This shows that the awareness level of women in Gram Panchayat is quite high.
- Majority of the respondents have awareness of their roles and responsibilities. They always visit the ward and interact with people to identify the problems of the wards.
- The nature of participation by the respondents in Panchayat proceedings and the ward sabha are quite encouraging.
- The respondents in most of the Gram Panchayats discuss village problems in meetings, interact with people to identify the needs of the community and implement developmental programmes.
- Decision- making role is important for empowerment. Majority of the respondents have involved themselves actively in decision making process. They have also exhibited potentiality to emerge as decisionmakers.
- A large proportion of the respondents' opinion is that women leaders have got extra responsibilities towards women.
- Most of the respondents are of the opinion that training should be imparted to newly elected representatives.
- The problems faced by majority of the women in politics are balancing family life and professional career, lack of previous political experience, lack of knowledge of the Panchayat Act, lack of awareness, inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence.

## **SUGGESTION**

In the light of the above study following specific suggestions can be made for the empowerment of women through their effective participation in political processes.

1. There is the need for regular orientation and training programmes that will help to increase the political and management skills of women in panchayats. Being politically skillful, they will be able to understand and assimilate diverse political opinion, participate intelligently in political debates and analyse issues to make useful decisions.
2. A long-term solution to women's participation in political activities rests in greater awareness about their role, responsibilities and entitlements.
3. Sharing and co-operation by both women and men would result in better designing and implementation of activities in panchayats.
4. Political empowerment of women need more support from officials and the public.
5. Reservation for women should be continued to ensure their empowerment through greater participation in political administration and decision making.

## **CONCLUSION:**

It is quite evident from the study that, Gram panchayats in many places have become highly politicized. Without political patronage it is difficult in a majority of cases for both women and men members of panchayats to get elected. This interference from political parties and their representatives has adversely affected these local bodies. An integrated approach is necessary to make the panchayats truly democratic and strengthen good governance. Training and research institutions, concerned state and central departments have a role in strengthening the panchayati raj institutions. Reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has definitely set a positive trend overall. Despite the many problems and limitations women have proved that given an opportunity they are capable of becoming equal partners in the development process. To an extent women have managed to overcome their lack of access and opportunities whether pertaining to literacy, skills, mobility etc. and yet perform their roles and responsibilities as members of panchayati raj institutions. While reservation has provided a window of opportunity for women to enter the public sphere, much needs to be done to empower women in the true sense. It is important to be aware of the socioeconomic and political background of the women who are elected to panchayats.

Awareness and training programmes to a large extent have focused on general aspects relating to the functioning of panchayats. As seen from the study in a majority of cases the awareness levels of women on these aspects are quite encouraging. Women cannot function and play their roles effectively unless they are able to assert themselves. Empowerment is a process and multi-dimensional. It cannot be confined to a limited sphere. Planned interventions have to be made in areas

including the economic, social and political spheres for true empowerment to take place. Therefore, women have to be provided access and opportunities to the basic rights such as literacy, legal and ownership rights etc. Political empowerment can be better sustained if women have at least a degree of economic independence. The 73rd constitutional amendment and the reservation policy for women undoubtedly have set a positive trend. Women in large number have been able to create and occupy space in the public sphere. It has given them greater visibility as well as mobility. Women have also been able to enter other sectors and actively participate in local organizations. This has changed the perception and outlook of women and given them greater self-confidence. Women have gained better status both in family and outside. Family members and men in many instances perceive women in a more positive way. In the context of gram panchayat, more reforms and structural changes are needed that would actually delegate powers and responsibilities to elected women members.

Sensitisation of men, both officials and elected members is very essential for women to be able to function effectively. Sharing and cooperation by both men and women would result in better designing and implementation of activities for the benefit of all. At the same time women need to gain greater role clarity and strike a balance between their household and official responsibilities. While men have to be sensitized to be supportive in this, women need to bring about shifts in their attitudes and outlook. Unless all these processes take place simultaneously and on a continuing basis empowerment of women in gram panchayats would remain a buzzword without translating into reality. There is a lot of scope and potential for women to emerge as leaders and decision makers and play a key role in the development and good governance of local institutions. It requires dedicated and committed efforts by all concerned.



## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of the Member:

2. Age:

3. Educational Qualification:

Illiterate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>	P.U.C	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post Graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Caste:

5. Religion:

6. Name of the Ward/Panchayat:

7. Family Background:

**i) Marital Status:** Married  Unmarried   
Widow  Separated

**ii) If Married**

**a) Husband's Occupation:** Agriculturist  Government Service   
Private Sector  Self employed

**b) Husband's Education:**

Illiterate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>	P.U.C	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post Graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>

**iii) Size of the Family:** Nuclear  Joint Family

**iv) Occupation:** Agricultural Labour  Industrial Labour   
Self Employed  House Wife

- 8. Annual Income:**    Less than 11,000.00      
    11,000/= to 25,000/=      
    50,000/= to 75,000/=      
    75,000/= to 1,00,000/=      
    1,00,000/= and above

**Information relating to Panchayat Membership:**

9. The persons who inspired you to enter politics:

- Family members        Husband        Self      
 Political Party        Village leaders

10. Present Position:    Member        Member of Standing Committee      
    Vice President        President

11. Number of terms elected to Panchayat:

- a)** One     b) Two     c) Three     4) more than four

12. Please state your perceived level of satisfaction of power and position

- Excellent        Very Good      
 Good        Neither good      
 Bad

13. Are you aware of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act?

- Very well aware        Just aware        Ignorant of it

**Participation:**

14. How often do you speak in panchayat meetings?

15. How often do you have presented the problems of your ward / panchayat in meetings?

- Always        Very often      
 Often        Less often        Not at all

16. Do you participate in process of decision making?

Actively involve                       Involve to a moderate level   
No involvement

17. Do you meet the members of your ward and solve their problems?

Always                       Very frequently                       Frequently   
Less frequently                       Never

18. What are your responsibilities in the Panchayat?

19. Do you observe any domination by the male members in the Panchayat?

Greater Extent                       Moderate extent   
Minimum extent                       No dominance.

20. Do you act on your own in Panchayat?

Yes                       No

If No, Whom do you depend upon?

Husband                       Family members                       Panchayat leaders.

21. What is your contribution for the development of your ward/Panchayat?

**General:**

22. Do you intend to continue in politics?

Yes                       Can not say                       No

23. As a women leader you have got an extra responsibility towards women

Yes                       No

24. What is your opinion regarding the women's Political Reservation Bill?

Absolutely essential                       Essential   
Not essential                       Not at all essential

25. Do you think that the condition of women have improved with 73<sup>rd</sup>

Constitutional Amendment Act?

Yes                       No                       Can't say                       Not known

26. Do you think that as a woman you face problems in politics?

Yes                       No

If Yes, Give reasons

27. Are you a member of local organization?

Mahila Mandal

Self Help

groupSchool Betterment Committee

Any other

28. Do you feel that your status in society has increased since then?

29. Is training imparted to newly elected women representatives?

Yes

No

30. How women can perform better in Panchayat activities ? Give Suggestions.

31. Challenges (problems) faced in the Panchayati

32. If any other Suggestions?

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**REASEARCH PHOTOS:**



