

Study of Political Empowerment of Women in Cooch Behar District of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is the trend of the 1990s and has become the most common growth phenomena, especially with regard to women Empowerment is a crucial response to many social problems, such as high population development, environmental degradation, etc. It is defined as "giving power to "creating power within" and "enabling", which is a multi-dimensional process that enables individuals and groups in all spheres of life to become aware of their full identity and power. Women are an essential part of every economy. All round advancement and harmonious growth of a nation can be achieved only when women are considered as equal partners in progress with men. In its essence, it is multidimensional and encompasses economic, political, legal, social / cultural, personal and family aspects. Of all these aspects of women development, economic empowerment is of utmost importance to uphold development of a society. This paper reflects Political Empowerment of Women in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal.

1. Introduction

Empowerment of women is a socio-political ideal, encompassing notions of dignity and equality, envisioned in relation to the wider framework of women's rights. It is a process of gaining control over self, over resources and over existing societal perceptions and attitudes and would be achieved only when an improvement in the 'condition' of women is accompanied by an advancement in their 'position' by enlarging the economic, social and political freedoms and choices available to them.

Women's empowerment especially refers to the collective action by the deprived and oppressed women to overcome the obstacles of structural inequality, which previously caused their disadvantaged position. It is a continuous, multidimensional mechanism through which women can understand their ability and overcome obstacles. On the empowerment of women, emphasis is sometimes placed on women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, their legal rights to equal treatment, their right to inheritance and protection from all forms of discrimination. The idea of empowerment is therefore conceived as an aid to help women contribute equally with men and significantly reduce the gender gap. Empowerment would enable women to perform certain social roles, which they could not perform without it.

2. Objective of study:

Objective of this paper is to study, Political Empowerment of Women in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal.

3. Review of literature:

Vani S. Kulkarni (2011). While there is a shared understanding and general consensus on the roles of microfinance institutions (MFIs), there has been much debate about their potential for empowering women. This paper focuses on this debate's essence. Research have shown both the potential of MFIs and the obstacles they present for the

empowerment of women. In this context, various factors - economic, organizational, political and cultural - have been emphasized. Although considering all of these causes, the present study supports a more comprehensive and complex examination of culture for a deeper understanding of the relations between MFIs and empowerment of women, and proposes fields of inquiry for informed policymaking.

Lakminarayanan Rammathan (2011), in the study on "Socio economic Impact of SHG -Bank Linkage on member: An Analysis "indicates that in promptness and quality of reimbursement women as a group were consistently better. Targeting women in these main stream services was a very successful way of ensuring that the benefits of increased earnings contribute to the family's overall well-being, and particularly to the children. Simultaneously, women themselves profit from the higher status they achieve when they can gain new income. The members reported a positive influence on confidence level in dealing with people and institution, an increase in awareness of health and hygiene, a generally positive attitude form their spouses and a larger avenger average share in the family income. Thus SHGs -Bank linkages are a benchmark in women's empowerment and socioeconomic development of women at the village level.

Sara Noreen (2011). Throughout developing countries, empowerment of women is one of the most important issues. Although women are an important part of society, they have very low status and involvement in both decision-making and economic activities. Through adding to economic activities, microfinance plays a role in strengthening women's decision-making. In this report, an attempt is made to examine women's empowerment socio-economic determinants in which microfinance is key political determinant. This research used regression analysis focused on Bahawalpur City's primary data to test the relationship on women empowerment of various socio-economic determinants. Women empowerment calculated by developing a simple index utilizing five metrics linked to child health, employment, children's spouse choice,

basic goods purchasing, and loan usage decision. The findings show that women were significantly influenced by gender, husband employment, father inherited wealth, marital status, number of living daughters, and microfinance. In this sample, gender, husband employment, no living children, and inherited parent wealth are more statistically significant variables. In fact, this study uses loan to decompose information for male and female, which means that females using loan on their own has some better results than male family members using loans. Ultimately, it is concluded that in this analysis, as microfinance is a significant explanatory factor, it plays a positive role in empowerment, but not as much as anticipated. It is suggested that education facilities and family protection must be provided in proper way. Microfinance institutions should strengthen and expand their support to resource poor women.

Dr. Sangeeta Arora, Reader, Ms Meenustates (2011).

Claim that women have always been marginalized and discriminated against in all spheres of life in a male-dominated society, whether in their family and social life or in their economic and political life. In contrast, household management's conventional responsibilities create obstacles to their social and economic independence. Over the years, several governmental and non-governmental organizations have made various efforts to promote empowerment of women, particularly in rural areas. Another such initiative is the involvement of microfinance. Most major institutions in the public and private sectors provide programs designed exclusively for women to set up their own enterprises. Even the unorganized sector is moving into the trend for microfinance. This paper is an effort to research the role of microfinance in fostering women's empowerment in rural India. An observational study was conducted in Punjab State. The aim is to examine women's clients' use of micro-financial services and to reach their level of satisfaction with these services.

This paper tried to understand the role of microfinance in women's socio-economic empowerment in the Punjab district of Jalandhar. There is no question that microfinance has made a significant contribution to empowering women for their family development in terms of securing credit for their children's housing improvements, schooling and marriage, as well as for consumption purposes. The study revealed good saving practices among women as the highest number of respondents saved bank accounts (46.9%) and post office savings (18.4%) but there are still so many obstacles in the way of women's financial inclusion, such as the banks' lack of awareness of micro-financing facilities as 80.7% of respondents did not know of the banks opening of zero minimum balance saving bank account. The frustration with various service practices undertaken by banks such as equity conditions, cumbersome bureaucratic formalities, loan use tests and challenging terms of repayment is also one of the main reasons why a significant proportion of rural people choose informal sources of finance (74.1% of respondents use credit) rather than formal ones. They find an ease in getting finance from their personal contacts. There is a need to improve this mentality. The banks should implement several constructive approaches aimed primarily at raising awareness of the micro-financing services available with the banks and promoting the use of these services.

More surprisingly, given the prevalent SHG-Bank correlation system, the study found that the respondents made

rather marginal use of the SHGs products (2.1% for savings). To maintain them involved in the microfinance movement, these SHGs need to be monitored and supervised. In addition, the banks should provide more products under the umbrella of microfinance as per women's requirements. Some attitudinal adjustments are also required to break the age-old taboo of gender discrimination on the part of financial providers. Women should be motivated to do business by supplying them with proper guidance and improving their business skills. Women's empowerment is largely dependent on women's economic empowerment, and microfinance will prove to be a very powerful tool for empowering women in the coming days.

Kanti Das Sanjay (2012). Self-help groups (SHGs) have arisen in recent years as a common way of working with individuals. Because SHG-based micro-finance initiatives serve a large number of women, these programs are anticipated to play an important role in empowering women. To order to help poor women access resources such as loans and other facilities, self-help groups (SHGs) have arisen. Microfinance and SHGs are effective in reducing inequality, empowering women, raising awareness and ensuring environmental sustainability which ultimately leads to the nation's sustainable development. To avert such a scenario, performance development has become today's primary priority among various stakeholders, as there is a growing concern about the SHG movement's sustainability in India. Self-help organizations have been influential in empowering women by facilitating collaborative agency work together. This paper aims to compare the quality and efficiency of SHGs and the effect of SHGs on female members in the Barak Valley of Assam (districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi). It is observed that the performance of SHG has been under pressure due to the rapid growth of the SHG-bank linkage system in the region. Some of the factors affecting the quality of SHGs are the government's target-oriented approach to team planning, insufficient opportunities for NGO's to cultivate their teams, etc. However, the effect on decision-making ranks is identified from Table 17, accompanied first by economic motivation and then mental dimensions. Building confidence ranks fourth, whereas Social motivation ranks fifth etc.

The quality of groups is quite low in Barak Valley in comparison to other regions or States. Strict random selection of sample could be one of the reasons. It is observed that the quality of SHG has been under strain due to the rapid development of the country's SHG-bank integration programme. Some of the factors that affect the value of SHGs are (i) the target oriented approach of the government preparing group, (ii) inadequate incentive to NGO's for nurturing their groups, (iii) lack of proper monitoring, (iv) absence of quality enhancement mechanism etc. Furthermore, it is found that SHGs have a positive effect on female members and it is shown in many instances that SHG encourages equality in the districts of the report. It is found that SHGs have a positive effect on the trend of decision-making which ranks first accompanied by economic empowerment and then mental facets. Building confidence ranks fourth, whereas Social motivation ranks fifth etc. In Barak Valley, the SHGs primarily concentrate on women and economically backward classes. The size of the groups ranges between 10 and 15.

Most of the members are the poorest of the poor, mainly landless agricultural laborers. Uniform socio-economic status

and living together in the same rural community are observed to be the homogeneous factors among groups. The main reason for establishing the SHGs in the study area is to get financial support from states, NGOs and banks to enhance members' economic status. The performance of majority of the SHGs in all the three districts was "Poor". Only a few of them are "Good". These "Grade A" or "Grade B" SHGs should serve as model groups to other SHGs which are low on performance and should interact with these SHGs to share their constraints. Incidents such as delays in repayment, loans to foreigners, increased indebtedness and lack of vision can lead to greater problems in the future. Thus, with a timely analysis of the problem and action can be taken to monitor these kinds of irregularities. The major discipline observed by the SHGs in state is regularity in meetings (at least once in a month), attendance in the meetings (at least 60%) and savings (Regular).

It has been observed that in the initial period members of the Banks/ NGOs/MFIs etc. attended all the meetings and year after year they gradually reduced their participation to create the autonomy of the group. The repayment performance of loan is more than 65 per cent. In case of delay in payment of dues by any member, the causes for such default are discussed in meetings and if necessary, the postponing of the installments was allowed, in some special case. It is also observed that, in a majority of the SHGs the members take more than 50 per cent of the decision on a financial transaction after consulting the promoters only. The monthly savings per member during the early stages of the group's formation ranged from Rs.100 to 500, which increased year after year.

The members of the SHGs availed themselves of loan for both production and consumption purposes. During the early years of the groups' formation, a majority of members availed themselves of loan for consumption purposes whereas in the later period of the groups' functioning, the major amount of loan was disbursed for production purposes. It is observed that the SHGs' main problems are delays in sanctioning loans by government authorities and bank officials. In addition, the SHGs are addressing promotional challenges, basic infrastructure, training and skills development opportunities, lack of administrative experience in group management. The Self Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage Programme, in the past eighteen years, has become a well-known tool for bankers, developmental agencies and even for corporate houses. In many cases, SHGs have moved beyond the means of providing financial services as a medium and have become a focal point in providing different services to the poor. The programme, over a period, has become the common vehicle in the development process, converging important development programmes.

Narang Dr. Uma (2012). This notes that the Self Help Group theory has its origins in rural areas and that rural and semi-urban women have been mooted to change their living conditions. Although it applies to men in our community, but only among women it has been more effective and they can begin economic activity through the movement of SHG. In India, this system is being introduced as a main nodal agency in rural development with the assistance of NABARD. To rural women in particular, who don't have their own resources, it's self-employment generation scheme.

Giving power is the term 'empowerment'. Power means

possessing the ability and means to steer one's life to desirable personal, political and economic aims or position, according to the International Encyclopedia (1999). Empowerment gives greater access to knowledge and tools, greater decision-making flexibility, greater ability to plan life, greater control of life-influencing situations, and independence from traditions, beliefs and practices. For example, empowering women is not only a priority in itself, but a gateway to all global development priorities. Empowerment is an ongoing multidimensional process empowering woman in all spheres of life to understand their role and strength. This paper explores the empowerment of women by SHGs and also discusses the present position of empowerment of women in India.

SHGs are described as a way of alleviating poverty and empowering women. And in all spheres of life, women empowerment strives to understand their roles, strength and ability. But real empowerment is only achievable if a woman has increased access to economic resources, increased confidence and self-motivation, increased strength, increased respect and influence in family matters, and increased engagement by participation. Although it is a gradual and continuous process, women will improve their mentality to be willing to make incremental sacrifices towards their overall development. SHGs can have an effect on empowerment of women. The concept of the Self Help Group was mooted alongside rural and semi-urban women in order to improve their living conditions. Although the concept of SHG still applies to men in our culture, only among women it has been more prominent. Reducing poverty by allowing the poor household to reach gainful self-employment and professional wage employment opportunities, contributing to significant improvement in their welfare on a permanent basis, through building strong grassroots institutions of the poor (SHGs) is now the primary motive of most employment schemes. SHGs showed the way forward to reduce India's suffering along with women's empowerment.

Borah Ajit(2014). Says that self-help is a tiny, economically homogenous and desirable community of 10-20 rural poor who come together to frequently save small amounts. With their small savings, this usually carries out various types of economic activities. Women Self-help organizations are an unofficial women's organization. Such an association's primary purpose is to allow participants to achieve economic benefits through mutual assistance, cooperation, and social responsibility. The economic advantage typically includes deposits and credit services mobilization and the promotion of group-based economic activities. SHG strategy is the group-based approach which lets poor female participants of each SHG raise assets by small savings and helps them get credit facilities from their investments. Today, society's poor women face the financial problem of beginning business or performing various economic activities in order to become self-employed and self-reliant. Through supplying services such as savings and credit in the society's economic development system, the SHG will encourage poor women.

From the study through primary sources it was clear that the women SHGs in both rural and urban areas are very active in providing income generating activities in Barhampur Development Block in Nagaon District. It can be clear that of the women SHGs are more vital in eradication of poverty for

the BPL family. The sample beneficiaries, are gaining employment by adopting own personal skills and home based activities. The micro-finance system is playing a significant role in empowering women through SHGs by the sources of NABARD. The overall analysis of this variable establishes that women empowerment of the block was above average and the hypothesis set that the rural credit helps members of women SHGs to start new business. It is found that majority of women SHGs have taken loan for various economic activities, such as, Cattie framing, poultry framing, fishery, textiles and handloom works, Weaving and embroidery, food processing, agriculture etc. The women SHGs of Barhampur Block are providing rural credit to women members of the SHGs. Therefore, hypothesis is accepted. It would be fruitful to accelerate the development process of the Block at a faster the rate, if mindset of the people is changed. In this era of liberalization, privatization and globalization, women are more conscious for their liberty, rights and freedom, security, social status etc, but till date they are deprived from same; hence, they should be provided with their deserving rights and liberties with dignity. We can conclude that women are part and parcel of our society so, it is essential to empower them.

Dr. Jyothi Kalyanrao Heggani and Dr. Sindhe Jaganath R(2014). states that For the socio-economic empowerment of women, self-help groups are created. Many of the reports have already been done on various aspects relevant to women empowerment and self-help groups, and this has been discovered in the present study by analyzing the literature. Analyzing the participation of women in income-generating activities by engagement in self-help groups is important.

It is clear that many of the research papers were already published on basic concepts of Women Empowerment and Self-Help Groups. Even the case studies were highlighted the problems and prospects of women empowerment. Further, it is noted that a few of the papers have also thrown light on significance of Bank Linkages to

Self-Help Groups. But, it is noted that, none of the studies were highlighted women entrepreneurship or women members of Self-Help Groups who are engaged in income generating activities. Hence, in this regard, it is essential to conduct necessary research.

4. Research methodology and analysis:

For the present study, survey was conducted among 320 sample respondents comprising 210 women politicians of scheduled casts & Muslim communities and 110 common women citizens of above-mentioned two communities. Among the 210 women politicians 110 have been taken from S/C communities in Tufanganj-I Block, 20 from Muslim community of the same block, another 80 was taken from Haldibari block and the distribution was from S/C 66 and from Muslim 14. 110 common women citizens were taken both from the selected blocks of Tufanganj-1 and Haldibari, belonging to S/C and Muslim community. In Tafanganj-1, 47 respondents were taken from S/C community and 13 from Muslim, comprised a total number of 60 common women citizens in the Block. In Haldibari, the distribution of common women citizens was 36 from S/C and remaining 14 from Muslim, constituting a total number of 50 respondents.

Table: - 1.1: Area-wise distribution of the Respondents (Women Politicians and Common Women Citizens)

Age	TUFANGANJ-1				HALDIBARI			
	WOMEN POLITICIANS		COMMON WOMEN CITIZENS		WOMEN POLITICIANS		COMMON WOMEN CITIZENS	
	Schedule Castes	Muslim	Schedule Castes	Muslim	Schedule Castes	Muslim	Schedule Castes	Muslim
18-25 yrs.	02 (1.81%)	01 (5%)	02 (4.25%)	01 (7.69%)	---	---	03 (8.33%)	02 (14.28)
26-35 yrs.	44 (40%)	09 (45%)	19 (40.42%)	06 (46.15%)	30 (45.45%)	03 (21.42%)	14 (38.88%)	05 (35.71 %)
36-45 yrs.	47 (42.72%)	09 (45%)	20 (42.55%)	06 (46.15%)	23 (34.84%)	07 (50%)	15 (41.66%)	05 (35.71%)
46-55 yrs.	15 (13.63%)	01 (5%)	06 (12.76%)	----	12 (18.18%)	03 (21.42%)	03 (8.33%)	02 (14.28%)
56-65 yrs.	02 (1.81 %)	-----	-----	----	01(1.51%)	----	01(2.77%)	----
66-Above	-----	-----	-----	----	-----	01 (7.14%)	----	----
Total	110 (100%)	20 (100%)	47 {100%	13 (100%)	66 (100%)	14 (100%)	36 (100%)	14 (100%)

(Figures in Parentheses reflect the percentage)

Table 1.1 shows the age-wise distribution of the women politicians and the common women citizens who were interviewed. As the age is concerned, the findings reflects that a considerable percentage of women politicians and common women citizens are concentrated mainly in the lower and middle age grouping both the SIC and Muslim communities, for both the blocks. In Tufanganj-1 40 percent (44) SC women politicians belong to the age group range from 26 years to 35 years, 42.47 percent (47) of theme is concentrated in the age group below 45 years. In Haldibari, 45.45 percent (30) SIC women politician belong to the age group below 35 years,

whereas 34.84 percent (23) belong to the age group below 45 years.

In Tufanganj-1, 40.42 percent (19) common SIC women citizens are belong in the age group below 35 years, and 42.55 percent (20) belong to below the age group of 45 years. In Haldibari, 38.88 percent (14) SIC common women citizens are in the category of below 35 years age, and 41.66 percent (15) of them belong to the age group upto 45 years. The picture of age group in Muslim community remain almost same. In Tufanganj-1 45 percent (09) of women politicians and 46.15 percent (06) of common women citizens concentrated in the

age group between 26 to 35 years, and again 45 percent (09) of women politicians and 46.15 percent (06) common Muslim women belong to the age group below 45 years. In Haldibari, comparatively a less 21.42 percent (03) of women politicians and 35.71 percent (05) common women citizens belong to the age group of below 35 years. Whereas, 50 percent (7) of women politicians and 35.71 percent (5) of common women citizens are concentrated in the age group below 45 years. However, in Tufanganj-I 13.63 percent (15) SIC women politicians, 12.76 percent (6) common SIC women citizens and in Haldibari 18.18 percent (12), SiC women politicians 8.33 percent (3) common SIC women citizens belong to the upper age limit, that is ranging from 46-55 years. In Tufanganj -1 only

5 percent (1) Muslim women politicians, in Haldibari, 21.42 percent (3) Muslim women politicians and 14.28 percent (2) common Muslim women citizens belong to the age group between 46-55 years. In Haldibari too, 14.28 percent (2) common Muslim women belong to the group between 18 to 25 years. In this block, and Tufanganj-I block, the percentage belong to 18-25 age group of both S/C and Muslim women politicians or common women citizens is either very narrow or Zero. Taken together, the age-wise distribution shows a concentration of the women politicians and common women citizens of both S/C and Muslim community in the district in the lower and middle age group.

Table : 1.2 : Distribution of Caste and Religion of the Sample Respondents

TUFANGANJ-1				HALDIBARI			
WOMEN POLITICIANS		COMMON WOMEN CITIZENS		WOMEN POLITICIANS		COMMON WOMEN CITIZENS	
Schedule Castes	Muslim	Schedule Castes	Muslim	Schedule Castes	Muslim	Schedule Castes	Muslim
HINDUS	ISLAM	HINDUS	ISLAM	HINDUS	ISLAM	HINDUS	ISLAM
110 (84.61 %)	20(15.38%)	47 (78.33%)	13 (21.66%)	66 (82.5%)	14 {17.5%}	36 (72 %)	14 (28%)

(Figures in parentheses represent the percentage)

Table 1.2 shows caste and religion wise distribution of the sample respondents of two selected blocks. In Tufanganj-1 Block 84.61 percent women politicians belong to scheduled castes and the Hindu religion, only 15.38 percent of them belong to Muslim community in Tufanganj-1 Block. In Haldibari Block, 82.5 percent women politicians belong to scheduled castes with Hindu Religion and 17.5 percent belongs to Muslim with faith in Islam. In this block, 72 percent common women citizens belong to scheduled castes and 28 percent covers to Muslim category.

Caste and religion-wise distribution shows that in Tufanganj-1 the percentage of scheduled caste and Hindu women politicians and common women citizens are higher than those of Haldibari. In regard to Muslim women politicians and common women citizens, Haldibari scores more percentage than those of Tufanganj-1. It reveals that, in the district, scheduled castes and Hindu women's participation in local Self-government institutions is higher than the Muslim women. However, the Muslim women's rank is second in this regard in the district.

Table 1.3 : Income-wise distribution of the Respondents

Sl. No.	LEVEL OF INCOME (IN RS.)	TUFANGANJ-1				HALDIBARI			
		WOMEN POLITICIANS		COMMON WOMEN CITIZENS		WOMEN POLITICIANS		COMMON WOMEN CITIZENS	
		Sch. Castes	Muslims	Sch. Castes	Muslims	Sch. Castes	Muslims	Sch. Castes	Muslims
01	Upto 10,000	47 (42.72%)	08 (40%)	27 (57.44%)	04 (30.76%)	15 (22.72%)	04 (28.57%)	05 (13.88%)	01 (7.14%)
02	10,001-25,000	37 (33.63%)	08 (40%)	15 (31.91%)	03 (23.07%)	18 (27.27%)	04 (28.57%)	14 (38.88%)	06 (42.85%)
03	25,001-40,000	08 (7.27%)	02 (10%)	----	-----	06 (9.09%)	----	09 (25%)	02 (14.28%)
04	40,001-55,000	01 (0.90%)	-----	-----	-----	04 (6.06%)	02 (14.28%)	01 (2.77%)	01 (7.14%)
05	55,000-70,000	06 (5.45%)	----	02 (4.25%)	02 (15.38%)	09 (13.63%)	01 (7.14%)	01 (2.77%)	01 (7.14%)
06	70,001-85,000	04 (3.63%)	----	02 (4.25%)	03 (23.07%)	07 (10.60%)	-----	04 (11.11%)	02 (14.28%)
07	85,001-1,00,000	02 (0.81%)	01 (5%)	----	----	03 (4.54%)	02 (14.28%)	----	----
08	1,00,001-1,15,000	03 (2.72%)	----	01 (2.12%)	----	01 (1.51%)	-----	----	----
09	1,15,001-1,30,000	02 (1.81 %)	01 (5%)	----	----	03 (4.54%)	01 (7.14%)	01 (2.77%)	01 (7.14%)
10	1,30,001-1,45,000	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

11	1,45001-1,60,000	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
12	1,60,001-1,75,000	----	----	----	01 (7.69%)	----	----	01 (2.77%)	----
	TOTAL	110 (100%)	20 (100%)	47 (100%)	13 (100%)	66 (100%)	14 (100%)	36 (100%)	14 (99.97%)

It appears from the Table 1.3 that most of the women politicians of SIC and Muslim category in both the blocks come from the lower income groups. In Tufanganj-1 47 (42.72%) SIC women politicians come from income group of upto Rs. 10,00 per year, 37 (33.63%) of them come from income group ranging from Rs. 10,001 to 25,000 per annum. In Haldibari, the picture of SIC women politicians in regard to income is comparatively better than Tufanganj-1. In this block, 15 (22.72%) SIC women politicians come from income group upto Rs. 10,001- per year, 18 (27.27%) SIC women politicians belong to annual group ranging from Rs. 10,001 to 25,000. In Tufanganj-1 7.27 percent SIC women politicians come from the income group ranging upto Rs. 40,001- per year, 0.09 percent upto 55,000, 5.45 percent upto Rs. 70,000, 3.63 percent upto Rs. 85,000, only 1.81 percent upto Rs. 1,00,000, 2.72 percent upto Rs. 1,15,000, and only 1.18 percent come from the income group ranging upto Rs. 1,30,000 per year. In Haldibari, 9.09 percent SIC women politicians come from the income group upto Rs. 40,000, 6.06 percent upto Rs. 70,000, 10.60 percent upto Rs.85,000, 4.54 percent upto Rs. 1,00,000, 1.51 percent upto Rs. 1,15,000 and 4.54 percent come from the income group ranging upto Rs. 1,30,000 annually.

It appears from the above that through the women politicians and common women citizens of S/C and Muslim community of Haldibari block have come from a slight better income group, still it is true that in both blocks majority of the women politicians and common women citizens have come from the lower income groups.

Thus, it can be said that in the district of Cooch Behar, majority of the Women Panchayat Members and common women citizens have come from lower economic background.

Only a few percentages of them come from middle and upper-income group. Thus, participation in the decentralized governance system by the women of weaker sections and Muslims of poor economic background has been increased in this district.

Thus, the position of women in all spheres of life in our society has been changed a little bit Through the major decisions in family affairs including decisions on women's participation in political affairs, is skill guided by the senior male members in our society. Women of weaker sections and Muslim in Cooch Behar district are of very poor Socio-economic background. In spite of overall changes in the country's socio-economic structure, the socio-economic structure of the families in rural areas of this district remain in such a condition where women are very much under the guidance and control of their male counterparts, particularly in SIC and Muslim families of the district.

5. Conclusion:

In the district of Cooch Behar, majority of the Women Panchayat Members and common women citizens have come from lower economic background. Only a few percentages of them come from middle and upper-income group. Thus, participation in the decentralized governance system by the women of weaker sections and Muslims of poor economic background has been increased in this district. Position of women in all spheres of life in our society has been changed a little bit through the major decisions in family affairs including decisions on women's participation in political affairs.

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