CHAPTER - VII

Dalit Women in Political Decision-Making

7.1 Introduction

Decision making is very vital for any political system in which the representatives of community should participate openly, eloquently, equally and judiciously as the decisions will have considerable implications for different sectors of community organization in which the political system is sustained. Hitherto, the political decision at panchayat level was a prerogative of the privileged caste men - now fortunately the women are provided with a scope to participate in it. Again the women from down trodden categories were sidelined in the process. In the present chapter, an attempt is made to present the views, opinions, attitudes and perceptions of Dalit women members of PRI’s in study area with regard to their role in decision making of the local self governments.

The Beijing platform for Action recognized that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace for women and men cannot be achieved. This recognition itself grew out of the active participation of women. Women, individually and as members and leaders of non-governmental organizations have organized at the grass roots, national and international level to press governments and international organizations to address issues central to the lives of women, including women’s human rights, violence against women reproductive health and unpaid work.

Further, with the support and encouragement of women’s groups around the world, governments were urged at the Beijing Conference to take
measures to ensure women’s access to and full participation in, governance and leaderships.

Development perspectives embark on the involvement of women by realizing their potentialities and capabilities, utilize their mental and human resources and be partners of the development process. To achieve this goal, they need to be empowered and make them to participate in decision-making process at all levels concerning their health, education, assets, property, resources, sex, freedom of movement, micro-finance, participation in household decisions, control over resources, knowledge and so on.

Has says “The purpose of development is to help people live longer, more productive and more fulfilling lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth. Economic growth that does not put people at its centre is development without soul”(in Pamela, 2007). Some of the issues of human development are gender inequality, status of woman and the consequent low level of participation of women in the decision-making process. Even the few women in decision-making are not able to contribute much. “Development, if not engendered, is endangered.” (HDR, 1995:1). In this context, the participation of women in decision-making is an important indicator of human resource development and ensuring equality among men and women does require the equal participation of the women in decision-making process.

The women, who are vulnerable sections, are exposed to all such actions, which are discriminatory and biased, based on patriarchy, gender inequality and under status led to their marginalization in society. Right from the dawn of civilization fight for the liberation from inequality, oppression and subordination continued. The women, as a class of people, have been excluded
from various spheres of life leading to their marginalization and social exclusion having implications to the social, political and economic structure of the society.

The origins of the discrimination can be traced to the patriarchal culture that prefers to see the woman behind the veil even as they work in the fields. Thus women are completely secluded from political division process and are trained from the very childhood that politics is man’s concern. (Choudhary, 1994).

7.2 Women in decision-making

The participation of women in decision-making concerning her own life is an indicator how far she can take decisions which affect her health, earnings, spending of her earnings, freedom of movement, gender role attitudes, household matters, control over resources and development of mental, physical and human resources. National Family Health Survey-3 collected data on a large number of indicators of women’s empowerment both men and women. Information was collected on the magnitude of wife’s earnings relative to her husband’s earnings, control over the use of one’s own earnings and those of the spouse, a wife’s participation in household decision-making, women’s control over resources, knowledge and use of micro-credit programs, freedom of movement and gender role attitudes. With regard to the latter, women and men were both asked about specific circumstances under which they feel that a woman is justified in refusing to have sexual intercourse with her husband and about specific circumstances under which they feel that wife beating is justified? Men are additionally asked about specific actions a man has right to take if his wife refuses him sex. These attitude questions are all aimed at capturing the conscientization of women and men with regard to gender equality. In addition to these, other indicators of women’s empowerment are
education, age at first marriage, employment and receipt of cash earnings, which have direct bearing on the status of women in society. Further, NFHS has identified basic indicators of empowerment through participation in decision-making process as follows:

(1) For women, earning cash is not likely to be sufficient condition for financial empowerment. Financial empowerment also require control over the use of one’s earnings. Mostly it is the men who decides the financial matter and only a small portion of women have control on their earnings and take decision to spend is due to higher education, career orientation, age etc.

(2) Since a large proportion of married are not employed and do not earn cash, their autonomy and empowerment will depend in part on having a say in how the earnings of their husbands are used.

(3) The ability of women to make decisions that affect the circumstances of their own lives is an essential aspect of empowerment. In order to assess the women’s decision-making autonomy NFHS identified four different types of decisions: their own health care, making large household purchases, making household purchases for daily household needs and visiting their family or relatives.

(4) To further understand women’s access to financial resources is also an important element of women’s empowerment. The participation of women in financial decision-making is also important indicators that indicates the access to financial position i.e. they have bank or savings account, which can be used by them independently.

(5) Freedom of movement outside the home is an important aspect of women’s autonomy and empowerment. This is more relevant in a country like India
where patriarchy still very strong and the women have no freedom of movement outside the home independently.

(6) A fundamental element of empowerment is the rejection of a normatively prescribed power of men over women and of unequal rights and privileges on the basis of sex of an individual. One such normatively ascribed ‘right’ of husbands is to regulate and control their wives ‘behaviour and bodies through whatever actions necessary, including the use of violence. Hence women who gives men these rights.

(7) The ability to access information, take decisions, and act effectively in their own interest or in the interest of those who depend on them are essential aspects of empowerment of women.

The empowerment of women demands an ability to access information, take decisions and act effectively in their own interest or in the interest of those who depend on them. For fulfillment of this task there is a need for political of space in which she can access information about her own problems such as gender biases, inequality, inaccessibility to the resources, lack of opportunities, discrimination, differential treatment etc., take decisions to overcome those problems by involving or participating in decision-making process to protect her own interest. In this background, the role of women in decision-making becomes important indicator of the empowerment.

‘Decision-making is a complex process hardly taking place deliberately in a clear cut formal way. Different family members participate in it directly as well as indirectly’. That means, decision-making is a deliberate act of an individual or a group to effect the changes in one’s own interest or the group. Indeed, it is evident that the formal entry of women into politics, or providing
political space to women, is a deliberate action of the state to correct the imbalances of gender biases, inequalities and discriminations.

‘Universally, ‘women’s entry into political decision-making is viewed as inevitable to deal with various forms of women’s oppression and to improve their status. This is because the level of women’s participation in absolute numbers is low the world over. Interestingly women who tried to succeed in the world of politics discovered that the hurdles they faced, be it on tradition, finances, ethnicity or organization, were compounded by the hurdles that were theirs by birth – that is the gender (Oomen, 1991:52). All over the world, the representation of women in the decision-making process is very low and not only that those meager percentages of women participating in the decision-making have not initiated action and succeeded in bringing the women’s issues to the front. It is pathetic that the efforts of international community, civil societies and national governments have not heeded to the demands of the half of the population and all that has been so far been done has not even created a difference. Hence, women continue to experience deprivations, oppression, exploitation and subordination.

International organizations under the banner of UNO have evolved the strategies and programs for the development of women and have made provisions based recommendations of the summits, Conferences, Symposia etc. which are mandatory for the Governments to comply with the provisions and recommendations through enacting legislations in favour of the women. Structural interventions by the International organizations have tremendous impact on the gender equations. Women have been recognized as political entity who deserve the participation in the decision-making process. Historically, women all over the world are under-represented in political arena. It is a contemporary necessity for the international organizations to put pressure on
popular Governments to comply with the various provisions and recommendations of the Summits and the Conferences to redress the political grievances of the women all over the world.

As discussed earlier, Indian women were also subjected to various disabilities arising out of the practice of gender biases and iniquitous social system. Indian women are marginalized by illiteracy, inaccessibility to resources and assets, lack of ownership of property, share in the ancestral property, lack of infrastructural facilities, lack of educational opportunities, poor health, marginalized employment, unpaid or under paid work, domestic responsibilities and obligations, violence, sexual harassment, and certain other social practices such as Devadasi system, concubinage, dowry and so on and so forth have diminished the position of women. Due to this, the women are marginalized. The women have no role to play in the decision-making process either in home or larger community.

Indian women are vulnerable sections whose voice is not heard in any of the platforms of democratic institutions. In view of this, the democratization of local self-government with the involvement of marginalized and vulnerable groups in it, is a step forward which has given fillip to realization of women’s dreams at grass root level.

In order to provide sustainability to the democracy it is imperative to include the under-privileged, under-represented, weaker sections and marginalized groups such as the women, the Dalits and the OBC’s into the democratic process by way of providing access and involving them in the decision-making process. The Indian Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies, right from the dawn of Independence, have tried to do much better for the upliftment of women by enacting legislations and evolving and implementing schemes and programs for development in society. The progress
of the women is not satisfactory. The fundamental issues concerning the women i.e. gender inequality and biases continue to exist in society.

The Indian Constitution provides equality before law, equality of provisions, social justice through its Constitutional provisions under the Articles 14, 15, 16, 39, 42, 46, 47, 51 and 243. The Directive Principles of the State Policy provides scope for achieving equality of opportunities between men and women without any discrimination. Five Year Plans have laid emphasis on the female education, enhancement of status of women and gender sensitization in the planning process of the country. The Central and State Governments have enacted legislations to undo the social practice which are detrimental to the interest of women by bringing prohibitions and preventions.

The process of bringing women to the main stream of political decision making process has begun with the induction of women into PRI’s, by conforming to the norm of providing 33 percentage of reservation of seats in all the three tiers of the PRI’s. As such as the 73rd Amendment Act is a revolutionary step towards ensuring equal access to political space for the women and other marginalized sections in the grass root level politics and make them partners of local development processes.

The Amendment is a structural intervention, which has its direct implications to the power structure of rural India. New power equations have emerged in the power structure. New groups, which are hitherto kept out of the power structure, have found place in it. The Amendment has a tremendous impact on the power sharing at grass root level.

The political reservation gives women an opportunity to influence decision-making process, planning, implementation and evaluating by integrating them into the political system. This further, ensures political
participation, which includes right to vote, contest, campaign, party membership and representations in political offices at all levels and effectively influence decisions thereby leading to political empowerment.

In India, the PRI’s comprise, 2,32,278 Village Panchayats, 5,905 Taluka Panchayat Samitis and 499 Zilla Panchayats, making it to a total of 2,38,682 with a capacity of 2.92 million people elected to PRI’s among whom nearly one million are women. Of the total women representatives about 9.2 lakh of these were elected to the village panchayats itself. Similarly, of the 2.92 million elected representatives, Scheduled castes and Tribes accounted for 3.65 lakh and 2.50 lakh respectively.

For the first time a large number of women were elected to rural local bodies. At the national level, a total of 9, 88,106 women got elected to Grama Panchayat, 59,688 women (40%) have been elected to Taluka Panchayat and 6,106 women (39%) have been elected as Zilla Panchayat Members. However, Karnataka has the distinction of having the highest number of women elected at all levels – 37, 689 (46.7%) for Grama Panchayat, 1,343 (40.2%) for Taluka panchayat and 335 (36.45%) for the Zilla Panchayats.

7.3 Decentralization of Power and Empowerment of Women

73rd Amendment Act has greatly contributed to the political empowerment of the women and more specifically, the women belonging to the socially disadvantaged, marginalized, under-privileged, and excluded groups. These elected women are obviously subjected to the gender biases, patriarchal chauvinism and differential treatment even in the constitutionally set up PRI’s. As they are largely illiterate, poor, burdened with family responsibilities, mal-nutrition and lack of awareness of skills due to these factors their participation in the decision-making process get adversely affected. The adversity of participation is deep rooted as they are subjected to maltreatment due to
inequitous social system. Traditionally dominant elites always evolve strategies to retain their grip over the political structure and the women elected to these bodies because they are reserved for them and rural elites have no option but to cope up with changes and try to control them keeping them veiled in the matter of decisions regarding rural development. More political reservation to the women and more so to the Dalit women, does not serve the purpose as their positions are always under the control of male dominance within the family and outside the family.

The women who have assumed the political positions due to reservation are those who have not ventured into it voluntarily but by the support of their husbands, father or other family members, or otherwise by the rural elites who finance them in elections. Caste equations, money and muscle power were also used by their patrons, husbands and other men folk to ensure their victory in several cases. Even in respect of seats reserved for chairpersons of Grama Panchayats for the Dalit women, there were attempts by the rural elites viz., landed gentry, to fix their ‘men’ as proxies, or their wives who are members at the helm of affairs in a significant number of villages.

There are instances where the men related to the dejure the women members demanded their presence and participation in village panchayat meetings. Due to their low levels of literacy and awareness; ignorance and imposed inferiority complex resulting from the prevailing social purdah system and lack of exposure and experience, the elected women members and chairpersons of the village panchayats in several cases had to depend upon their male counterparts for briefings the details required in decision-making process. In regard to the elected Scheduled Caste women chairpersons of Grama Panchayats, they had to depend on their husbands or ‘patrons’, may be the vice-
chairperson, belonging to the rural elite who is mostly the upper caste landlord or the one who supported her financially and politically in elections.

Snehalata Panda (1996) in her study of village Panchayat in Orissa found that women entered into politics due to mandatory provisions of reservation. Initial resistance by women to participate in politics changed due to political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibility. Again, she conducted another study in 1999 where she observed that the upper-caste women participation has hindered considerably due to caste prejudices and feelings. Further, she pointed out that the role of lower caste women is effective and they have emerged as a potential force in village politics. Even similar studies conducted in different states confirm the same trend and found that the Dalit women are more assertive and actively participate in the Panchayat activities effectively compare to their counterparts i.e. upper caste women (Omvedt: 2005).

Devaki Jain (1996) has pointed out that as usual the representation of upper castes is considerable in PRI’s. She felt that the women’s involvement in the PRI’s has brought transformation among them, which includes empowerment, self-confidence, political awareness and self-assertion. Further, she argued that the women have gained sense of empowerment by asserting control over resources, officials and most of all challenging men. Still further women’s empowerment challenged traditional ideas of male authority and supremacy.

Bidyut Mohanty’s (2002) recent study on the impact of 73rd Amendment in Orissa revealed that it has enhanced the participatory democracy at grass-root level leading to changes in the working pattern of Panchayats because of the presence of women. Gender parity is also a remarkable change occurred in the relationship between husband and wife. Further, interesting findings have also
been recorded with regard to the proxy representation of the women by their husband and brothers in the official activities.

Sunita Dhaka and Rajbir S. Dhaka (2005) in their study ‘Behind the veil – Dalit women in Panchayat Raj’ pointed out that the elected representatives of Dalit Women are between the age group of 30-50 years, illiterate, and live in joint families. Lack of awareness of PRI’s structural and functional arrangements is a major obstacle for them. Most of them are agricultural or casual labourers, elected for the first time. Their lack of awareness and inadequate knowledge of PRI’s is the main cause of non-effective participation, and non-performance. The proxy representation is very common in Panchayat affairs. Though reservation has helped to enhance their political status but that will not be sufficient to convert it into power. Devolution of powers has no meaning for the ineffective participants of the SC women. Though the husband and other family members support their political activities other factors such as illiteracy, and lack of knowledge hinders their political participation.

Further, they argue that the reservation of SC women has increased their self-confidence and empowerment, political education and socialization may improve their performance in PRI’s. In the end, large number women in PRI’s indicate that there is ‘‘marginal shift ‘‘ in women’s participation in decision-making.

O.P. Bohra (1997) in his case study of a Tamil Nadu Panchayat observed that large number of women constitute electorate but they hardly take any active participation in campaigning and electioneering. Rashmi Arun (1997) in a case study of MP found that majority of the elected women are illiterate, first timers, and new entrants into politics. Manikamba (1989) and Palanithurai (2001) have pointed out that the education and participation is interrelated. Economic status
enhances the better sense of confidence and encouragement to participate. Poor women’s participation is insignificant.

Further they found that the effective participation in decision-making increases due to periodical training, orientation and sensitization.

Paricha A.K.(2002) in his ‘Strategies for ‘Empowerment of Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions’ noted that the policy of reservation envisaged in the 73rd Amendment Act raises certain pertinent issues: will one-third reservation of electoral seats in panchayat bodies ensure greater and meaningful participation and involvement and contribution of women in grass-root level institutions and their decision making process? Will they be able to act as agents of socio-economic change in rural India? The traditional and conservative attitude of rural community, social forces, economic structure and political milieu place obstructions in their effective participation.

Smitha KC(2007) in her study found that many myths associated with entry of women into leadership positions that would be hindered by socio-economic profile in terms of their age, occupation, family income, landholdings, and education are disproved.

Pamela Singla (2007) has made an attempt to study the role of ‘Women Participation in Panchayat Raj: Nature and Effectiveness’ in which she has pointed out that rural women are nurtured in traditional values, beliefs and culture that is marked by male dominance, which tend to marginalize them. Their ability to perform effectively in such a situation is a matter of concern, keeping in mind that proxy attendance by men is not uncommon and mere physical presence of women members at meetings may not amount to their actual participation. The Findings of this study can be summed up: the mean age of elected women is 45 years; all of them are married; majority of them are
Hindus and belong to the various castes; large number of women have not attained school and are illiterate; large number are housewives, equal number of members belong to low income groups, more than half of the elected women are first time entrants into politics; majority of them have not been members of any political party; more than half of them involve in village welfare activities prior to their getting elected to the present portfolio; and elected women members have low political awareness. Similar findings have also been observed from the empirical works of Chandrashekar and Inbanathan (1991), George Mathew (1995), Rashmi Arun (1996), Kamalanath, et.al. (1996), MARG (1997), Susheela Kaushik (1997), Manu Bhaskar (1997), B. Mohanty (1999), Snehalata Panda, (1997), Seema Salgaonkar (2000), Sudha Pai (2000) and Stephen F., and Sekaran N.R. (2001).

Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai (2006) in their ‘Dalit Leadership in Panchayats – A Comparative study of Four States’ have pointed out the resistance of Ambedkar to include and revive the panchayats as administrative units in the federal system of democracy and Nehruvian middle path policy that panchayats in democratic set up would in time give a blow to the discriminatory caste structure and break the power of the land owning elite by introducing change in village India. Further their findings include: (1) the power structure dominated by land owning rural elites has begun to challenged by educated and upwardly mobile Dalit leadership due to emergence of political parties such as BSP which introduced change; (2) decentralization of power and decision-making downwards gained Dalits access to rural power structure; (3) scope of the participation of weaker sections widened; and (4) increased sense of accountability among the elected representatives of Dalit community noticed.

The study further show how (1) reservations have been accepted and Dalits have entered into the new panchayats; (2) changing attitudes of non-
Dalits improved their positions in panchayats; (3) Dalit women have also gained acceptance and support within the panchayats and among the villagers; (4) Dalits do not take part in the deliberations or do not contribute to any major decisions which determine local governance and development; and (5) Panchayats are not yet democratic institutions nor are they arenas of contestation and debate.

This study by Narenra kumar and Manoj Rai in fact provide insights into the various factors leading to non-effective functioning of Dalits in PRI’s and some of them are (1) since majority of Dalits are illiterates and their participation is limited due to lack of knowledge of PRI’s system; (2) traditionally, Dalits have owned little land while majority of them landless agricultural labourers, have depended upon the land owning class in village to provide them employment leading to culture of dependency inhibiting them from participating in the panchayats; (3) caste discriminations and iniquitous social system also come in the way of their participation; and (4) reservations alone cannot provide empowerment unless Dalits also have the wealth to make use of it. Finally, they argue that the significance of these factors is even more clearly visible in the case of Dalit women. Traditionally, Dalit women have suffered on account of both caste and gender and as they have been part of the work force throughout they have not played any role in the panchayats. The study suggests that in states where the rate of literacy and the status of women remain low, providing Dalit women reservation has not led to their active participation. They remain proxies of their husbands or other male relatives.

Reservations have ensured election of Dalits to the new panchayats. But, they have not ensured the effective representation of disadvantaged groups in the panchayats with respect to participation of elected members. Their
responsiveness to villager’s needs and interest and accountability to the local government is a prime concern.

The authors (Narendra kumar and Manoj Rai, 2006) have suggested in order to make constitutional provisions effective in terms of encouraging Dalits and women to participate actively in politics, it is imperative for the government to facilitate them with infrastructure inputs of the State apparatus so that they could be effective. Following measures could be extremely useful in this regard: (1) Not mere politicization but also political socialization; (2) transforming role perception of leaders; (3) imparting functional education and training; (4) celebrating days of importance and initiating positive discourse on social issues; and (5) Lastly, role of civil society initiatives.

In consideration of this background the present study of Dalit women in Gram Panchayat in decision-making in Koppal District in Karnataka assumes greater importance. The present study intended to assess the participation and effectiveness of Dalit women in decision-making process and in order to do this certain set of items relating to the respondents were included in the interview schedule which are as follows: (1) prior to getting elected as GP members participation in public function, political party meeting, Grama Sabha etc. (2) reason for contesting elections, (3) political background of family members, (4) first time entrant into politics, (5) support of the husband, (6) attendance in meetings, (7) frequency of attendance in meetings, (8) proxy representation of women elected representatives and mostly who represent them in the panchayat activities and affairs, (9) devolution of financial powers to GP’s for effective development, (10) misuse of resources by GP’s, (12) intimation of meetings, (13) seating arrangements in the meeting hall, (14) if there is discrimination within panchayat what is your action, whether you object it, if yes how do you object it, (15) participation in discussions and how, (16)
opinion is overlooked while taking decisions, (17) political reservation helps the empowerment, (18) if yes, in what way? (19) support of Dalit male members in the panchayat discussions and (20) how capacity building programmes and your participation, in training helps in understanding the functioning of G.P. system and your role and responsibilities as a member, (23) do you think training is necessary, (24) place of training and (25) lastly the elected Dalit women G.P. members were asked to record their opinion of being satisfied or unsatisfied with their work as a member.

7.4 Dalit Woman and Decision-Making in Panchayat

Panchayat constitutes the most primary and a basic political institution established at the level of village community. It often serve as training ground for those who want to try their luck in politics as well as seek for a career in politics. We have several established politicians in Indian society who have come from the grass-root level politics and made grades in regional and national level politics. A long political career one will have to his or her credit implies starting it at the grass-roots and sustain to reach up to any level in the political hierarchy. Panchayat serves as a political launching pad for those who want seek career in politics with having no one to put him or her at the regional or national level politics, which often is possible only with those who have come from political families. Family plays a significant role in the successful launching of the individual political career. Politically Dalits being the weakest among all, they still need to muster support for getting their political desires attained.

Politics is not everybody’s tea cup. It needs, besides, a kind of aptitude as well as the capacities of both visible and non-visible types. One need to participate in the political affairs, most importantly of a group or community,
provide political inputs for conflict resolution as well for development, and lead
a group, at least for some time, in its establishing as a social activity. An early
and effective participation of one in such situation would amply indicate one’s
political desires and orientations of making a career in politics. Dalit women
being still the most worst sufferer of the prevailing social, economic and
political arrangements, they need to work hard to get their political desires
fulfilled taking all the plausible support they find it to their credits. In order to
ascertain whether the respondents of the present study had any political
inclinations and did participate in some activities through which they could
exhibit it, they were asked to indicate about their participation in Grama Sabhas,
party functions etc., to which about 70 (69.70 %) percent of them indicated in
negative.

It means majority of the respondents have not involved in these activities
prior to their entry in to PRI’s as members of Grama Panchayat. This may,
however, indicate that their entry to the GP is by sheer compulsion created out
of the situation of an opportunity due to reservation which be relatives of these
respondents wanted to capitalize. This is exemplified by the response of the
respondents to the question ‘why did you contest the election for GP
membership? The emphatic reply was because ‘ward is reserved for SC
woman’. About 67.27 percent of the respondents contesting election
successfully were due to reservation of the ward in which their house hold is
situated. Also we have obtained the details from the respondents about
somebody in their family had already been in PRI’s 86(86.06) percent of them
have none in their family to reveal a kind of political background possessed by
them with in family context.

Majority of the respondents are only first time entrants in to politics
while they lack political backgrounds in their family context. It is already noted
that about 78(78.18%) percent of the respondents are the first time entrants in the GP on its elected member.

To become an elected member of Panchayat, though is an herculean task to several open category contestants, it goes largely easier to Dalits and OBC’s on the contest is posed with least challenge unlike the others. Election to GP is a stepping stone to the political career one seeks to have for one self.

With election, one will be a member of GP for five years without any disturbance, unless something goes wrong. As an elected member one has to take active part in the decision-making process which is a vital part of once membership in the GP. As already pointed out, the GP is an agent of the government of India to implement its rural community developed programmes. Decision with regard to implementation of programmes and utilization of funds given to panchayat by the Governments is considered vital as the funds are to be utilized for the purpose for which they are provided. It is often complained that the funds are mis-utilized in connivance with some members, neglecting the opinion of others. Hence participation in decision making is vital on part of all the elected members. In order to ascertained whether the respondents of the percent study attend the meetings, called by the GP President, regularly, 98 (97.58%) percent of them have said being regular in attending the meetings, while the rest(2.42%) were not all that regular in their attending the meetings arranged in their GP’s. Further the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of their attending meetings in month duration. The responses provided indicate that about 82(81.90%) percent of them have attended GP meetings at least once in a month; while about 17(15.63%) percent have attended once in a quarter year.
One of the serious allegations against the elected women members of GP is that they are represented in the local self government by proxy by their husband or son or some other male members in the family.

This is so because women are incapable of taking decisions as the male counterparts expect and also they are still subjugated by men and it is only men who should take decision but not women. This idea and feeling still persists largely in the villages and hence a kind of feeling that prevails in the, general understanding of women members of GP’s.

Since inception of PRI’s, there is serious observation that the women members are proxy represented by the male members of their families in the activities of GP. Many empirical studies have highlighted this fact that male counterparts of women members are proxy representing them in GP activities. The details of the present enquiry, show that 56.36 percent of the respondents indicating only ‘to some extant’ the men members of their family represent them in GP activities, while 22.42 percent say that ‘to a large extent’ they are proxy represented in the Panchayat activities. Very interestingly only 8.48 percent of the respondents have said that proxy representation does not exist in their GP.

Further, our query in to who exactly to represent the women elected members of Panchayat in their respective organization, nearly one quarter (23.21%) of respondents have maintained that it is ‘husband’ while others say it is other say it is other relatives at home and larger kin network implying as to how important and still strong the families and kin relationship in our society. Though it is expected of the elected members of modern political organization to at independently in decision- making processes, unfortunately the domination of Panchayat non–member male counterparts is very much seen. The patriarchy is still not kept out of modern organizations in Indian situation due to the fact
that there is close relationship sustained between polity and family. Often we find the whole capacity that it is possible, and this is more so with the women members of family being in polity.

7.5 Panchayat and Issue of Autonomy:

Grama Panchayat as a local self Government (LSG’s) is supposed to have its political and administrative jurisdiction confined to within the boundary limit of a big village as group of small villages. To carry out its function as a constitutionally established authority it needs autonomy with which planning and executive of developmental activities could be followed with a time frame. Decentralization of power from ‘Delhi’ to ’halli’(village) has been very well brought out to establish some amount of autonomy in the sense in which the term is used .Illiteracy, ignorance, injustice, exploitation, exclusion being the major political problems in villages in India .The devolution of political and economic autonomy is done with certain limitations. The GP’s are given lot of funds for rural development directly by the government of India and matching grant is provided by the regional government, i.e., State Government. Adequate funds flow has stimulated the villages to view the GP, in terms of its resources mobilization and utilization a means to embezzle funds at grass roots which is possible only with autonomy being provided. However, there are restrictions with regard to this. A GP can make planning in terms of its needs, prepare a proposed within the ambit of the programmes and their guidelines issued by the government from time to time .That grant approved and released used to be spent only for the purpose for which it is given.

There is a always a grumbling in political administration that the freedom given for using funds is not as per its designs which always puts them in corner. Hence there is a question of autonomy often raised as a demand. In
the present study in order to realize this issue in the consideration of the Dalit women respondents a question was to each one of them ‘do you think Panchayat need timing to carry out the developmental plans?’ Astonishingly, about 40(39.39) percent of them have expressed saying ‘do not know’ which only speaks of their ignorance of Panchayat functioning and funding. About 30(30.30%) percent of the respondents have answered in positive while 18(17.58) percent of them have answered in negative. Rest of the respondents could not say anything exhibiting their ignorance. Say about half of Dalit women members of Panchayat ‘do not know’ ABC of Panchayat funding etc.

Further to the question-‘do you think Panchayats have sufficient for initiating developmental works in their areas?’ about 37(36.67%) percent have viewed it in positive, while the rest in ‘negative’ or not expressed anything. Further, our enquiry relating to misuse of Panchayat resources for personal use by the members, nearly three-fifths (59.39%) have expressed saying indeed it is a reality as the details in the following table reveal.

**Table 7.1 Respondents by their opinion of Panchayat members misusing of resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misuse of Panchayat resources</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>59.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Details in the Table 7.1 above amply represent the opinion of 60% of the respondents about their agreement that grama panchayats misuse its own resources, as well as follow mis-appropriations of Governments grants, village resources, Panchayat property, while only about 14(13.94%) of
decentralization of political power or otherwise, decentralization of corruption or embezzlement.

7.6 The Panchayat Meetings and Dalit Women Members

Entry into the Grama Panchayat in itself is a matter of great achievement to Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular. Throughout the history of Hindu Society Dalits were kept out of political processes from community level to national level with the policy of protective discrimination, the state has been able to carve space in the political sphere to them through reservation. While entry has been gained successfully, they need to find space to sit with panchayat members from upper castes in the proceedings of the institutions. In order to how are they considered by others for they being involved in the meetings, a question was asked to the respondents as to how do they receive invitation for attending meetings of the Panchayat. The responses indicate that at least the official procedure is not violated in this regard as the details in the following table 7.2 indicate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of. Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By a messenger</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By a written notice</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>94.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By personal communication</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 above reveal the fact as many as 94.55 percent of the respondents get meeting notices in written while 3(3.03%) percent say by personal communication and 2(2.42%) percent respondents say by messengers
The Panchayat having its own office, the Panchayat secretary is the member-secretary of GP’s and as the government official is supposed to carry out the instructions of the Government issued from time with regard to this office's functioning approaches and methods. It is precisely for this reason; most of the members of Panchayat (94.55%) receive meetings notices in black and white. Otherwise, it could have been according to the way decided by a dominant group in panchayat.

Receiving meeting notice is one thing and attending it is another thing. In the sense, attending of meeting is self-decision of the member, yet there are official norms governing the issue. If a member is consequently absent for three or more official meetings, these would be notice served to such member seeking ‘show cause’ for absence. And if tendency continues, then it would attract disqualification. But this normally does not happen as these would be forces of the kind operating to get them attend meeting, sometime some forces of other kind in some Panchayat do operate preventing attendance of some members selectively. This operates in a permutation and combination of factors sponsoring it. However, the responsibility of Panchayat Secretary towards sending of written communication, receiving the members at the meetings and arranging for their seating etc., we may expect everything to proceed democratically as well as bureaucratically.

Attending meetings, by Dalit women representatives along with other caste elected members of Panchayat is matter of great pride and should also highly gratifying as a community they had missed historically.

In orders to ascertain from the respondents as to how do they find seating arrangement in GP’s in the meetings, they were asked to a straight question ‘Do you sit in the meeting hall along developments in the society in India as the details in the following table 7.3 reveal.
Table 7.3 Respondents by their opinion of sitting with others in the GP meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sitting with others in GP meeting</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>58.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table 7.3 we may that nearly three-fifths (58.79%) of Dalit women members of Panchayat having said that they sit along with others in the meetings implying that the Dalits have been accepted for inclusive participation in the meetings of the Panchayat institutions to little greater extent. At least to the extent of working together in local political bodies, the Dalit are allowed to longer extant to sit, work, chat, and decide in Panchayat programmes. The untouchability hallmark of traditional Indian society does not seem to be gaining currency any longer in their working together in political bodies at grass root level. However, little over two –fifths (41.21%) have expressed being made to be sit separately in Panchayat meetings. This could be so for two things- one is they are Dalit, and the others is women. The caste-gender complexion of course, have find a chance on the consideration of the non-Dalits.

Further a question was made asked to the respondents as to be where they sit when they are made to sit separately in the meetings. Of the total 68 about 17 respondents have opined that they hesitate to sit along with the members of other castes, while 57 stating that they squat on the floor at a separate place which is little away in a corner which also do not distribute the movement of others in the meetings. When queried further as to how do they react to the treatment of making them to squat on the floor, about 42 of the 51
respondents have stated having objected to such treatment meted to them in the public institution. Further, such respondents who objected to the kind of mal treatment when asked to indicate as how they do that (protest) that is used what is the approach they followed. Of the total 42 respondents, about 09 gave representation to the authorities to set the things rights, while about 30 protested in the meetings and the rest of (03) discussed about such treatment in the meeting with a request to settle the issue amicably. This amply indicates that for the Dalit women in public organization there is still kind of maltreatment followed which is objected to and conflicted over for resolution.

7.7 Inclusive Participation in Panchayat

Panchayat being a constitutionally established public local political institution provides scope for people from all castes and creeds to enter in formally as elected or State nominated member and participate in all the proceedings of the Panchayat meetings. However, the hangover of traditional power holding and wielding is still perceived being the reality with dominate caste. The age old practice of holding political power has received a high jolt with the reservation of seats and positions in Grama Panchayat. Through this has been accepted by all, yet there is some amount of bickering in accepting Dalits whole heartedly on Panchayat committee. Often there were classes for power sharing between the strong and weak. In order to ascertain whether the Dalits, especially their women in Panchayat also treated better as well as been provided with better scope to act together politically them to provide their opinion (to the question ‘ Do you participate in discussion in the GP meetings).

While on the one hand we find about 40 percent of the respondents are not allowed to sit along with the Panchayat members of other caste and
creed, on the other hand the participation of Dalit women in Panchayat proceedings could be only to meet the technical requirement of some forces operate against their active participate in discussion, a question was asked to each of respondents ‘Do you participate in the discussion in meetings?’ The responses provided are little encouraging as two-thirds (66.06%) have said ‘yes’ as the details in the following table 7.4 indicate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>66.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO not participate</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table 7.4 we may learn that a majority (66.06%) of respondents to participate in the discussion in the GP meetings whenever they were scheduled. This implies that there is a considerable improvement among Dalit women, who are to participate in the discussion in the GP meetings whenever they were scheduled. This implies that there is a considerable improvement among Dalit women, who along with their male counterparts, suffixed intrinsically their participation in public life, new finds scope for doing so in the wake of changes effected to the traditional socio-political hierarchy in Indian society. While the details in above table 5.4 send along with the details in as earlier table 5.5, it becomes more or less clear that largely those who sit along with others in the meetings are the once who participate in discussion, while others are not encouraged to do as they are not allowed to even sit freely in the meetings.

Further, an attempt was made to learn from these respondents (109) who participate in the discussions in meetings as to what are the issues they
priorities and like discussing such issues as and they are brought before the Panchayats.

The details provided indicate that about 63 such respondents prefer to have participated in the discussion on the matters relating to the SC’s/ST’s problems, while only 16 indicated their choice for discussion being the issues of development as the details in the table 7.5 indicate.

**Table 7.5 Respondents by the choice of issues for Discussion in meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice of issues for discussion in Meetings</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in discussion on SC’s/ST’s issues</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in discussions on all sorts of issues</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in discussions about various development works</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, table 7.5 above, we may learn that of all the respondents participating in meetings and taking part in discussion of the issues etc., hardly any number (16; 9.76) of them seem to be concerned about the development works in particular, while 30(18.18%) of them have their interests on all sorts issues that connect to the Panchayat functioning. About 56 have maintained silence as they have been kept out of the process of discussion in the meetings which has basis in the very maltreatment meted out to them by keeping them separately in their respective Panchayat. Panchayat leaders have peculiar way of dealing with the people and programmes and as such they may change their opinions according to changing situations. From the above table it becomes clear that a kind of parochial approach of elected Dalit women members of Panchayat as they are most caste centered the thing they must have imbibed from others.

Further, the respondents were asked to indicate in clear terms whether they remain part of the whole process of decision making or they
are sidelined. To a question ‘Do you feel that your opinion is overlooked while taking decision?’ only little over one fifths (21.12%) of the respondents are overlooked while decision taking is concerned as the details in the following table 7.6. reveal.

Table 7.6 Respondents by their opinion of being overlooked in decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overlooked in decision-making</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often overlooked</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>44.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all overlooked</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not involved in decision-making</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>165</td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details in the above tables 7.6 reveal the opinion of elected representative being overlooked while taking decision in Grama Panchayat. About 44.85 percent of the respondents have given their negative opinion by often their opinions are overlooked implying there is hardly any respect for their opinions expressed by Dalit women members of Panchayat. That means the opinions of the marginalized people in local self-government has hardly any or little impact in the developmental processes.

7.8 Political Reservation for Dalit Women

It has been discussed at length in the earlier chapters about suffering of Dalit in general and Dalit women in particular. Dalit women have been in disadvantaged position comparatively their counter parts from the upper castes. They have been subjected due to their weak position in the society and family. The only way to uplift, strengthen and being them to the main stream is to treat them as category and provide reservation. The governmental legislations this from the respondents they were asked to react to the question ‘do you think political reservation to Dalit women helped them in coming in
to public life?’ The response is overwhelming positive as more than four-fifths of the following table 7.7 reveal.

**Table 7.7 Respondents by their opinion of political reservation to Dalit women:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political reservation to Dalit women</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided public space</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>82.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not provided any benefit</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents in the study area were asked to think how political reservation has helped Dalit women in coming into the public life. But for the reservation the Dalit women would not have accessed to political space as details in table 7.7 show. About 82.42% of the respondents say ‘yes’ while 17.58% respondents negatively. Political reservation is a milestone in ensuring the empowerment of women politically which without the quota system they not have accessed to. There are few of structural interventions that have helped the women to be grass root level.

Further the respondents were asked to specifically indicate in what different way (5) they think the reservation for Dalit women in political institutions have helped them. Because they being the stakeholder in the power institutions, they be knowing as to how and to what extent the benefits would have been derived from them. In order to ascertain the views of the respondents, they were individually asked to indicate.’ What way political reservation has helped Dalit women?’ The responses provided indicate that it has largely benefitted them in their social empowerment as the details in the following table 7.8 indicate.

**Table 7.8 Respondents by their opinion of benefits of Political Reservation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit political reservation</th>
<th>No. of</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It empowers women society</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps them to assert their rights</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has helped</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We may observe from the above table that about two-fifths (40.61%) of the respondents have found political reservation being utilitarian in getting socially empowered. This is so because it facilities them in being socially accepted on various occasion in public places and or otherwise. About 28(27.70%) have expressed their view point’s saying political reservation helped them in assisting their rights, while only 12.12 percent not find much benefits derived by Dalit women from political reservations.

Grass roots political institutions like Pachayats (PRI’s) and other local self–government (LSG’s) have reservation of constitutions for Dalits and OBc’s and there are reservation within for women in these categories if these bodies. Women from these categories contest elections on par with others from these constituencies reserved for them and get elected on the strength of the virtues of a political party by which they are supported, or some interest groups, or their own virtues. What is entreating to consider here is there are men and women representative from each category, including those who do not receive the support of the state, like upper castes and upper class people representing their respective constituencies holding political power together. As already stated they would have been backed by the different sources in their election to those political institutions and hence their loyalty being expected to the source. However, there are several occasions whom these political men and women disowning their allegiances to the sources. Either
openly or clandestinely, such support each other or join hands in getting achieved certain of their own individual or group interests.

As well as know, caste religion or otherwise money etc. serve a basis for such joining hands with other members etching across party lines when certain crucial issues crop up for resolution in the political for as. In order to ascertain in the present study, whether such practice advertantly or inadvertently, is followed among the members of GP’s on caste lines, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they seek for any support from male Dalit members of GP’s for any purpose they need to look for. The details provided to the question ‘Do you get the support of Dalit male members of Panchayat?’ about 72(72.12%) percent of them have responded in positive while the rest (27.88%) in negative. Further, they were asked to indicate as to what are the issues or reasons for which they seek the support of Dalit male members of their respective Panchayat. About 44(44.24%) percent of the respondents have sought the support of Dalit male members of panchayat on the issues pertaining to the SC’s/ST’s within the jurisdiction of Panchayat as the details in the following table 7.9 indicate.

**Table 7.9 Respondents by their opinion of Reason for seeking Dalit male member support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Dalit male members support at GP’s</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They support when SC/ST issues put to vote</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>44.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not support specifically</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They support because and support then</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details in the above table 7.9 amply as to what are the issues on which the support is suggest among Dalit members of Panchayat, especially
women members seeking support of male members. The support provided in an mutual basis for 36 respondents while male members do not do any such things at all. Seeking and providing support of various panchayat issues among Dalits is certainly to facilitate them to remain united and for to reckon with, but importantly this not happen as the same categories of Dalits are used to settle score by other caste people, the Dalits are remain under subjugation of others even in modern political institutions.

7.9 Effective Participation in Panchayat:

The genuine participation of Dalits in panchayat (PRI’s) and other LSG’s is often considered a myth as they are incapacitated due to illiteracy or low education, ignorance, low social states, weak economic position and lack of historical procedure of having held political power. As a constitutional measure and the government efforts through its policies and programmes, the Dalits are supported to come to mainstream of the society the advantage of which has do not reached all the Dalits. Obviously such Dalits need to be provided with proper orientation and adequate training to them to work effectively in any modern institution like the (PRI’s). Hence, it is obligatory exercise on part of the government to arrange for capacity building programmes for the elected members of PRI’s and other legislative bodies. In order to ascertain whether respondents of the present study did participate in any capacity building programme, a question was asked to them ‘Have you participate in any capacity building programme? The responses of the respondents reveal that a majority 93(91.52%) percent of them have attended such programmes, while the rest (8.48) have not undergone any such programme. When the field study was conducted, the respondents were individually meet at their place of residence. they were about to complete 5 years term as members of panchayat, 15 respondents had not attended any
capacity building programme learning anybody to Dalit their knowledge of panchayat in terms of its structural and functional aspects, unless otherwise, they were the members of panchayat in their second or third term.

Further the respondents were asked as to where did they attend such capacity building programme and who did conduct them. The majority 116 of the attended such programmes when conducted in the premises of PRI office either at taluka or District level by governmental agencies. The remaining attended similar such programmes when organized by NGp’s. Such capacity building programmes of varying time duration. While some attended the programmes of crash course nature (11.32%), some other, often attended a programme of two weeks duration (35.15%). Duration of the programme is very important from the point of learning inputs that can be or are to be provided which need to facilitate.

Any capacity building programme arranged for any category of people are indeed to help its attendants in gaining something which they did not know as their functional input. It is from this point of view, the respondents of the present enquiry were asked in specific to express their opinion to the question ‘Does capacity building / training programmes help you to understand the functioning of Grama Panchayat System?’. An overwhelming majority all those who attend the programme, said ‘yes’ to the query. Further, in our discussion it was learnt that the Dalit women representatives are in favour of training as an important component in their empowerment process. Such as programmes helped them in understanding so many details that are of a significance in performing their roles as members of panchayat. Also, they expressed that those programmes helped them in learning about the whole socio-geo-political situation is which the PRI’s are obtained the knowledge which is essential for understanding the totality of the system. As viewed earlier, the capacity
building on human resource development exercise, have to certainly help people in accomplishing their tasks in their respective roles in modern organizations. Because of this there is a greater emphasis on conduct of such programmes repeatedly to help update people to keep abreast of latest developments and changes in objectives, targets, approaches and methodologies and here the requirement of holding HRD programmes. In the present enquiry an attempt was further made with the Dalit elected panchayat women members in the study area as to how to the capacity building programmes help them learn about the PRI’s while the responses provided by 165 Dalit women in grass root political institutions imply several things but most importantly in understanding the functions of PRI’s and the duties of members of the GP as the details in the following table 7.10 reveal.

**Table 7.10 Respondents by their opinion of how capacity building programmes help**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It help to understand PRI system better</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It help to understand the functions and duties of GP member</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>53.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps to perform our duties</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps to understand the schemes of GP</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details in the above table 7.10 amply indicate the different viewpoints the Dalit grass root 16.98% of the respondent say it helped to understand PRI system better. About 10.38% say that it helps to perform duties as member’s better, while rest (6.68%) have indicated that it helps to understand the schemes of GP.
Training in the functioning and working of PRI system is quite necessary for the political novices like Dalit women members of panchayat. Training and workshops have been organized by the government in one of the most reputed training institute in rural development i.e., this state Nazeer Sab Institute of Rural Development, Mysore, to the elected members of PRI’s. In order to ascertain from Dalit women elected representatives a question was asked ‘Do you think training is necessary’, as expected from the political novices majority 99(98.79) of the respondents remarked that training is necessary by indicating “yes”, while only 2(1.21%) of the respondents in negative. The responses provided indicate that training is necessary for Dalit women elected representatives as they are new entrants of Panchayat and political novices to understand the functions and responsibilities of Grama Panchayat as details in the following table 7.11 indicate.

Table 7.11 Respondents by training is necessary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>98.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details in the above table 7.11... amply indicate that majority 99(98.79%) of the respondents say ‘yes’ while (1.21%) of them in negative. root means training is necessary for understanding the functioning of local self–government (LSG’s) and its functions and responsibilities.