

CHAPTER VI

TRIBAL WOMEN AND THE DECISION-MAKING

PARTICIPATION PROCESS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL POLITICS- ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND EFFECTIVENESS

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment of 1993 has given local government a constitutional status introducing new institutions into the working of Indian democracy through several significant innovations, such as reservations of seats for marginal groups, women, Dalits, and Adivasis; creation of a decentralized planning mechanism; establishment of state election commissions to oversee local elections and state finance commissions to prepare a blueprint for sharing of state revenues; and institutionalization of the village assembly (*gram sabha*).

In its effort to be more participatory and people oriented Indian democracy has made an elaborate arrangement to facilitate participation of the hitherto excluded populations, the weaker sections like the SCs, STs and women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution (1992) have been a landmark in this direction. Indian Constitution now makes it mandatory to hold the regular election to the bodies of local self-government and reserve at least 33 per cent of the total seats for the women in all bodies.

The varied issues that influence proper and effective participation of women at the grass roots levels are sought to be analysed and put into proper perspective in this chapter. It is heartening to note that while there were quite a substantial percentage of women who caved into pressure from local political satraps, there is an equal number of women who stuck their neck out on their own to be a part of the political process. These women bear testimony to the fact that there is an inherent (though largely subdued) desire amongst the women who make a meaningful social impact through effective participation at the grass root political levels.

Although interested observers were sceptical about the future of the move recent reports from different parts of the country record developments that are encouraging. There has been a growing popular consensus that Indian democracy cannot simply be without the active participation of the women, who have been excluded so long from the political

space of the country. I have been working for the last few years on the participation of tribal women in the bodies of local self-government and in trade unions in the *Terai* and *Dooars* regions of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of North Bengal. It is difficult to trace nearly 1.5 million tribal people (49.60 per cent of whom are women) in six districts of North Bengal in development map of the state since they constitute the marginalized, the “poorest of the poor”.

After the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 the scope for participation of the members of the backward communities, particularly the women, has significantly risen. In North Bengal there are 717 Gram Panchayats, 61 Panchayat Samities, 6 Zilla Parisads and one Mahakuma Parisad (Table 6.1). So far as the tribal representation is concerned, in the GPs in North Bengal there are 792 male (or 11.51 per cent of the total male members) 479 female members (11.89 per cent of the total female members). In the Panchayat Samities there are 125 male and 72 female members, and in the Zilla Parisads and Mahakuma Parisad together there are 31 male and 21 female ST members. Thus in all the *panchayat* bodies taken together, there are as many as 556 tribal women members who in North Bengal who would constitute the population for the present study (Table 6.2). It is significant to note that the percentage share of tribal male and female representation to the local bodies exceeds their share of the total population in the State or in North Bengal. This bears testimony to the fact that the dominant sections or the order are prepared to grant some political space to the hitherto marginalized communities. The participation of a sizable section of tribal women in politics indicates to a socio-political transformation of great significance for the tribal communities as well as for the Indian democracy and this precisely constitutes the subject matter of the present study.

In North Bengal there are 717 Gram Panchayatas with 10,902 members, 61 Panchayat Samities with 333 members and 6 Zilla Parisads and one Mahakuma Parisad with 720 members. In GPs among the male members there are 792 (or 11.51 per cent of the total members) ST members and among the female members there are 479 ST members (11.89 per cent of the total female members). In the Panchayat Samities there are 125 male ST members and 72 female members, and in the Zilla Parisad and Mahakuma Parisad together there are 31 male and 21 female ST members. Thus at the three levels of

panchayat bodies there are as many as 556 women members who represent different scheduled tribes of the region (Table 6.2, 6.3& 6.4).

Table 6.1: Local Self-Governments in North Bengal and West Bengal at a Glance (Panchayat Elections, 2003)

Name of District	No. of Gram Sansads	No. of Gram Panchayats	No. of Seats/ Members in GP	No. of Panchayat Samiti	No. of Seats/ Members in PS	No. of Seats/Members in ZP/MP
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Coochbehar	1703	128	1905	12	339	26
Jalpaiguri	2075	146	2241	13	374	31
Darjeeling	1043	112	1597	X	x	x
Siliguri	359	22	405	04	64	07
D.Dinajpur	929	65	993	08	179	15
U.Dinajpur	1422	98	1529	09	263	21
Malda	2008	146	2232	15	388	33
NB TOTAL	9539	717	10902	61	1607	133
WB TOTAL	45,245	3354	51,142	333	8,564	720

Source: District Office of NIC (National Information Centre), Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. Jan. 2006. West Bengal total figures have been collected from AUN India Sponsored initiative based on UNICEF Database, 2006. Office of the Registrar General, India, New Delhi.

Table 6.2: Community Breakup of the Directly Elected Male and Female Members of Gram Panchayats (after 2003 Election)

Name of District	Male Members				Female Members			
	SC	ST	GEN	Total	SC	ST	GEN	Total
Coochbehar	710	05	513	1228	386	01	290	677
Jalpaiguri	638	315	468	1421	360	177	283	820
Darjeeling	73	110	843	1026	43	76	452	571
Siliguri	154	99	11	264	52	41	48	141
D. Dinajpur	215	115	300	630	122	87	154	363
U. Dinajpur	334	55	555	944	226	43	316	585
Malda	285	93	985	1363	192	54	623	869
NB TOTAL	2409	792	3675	6876	1381	479	2166	4026
WB Total	8951	2318	21,152	32,421	5657	1496	11,568	18,721

Source: District Office of NIC (National Information Centre), Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. Jan. 2006. West Bengal total figures have been collected from AUN India Sponsored initiative based on UNICEF Database, 2006. Office of the Registrar General, India, New Delhi.

Table 6.3: Community Breakup of the Directly Elected Male and Female Members of Panchayat Samiti (after 2003 Election)

Name of District	Male Members				Female Members			
	SC	ST	GEN	Total	SC	ST	GEN	Total
Coochbehar	136	01	86	223	65	X	51	116
Jalpaiguri	115	70	57	242	57	28	47	132
Darjeeling	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Siliguri	23	15	04	42	07	07	08	22
D. Dinajpur	40	18	49	107	26	17	29	72
U. Dinajpur	60	09	98	167	37	08	51	96
Malda	48	12	192	252	25	12	99	136
NB TOTAL	422	125	486	1033	271	72	285	574
WB Total	1545	409	3578	5532	923	228	1881	3032

Source: District Office of NIC (National Information Centre), Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. Jan. 2006. West Bengal total figures have been collected from AUN India Sponsored initiative based on UNICEF Database, 2006. Office of the Registrar General, India, New Delhi.

Table 6.4: Community Breakup of the Directly Elected Male and Female Members of Zilla Parishad (after 2003 Election)

Name of District	Male Members				Female Members			
	SC	ST	GEN	Total	SC	ST	GEN	Total
Coochbehar	04	X	13	17	05	X	04	09
Jalpaiguri	07	06	07	20	05	02	04	11
Darjeeling	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Siliguri	01	X	03	04	01	01	01	03
D. Dinajpur	03	02	05	10	02	01	02	05
U. Dinajpur	05	01	09	15	02	X	04	06
Malda	04	01	17	22	02	01	08	11
NB TOTAL	24	10	54	88	17	05	23	45
WB TOTAL	127	31	316	474	66	21	159	246

Source: District Office of NIC (National Information Centre), Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. Jan. 2006. West Bengal total figures have been collected from AUN India Sponsored initiative based on UNICEF Database, 2006. Office of the Registrar General, India, New Delhi.

The participation of tribal women in the political process, especially in North Bengal has grown manifolds. This has much to do with reservation of seats for tribal women, right from the *panchayats* to *Lok Sabha* elections. Under these conditions the political parties are legitimaly bound to appoint tribal women as their candidate for elections ranging from the basic *panchayat* levels up to election of highest echelons of power that is the *Lok Sabha*. During the course of my numerous interactions with tribal women who have been elected under the *panchayat* scheme of things or *Lok Sabha*, it has primarily stood out

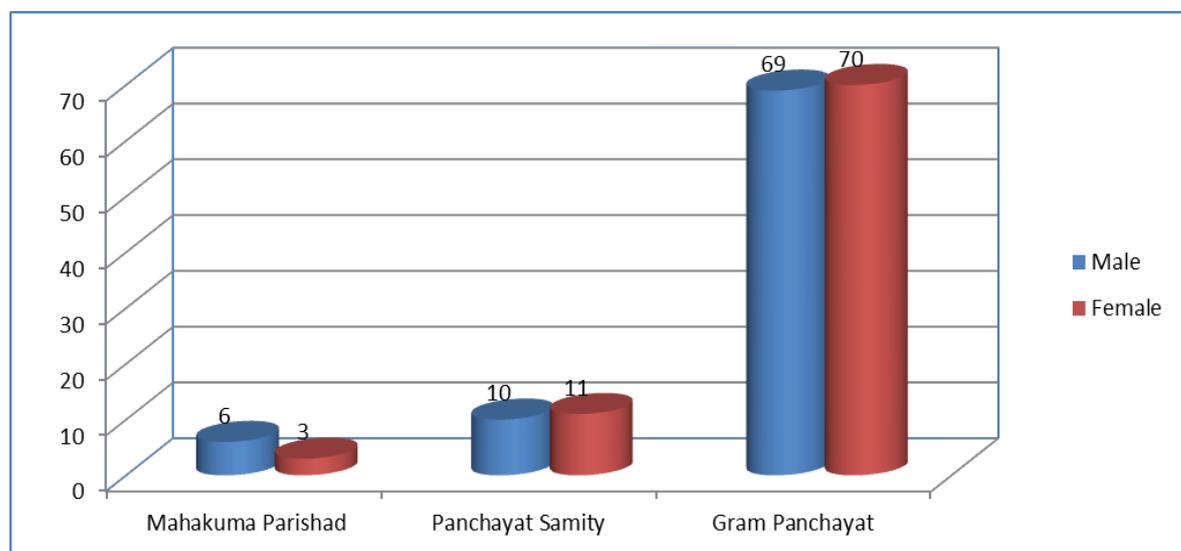
that amongst the majority of these tribal women representatives, most of them continue to be just a shield. It is predominantly the menfolk who still govern the decision making process, though the elected representatives may be amongst the womenfolk of tribal population. A vast majority of these tribal women thrown into the political field have little say as far as political decision making is concerned.

Table 6.5- Number of Elected Members in Local level bodies in Phansidewa Block (2004 & 2015 Election)

	Male	Female	Total
Mahakuma Parishad	6	3	09
Panchayat Samity	10	11	21
Gram Panchayat	69	70	139
Total	N=85	N=84	N=169
Year 2004 Total	N=88	N=55	N=143

Source: Block Development Officer, Phansidewa Block Development.

Chart No. 9- Showing Number of Elected Representatives in Panchayat Bodies



The above table shows that out of 169 elected members 139 are gram panchayat members, 21 members are panchayat samity members and only 9 are in mahakuma Parishad. Women representatives outnumber the male members by 1 in gram panchayat and panchayat samity. (see Table 6.5). In gram panchayat the SCs elected members are higher in number than STs and OBCs. Altogether the minorities in the local bodies are 84

in number where there number in GP is 70. In Panchayat Samity and Mahakuma Parishad their presence is 11 and 3 respectively. (see Table 6. 6 & Chart No. 9)

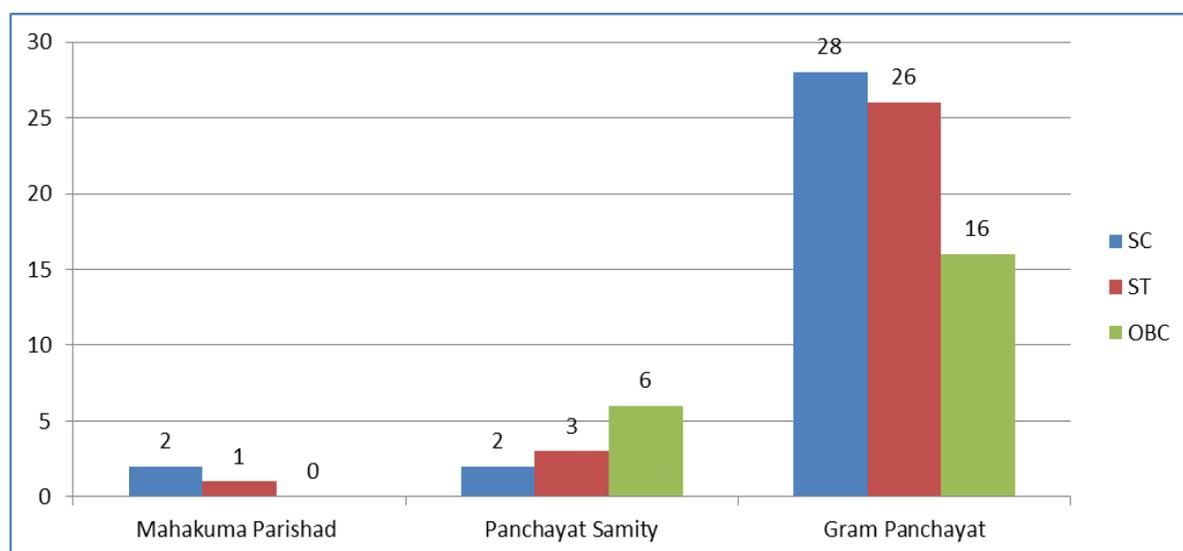
Thus the majority of these tribal womenfolk endured with carrying out political agendas principally meant for betterment of the tribal women, are not able contribute meaningfully towards the very basic reason of election to these posts. In majority of cases, they still remain just a means of exploitation by the political parties whereby their election to political positions are just a face. Upon their election into these importance decision making political bodies, they are not able to assert their political wherewithal in a positive manner. Thereby rendering the men-folk, be it their husband or father, to undertake and enjoy the privilege of political power.

Table 6.6- Number of Women Elected Representatives in Local Bodies by Caste

	Mahakuma Parishad	Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat
SC	2 (66%)	2 (18%)	28 (40%)
ST	1 (33%)	3 (27%)	26 (37%)
OBC	-	6 (54%)	16 (22%)
Total	N= 03	N= 11	N= 70

Source: Field Survey

Chart No. 10 – Showing number of Elected Representatives in Local Bodies by Caste



Despite reservation for women, effective participation in *panchayat raj* institutions is a myth. This is particularly true amongst the tribal belt in *Dooars* where the female elected representatives continue to be just a tool in the hands of the political parties. Jha (2004) opines that despite reservation for women, effective participation in *panchayati raj*

institutions have failed due to misuse and manipulation by local power brokers. Ignorance of women about their rights and procedures and about their potential and responsibilities have kept them far behind men in local bodies. Jha sincerely believes that mere increase in number of reserved seats for women in local bodies is likely to increase participation of women unless structural changes are brought about and sincere effort is made to educate women and the power structures existing in rural areas are neutralized, nothing can be achieved.

It however came upon me during my numerous interactions with these tribal women political representatives, that there has been, though miniscule, a percentage amongst these tribal women who have managed to stand their ground and assert themselves politically. There are numerous examples where these tribal women coming from divergent background have managed to hold their own and have thereby worked meaningfully and contributed in their capacity as elected representatives, for betterment of the tribal population as whole and tribal women in particular. This spans across the tribal population residing in *dooars* and *terai*. This of course is very heartening and welcome trend amongst the tribal womenfolk, trying to assert positively their socio-economic and political identity. Examples are numerous spanning across elected political representatives like Panchami Lohar in Chulsa Tea Garden to women like Rina Ekka in terai region who works under the local *panchayats*. This assertion of the womenfolk of the downtrodden tribal population is a welcome trend which of course augurs well for the tribal women population at large.

There are myriads of tribal women who bear testimony to the fact that meaningful and effective participation of tribal women in the process of political decision making is not totally a myth. There remain quite a substantial percentage of tribal women who have risen to positions of political power at the grass root level represented by the *panchayats*. Many amongst them have started their political journey riding upon the fact that the Constitution guarantees reservations for the tribal women in certain seats, right from the grass root *panchayat* levels up to the *lok sabha*. Many of these avenues were propelled to political limelight because of these reservations. While it still remains a fact that it is the men who control the strings of these tribal women candidates and these women are often rendered defunct, there is quite an appreciable percentage of these women who have successfully tried to assert their own free will and hold their ground.

In a predominantly male dominated society like ours, legislations aimed towards empowerment of women of this underprivileged class of society, though a right step forward, often failed to get the desired result. It however needs to be appreciated that under the aiges of this legislations several women are by force thrown into the political spectrum of our society. Quite an appreciable number of women, having been elected as political representatives do manage to successfully negotiate the tricky path of the male dominated society. These women though having started off as an offshoot of socio-economic reservations, have over a period of time managed to insulate themselves from the political designs of the political parties, of which they are representatives. It is heartening to note that many amongst these groups of women have successfully managed to put agendas of social importance to the forefront. These women have managed to successfully transgress the political divide at their place of work and contribute to the wholesome development of their immediate society, many a times overcoming male prejudices.

Empowerment of women of the fringe social groups still remains a challenge, as majority of tribal women continue to be exploited by political parties for furtherance of electoral gains. True empowerment of these women, even after sixty years of independent still largely remains a myth. Positivity's that can be drawn from actions such as reservations for tribal women right at the grass root level, though insufficient, are still enough to substantiate this socio-economic initiative. Many of these elected tribal women folk have over the course of time managed to stand their own authority. It is welcome to note that women, who are, a product of measures under taken to have gender equality, have managed to assert their political agendas. Two of the examples quoted by me bear testimony to the fact that empowering women of the downtrodden society, often has quite a positive social impact.

While there has been quite a substantial progress towards empowerment of women belonging to the downtrodden class of society, the fact that much more needs to be done cannot be over emphasized. Constitution and the numerous positive amendments therein have been directed towards grating and securing political and decision-making platforms for the women folk of the underprivileged section of the society. Though there is heartening example of women from this section of society who have come forward and

managed to have meaningful contributions at the grass root level of democracy, the percentage of such women still remains miniscule.

Majority of women, though being elected representative thereby bestowed with all the decision-making powers, still eventually end up being just ornamental posts. Under majority of conditions, Constitutional guarantee towards protecting and nurturing the women power at grass-root levels is miss-utilised. In vast majority of cases these women are just propped up as candidates for local body elections, but the actual power is often with the men-folk of the family. Women thus end up being in important positions of decision-making at the grass-root levels just for the namesake. Majority of political parties often try to get around the constitutionally laid down guidelines for empowering women by electing women candidates just to fulfil constitutional obligations. The real power amongst the majority of these posts is wielded by either the political parties or by the male members of family the elected women representative. Lack of education amongst the women of this section primarily contributes to this plight. It thus suffices to surmise that the only means to guarantee that true women empowerment at the grass-root levels will always remain a myth, unless and until backed up by a strong drive to educate these women, thereby making them conscious towards their right. Constitutional reservations, though a welcome step forward, are rendered futile without an educated and socially conscious women part of the society.

The primary emphasis thus needs to be towards providing with compulsory and meaningful education to women. vast majority of this socially backward section of society in North Bengal is primarily employed as tea garden labourers. The remote and often socially ostracized nature of tea gardens makes it extremely difficult and challenging to reach educational, social and health related government programmes to infiltrate into these societies. Furthermore, women of these societies often bear the brunt of socio-economic constraints, thereby getting deprived of basic human rights like education and health. Thus, any initiative, though constitutionally guaranteed for upliftment of these tribal women, will continue to meet with extremely limited success, unless backed up with means to further the educational status of these women.

Endeavors principally aimed at educational empowerment of women of this section of the society have definitely to be initiated at the grass root levels. It is a fact that majority of

tribal population in North Bengal earn their living as employees in the tea garden industry. Thus, initiative aimed at providing education to these tribal women cannot bear fruit if the tea gardens are neglected. While there have been progress in the form of setting up of primary schools within the tea garden premises in quite a number of tea gardens, social constraints still result in quite a substantial percentage of school dropouts within the girl populations. A multipronged approach encompassing the socio-economic plethora is definitely the need of the hour. Various social schemes, mainly under the edges of local self-government bodies have to be initiated to counter the social attitude of neglect of girl child. It is primarily engrained in the Indian social make up to celebrate and further the cause of a boy child. It remains a fact that even amongst the higher social structures of human society in India, birth of a male child still remains an occasion of rejoicement.

Though the tribal society at large does not have this stigma attached to the girl child, social obligations are the forerunners, which thus play an important part in deprivation of educational facilities to the girl child. Majority of tribal families employed as tea garden workers have both the husband and wife employed in tea garden. Upon birth of their children a girl child is always bestowed with the responsibility of looking after her siblings and the family at large during the period of absence of the parents. This contributes to the substantial number of school drop outs amongst the girls in tea gardens. Deprived of education, a substantial majority of these girls are left with no other choice than to get themselves tied in nuptial bond at the earliest. And this vicious cycle continues through ages. Lack of education renders these women vulnerable to the whims and fancies of men-folk and political parties. Thus reforms aimed at political empowerment of these tribal women are often rendered futile as majority of this tribal women political representatives end up as just a face, the actual power wielded by the men and political parties.

Government initiatives should primarily target upon social awareness towards the benefits of an educated girl for the society at large. In the society like the tribal society which can rightfully boast of far less sex based discrimination, it should not be a very cumbersome task. Sincere endeavours by government in conjunction with other agencies will definitely help to tie over these socio-economic hurdles. Once the educational upliftment of the tribal girl child is ensured, true political empowerment of tribal women can definitely be

attained. This will go a long way towards empowerment of women at the grass root levels. It is heartening to note that even under the present scenario, where there are huge constraints, educated tribal women when endowed with political and decision making power have done exceedingly well. They have often been able to transgress political divides and have successfully worked towards betterment of their fellow women and the society at large.

In our interaction with multitude of such educated tribal elected tribal women representatives, numerous praiseworthy examples have come to the fore. There however remain quite a substantial percentage of tribal women, who though bestowed with political powers, could contribute extremely little towards furtherance of the cause of tribal women. Lack of education was a principle hindrance, which laid them vulnerable to manoeuvres by the men and political parties at large, whose principle aims are just to further their political cause. Bereft educational empowerment of tribal women, political empowerment is just a mirage.

While it cannot be contended that education amongst tribal women has definitely been on an upswing, after more than sixty years of independence much more was expected. The Constitutional makers and subsequent amendments have tried to inculcate tribal women into the democratic decision-making process. But the ground reality is far from satisfactory. Abysmal educational standards amongst the majority of tribal women population still remains a huge hindrance towards true appreciation of various endeavours aimed at upliftment of the tribal women. It is thus of paramount importance to provide basic and meaningful education to tribal women, whereby they can do true justice to their elected posts as tribal women representatives at the grass root level.

It is rampant amongst the men-folk of the tribal population to indulge in alcohol abuse. Use of alcohol, in their crudest form, is a part of social structure of a tribal society. It thus compounds into an economic constraint for these tribal population. The role of the tribal women employed as a tea garden worker is thus manifold. On the one hand they have to actively get involved in overcoming problems arising out of unbridled liquor consumption by the men-folk of the society, extending up to striking a balance between their economic obligations as tea garden workers and trying to provide socio-economic security for their families.

Granting of reservations for these women, principally aimed at improvement of their socio-economic status has huge social hurdles. My interaction with quite a substantial percentage of these tribal women has repeatedly drawn me to conclude that educational empowerment of these tribal women is of paramount importance. An educated tribal woman can go a long way to positively break down regressive social norms principally aimed at depriving the women, the right to education.

Financial constraints are huge hindrance towards proper functioning and implementation of various government schemes at the grass root levels. Though the intentions of many elected tribal representatives at the *panchayat* level may be very benevolent, lack of financial resources is often a major obstacle. Devolution of funds, though a constitutional responsibility of the state government, often not adhered to proper percolation of funds primarily aimed at implementation of various developmental projects at the grass root level is a must for proper political empowerment of government bodies at the *panchayati raj* institutions. Availability of funds coupled with improved educational levels will definitely go a long way to strengthen grass root democratic institutions. These two primary issues that is education of the fringe tribal women population and providence of financial funds necessary for developmental activities at the grass root levels have to be addressed seriously. Though there has been quite a substantial progress on these two fronts, much more still needs to be done.

Another major impact is lack of social health related meaningful schemes. Implementations of such basic health schemes as universal immunization programme for children is yet to boast of hundred percentage coverage. Traditional and age old beliefs, under major circumstances, still have a large influence. Lack of education of the women of this part of society does definitely have a detrimental effect. This huge social barrier continues to be a hindrance towards development of this society at large. The answer towards successful overcoming this obstacle definitely lies with providing these tribal women with meaningful and substantial education. It is disheartening to note that quite a majority of pregnant women of this class of society still shun. Institutionalized health care, thereby preferring to give birth to their offspring's at home. The poor economic conditions render this to be an extremely cumbersome procedure. Thereby, the maternal mortality rate amongst this class of human society still remains alarmingly high.

Though various programmes aimed towards spreading of health awareness have infiltrated into this society, it has definitely not succeeded in overcoming the traditional-social beliefs. Thus, even the basic immunization programme for children runs into a huge obstacle. An educated women populace will certainly go a long way in integration of this society into modern and scientific health care system. Provision of education for the girl child, though prevalent, has still not been able to fully break away from traditional social beliefs. Adding to this is the problem of the custom of early marriage of the girl child. This therefore curtails their scope to avail of any meaningful education. The future generation is thus rendered brazenly open to be usurped by traditional social beliefs. An uneducated mother can contribute precious little towards inculcating proper and scientific thinking for her offspring.

My numerous interaction with various successful tribal women at the grass root level have led me to conclude that education definitely contributes towards wholesome development of family at large, whereby they can become instrumental in successful implementation of various health related schemes, particularly relating to proper scientific care of pregnant women and immunization of the young children. If the vast majority of women of this society are provided with proper and meaningful education, numerous health related issues prevalent in the society can be successfully and positively tackled. Another big menace in the form of alcohol abuse can definitely be subjugated by an educated and socially aware women population.

Many of the tea gardens bear testimony to the fact that educated women have often formed social groups to successfully counter the issue of alcohol. Thus the advantages of an educated and socially aware women population are manifold, spanning across various socio-economic domains, to positively mould the society at large.

Mark Robinson (2005) in his article *A Decade of Panchayati Raj Reforms: The Challenge of Democratic Decentralization in India* opines that constitutional provision for reserved seats for women and tribes distinguishes the current phase of *panchayati raj* reforms from earlier initiatives. The absence of affirmative action ensured a high level of elite dominance in earlier decentralization efforts, since local vested interests played a critical role in *panchayat* affairs reflective of their superior socioeconomic and political status. In the new constitutional dispensation, seat reservations for women scheduled castes and

tribes provide opportunities for formal representation that more closely approximate population shares, but the effectiveness of these provisions is very uneven. On the one hand, seat reservations have provided underprivileged groups with increased visibility and an opportunity to influence local affairs. There are many instances where women have managed to generate modest local development dividends by marshalling financial resources and lobbying bureaucrats and politicians at higher levels. On the other hand, elite dominance continues to prevail in most *panchayats* with the result that traditional caste leaders and landed elites dominate decision making by proxy or manipulation. Influential male relatives influence decision making and control resources. Outspoken scheduled caste and female representatives have often had to contend with violence, ostracism or no cooperation from dominant interests.

Robinson (2005) remarks that elected women representatives often face considerable opposition in seeking to carry out the duties of office in a responsible manner from male relatives who resent their public role and from vested interests who are opposed to affirmative action. More common is the tendency by influential men to pressure elected *panchayat* members into supporting a no-confidence motion that can unseat women gram *panchayat* presidents. These responses are magnified for scheduled castes and tribal women who face social ostracism and no cooperation by virtue of their gender and caste status. Robinson opines that political commitment alone cannot ensure well-functioning *panchayati raj institutions* in the absence of transfer of sufficient powers, responsibilities and resources to the lower tiers of government. Moreover, the resources available for social welfare programmes in the form of subsidized housing and employment generation are spread very thinly with the result that only a handful of individuals receive these benefits each year in the average gram *panchayat*. Without a much greater devolution of financial resources, the potential development impact of decentralization will remain limited; a marked localized effect on poverty levels is therefore highly unlikely under such restrictive conditions. Similarly, the fact that health and education remain subject to highly centralized forms of provision means that elected representatives have little influence over service delivery at the local level.

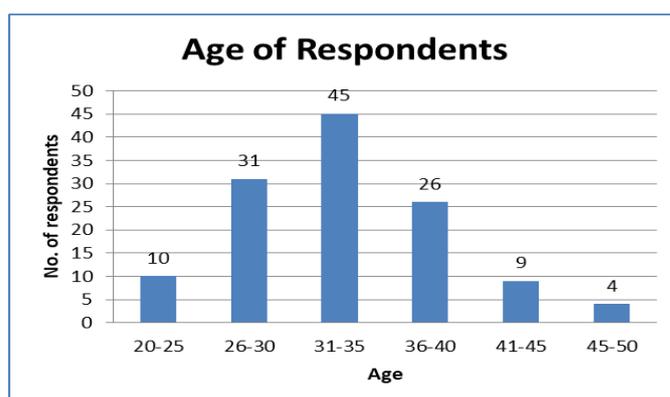
INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The numerous data that I have collected through my personal interactions with tribal women representatives spanning across Dooars and Terai regions of North Bengal have been put into a tabulated form in the following tables and charts. These observations of mine have been a result of a standard questionnaire-cum-scheduled that I have design to throw light upon the various aspects that have a primary bearance upon their present political stature as representatives of tribal population at large and specifically as tribal women. I have, through my questionnaire-cum-schedule attempted to address all the relevant issues that have contributed towards propelling these tribal women of North Bengal to positions of power. There has also been a sincere endeavour towards addressal of the various problems that these women face as grass root political leaders. A sincere effort has been made to delve upon the various socio-economic paraphernalia that contribute towards success or failure of these tribal women, who are in positions of power.

The sample size of our study comprises of 125 respondents, who are evely disggtributed amongst the two areas of study. We have taken care to have a fair representation of the population through random selection of our samples, which can claim to reflect a fair representation of the population as a whole. Specifically in Matelli block of Jalpaiguri district, the far flung and remote locations of tea gardens were a huge deterrence. This therefore was an economic constrains which we have tried tto minimize by givingample representation to the remote and far flung ea gardens under Matelli block. A sample size of 125 respondents (which comprise the universe of our study) has had a truly propotional representation spanning across all the divergent population within the area of the our study. Increasing the sample size more would definetly have 1) diluted the propotional nature of our sample and 2) placed undue economic constrains for our studies.

Table No.6.7: Age of respondents

Age	No.	%
20-25	10	8
26-30	31	24.8
31-35	45	36
36-40	26	20.8



41-45	9	7.2
45-50	4	3.2
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that out of 125 tribal women representatives 45 belong to the age group of 31-35 and 31 belong to the age group of 26-30. In other words 36 percent women are of the age group of 31-35 years. Out of 125 women representative 4 are of the age group of 41-45 years. (Table 6.7). Table 6.8 shows the religion of respondents where Hindus are in majority in this region.

Table 6.8- Religion of Respondents

Religion	Number	Percentage
Hindu	72	41.3
Christian	53	58.6
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

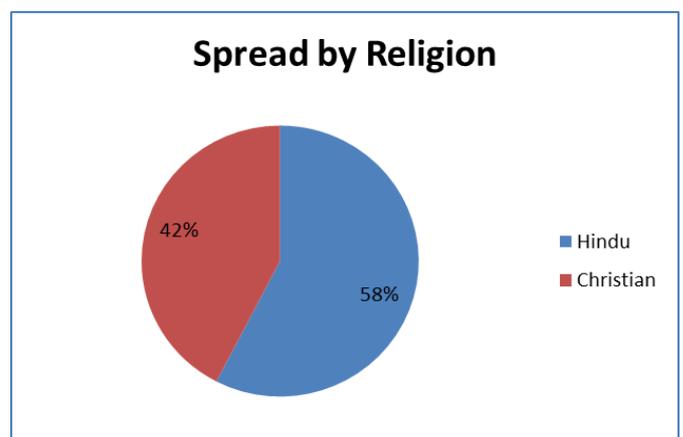
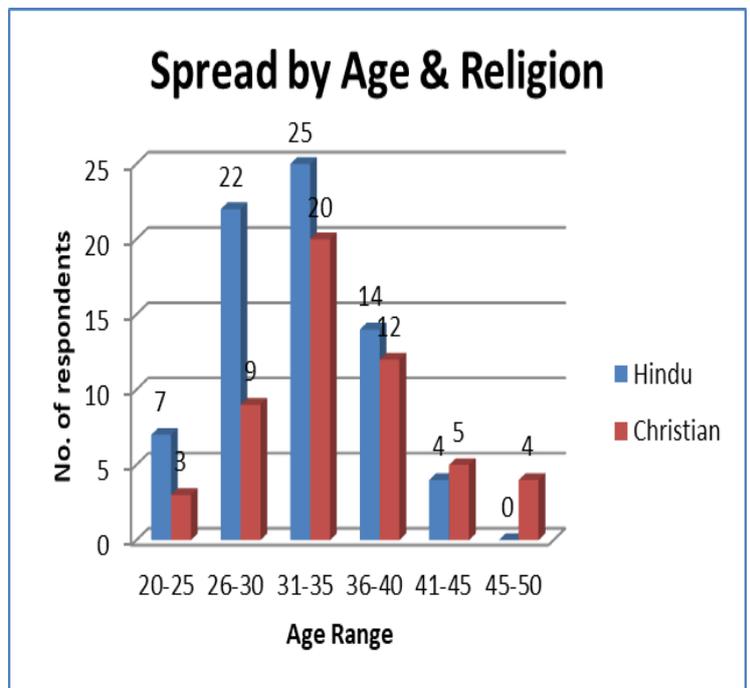


Table 6.9- Age & Religion of respondents

Age	Hindu	Christia n	Total
20-25	7	3	10
26-30	22	9	31
31-35	25	20	45
36-40	14	12	26
41-45	4	5	9
45-50	0	4	4
Total	72	53	125

Source: Source: Field Survey



The below two table show that the ethnicity of the respondents. The table 6.10 shows that the Oroans are majority in this region which gets reflected in the number of women respondents. The Munda tribe respondents are second in number. Table 7.11 shows respondents belonging to ethnicity following different religion. Out of 75 Oroan women respondents 40 follow the Hindu religion and 35 are Christian. Munda who are second in number, Hindus women respondents are 10 and 7 are Christians.

Table 6.10- Ethnicity of the respondents

Ethnicity	No.	%
Oroan	75	69.2
Naik	6	1.9
Kharia	7	4.8
Kalandi	2	1.9
Santhal	5	4.8
Munda	17	10.6
Others (Lohar, Nagasia, Tanti, Malpare, Naik)	13	6.7
Total	125	100

Source: Source: Field Survey

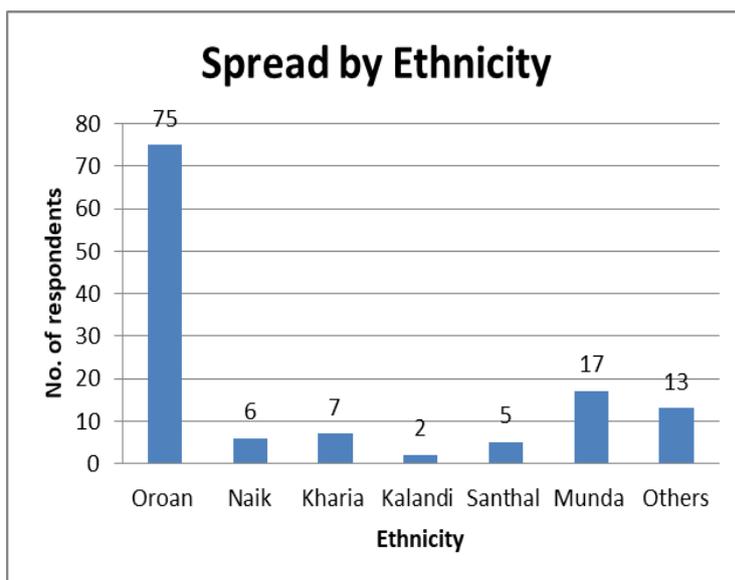


Table 6.11- Ethnicity & Religion of respondents

Ethnicity	Hindu	Christian	Total
Oroan	40	35	75
Munda	10	07	17
Majhi	6	0	06
Kharia	4	3	07
Santhal	3	2	05
Kalandi	2	0	02
Others	7	6	13
Total	72	53	125

Source: Field Survey

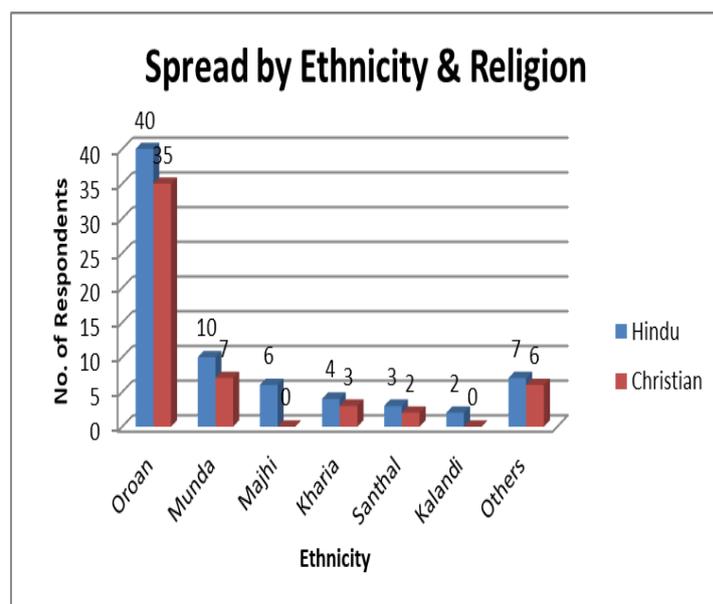


Table 6.12- Educational Background of the Respondents

Background	No.	%
Illiterate	6	8
Primary	11	9.6
Class V-VIII	50	12
IX-X	28	31.2
H.S	22	16
B.A	6	16.8
M.A	2	4.8
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table (6.12) shows the educational background of the women respondents. Out of 125 women elected representatives the maximum number of women has the education background between class V-VIII followed by class V-VIII. We can see only two respondents with the education upto M.A and 6 of them having graduation. Table 6.13 shows that the women respondents aged between 36-40 have the higher education. Women who are graduates fall under 4 of them fall under the category of 26-30 years and 2 under 31-35. Out of 22 respondents falling under the educational level upto higher secondary 7 are of the age 26-30 and 6 31-35. Out of 28 who have the educational level class IX-X, 11 of them are between age 36-40, 8 are 31-35, 4 are 20-25 and 3 are 41-45 age group. Out of 6 illiterates 2 are 41-45 and another 2 are 46-50 years of age. (see table 6.13).

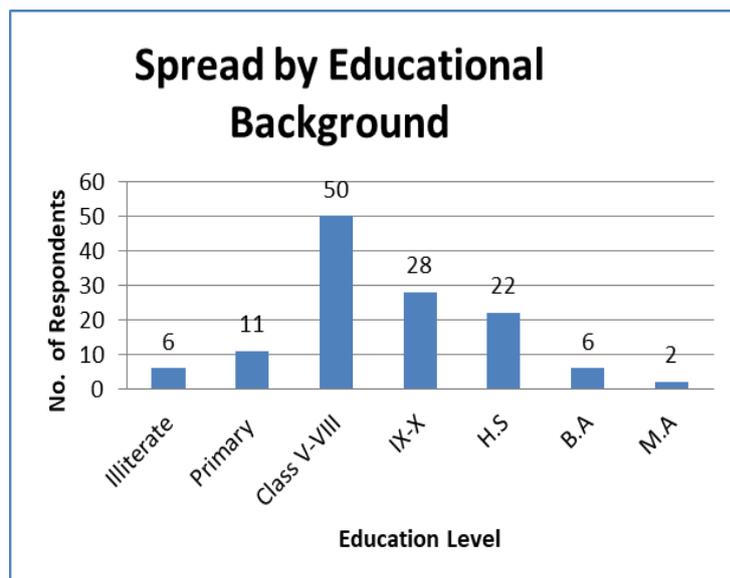
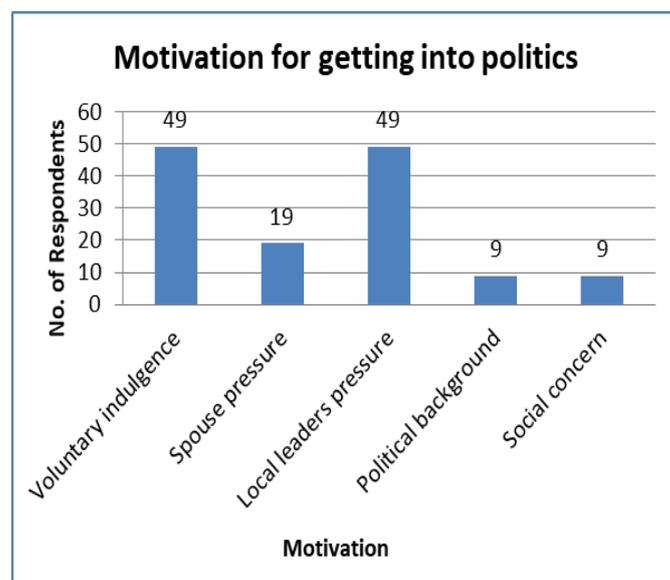


Table 6.13- Motivation for getting inducted into politics

Motivation for getting inducted into politics	No.	%
Voluntary indulgence	49	39.2
Spouse pressure	19	15.2
Pressure from local leaders	49	39.2
Political background	09	7.2
Social concern	09	7.2
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

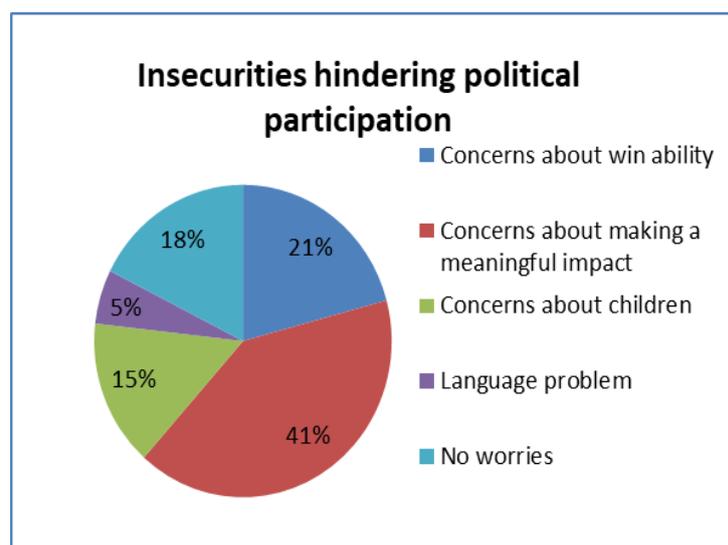


The above table shows that out of 125 women panchayat representatives 39.2 per cent were voluntarily motivated to enter into the political arena. An equal percentage of women succumbed to political pressure, thereby taking the political plunge. Quite a substantial percentage of these women political representatives were driven by spouse pressure thereby entering into the political fold. A miniscule percentage of these women panchayat representatives (7.2%) caved into external political pressures and to the compulsions of their social backgrounds.

The below table shows that the concerns about being able to make a meaningful and worth-while socio-political impact as a women political representative was the driving force for reluctance to take the political plunge amongst the majority of these tribal elected women (40.8%). Another important criteria for denial to agree for candidature was the lack in belief (20.8%) that they could actually end up winning the elections. (Table 6.14).

Table 6.14- Insecurities hindering political participation

Insecurities hindering political participation	No.	%
Concerns about win ability	26	20.8
Concerns about making a meaningful impact	51	40.8
Concerns about children	19	15.2
Language problem	07	5.6
No worries	22	17.6
Total	125	100



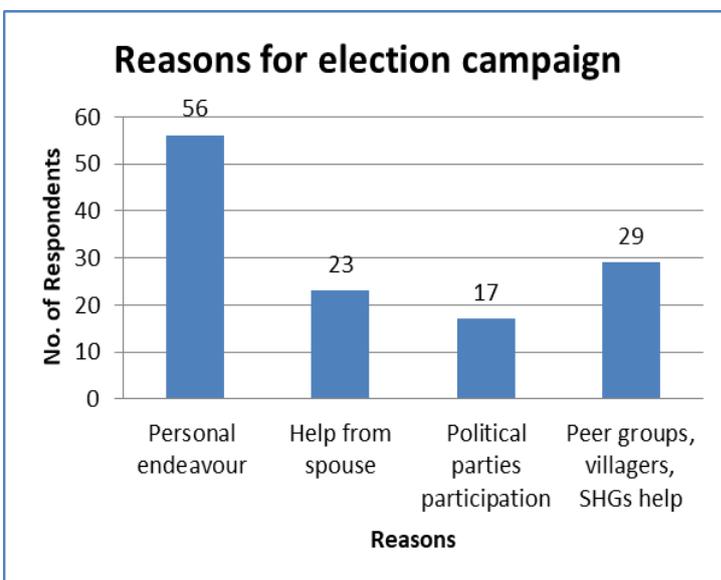
Source: Field Survey

It is heartening to note that certain percentage amongst these elected women political representatives were not bowed down by any socio-familial-political exigencies and thus were able to independently curve out their own socio-political destiny. A further cause of concern for these down trodden, mostly uneducated women representatives is the lacunae of proper linguistic expertise which can be a serious impediment towards meaningful discharging of duties consummating with their political positions. Familial worries

specially bordering on children being neglected, owing to pressures of being in political positions was another cause of non-reluctance towards political participation.

Table 6.15-Campaign for election

Reasons	No.	%
Personal endeavour	56	44.8
Help from spouse	23	18.4
Participation from political parties	17	13.6
Help from peer groups/villagers/S HGs	29	23.2
Total	125	100

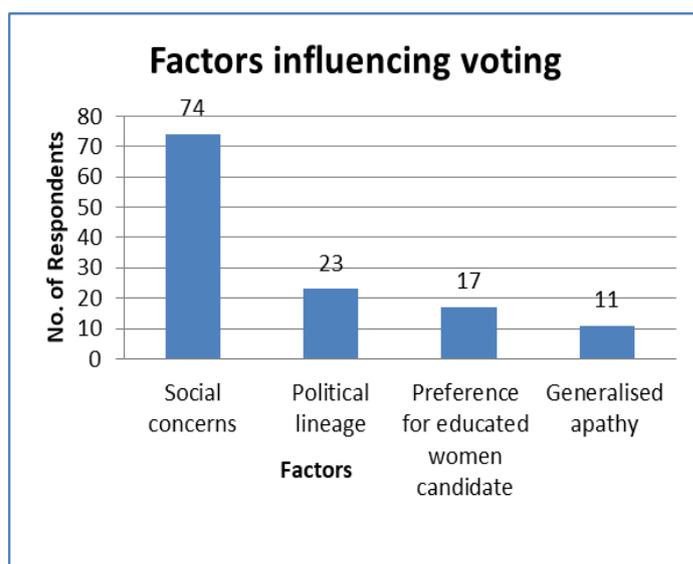


The above table shows that 44.8 percentage of women representatives claim to have managed their campaigning on their own. They took active interest and were the primary driving force for their political campaigns. 23.2 percentage of women were backed up by their peers and various village community groups which substantially aided them to further their campaign. Familial help, predominantly help from spouse, was a primary factor for some of (18.4%) these women. A few of these women (13.6%) did rely on the might of the political parties under whose banner they were fighting the elections.

Table 6.16- Factors influencing voting

Factors	No.	%
Social concerns/development	74	59.2
Political lineage	23	18.4
Preference for educated women candidate	17	13.6
Generalised apathy	11	8.8
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

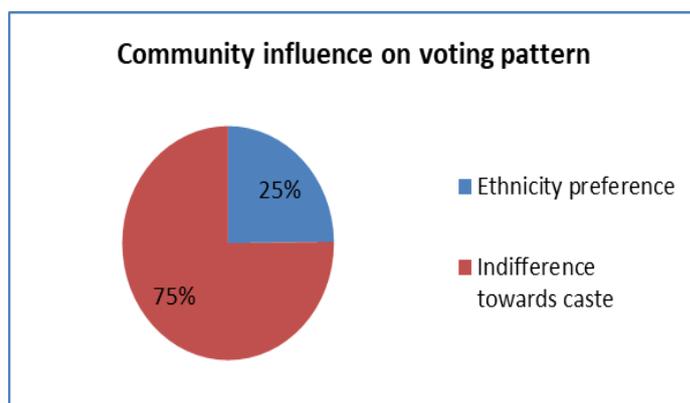


The above table shows that the amongst the major factors that had a telling effect on voting the predominant factor was concern for social issues and positive impact on the development (59.2%). Another substantial percentage of the voting population (18.4%) was swayed by their political lineage nurtured over generations. They were thus unable to think beyond their age old political convictions. Some of the voting populace (13.6) did unequivocally put forward their preference for prospective candidates who have educational qualifications that they deemed to be an important factor for effective discharging of their political duties.

Table 6.17- Community influence on voting pattern

Community influence on voting pattern	No.	%
Ethnicity preference	31	24.8
Indifference towards caste	94	75.2
Total	125	100

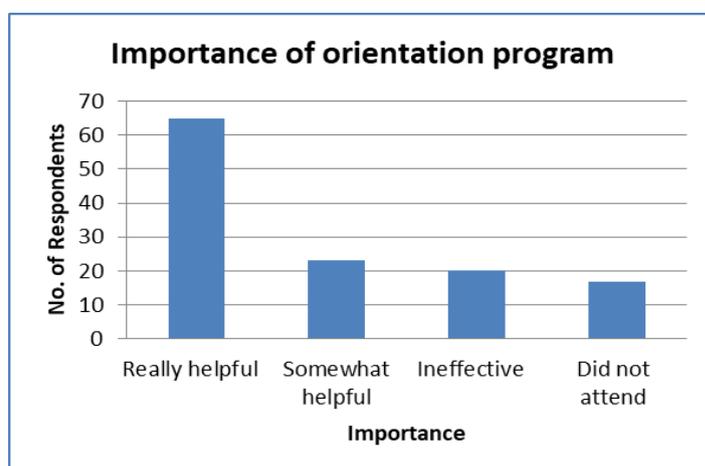
Source: Field Survey



An apathy towards the political process as a whole, thereby being totally unbothered about the contesting candidates and their credentials in any way was a noticeable features amongst few of the voters. A perspective analysis by the elected representatives about the influence of caste factor on voting reveals that majority of the voters were not dominated by caste, thereby choosing to vote for the most eligible candidate irrespective of their caste (75.2%). Caste consideration was however predisposing factor for a minority of voters (24.8%), thereby choosing to vote for candidates belonging to their caste, despite other factors being not so favourable. (see table 6.17).

Table 6.18- Importance of Orientation Program

Importance of orientation programme	No.	%
Really helpful	65	52
Somewhat helpful	23	18.4
Ineffective	20	16
Did not attend	17	13.6



Total	125	100
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Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that when confronted with judging the efficacy of training programme, which are under taken prior to their assuming office as elected representatives, majority of them (52%) were of the opinion that these training programmes really helped them to orient themselves towards requirements of their potential roles. Thus they were able to be more effective and meaningful in performance of their duties. Some of these women representatives (18.4%) were however of the view that they were not greatly benefited by these training programmes and that these programmes had a non-significant role. A few of these representatives (16%) were forthright in totally dismissing the need and effectiveness of these programmes. A few members were forced by various compulsions to skip these training sessions, thereby not being in a position to comment upon the effectiveness or otherwise of these programmes (13.6%). (see Table 6.18)

Majority of these women political representatives (43.2%) have taken the plunge into political arena because of their strong familial political background. Some of these women political representatives were devoid of previous political convictions (36%). They had been largely apolitical up to the point of getting involved in the election process. Yet a few number of tribal women (20.8%) had a passive political allegiance, although they had not been an active part of any political organisation. (Table 6.19).

Table 6.19- Family history in politics

Family history in politics	No.	%
Active participation	54	43.2
Passively political	26	20.8
Apolitical	45	36
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

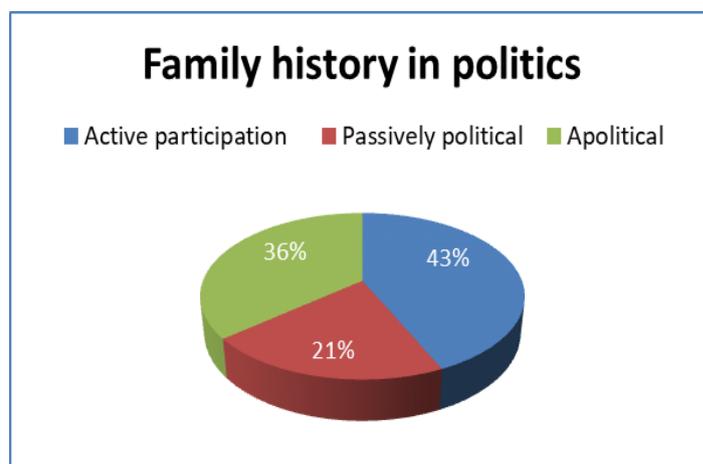
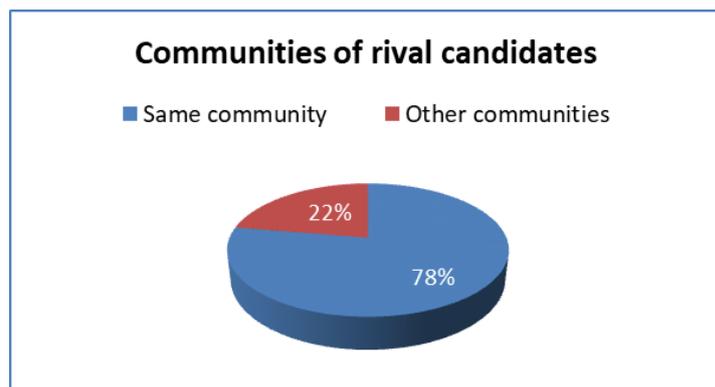


Table 6.20- Communities of rival Candidates

Communities of rival candidates	No.	%
Same community	97	77.6
Other communities	28	22.4
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

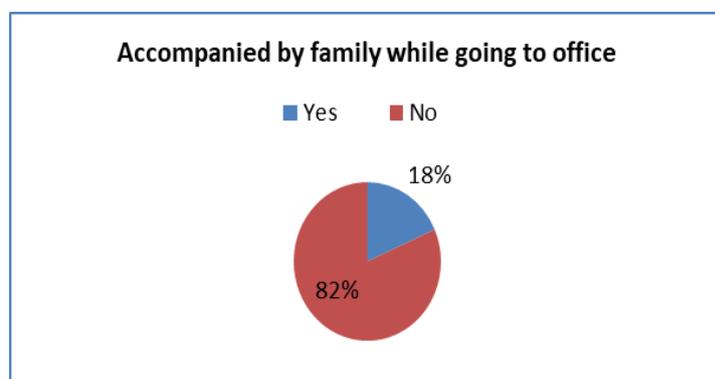


The above table (6.20) shows that the majority of the contesting candidates amongst the particular constituencies belong to the same caste (77.6%). Amongst a few constituencies however, contesting candidates belong to divers castes, thereby bringing caste equations to forefront.

Table 6.21- Whether accompanied by the family members while going to office

Whether accompanied by the family members while going to office	No.	%
Yes	23	18.4
No	102	81.6
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

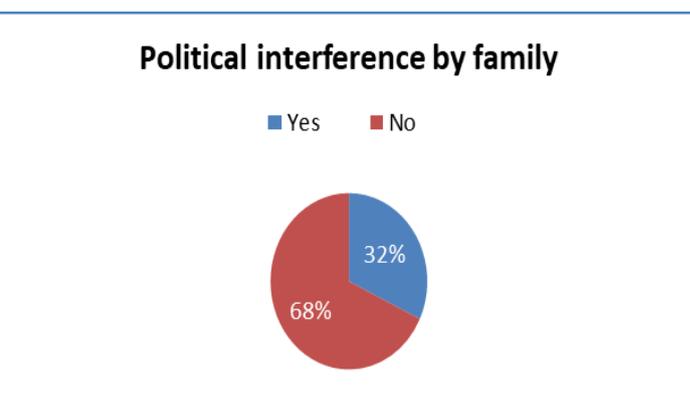


When asked to comment about whether they were accompanied by their spouses or family members to their work place after being elected as member, majority of i.e 81.6% of these women claim to have trodden the path from their home to their workplaces on their own, unaided by their family members. Some of these women (18.4%) do admit that their spouses stood by them and even accompanied them to and forth from their work places, and thus they had little to worry about despite odd working hours. (see Tble 6.21).

Table 6.22- Political interference by family members

Political interference by family members	No.	%
Yes	40	32
No	85	68
Total	125	

Source: Field Survey

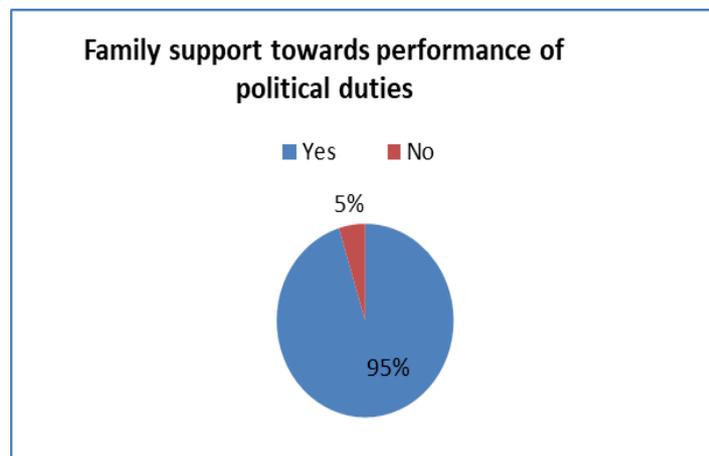


The above table 6.22 shows that majority of these women elected representatives (68%) deny any political interference from their family members. They thus claim to have an independent political framework devoid of any familial political lineage at their workplace. Few of this members however claim to have succumbed to their political family views, thereby surrendering their independent thinking.

Table 6.23- Familial support towards performance of political duties

Familial support towards performance of political duties	No.	%
Yes	119	95.2
No	06	4.8
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

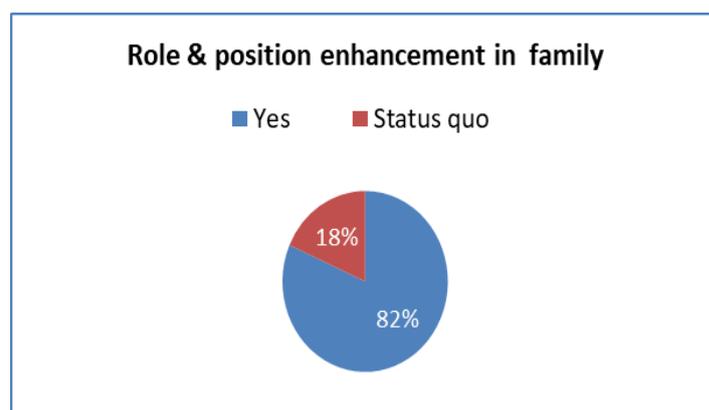


Majority of this women whole heartedly acknowledge the positive support of their families towards fulfilling of their political duties as elected women political representatives. A small percentage of women however claim to have little or insignificant familial support, thereby rendering them incapacitated whereby they had to wage a lone battle towards performing their political duties. (Table 6.23).

Table 6.24- Enhancement of role and position in the family

Enhancement of role and position in the family	No.	%
Yes	102	81.6
Status quo	23	18.4
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

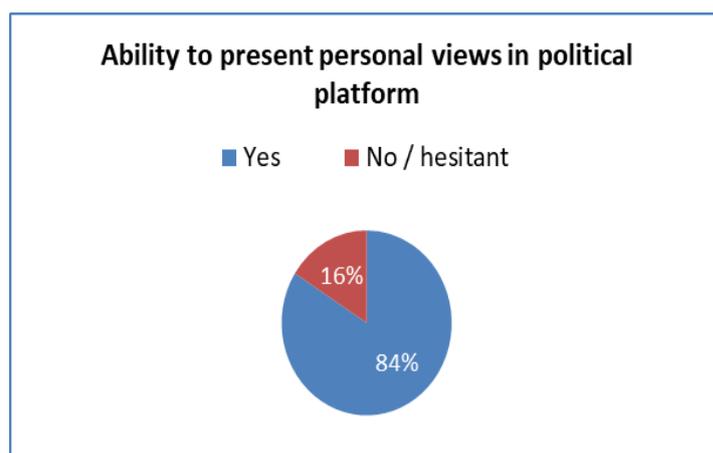


The above table 6.24 shows that being at the threshold of political power after getting elected as representatives did enhance and upgrade their status in the family structure, thereby they were acknowledge as important voices within their family and immediate neighbourhood. Some of them however opine that being in positions of power did not alter their status and position within the family and thus they were not able to appreciate any positive noticeable change vis-à-vis their family status.

Table 6.25- Ability to bring forth personal views in political platform

Ability to bring forth personal views in political platform	No.	%
Yes	105	84
No / hesitant	20	16
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

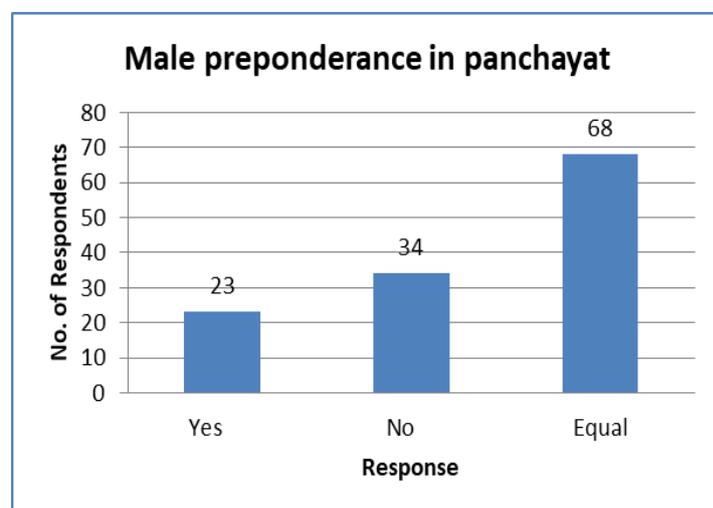


Substantial percentage of these women claim to have forceful and path defining narratives in the political scheme of thing. Thereby they claim to have played an influencing role towards political discourse at large. A small percentage of these women however were not able to engage in a forceful political dialogue, primarily because of their hesitancy to bring forth their political views on table. They thus claim to have played little or no role in shaping of political agendas. (Table 6.25).

Table 6.26- Male preponderance in the panchayat bodies

Male preponderance in panchayat bodies	No.	%
Yes	23	18.4
No	34	27.2
Equal	68	54.4
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

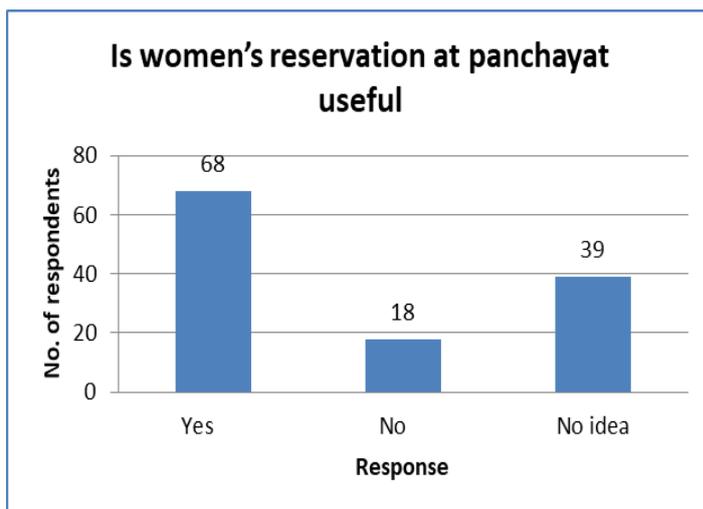


Majority amongst these women (54.4%) are of the opinion that there is a gender equality within these grass root political bodies. Some of these women do go the extent of proclaiming a positive female gender bias which has led them to work in an environment which is not overwhelmed by the presence of males. 18.4% of women however are of the view that male preponderance has been a defining factor which has handicapped their ability to function.

Table 6.27- Is women's reservation at panchayat body level useful

Is women's reservation at panchayat body level useful	No.	%
Yes	68	54.4
No	18	14.4
No idea	39	31.2
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

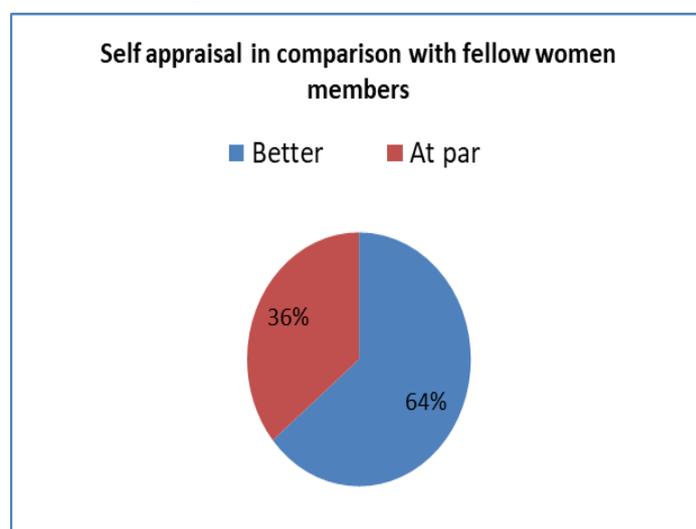


A substantial percentage of (54%) do these women do acknowledge that the reservation for women candidates at local panchayats have been a primary driving force towards empowerment of women at the grass root level, thereby enabling them to embark upon meaningful and effective political journey is. They claim to have reason to defining political positions from oblivion due to these reservations for women. Some percentage of these women are however non-committal, thereby reserving their opinions as to the effectiveness of these women reservation policies. Another section of them feel that these reservations has contributed nothing towards actual empowerment of women.

Table 6.28- Self appraisal in comparison with fellow women members

Self appraisal in comparison with fellow women members	No.	%
Better	80	64
At par	45	36
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

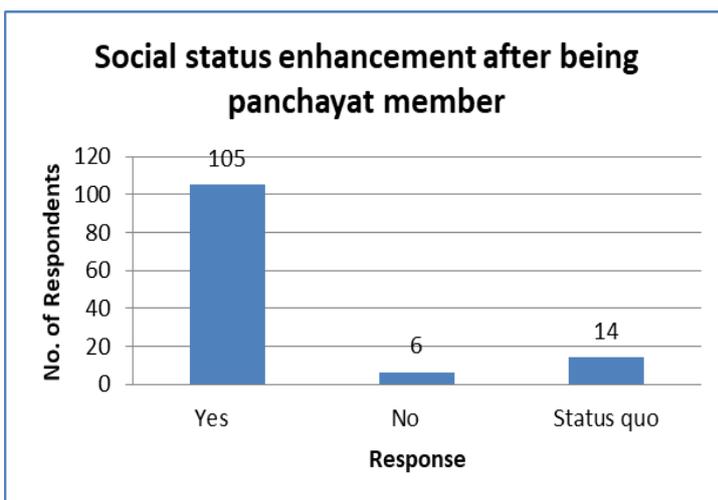


64 per cent of these women do rate their performance as elected representative in a positive light, thereby claiming to have out-shown their female colleagues in similar positions. 36 percentage of these women however evaluate their performance to be at par with their other female counterpart, thereby envisaging that women representatives across the political spectrum have manage to have positive and meaningful impact.

Table 6.29- Enhancement of social status after being a panchayat member

Enhancement of social status after being panchayat member	No.	%
Yes	105	84
No	06	4.8
Status quo	14	11.2
Total no. of respondents	125	100

Source: Field Survey

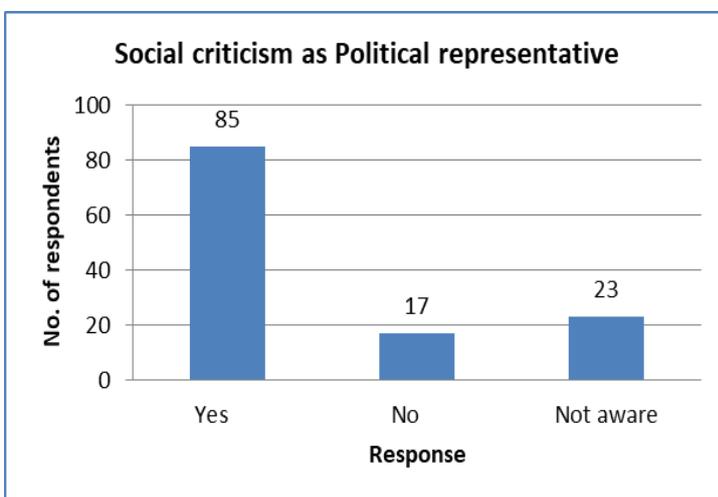


Majority of these women feel that there has been enhancement and improvement in their social status after being elected as political representatives. Some of these women appreciate no substantial difference in their status, thus being of the opinion that it is a factor that is immaterial to their social status. A small percentage of these women however fail to see any change even after being in positions of power.

Table 6.30- Social criticism as a political representative

Social criticism as Political representative	No.	%
Yes	85	68
No	17	13.6
Not aware	23	18.4
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey



Despite their sincerest of efforts a substantial percentage of these women are of the opinion that there is criticism from their immediate society towards their endeavours. Few of these members are not aware of any such condemnation. A small percentage of these women do deny being privy to any criticisms.

Table 6.31- Being Panchayat representative has contributed to family ascendency

Family ascendency due to panchayat representation	No.	%
Yes	03	2.4
No	122	97.6
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey

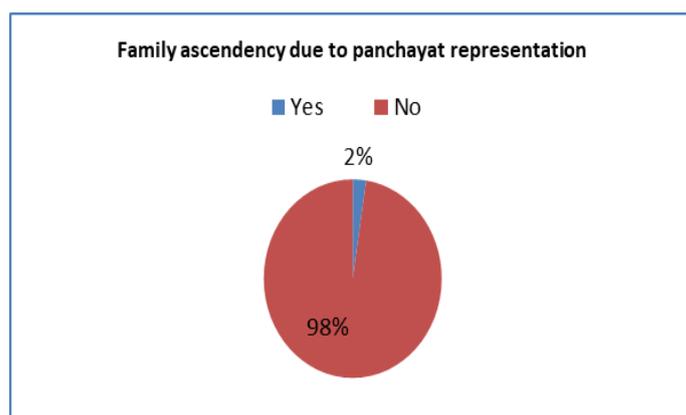
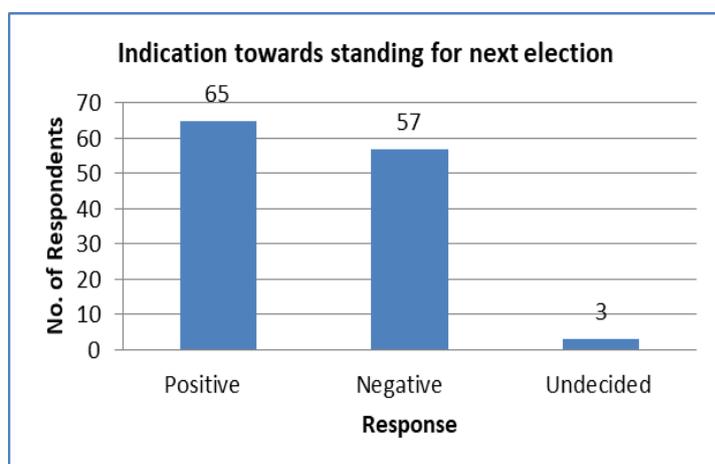


Table 6.32- Indication towards standing for next election

Indication towards standing for next election	No.	%
Positive	65	52
Negative	57	45.6
Undecided	03	2.4
Total	125	100

Source: Field Survey



A substantial majority of these women are of the opinion that being elected representative has not contributed to the upliftment of their family. A very meagre percentage of them however do acknowledge that their family has gained as a result of they being in positions of power. (Table 6.31). Majority of these women harbour a positive outlook towards participation in next electoral process, thereby being willing to contest as candidates again. Some of them are however vehemently deny any such ambition thereby dissociating themselves from further electoral politics. Some of them are yet not able to decide on this issue, thereby waiting for the unfolding of political scenario before taking a plunge into the process again. (Table 6.32).

The below table shows the age and rate of participation of the respondents. The women belonging to the age group of 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 have the high rate of participation. Whereas the above table shows the tendency of low participation of the women belonging to the age group of 45-50 years. Rate of participation for the women of 20-25 and 41-45 belong to medium category. (Table 6.33).

Table 6.33- Age and Rate of Participation

Age in years	Rate of participation			Number
	Low	Medium	High	
20-25		✓		10
26-30			✓	32
31-35			✓	38
36-40			✓	33
41-45		✓		11
45-50	✓			1
Total				N= 125

Source: Field Survey

Table 6.34- Marital Status and Rate of Participation

Marital Status	Rate of Participation			No.
	Low	Medium	High	
Married			✓	108
Unmarried	✓			17
Total				N= 125

Source: Field Survey

The above table (6.34) shows the marital status and rate of participation of the respondents. The majority of women respondents who were married have high rate of participation in the local bodies. Women who are unmarried have low rate of participation. Table no 6.35 indicates the nature of family and rate of participation of the respondents. Out of 125 women respondents 109 women belong to the nuclear family and their rate of participation is high as compared with the women who have joint family.

Table 6.35- Nature of Family and rate of participation

Nature of Family	Rate of Participation			No.
	Low	Medium	High	
Joint Family	✓			16
Nuclear Family			✓	109
Total				N= 125

Source: Field Survey

Table 6.36- Ethnicity and rate of participation

Ethnicity	Rate of Participation			No.
	Low	Medium	High	
Oroan			✓	75
Naik		✓		6
Kharia		✓		7
Kalandi	✓			2
Santhal	✓			5
Munda		✓		17
Others (Lohar, Nagasia, Tanti, Malpare, Naik)	✓			13
Total				N= 125

Source: Field Survey

Since according to the data found the Oroan out number other tribal groups. It is therefore apparent that tribes belonging to Oroan ethnicity have high rate of participation in local bodies. Naik, Kharia and Munda have medium rate of participation whereas Kalandi, Santhal and others like Lohar, Nagasia, Tanti, Malpare and Naik have low rate of participation. (Table 6.36). 2 Women having the age group 36-40 have the educational degree of masters. Out of 6 women respondents who are graduates belong to the age group of 26-30 and 31-35. Out of 22 respondents who have studied upto higher secondary level 7 belong to 26-30 age group and 6 are 31-35. The maximum number of respondents who are educated between class V-VIII, 21 are 31-35 years of age. (Table 6.37).

Table 6.37- Educational level and Age of the Respondents

Age	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL							TOTAL
	Illiterate	Primary	v-viii	IX-X	H.S.	B.A.	M.A.	
20-25	0	0	3	4	3	0	0	10
26-30	1	4	13	2	7	4	0	31
31-35	1	7	21	8	6	2	0	45
36-40	0	0	10	11	3	0	2	26
41-45	2	0	1	3	3	0	0	9
46-50	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
TOTAL	6	11	50	28	22	6	2	N= 125

Source: Field Survey

Chart showing Motivation for getting inducted into Politics and age of the respondents

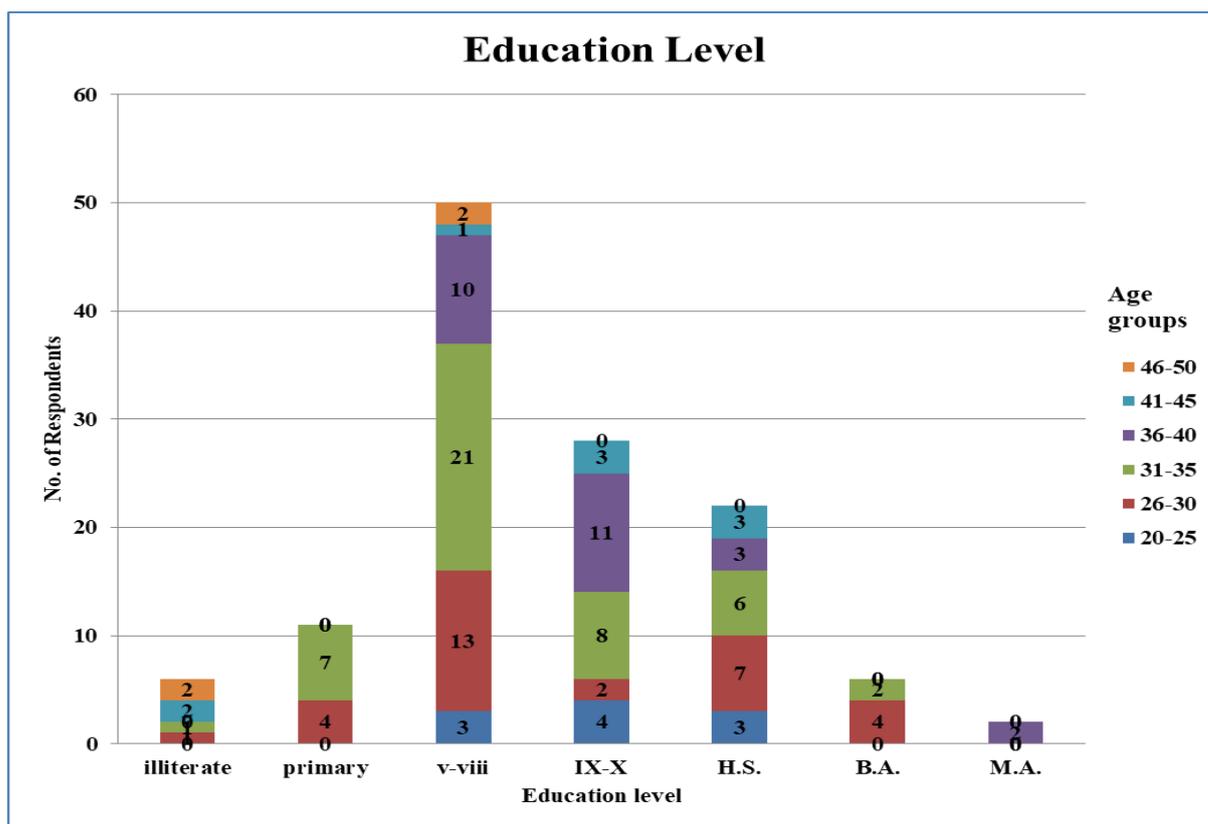


Table 6.38- Motivation for getting inducted into Politics and age of the respondents

Age	Voluntary indulgence	Spouse pressure	Party pressure	Total
20-25	5	2	3	10
26-30	14	5	12	31
31-35	26	4	15	45
36-40	6	3	17	26
41-45	4	4	1	9
46-50	1	1	2	4
TOTAL	N= 56	N= 19	N= 50	N= 125

Source: Field Survey

The above table (6.38) shows the age of respondents and the reasons for motivation for getting inducted into politics. Out of 125 women respondents 56 women have been inducted voluntarily. Out of these 56 women 26 belong to 31-35, 14 belong to 26-30, 6 are from 36-40, 5 women from 20-25, 4 are 41-45 and 1 belongs to 46-50 age group. 19 women say that there is spouse pressure for getting inducted into politics. 50 women respondents say that there is party pressure which motivated them into politics.

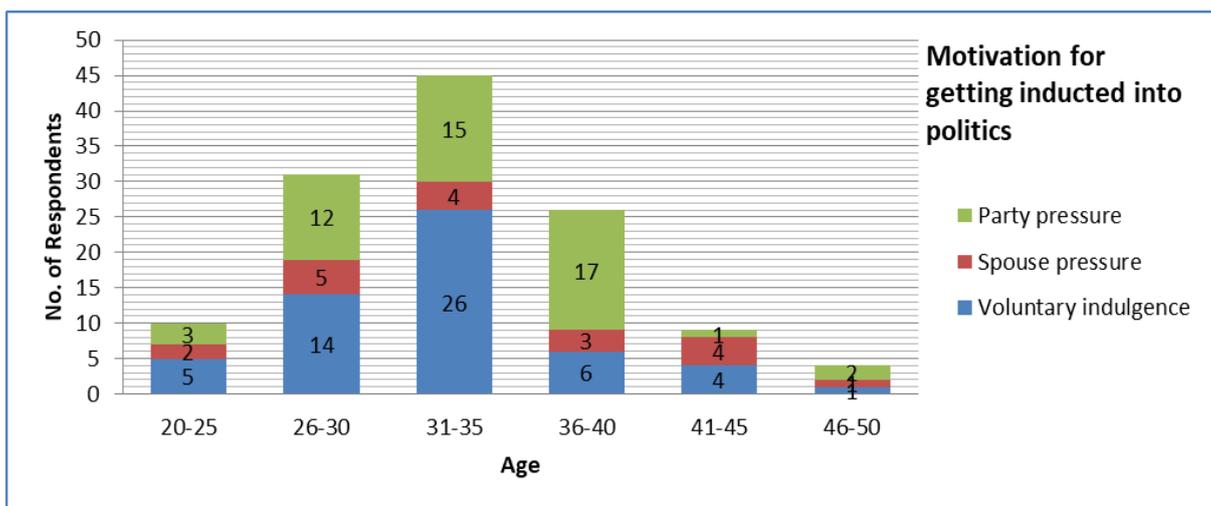


Table 6.39- Is Women’s Reservation at Panchayat Body level useful

Educational Level	Is Women’s Reservation at Panchayat Body level useful			
	Yes	No	No Idea	Total
Illiterate	1	1	4	6
Primary	3	6	2	11
V-VIII	24	8	18	50
IX-X	18	1	9	28
H.S.	14	2	6	22
B.A.	6	0	0	6
M.A.	2	0	0	2
Total	N= 68	N= 18	N= 39	N= 125

Source: Field Survey

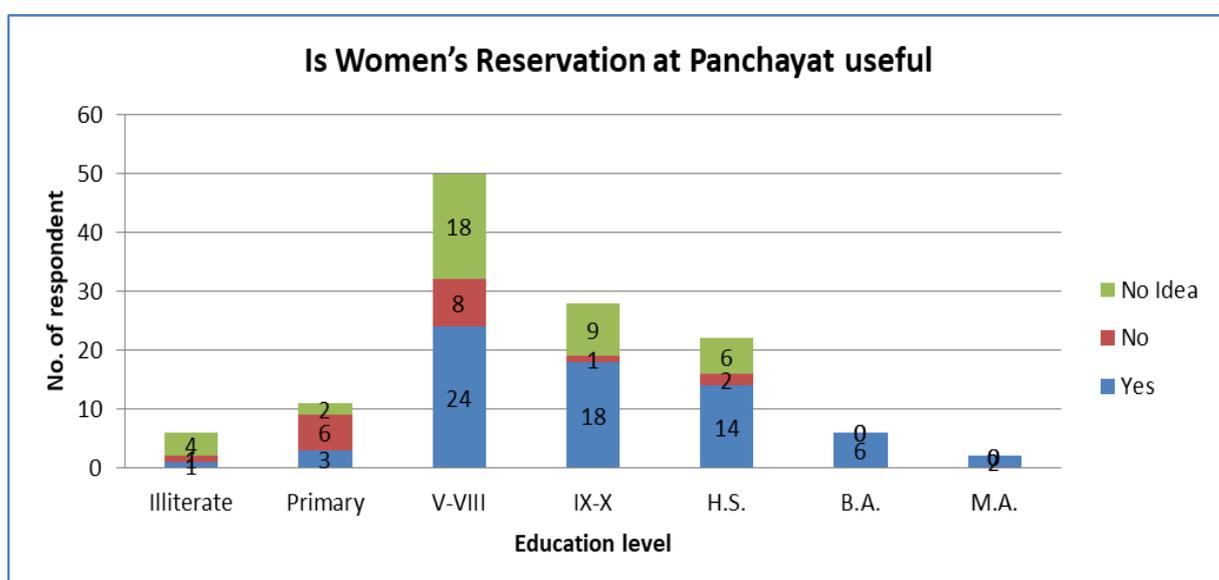
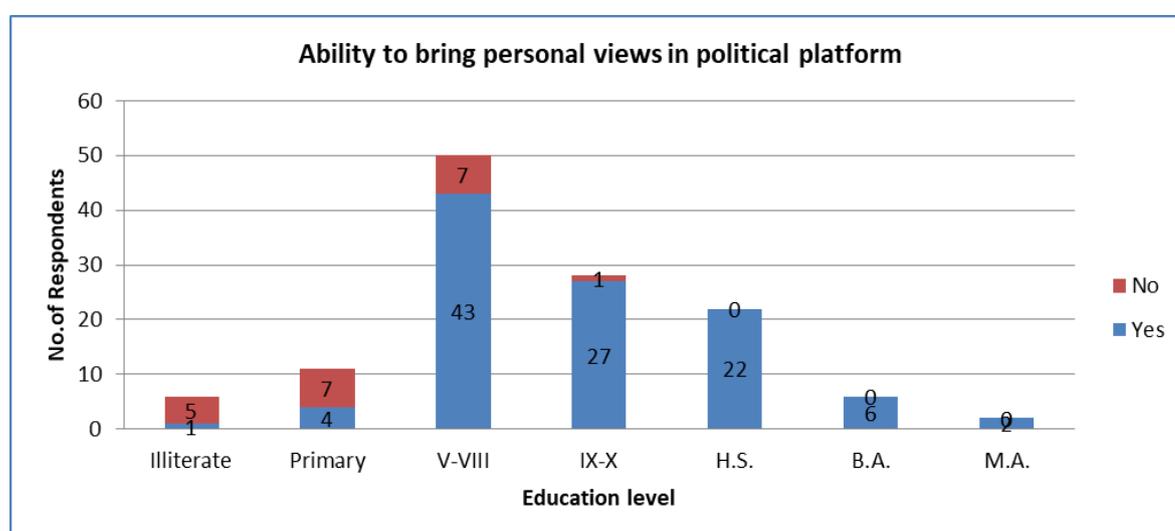


Table 6.40- Ability to bring forth personal views in political platform

Educational Level	Ability to bring forth personal views in political platform		
	Yes	No	Total
Illiterate	1	5	6
Primary	4	7	11
V-VIII	43	7	50
IX-X	27	1	28
H.S.	22	0	22
B.A.	6	0	6
M.A.	2	0	2
Total	N= 105	N= 20	N= 125

Source: Field Survey



The table (6.39) shows that out of 125 women respondents 68 women agree that reservation policy at the panchayat body level is useful. 18 say no and 39 have no idea about the women's reservation at panchayat body level. Women who have higher level of education have positive answer regarding the women's reservation at the panchayat body level.

The above table (6.40) shows the level of education and the ability to bring forth personal views in political platform. It is seen that the women having higher education level have much more confidence to bring for the one's personal ideas to the forefront than compared with the less educated women. Out of 125 elected women representatives 105 have the ability to bring forth personal views in political platform. Whereas 20 women say they are not able to express their views in front of others. The above table is the clear indication of educational value to boost up confidence.

STATISTICAL EXPLANATION to substantiate my null hypothesis:

The following three hypothesis were put forward during my introductory chapter.

- 1) India's democratic process has created open space for the wider participation of women, mainly tribal women in the political functioning of the country.
- 2) Lack of adequate knowledge about the political system of the country stands in the way for greater participation of the tribal women in the political process.
- 3) Without adequate participation of the tribal women in this region, a social equilibrium may not be easy to achieve.

Hypothesis #1- The quantitative study thus indicate a larger participation of women (specially amongst the tribal population) in the grass root political level. As compared to the data of 2004 (which envisages a women participation of 2.6%), there is 4.3% of women participation as per statistic of 2015 data. Within a span of a decade there has been a 60% rise in political participation of tribal women. This is a welcome trend and bears testimony to the fact that women's reservation (particularly for tribal women) has definitely resulted in enhanced tribal women representation. It is thus a forgone conclusion that participation of tribal women in the democratic process has definitely increased the tribal women participation in grass root democratic levels. A P value of 0.14 is definitely a strong measure for substantiating my hypothesis that as compared to previous social infrastructure tribal women have surely managed to eke out a political space for themselves.

(Degrees of freedom = $n-1$ "where n " is the number of categories or variables.

Here $n = 2$ (as we have chosen two years 2004 and 2015 as the year of reference).

Thus, in this study we have $2-1 = 1$ degree of freedom.

Chi square =

$$X^2 = \sum ((o-e)^2/e)$$

Where o is the observed value (which is 4.3% of women participation I the year 2015) and e is the expected value (which according to previous census data, puts women participation at 2.6 percent).

Thus, calculation of chi square gives a result of 2.8. The significance level which I have chosen is 0.05.

This gives a final P value of 0.14 (which is of much more significance than the expected cut off value of 0.05 to reject a hypothesis). Thus my null hypothesis that there has been a significant rise in tribal women political participation stands.

Hypothesis #2- The study about the educational standards of elected women representatives, vis-à-vis those having higher education and basic primary education leads to a P value of 0.40. This goes on to prove the huge dearth amongst the educational standards of these tribal women political representatives. Such a P value definitely has a strong representation towards the need of proper educational levels amongst the tribal women, prior to being effective instruments of socio-political change. There is a huge lacunae in, the expected educational standards amongst the tribal women. A very high P score further enhances my observation that without proper education, these tribal women can never endeavour to be the harbinger of ushering the forces of socio-political change. This compromised P score which is a pointer towards the largely uneducated status of tribal women political leaders is further backed up by the meaningful and positive performance of educated tribal women. It is therefore hypothesized that education of tribal women is of prime importance so that they can be groomed into effective tribal leaders.

Hypothesis #3- Through the ages there has been a large male preponderance towards the socio-political scenario. The women have thus been confined to a situation where their active participation in political activities has always been restricted. This applies to the tribal society as well. With the promulgation of 73rd Amendment there has been endeavour to effectively redress this gender bias. The present study, which take into account the levels of tribal women population in political activities, vis-à-vis the scenario prevalent only a decade back, points to a larger women's participation. Comparative statistical data between the years 2004 to 2015 are a definite pointer towards increased participation of tribal women at panchayat levels. A quantitative study aimed to analyze the increase tribal women participation at grass root levels leads to a favorable P values of 1.65, which bears a significant statistical importance. This therefore corroborates the inferences of the present study that the 73rd Amendment has largely successful in narrowing down the gender bias.

(Degrees of freedom = n-1

Here n = 4 (as we have chosen 4 categories, namely female, male and two years, 2004 and 2015).

Thus, we have $4-1 = 3$ degree of freedom.

Chi square and significance level (which I have chosen as 0.05) gives a final P value of 0.75.

This again corroborates my null hypothesis that the gender bias (which was significantly in favor of males) has started to be addressed with increase in number of tribal women's participation in recent past, the gender inequality is in the process of being breached.

Conjuring upon our three primary hypothesis we would like to draw the following conclusions:

1. It cannot be denied that the participation of tribal women, especially at the grass root political level, has definitely increased due to State measures like reservations for tribal women.
2. The largely uneducated status of tribal women remains a huge obstacle towards unlocking of the true potential of these women.
3. While statistical analyses goes on to prove that the largely predominant male gender bias has been addressed, without initialization of state sponsored initiatives aimed towards addressal of primarily health and education related problems faced by women, true empowerment of tribal women will continue to remain a distant dream.