

CHAPTER – VI

IMPACT OF RESERVATION OF SEATS FOR WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS ON THEIR LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD

6.1 Introduction

Gandhi wanted Panchayats would be involved in meeting for the basic needs of the people by addressing poverty, unemployment, drinking water and increasing food production, among others. By assigning productive functions to the Panchayats, Gandhi assigned it a key economic role.

During the British era, the village Panchayat was a unit of local administration for mainly maintaining law and order. Pressing by Indian leaders for local autonomy, the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885 was introduced. For a little more autonomy for the local self-government institutions the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919 was passed.

After independence, to give concrete shape to the decentralization of power, Constitution of India has been amended. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) has initiated the process of decentralizing powers to grassroots institutions. 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India is a guideline and a basic framework evolved to guide the state governments to take initiative of organising grassroots democracy as a system of governance to administer development and social justice (Palanithurai, 2002).

The 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 inserted Part IX, containing Articles 243 to 243-O in the Constitution. Among these Articles 243 to 243-O, Article 243-G of the Constitution stipulates with the Panchayats powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. The responsibility is given as: i) preparing plans for economic development and social justice, ii) implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice and iii) in regard to matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule (Basu,2008). The Eleventh Schedule contains 29 items, e.g., agriculture, land improvement, minor irrigation, animal husbandry, fisheries, education, women and child development, small scale industries, rural housing, drinking water, poverty alleviation, health and sanitation etc.

Through the West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973, the State has devolved all 29 functions included in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, to the three levels of Panchayats through the West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1994. In West Bengal Panchayat Act, Section 19, section 20, section 21 and section 32(A) mentioned the functions, duties and power of Panchayats in West Bengal. Sections 9 and 34 describe the power and duties of the Pradhan and the Upa-Pradhan.

The Pradhan is responsible for maintaining all the records and finance of Gram Panchayat and he/she has executes administration powers of GP. The Pradhan is a whole-time functionary.

During the absence of the Pradhan, the Upa-Pradhan shall exercise all the powers, perform all the function and discharge all the duties of the Pradhan. Similarly during the absence of the Upa-Pradhan, the Pradhan shall exercise the powers, perform the functions and discharge the duties of the Upa-Pradhan.

Pradhan may delegate some of his / her power to the Upa-Pradhan but he/she cannot delegate his financial power without approval of the Gram Panchayat.

Bhattacharyya (1998) observed that in West Bengal CPI-M has defined the panchayats as part of the government's rural development programmes, and thus they are considered as agencies of programme implementation.

Bardhan and Mookherjee (2004) examined the role of the panchayats in poverty alleviation efforts in West Bengal and observed that "the West Bengal panchayat played an important role in delivery of farm inputs and implementation of poverty alleviation schemes". According to the authors, "the major responsibility, devolved on the gram panchayats, was the selection of beneficiaries of limited amount of resources within specified sectors within the villages".

Datta and Datta (2002) had written about West Bengal G.P.'s functions in their article that not only Panchayats prepare and implement the development plans and infrastructural facilities for overall economic development at the village level but also perform the duty to prepare a report showing the work done during the previous year under different heads, the receipts from different sources and the expenditure incurred for each type of work. They said that the GP also prepare a report in the prescribed form on the work proposed to be done during the following year, indicating the anticipated receipts from different sources and the nature of work proposed to be executed.

Except above mentioned GP's functions which are written by different researcher, there are many more functions of GP in West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 which are mentioning below.

6.2 Duties of the Gram Panchayat

In the West Bengal Panchayat Act, there are three types of duties of the Gram Panchayat. These are obligatory duties (sec.19), other duties (sec.20) and discretionary duties (sec.21).

In section 19 the functions of the gram panchayats are given in clear term. These are given below:

Section :19

(1)“A Gram Panchayat shall function as a unit of self-government and in order to achieve economic development and secure social justice for all, shall, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed or such directions as may be given by the State Government,-

- (a) Prepare a development plan for the five-year term of the office of the members and revise and update it as and when necessary with regard to the resources available;
- (b) Prepare an annual plan for each year by the month of October of the preceding year for development of human resources, infra-structure and civic amenities in the area;
- (c) Implement schemes for economic development and social justice as may be drawn up by, or entrusted upon it.

(2) The duties of a *Gram Panchayat* shall be to provide within the area under its jurisdiction for (subject to such conditions as may be prescribed or such directions as may be given by the State Government)—

- (a) Sanitation, conservancy and drainage and the prevention of public nuisances;
- (b) Curative and preventive measures in respect of malaria, small pox, cholera or any other epidemic;
- (c) Supply of drinking water and the cleansing and disinfecting the sources of supply and storage of water;
- (d) The maintenance, repair and construction of public streets and protection thereof;
- (e) The removal of encroachments of public streets or public places;
- (f) The protection and repair of buildings or other property vested in it;
- (g) The management and care of public tanks, subject to the provisions of the Bengal Tanks Improvement Act, 1939, common grazing grounds, burning ghats and public graveyards;
- (h) The supply of any local information which the District Magistrate, the *Zilla Parishad* (the *Mahakuma Parishad*, the Council) or the *Panchayat Samiti* within the local limits of whose jurisdiction the *Gram Panchayat* is situated may require;
- (i) Organising voluntary labour for community works and works for the upliftment of its area;
- (j) The control and administration of the *Gram Panchayat* Fund established under this Act;
- (k) The imposition, assessment and collection of the taxes, rates or fees leviable under this Act;
- (l) The maintenance and 2(control of *Dafadars*, *Chowkidars* and *Gram Panchayat Karmees*) within its jurisdiction and securing due 3 (performance by the *Dafadars*, *Chowkidars* and *Gram Panchayat Karmees*) of the duties imposed on them under this Act;
- (m) The constitution and administration of the *Nyaya Panchayat* established under this Act; and

(n)The performance of such functions as may be transferred to it under section 31 of the Cattle-trespass Act, 1871.”

Under ‘other duties’ of the gram panchayats delineated in section 20 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act there are 21 duties. These duties are assigned to the gram panchayats by the State Government. Under these duties all aspects of rural development activities are covered. These duties are given below:

Section: 20

- “(a) primary, social, technical (vocational, adult or non-formal education);
- (b) Rural dispensaries, health centres and maternity and child welfare centres;
- (c) Management of any public ferry under the Bengal Ferries Act, 1885;
- (d) Irrigation (including minor irrigation, water management and watershed development);
- (e) Agriculture including agricultural extension and fuel and fodder;
- (f) care of the infirm and the destitute;
- (g) Rehabilitation of displaced persons;
- (h) improved breeding of cattle, medical treatment of cattle and prevention of cattle disease;
- (i) Its acting as a channel through which Government assistance should reach the villages;
- (j) Bringing waste land under cultivation (through land improvement and soil conservation);
- (k) Promotion of village plantations (social forestry and farm forestry);
- (l) Arranging for cultivation of land lying fallow;
- (m) Arranging for co-operative management of land and other resources of the village;
- (n) Assisting in the implementation of land reform measure in its area;
- (o) Implementation of such schemes as may be formulated or performance of such acts as may be entrusted to the *Gram Panchayat* by the State Government;
- (p) Field publicity on matters connected with development works and other welfare measures undertaken by the State Government;
- (q) Minor forest produce;
- (r) Rural housing programme;
- (s) Rural electrification including distribution of electricity;
- (t) Non-conventional energy sources; and
- (u) Women and child development.”

Section 21 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act underlines the ‘discretionary duties’ of the gram panchayats includes 29 items covering different areas of rural development and the rural life. In this section there are some specific duties which have direct influence on the livelihood pattern of the villagers. These are follows:

Section: 21

“Subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, a *Gram Panchayat* may, and shall if the State Government so directs, make provision for—

- (a) The maintenance of lighting of public streets;
- (b) Planting and maintaining trees on the sides of public streets or in other public places vested in it;
- (c) The sinking of wells and excavation of ponds and tanks;
- (d) The introduction and promotion of co-operative fanning, co-operative stores, and other co-operative enterprises, trades and callings;
- (e) The construction and regulation of markets, the holding and regulation of fairs, *melas* and *hats* and exhibitions of local produce and products of local handicrafts and homeindustries;
- (f) The allotment of places for storing manure;
- (g) Assisting and advising agriculturists in the matter of obtaining State loan and its distribution and repayment;
- (h) Filling up of insanitary depressions and reclaiming of unhealthy localities;
- (i) The promotion and encouragement of cottage 3(*Khadi*, village and small-scale including food processing) industries;
- 3(i1) promotion of dairying and poultry;
- 3(i2) promotion of fishery;
- (i3) poverty alleviation programme;
- (j) The destruction of rabbit or ownerless dogs;
- (k) Regulating the production and disposal of foodstuffs and other commodities in the manner prescribed;
- (l) The construction and maintenance of *surais*, *dharmasalas*, rest houses, cattle sheds and cart stands;
- (m) The disposal of unclaimed cattle;
- (n) The disposal of unclaimed cropses and carcasses;
- (o) The establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms;
- (p) the organisation and maintenance of *akharas*, clubs and other places for recreation or games; (p1) cultural activities including sports and games; (p2) social welfare including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded: (p3)welfare of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes; (p4)public distribution system; (p5)maintenance of community assets;
- (q) The maintenance of records relating to population census, crop census, cattle census and census of unemployed persons and of other statistics as may be prescribed;
- (r) the performance in the manner prescribed of any of the functions of (the *Zilla Parishad* or the *Mahakuma Parishad* or the Council, as the case may be) with itsprevious approval, calculated to benefit the people living within the jurisdiction of the *Gram Panchayat*;

- (s) Rendering assistance in extinguishing fire and protecting life and property when fire occurs;
- (t) Assisting in the prevention of burglary and dacoity; and
- (u) Any other local work or service of public utility which is likely to promote the health, comfort, convenience or material prosperity of the public, not otherwise provided for in this Act.”

Besides sections 19, 20 and 21 there are other sections which also represent gram panchayats functions or power and duties. In **Section 24**, a gram panchayat has been given the power to do all works necessary for the improvement of sanitation in its jurisdiction.

The gram panchayat cannot do anything without a meeting. For any decision they sit in a meeting, discuss, and then take decision. According to the West Bengal Panchayat (Gram Panchayat Administration) Rules, 2004, “the proceedings of a meeting shall be recorded”.

6.3 Women Panchayat Members Perform Their Duties at Home and Panchayat Institution

For the economic development at the village level and for ensuring social justice, panchayat members will have to perform their duties on behalf of the gram panchayts, through the West Bengal Panchayat Act. According to West Bengal Panchayat Act, Seventy one (71) duties of the gram panchayts are already mentioned above. This chapter will discuss how do women panchayat members including pradhans maintain a balance in performance of their duties at home and panchayat institution.

Despite the constitutional safeguards (Article 14, 15(1) and 16 and Amendment Act 73 and 74), rapid expansion of educational facilities and higher degree of self-awareness among modern women, the fact is that, women (who are also in power) are treated as first ‘homemakers’ who is good in household chores, than the rest, women are still found in long-working hours and hearing full responsibility for the home by fetching fuel and water, by doing work in family production units, by bringing up children and looking after the sick and the aged, by doing cook, by caring husbands and other members of the family, by serving breakfast- lunch-dinner etc., by looking after the studies of their children and behaviour also, by washing cloths and utensils, by sweeping house, by caring domestic animals etc.

“Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world” (Dashora, 2013). For housewives, it is compulsory to do make themselves as a “homemakers” but for the working ladies also they do not get any help from their spouse or male person in the family for doing household chores (cooking, clean the house, clean the dishes, wash clothes get their children ready for school etc.).

Shalz (2014) has written in his/her article that if the women are in highly reputed position (designation) in her working place even also she is expected take care of all the family affairs. Due to balancing the responsibilities in their multiple roles in domestic and professional lives they become tired and make their lives extremely stressful. This happens because of men do not treat household chores as work and as time consuming work.

After 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India (1992), numerous of women have been elected from different strata of the society, at the village (Gram Panchayat), block (Panchayat Samiti) and district (Zilla Parishad) levels. Panchayati Raj Institution plays multiple roles for village development and it works as a link between the local priorities and implementation of govt. plans and programmes. On behalf of this institution panchayat members including Pradhans do these work. Women panchayat members and Pradhans are also going through this same duties and functions for village development.

6.4 Allocation of Time on Public and Private Works by Women Panchayat Members – Empirical Results

To maintain inside (no time limit) and outside (no time limit, it is public work) responsibilities, this section will discuss how women panchayat members allocate their time on both types of responsibilities. In order to explore all these issues the present researcher had prepared a questionnaire for collecting data related with time allocations of women panchayat members on household work (including their leisure time) and panchayati work.

In this questionnaire, questions were asked as to when does women panchayat member leave the bed and when does she go to bed. During this time what kinds of domestic work she does and how much time she takes for each work and how much time does she get for panchayati work. The researcher considered her household works such as cooking including preparation of breakfast-lunch-dinner and serving it, cleaning the house including sweeping, washing clothes, preparing children or grandchildren for schools including their studies like homework, collecting firewood (if required), collecting drinking water if required, looking after aged person in the family, caring domestic animal (if it is there), giving time to husband and spending own time for entertainment. Researcher has collected data on individual time with respect to different kinds of works and sum up the whole time which she (one women panchayat member) spends for her family. This total time can be called household keeping time. After that she gives time for panchayati work. The panchayati work time is variable that means they can spend less time for panchayati work when requirement is there but housekeeping time is not variable. They can spend more time for house but not less than that otherwise there will be possibility of domestic violence. The following Table shows the total number of hours that women panchayat members spend for their house keeping work.

Table 6.1: Total Time (hours) Spent (in hours) Per Day for Housekeeping Work of Women Panchayat Members (WPM) (excluding Pradhans) as per WPMs Response in Cooch Behar District

Block	G.P.s	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	Grand Total
Cooch Behar - I	Madhupur	-	-	9	3	-	12
	Patlakhawa	-	1	6	7	-	14
	Pundibari	-	1	3	4	-	8
	Sub-total	-	2	18	14	-	34
Dinhata -I	Gitaldah-II	-	1	1	1	-	3
	Goshanimari-I	1	1	3	1	-	6
	Putimari-I	-	-	2	3	1	6
	Sub-total	1	2	6	5	1	15
Mathabhanga-I	Bairagirhat	-	-	3	2	-	5
	Pachagar	-	-	3	1	1	5
	Shikarpur	-	-	2	3	-	5
	Sub-total	-	-	8	6	1	15
Tufanganj -I	Balarampur -I	-	-	2	1	-	3
	Chilakhana-II	-	-	1	2	-	3
	Deochaira	-	-	4	2	-	6
	Sub-total	-	-	7	5	-	12
Total		1	4	39	30	2	76
		(01.31)	(05.26)	(51.31)	(39.47)	(02.63)	(100.00)

Source: Field Survey

Note: In column 5 out of 39 members 24 spend 8 hours for household work.

The above Table shows that more than 50 per cent of women panchayat members (WPM) in Cooch Behar district, spend 6-8 hours only for household work. Out of 39 members in the 6-8 hours group, 24 (61.54 percent) members spend 8 (eight) hours for household work and 39.47 per cent WPMs spends 9-11 hours for household work. If it can be combined then out of 76 members, 56(=24+30+2) WPMs i.e.73.68 per cent are doing household work for 8 hours or more than that. Average active hours (difference between get up time and bed time) for the women panchayat members for a day is 17 hours. 50 percent or more than 50 percent time they spend only on unproductive (household) work. They do their household chores very effectively and very positively with 100 percent energy. But remaining time they do not spend on panchayati work. Panchayat members think that they are only the panchayat members, so they have less responsibility to do public work and that

is the reason they are not regular to attend panchayat office except attending panchayat meetings. For most of the WPMs household work is a first preference and after that if anywhere (under PRI) their requirement is there where family male members (especially husband or son) cannot do anything, then only they do something for public. Their husbands or their male family members do the required panchayati work instead of elected women panchayat members due to WPMs spending more time in the household work. The following Table shows how much WPMs spend their time for domestic purpose in the case of Nadia district.

Table 6.2: Total Time (hrs.) Spent (in hours) Per Day for Housekeeping Work of Women Panchayat Members (excluding Women Pradhans) as per WPMs Response in Nadia District

Block	GPs	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	Grand Total
Harin ghata	Birohi-I	1	-	-	1	2	4
	Haringhata-I	1	-	-	3	4	8
	Mollabelia	-	3	2	4	-	9
	Sub-total	2	3	2	8	6	21
Karim pur-II	Dhoradaha-II	-	-	-	3	1	4
	Nandanpur	-	-	2	3	-	5
	Rahamatpur-II	1	-	-	3	3	7
	Sub- total	1	-	2	9	4	16
Krishna nagar-II	Dhubulia-I	1	-	-	-	1	2
	Nowapara-II	1	-	-	1	1	3
	Sadhanpara-II	-	-	-	1	1	2
	Sub-total	2	-	-	2	3	7
Rana ghat-II	Baidyapur-I	-	-	-	3	1	4
	Duttaphulia	1	1	1	3	2	8
	Raghunathpur Hijuli -II	-	-	1	-	3	4
	Sub-total	1	1	2	6	6	16
Total	Total	6 (10.00)	4 (06.67)	6 (10.00)	25 (41.67)	19 (31.66)	60 (100.00)
Cooch Behar + Nadia (Grand Total)		7 (05.15)	8 (05.88)	45 (33.09)	55 (40.44)	21 (15.44)	136 (100.00)

Source:-Field Survey

Note: In column 5, in Nadia district out of 6 members 4 members spend 8 hours only for household work and total Cooch Behar and Nadia districts out of 45 members 28 members spend 8 hours only for household work.

The above Table 6.2 shows that in Nadia district 31.66 per cent women panchayat members are spending 12-14 hours for household work which is higher than Cooch Behar district (02.63 per cent) and 41.67 per cent spend 9-11 hours for household work which is also more than Cooch Behar district (39.47 per cent). Combined all the women panchayat members who spend 8 (eight) hours or more than eight hours for household chores, it would be 76.47 per cent. In Nadia district it is 80 per cent ($4+25+19=48$ out of **60**) and in Cooch Behar district it is 73.68 per cent ($24+30+2=56$ out of **76**).

From the above data it can be said that more involvement in the household work of women panchayat members creates more scope of male family members or party members or male counterpart for interfering more in the panchayati work or decision making process.

The women who specially belong to poorer sections, have performed multiple roles in their day-to-day existence. It is a tightrope walk for them to strike a balance between performing the different roles at home and in their place of work on the one hand and fulfilling their duties towards the panchayats on the other.

But as panchayat representatives, after completion of household chores they have to give time for panchayati work which is related to village development. The following Tables show how the Panchayat Pradhans and members do spend their time for panchayat related work.

**Table 6.3: Every day Total Time (hours) Spent in Different Works as per Women
Panchayat Pradhan's Response in Cooch Behar District**

Block	G.P.s / Pradhans	Age and marital status	Time spent in House hold (HH) Work (hrs.)	Time spent in panchayat Office (hrs.)	Time spent in field related to Panchayati work (excluding Office hour)(hrs.)	Whole day[=difference between getup time and bed time] (hrs.)	% Share of HH work time on total time in a day	Panchayati work either Burden or not (Y/N)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Cooch Behar -I	Madhupur	36-M	10	4	2	16	62.50	Y
	Patlakhawa	47-M	6	7	2	18	33.33	N
	Pundibari	49-M	6	7	1	17	35.29	N
Dinhat a -I	Gitaldah-II	40-M	8	3	1	16	50.00	Y
	Goshanimari-I	40-M	11	2	1	17	64.70	Y
	Putimari-I	37-W	1	8	3	18	5.55	N
Mathabhanga-I	Bairagirhat	42-M	11	4	-	18	61.11	Y
	Pachagar	38-M	4	4	3	17	23.53	Y
	Shikarpur	40-M	10	3	2	18	55.55	Y
Tufanganj -I	Balarampur -I	38-M	8	4	2	17	47.06	N
	Chilakhana-II	55-M	2	2	2	18	11.11	Y
	Deochaira	30-M	11	4	1	17	64.70	N
Total	12 Pradhans	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y=7, N=5

Source: Field Survey

Note : M = Married; W = Widow; Y = Yes; N = No

Col. 8 = Col. 4 ÷ Col.7

**Table 6.4: Every Day Total Time (hours) Spent in Different Works as per Women
Panchayat Pradhan's Response in Nadia District**

Blocks	G.P.s / Pradhans	Age and marital status	Time spent in Household (HH) Work (hrs.)	Time spent in panchayat Office (hrs.)	Time spent in field related to Panchayati work (excluding Office hour)(hrs.)	Whole day [=difference between get up time and bed time] (hrs.)	% Share of HH work time on total time in a day	Panchayati work either Burden or not (Y/N)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Harin ghata	Birohi-I	38-M	9	4	1	16	56.25	Y
	Haringhata-I	55-M	6	5	2	19	31.58	Y
	Mollabelia	25-UM	4	4	2	16	25.00	N
Karim pur-II	Dhoradaha-II	27-M	8	4	2	16	50.00	Y
	Nandanpur	40-M	10	4	1	17	58.82	Y
	Rahamatpur-II	38-W	10	5	1	17	58.82	Y
Krishna nagar-II	Dhubulia-I	45-M	1	7	2	17	5.88	Y
	Nowapara-II	30-M	10	4	1	16	62.50	Y
	Sadhanpara-II	28-UM	2	8	2	17	11.76	Y
Rana ghat-II	Baidyapur-I	40-M	11	3	1	18	61.11	Y
	Duttapulia	30-UM	1	5	1	18	5.55	Y
	Raghunath Hijuli-II	38-M	10	3	1	17	58.82	Y
Total	12 Pradhan							
Cooch Behar + Nadia (=24 Pradhans)								Y=11 N=1

Source:-Field Survey

Note: M = Married; UM = Unmarried; W = Widow; Y = Yes; N = No

Col. 8 = Col. 4 ÷ Col.7

The above two Tables i.e. 6.3 and 6.4 show only the Panchayat Pradhan's data in Cooch Behar and Nadia districts respectively. It has been shown separately because Pradhans are playing the important role in the three tier panchayati system and they have to go the "Anchal Office" five days a week and their responsibility and functions are also more

than the members. So it is very natural to them they will not get that much of time to keep their house properly as the other women members do. But the primary data which are available in the above two Tables, show that out of 24 women panchayat Pradhans 13 i.e. 54.17 per cent panchayat Pradhans spend more than half (8-11 hours) of their whole day time on household work. After maintaining household work they go to Panchayat Office daily for their official work and spend time for village development. This is a good sign for the women since they are playing multirole inside the house as well as outside the house. But the thing is that the women Pradhans who are spending more time in the domestic work they are not able to give attention to maintain the diversified functions of Pradhans. Through this gap husbands, sons, even father-in-law, other panchayat male members or party leaders get the chance to enter into this PRIs and impose their ideas and opinions for consideration.

Nevertheless, out of 24 Pradhans 6 Pradhans i.e. 25 percent are saying that it is not a burden on them. This is the achievement of the reservation.

The following Table shows the comments of women panchayat members about the panchayati work.

Table 6.5: 'Responsibility of Panchyati Work is a burden' as per Women Panchayat Members' (excepting Pradhans) Response in Cooch Behar District

Block	G.P.s	Not Response	%	No	%	Yes	%	Grand Total
Cooch Behar -I	Madhupur	1	8.33	2	16.67	9	75.00	12
	Patlakhawa	-	-	5	35.71	9	64.28	14
	Pundibari	-	-	-	-	8	100.00	8
	Sub-total	1	2.94	7	20.59	26	76.47	34
Dinhata -I	Gitaldah-II	-	-	-	-	3	100.00	3
	Goshanimari-I	-	-	3	50.00	3	50.00	6
	Putimari-I	1	16.67	1	16.67	4	66.67	6
	Sub-total	1	6.67	4	26.67	10	66.67	15
Mathabhanga-I	Bairagirhat	-	-	-	-	5	100.00	5
	Pachagar	1	20.00	-	-	4	80.00	5
	Shikarpur	1	20.00	1	20.00	3	60.00	5
	Sub-total	2	13.33	1	6.67	12	80.00	15
Tufan ganj -I	Balarampur -I	2	66.67	-	-	1	33.33	3
	Chilakhana-II	-	-	1	33.33	2	66.67	3
	Deochaira	1	16.67	-	-	5	83.33	6
	Sub-total	3	25.00	1	8.33	8	66.67	12
Total		7	9.2	13	17.10	56	73.68	76

Source: Field Survey

From the above Table it can be seen that 17.10 percent women panchayat members in Cooch Behar district opined that responsibility of panchayati work is not a burden for them. However 73.68 per cent women panchayat members are saying that it is a burden to them. The Table shows that women panchayat members in Cooch Behar block (20.59) and Dinhata block (26.67), they realised that reservation is not a burden, it is a power by which they can participate in the decision making process and can take part in the village development .

Table 6.6: 'Responsibility of Panchayati Work is a burden' as per Women Panchayat Members' (excluding Pradhans) Response in Nadia District

Block	GPs	NA	%	No	%	Yes	%	Grand Total
Harin ghata	Birohi-I	-	-	-	-	4	100.00	4
	Haringhata-I	-	-	2	25.00	6	75.00	8
	Mollabelia	-	-	-	-	9	100.00	9
	Sub-total	-	-	2	9.52	19	90.48	21
Karim pur-II	Dhoradaha-II	-	-	-	-	4	100.00	4
	Nandanpur	1	20.00	-	-	4	80.00	5
	Rahamatpur-II	-	-	-	-	7	100.00	7
	Sub- total	1	6.25	-	-	15	93.75	16
Krishna nagar-II	Dhubulia-I	-	-	1	50.00	1	50.00	2
	Nowapara-II	1	33.33	-	-	2	66.67	3
	Sadhanpara-II	-	-	-	-	2	100.00	2
	Sub-total	1	14.28	1	14.28	5	71.43	7
Rana ghat-II	Baidyapur-I	1	-	-	-	3	-	4
	Duttaphulia	-	-	1	12.50	7	87.50	8
	Raghunathpur Hijuli -II	-	-	-	-	4	100.00	4
	Sub-total	1	6.25	1	6.25	14	87.50	16
Total	Total	3	5.00	4	6.67	53	88.33	60
Cooch Behar + Nadia (Grand Total)		10	7.35	17	12.50	109	80.15	136

Source:-Field Survey

The above Table shows that only 6.67 per cent women panchayat members in Nadia district are saying that panchayati work is not a burden whereas 17.10 per cent WPMs in Cooch Behar district are saying it is not a burden. It can be said from the above Tables that women panchayat members in Cooch Behar district are taking the responsibility of panchayati work in a more positive way than that of Nadia district.

But 80.15 per cent women panchayat members feel that panchayati work is a burden for them. Their feelings arise due to the patriarchal society where women are treated as a

homemaker first then others. Due to this society's constraint in Indian culture most of the families' male members do not share any housekeeping work with their ladies. That is why ladies would take all the responsibility of domestic work and they do not get enough time to devote for performance of panchayat related duties. And the other reason is that not even a single respondent knows about their powers and duties provided in Panchayati Raj Act.

6.5 Capacity Building

In recent times, various strategies have been adopted to build the capacities in Panchayati Raj Institutions (Rao,2008). These strategies are adopted for empowering the SC/ST and women elected representatives and lower level staff of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in India has opened up opportunities for women and other marginalized groups to influence the process of governance. There are a variety of barriers to women hailing from marginalized sections exercising their powers, because most of the women are new in politics and lack exposure to it, illiterate, family responsibilities and restrictive social norms and lack of confidence for interacting with the public etc. To ensure women's performance better in the governance for social development includes – literacy and education; health mal-nutrition and its impact on women and children; information about vaccination; major programmes for the development of women and children and rural sanitation, conduct meetings, timely decision making, communicate effectively and managing the resources in an appropriate manner, training intervention can only help women panchayat members to smoothly run the panchayati work.

To build the skills, capacity and capability of the elected representatives to function as a leader of the institutions and administer the official machinery and development, the State Governments open the training centres. For smooth running of the panchayati work it is necessary that Panchayats should understand the whole scheme of governance including status, jurisdiction, power, responsibilities and inherent principles of governance. For empowerment of the people of rural region in panchayati raj functionaries, training and capacity building is a pre-condition. (Sisodia, 2008).

After 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, a large number of women are to come and contest for seats in the panchayats. Initially the new entrants are hesitant in handling their affairs. Training intervention can only help them to smooth out initial inertia (Ghosh, 2008). Most of the state Governments responded by designating certain institutions such as the state institutes of rural development (SIRDs) to undertake centralised two-three day training sessions in a classroom setting for the elected representatives. In the West Bengal, there is only one institute called State Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development (SIPRD) to cater to the needs of training. SIPRD normally does not provide training to the Pradhans

directly. This training is organized at the district level by the district administration. The teams of district level trainers formed by the district administration in each and every district of the State are trained at SIPRD. This training is known as Training of Trainers (ToT). These district level trainers, provide training to the Pradhans, upa-pradhans and other members of the gram panchayats (Ghosh,2008).

Civil society groups in some states were invited to help in the development of modules and a system of training of trainers (ToT), but given the mammoth task and the huge numbers of elected representatives involved, the primary task of capacity building remained with the state Governments (Behar and Aiyar, 2003).

Capacity building has helped in playing their (panchayat members) role effectively and with confidence (Dass, 2008). Dass also said that the realisation to the importance of the information and access to resources have come through these interventions and helped them to be empowered.

Capacity building is a good exercise for shaping and building and strengthening the women panchayat members for the leadership in panchayats. Through this training they must be gained access to carry out their responsibilities in all the key areas, including Panchayat finance, nutrition and health, family planning, sanitation, education and economic development. But from the above Tables, it can be seen that in the patriarchal society, women panchayat members are busier to maintain domestic responsibilities than panchayati work. Due to specially this reason they feel panchayati work is a burden to them.

It is required to arrange a workshop for women panchayat members and their male family members, about the management of time. In this way they can minimise their burden.

Panchayat members felt that panchayati work takes a lot of their time which affects their other activities. But the Government does not provide that amount of facilities for them (Pradhans as well as panchayat members) compared to others Constitutional posts. Considering the duties and functions of panchayat members, the resources and facilities provided to them are not sufficient. They do not get enough financial allowance to sustain their living. No conveyance allowance is provided to them to visit sites of various work being under taken by the panchayat. Thus livelihood of panchayat members is adversely affected due to insufficient facilities and resources.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter deals with the impact of reservation of seats for women in panchayati raj institutions on their life and livelihood. From the primary data we have seen that 51.31 per cent women panchayat members (excluding Pradhans) in Cooch Behar district spent 6-8 hours for housekeeping work and 42.10 per cent spent more than 8 hours for the housekeeping work. In Nadia district 73.33 per cent women panchayat members (excluding Pradhans) spent more than 8 hours for their housekeeping work. In Cooch Behar district, out of 12 Pradhans, 7 women Pradhans spent 50 per cent or more time of the day in the housekeeping work. In Cooch Behar as well as in Nadia district no woman Pradhan spend more than 50 per cent and even 50 per cent of their whole day in their Anchal office since they are pre-occupied at their home. Most of the members spend less than eight hours in the panchayat office. But during survey it was found that one woman Pradhan each in Cooch Behar and Nadia district spent 8 hours in the Anchal office. This is a good sign for a female Pradhan.

In Cooch Behar district out of 12 Pradhans 5 Pradhans said panchayat responsibility is not a burden but in Nadia district only one said it is not burden. In Cooch Behar district 73.68 percent women panchayat members said that it is a burden and 26.32 per cent said it is not a burden. In Nadia district 88.33 per cent women panchayat members said that it is a burden and remaining 11.66 percent said, it is not a burden. They were happy with their new identity as a panchayat Pradhan or panchayat member and with their new power. By using their power they can also help their relatives by giving them new houses under IAY and also made their houses through IAY. In the previous chapter i.e. chapter-5 we have seen under same central project like IAY in different areas panchayat representatives are giving different amount of money to the beneficiaries for making houses. A fixed sum is given by Central Government for making the house under IAY. Thus, it can be inferred that those panchayat members who are providing less than the fixed amount to the beneficiaries, are using the remaining amount for their own purpose. In this way they have changed their living status.