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## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/11594

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/11594>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### MARGINALIZED WOMEN IN GRAMA PANCHAYAT GOVERNANCE (AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN PRAKASAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH)

K. Prabhudas<sup>1</sup> and K. Sreelakshamma<sup>2</sup>

1. Department of Political Science, KRK Govt. Degree College, Addanki, Andhra Pradesh, India.
2. Department of Political Science, Hindu College, Guntur.

#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 30 June 2020

Final Accepted: 31 July 2020

Published: August 2020

##### Key words:-

Grama Panchayat, Marginalized  
Women, Rural Governance,  
Participation

#### Abstract

An attempt is made to understand in a comparative perspective, the various dynamics involved in the functioning of marginalized women in panchayat raj in the context of reservations provided to these categories under 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. The reservation has been initiated in the country in the back-drop of illiteracy, male dominance, and caste predominance, deep-rooted cultural beliefs and values. The scholars in different studies pointed out that the reservation for marginalized women has not been made remarkable in roads in realizing the democratization of village governance. A large number of under-privileged women have been got elected to all tiers of PRI's through reservation. However, the quality of participation of women members in these PRI's is not satisfactory. Actually, how far they are effective in decision making are a pertinent question and how far the Schedule caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) women participate in the PRI's. The Study explored the role of reservation, awareness of Grama Panchayat, powers and functions and decision making with regard to the functions of S.C and S.T marginalized women panchayat members at grass roots grama panchayat governance. It also indicates pertinent observations regarding the limited and restricted political space given marginalized elected women in Grama panchayat politics. The present study is undertaken in the developed and under-developed mandals of (prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh in India) elected women of disadvantaged groups from political local body of Grama Panchayat. Besides, it also suggests suitable measures towards policy formulation for ensuring effective participation of marginalized women.

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#### Introduction:-

SC and ST women constitute a lower segment in Indian society. The women are treated as a separate category and these are faced different problems as compared to other women in our society. The constitutional provisions of reservation for marginalized women in Panchayat Raj Institutions have given paradoxical results leading to structural implications. The presence of these deprived groups in the Panchayat system was resisted by traditionally dominates caste groups in the rural local bodies. The marginalized women are generally under poverty, agriculture laborers, economically poor, low education and social background, less influence on political power.

**Corresponding Author:- K. Prabhudas**

Address:- Department of Political Science, KRK Govt. Degree College, Addanki, AP, India.

The position of disadvantaged women in rural public sphere role has always been very low. They have been inaccessible to the power structure for several centuries. These marginalized groups through PRI's have been being encountered by traditional, conservative and feudal authority. The political authority gained by these groups is challenged by caste, gender and patriarchy. 73 years of Independence, the power structure at the village level remains oppressive for disadvantage group. Despite these hurdles the new leadership has emerged from among elected SCs, STs and other women representatives.

The Constitutional 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act of 1992 has brought radical changes in the rural power structure. There were few women in the PRI's before the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. This Act has enabled political space for women and deprived sections of our society in the grass root level governance.

The reservation has been initiated in the country in the backdrop of illiteracy, male dominance, and caste predominance, deep rooted cultural beliefs and values. The scholars in different studies pointed that the reservation for marginalized women has not been made remarkable in roads in realizing the democratization of village governance. Under-privileged women have been got elected in large number to all tier PRI's through reservation. However, the quality of participation of women members in these PRI's is not satisfactory. Actually, how far they are effective in decision making is a pertinent question and how far the least privileged SC and ST women get political justice. It also tries to explore the fundamental challenges being faced by the Marginalized women in grass root level Gram Panchayat politics. It analyzes the process of the political participation of the women in the light of 50 percentage reservation in the village local bodies for women in Andhra Pradesh. The study pointed out the emerging trends of leadership among marginalized groups, hitherto which were excluded socially and culturally and the factors that are encountered by them in exercising their constitutional authority as members of Grama Panchayat. The study is focused on the problems being faced by SC, ST woman sarpanches and members of Grama Panchayat in performing their roles and duties. The work is also eliciting suggestions from them as to what sort of support system is required for their effective functioning.

The most significant Act of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment (1992) aimed at bringing the marginalized groups into the mainstream political process through local body institutions. According to Article 243D of the Constitution the Schedule Castes (SCs) Schedule Tribes (STs) are provided reservation in Panchayat in proportion to their population in that area. Similarly, one- third of seats are reserved for women belonged to SC/ST community. As a result, nearly six lakhs of Schedule Castes /Tribes were elected to different levels of PRI's in the country. But questions were raised regarding their active involvement and competence in the rural local governance. Will these under-privileged women be able to exercise their role is highlighted in this article. SC/ST women leaders usually in these institutions are less competent in comparison to those who are from general category. These are reserved categories leaders have been limitations in exercising their powers in Grama panchayat politics. It indicates that participation of SC/ST members based on their expression of views is not up to the desirable.

### **Review of Literature:-**

Dalit women representatives are engaged daily wage labour work and they hardly get time to involve panchayat work. Poor economic conditions are also influence them heed to the dominate caste rural elites instead becoming political force. And their opinions are not at all considered or given least importance by giving reasons like illiteracy and lack of experience. (Dinesha, P.T. 2014) (1) The women leaders are drawn from either middle class or from poor segment of society. Their level of education ranges between primary to secondary and only a few have crossed their schooling. Women have come to power simply because of the space created by the act through the reservation. (Palanithurai, 2001) (2) The reservation has led only to formal and not real empowerment of women in the panchayats. The participation of women in meetings is not satisfactory even get cooperation from their family members. Participation of the women in preparing budget and plan was also not to the desired extent. (Surat Singh 2006) (3) Due to the ignorance of women, there was higher frequency of no-confidence motions against women sarpanches. Women chairpersons acted through their husbands or sons, who often accompanied them to the meetings (RP Joshi, and GS Narwani, 2002) (4)

With the introduction of statutory panchayat institutions and participation of women in the democratic process, the political scenario has undergone certain perceptible changes. Women have been elected local body as political representatives, but their influence in the public domain is yet to be felt. They play a marginal role, even though they might occupy powerful positions in the political structure. (Sonali Mukherjee 2014) (5) Women members from Schedule Caste suffer a double discrimination as women and Schedule castes. The male representatives did not even

allow them to speak in the meetings. In the same way, wherever there are educated, knowledgeable women members, there is no co-operation. Panchayat are somewhat lacking legitimacy because it excluded some groups from participating in the functioning of the panchayats. (N. Sivanna, 2014) (6)

In a highly ranked society, women belonging to the lower castes have lesser access to public sphere, which is compounded by their gender. This omission makes it difficult for these women to represent and coherent the voices of their constituencies and their demands are often ignored or subsumed by the dominant sections of the society. (Ramesh Maruthi Adin and Mohan S. Singhe, 2014) (7)

The upper caste vice –presidents invariably refused to cooperate with the Dalit presidents. In many places they were not even permitted to occupy the chair meant for them in the panchayat office (S. Viswanathan, 2008) (8) The sarpanches have been holding the meetings of Grama Sabha and Grama panchayat without much aware about the powers and functions in general. It was found that illiteracy and lack of awareness about the powers and functions. As there was no regular income for them their participation in the Panchayats work was greatly hampered.

### **Significance of the Study:-**

Since Indian rural society is characterized by caste hierarchy and patriarchies, equity and equality are the desired goals to achieve, which is highly challenging in the rural power structure. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in socio-economic, political field and emerging as a major challenge to the progress of Indian society.

There is necessity to record of the perception and outlook of rural elites and recently emerged economically powerful castes towards the decentralization of power and the inclusion of socially disadvantage sections like Schedule Castes (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) women. The success of rural democracy is depended upon the extent of deprived sections greater participation at grass root political arena.

The plurality of Indian society is leading differential participation in the local governance based on age, caste, class, gender. Further the feudal mindset is a major barrier to the process of transfer of power to the under-privileged class particularly SC/ST elected women in the local democracy. It is also important that how these factors affected the participation of various social categories in the decision-making processes at the lower stage of political institution. It is also interesting to note that the socially and politically excluded groups reacted to the changing situations and encountered the challenges in the exercise of their statutory rights.

The reservation of seats to women in local rural governance has enabled new political space and opportunity to achieve the coveted goal of empowerment women. The topic 'Marginalized women in Grama Panchayat Politics in the Prakasam District is most appropriate today, as the issues of reservation of 50 per cent of seats for women in local governance are widely debated since its inception in the last election held in June-July 2013 in combined Andhra Pradesh state. Hence, the need for bringing marginalized women in bottom up political institution as force in rural India. The purpose of the proposed study is to examine the elected under-privileged women representatives' and their participation at the lower level rungs of the multi-federal institutions in Prakasam District of AP in India.

### **Place of study**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 the Telangana state has been formed as a 29<sup>th</sup> state of India from Andhra Pradesh. On this change, the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh remains 13 Districts. Prakasam District constituted on 02-02-1970 with Ongole as head quarter by carving out portions of Ongole Revenue division from Guntur, Kandukur Revenue division from Nellore district and Markapur Revenue division from Kurnool. The district was renamed as Prakasam in 1972 in memory of the great freedom fighter late Sri Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu also called as Andhra Kesari, who was chief minister of the composite Madras State and the initial chief minister of Andhra Pradesh State.

There are 1002 inhabited Revenue Villages are existing in Prakasam District. They were constituted into 1043 Grama Panchayats duly classifying them into 62 and 981 Grama Panchayats as notified and non-notified respectively. According to the 2011 Census community-wise population the Scheduled Caste population of the district is 7, 87, 861 which 23 percent of the district and 9.33 of the state total Scheduled Caste population. Similarly, the Scheduled Tribe population of the district is 1, 51, 145 and it stands for 4.45 percent of the district and 5 per cent of the state Scheduled Tribe population. The total S.C population is 7.88 out of which 3.97 lakhs are

males and 3.91 females. The district consists of 1.51 lakhs S T population, out of which 0.77 lakhs are males and 0.74 females.

The District has three Revenue Divisions Viz, Ongole Kandukur and Markapur. 56 Mandals were formed on 25-05-1985 with the purpose of bringing the administration to access the people. Ongole Division comprises of 20 Mandals, Kandukur Division constitutes with 24 Mandals and Markapuram Division with 24 Mandals. Thus the district has 56 Mandals. (CPO 2016-17, Ongole) (9)

## Methodology:-

### The Universe and Sample

Out of 13 Districts in Andhra Pradesh the Prakasam District was chosen for the purpose of empirical study. This District was selected because Prakasam is one of the backward districts in terms of HDI in Andhra Pradesh.

**Table-1:-** Category -wise Distribution of Sample Respondents.

Sl No	Social Status	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha magalur	Total	
1	SC	20	09	29	15	16	31	60
2	ST	04	03	07	03	02	05	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>

District Prakasam is divided into three Revenue Divisions i.e. Ongole, Kandukur, Markapuram. Out of the three divisions, Ongole Division has been selected as the area of the case study. The division consists of 20 Mandals, and out of these four have been selected keeping in view their stage of development. In each Mandal all women-headed the GPs were selected. The Mandals selected for the study are Ballikurava and Santa Magalur were underdeveloped while, Chirala and Tangutur can be considered as advanced in terms of development in Ongole Revenue Division. (CPO- Ongole 2016-17) The field work was carried out in the selected Mandals (January 2018) for the duration of one month.

The current study is based on personal interviews with 72 SC and ST elected women representatives among whom are president, vice-president and members of Gram Panchayat in the four mandals in Ongole Revenue Division of Prakasam District. In Ongole division there are 353 Panchayats from 20 Mandals. In those 175 are women-headed Grama Panchayats. 36 GP's have been selected (20 per cent). Where, 72 women are taken as sample respondents from four Mandals. Two samples were selected each G.P for case study. There are 245 women members in 36 panchayats of these 12 sarpanches, 53 ward members 07 vice-presidents of SC/ST women representatives were purposively included in the sample and interviewed. Most of the SC and ST women representatives belong to Mala, Madiga from SC's and Yerukula, Yandi's from ST's communities.

**Table – 2:-** Distribution of Sample Respondents in Grama Panchayat by their Position.

S. No	Position Held	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals		Total	Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	SanthaMagalur		
1	Ward Member	18	05	23	13	17	30	53
2	President	04	03	07	04	01	05	12
3	Vice- president	02	04	06	01	00	01	07
4	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>

The variables such as Age, Community, Education, Occupation and Income are included under socio-economic status. Motivation to joining politics, Attendance to panchayat meetings, Awareness of G.P, involving decisions have also been framed as participation variables.

## Objectives of the Study:-

1. To study the comparative profile of the sample of developed and under-developed areas of marginalized women members of G.P.
2. To examine the marginalized women socio-economic status.
3. To assess the level of awareness among the elected marginalized women.
4. To analyze the extent of participation of women in decision making process.

**Socio-Economic Status of Sample of Respondents****Age Composition of Women Leaders**

Age is a significant variable in the study of rural leadership in the Indian society. The rural leadership has been a monopoly of elderly people who have traditionally dominated all walks of social and political life of the villages. Age is also considered an important factor in analyzing the leader's behavior in the public sphere.

**Table- 3:-** Distribution of Sample Respondents by Age.

Sl No	Age (in years)	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha Magalur	Total	
1	21-35	10 (66.66) (41.66)	5 (33.34) (41.66)	15 (100) (41.66)	9 (60.00) (50.00)	06 (40.00) (33.33)	15 (100) (41.66)	30 (100%) (41.67)
2	36-45	10 (62.5) (41.66)	06 (37.5) (50.00)	16 (100) (44.44)	07 (46.66) (38.88)	8 (53.33) (44.44)	15 (100) (41.66)	31 (100%) (43.05)
3	46-50	01 (100) (4.16)	00 (00) (00)	01 (100) (2.77)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	01 (100%) (1.39)
4	Above-50	03 (75.00) (12.5)	01 (25.00) (8.33)	04 (100) (11.11)	02 (33.33) (11.11)	04 (66.64) (22.23)	06 (100) (16.66)	10 (100%) (13.89)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b> <b>(66.64)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(33.33)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>72</b> <b>(100%)</b> <b>(100%)</b>

As per as distribution of respondents age is concerned, a good number 30 (41.67 %) of elected women are under young age in all Mandals of sample study area. It was 66.66 per cent in Tangutur, followed by 60.00 per cent in Ballikurva, 40.00 per cent in Santha Magalur and in Chirala 33.34 per cent. With regard to old age respondents, 11.11 per cent was also found in both developed mandals and under-developed mandals. The per cent is higher (66.64) in backward Santhamagalur Mandalam. It is clear from the table that approximately 85.00 per cent of the respondents from all mandals were young and middle age group. There was only one women leader from Tangutur mandal in the age range of 46-50. It is found that all respondents are married in the sample study area. Unmarried women are usually not encouraged to get into public life in the rural area of prakasam district.

Similar results are also found in B.S Bhargava and K.C Vidya (1992) (10) majority of the women leaders belong to the younger age group. These women are perhaps more easily persuaded to contest elections.

**Educational Status of Women Leaders**

Education is one of the significant agents of socialization and it promotes political awareness and knowledge, which enable the members to make a right decision in the exercise of their public role. It determines one's social status in the society. Table 4 indicates educational status of respondents in developed and under-developed mandals of sample study area. The women leaders are categorized into different groups as per their education level. It is observed that illiteracy has been found heist percentage in both developed and under-developed mandals of study area in the district.

**Table -4:-** Distribution of Sample Respondents by Educational Level.

Sl. No	Educational level	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha Magalur	Total	
1	Illiterate	16 (88.88) (66.66)	02 (11.12) (16.66)	18 (100) (50.00)	14 (58.33) (77.77)	10 (41.66) (55.55)	24 (100) (66.66)	42 (100) (58.33)
2	Primary	06 (54.54)	05 (45.45)	11 (100)	04 (50.00)	04 (50.00)	08 (100)	19 (100)

		(25.00)	(41.66)	(30.55)	(22.23)	(22.22)	(22.22)	(26.38)
3	High School	02	05	7	00	02	02	09
		(28.57)	(71.42)	(77.77)	(000)	(100)	(22.22)	(100)
		(8.33)	(41.66)	(19.44)	(000)	(11.11)	(5.55)	(12.5)
4	College	00	00	00	00	02	02	02
		(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	(100)	(100)	(100)
		(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	(11.11)	(5.55)	(2.77)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>
		<b>(66.64)</b>	<b>(33.33)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(100)</b>
		<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>

It was the biggest group among the respondents (58.33%). It was observed that 19 women leaders (26.38%) are studied up to primary education only. Of the total sample only two respondents from under-developed Santha Magalur had college education. With regard to illiteracy of the respondents, the vast majority is found in Tangutur (88.88%) and Ballikurva (58.33%) Mandals. It is understood from the table that most of the respondents covered under this study with no education. It is also observed in the study of **Dinesha.P. T** (2014)(11) most of the Dalit women representatives are illiterates and lack of skills to take autonomous verdict in several issues and absence of initiative in the panchayat raj system. The absence of education has serious implications to the level and pattern of participation in the panchayat activities.

#### Occupational Status of Women Leaders

Occupation is another factor in determining the respondent's behavior in public life. Occupation is an independent variable which denotes an individual's class status. It is also a vital indicator of socialization process.

**Table-5:-** Distribution of Sample Respondents by Occupational Status.

Sl.No	Occupational Status	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha Magalur	Total	
1	House Keeper	02	03	05	03	05	08	13
		(40.00)	(60.00)	(100)	(37.5)	(62.5)	(100)	(100%)
		(8.33)	(25.00)	(13.88)	(16.66)	(27.27)	(22.22)	(18.05)
2	Agricultural Labor	22	08	30	15	12	27	57
		(73.33)	(26.66)	(100)	(55.55)	(44.44)	(100)	(100%)
		(91.66)	(66.66)	(83.33)	(83.33)	(66.66)	(75.00)	(79.16)
3	Business	00	01	01	00	01	01	02
		(00)	(100)	(100)	(00)	(100)	(100)	(100%)
		(00)	(8.33)	(2.77)	(00)	(1.23)	(2.77)	(2.77)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>
		<b>(66.64)</b>	<b>(33.33)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>
		<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

The data presented in Table 5 reveals the elected women leader's occupation details in the sample study area. It is observed that a large majority percentage (79.16) of respondents is involved agriculture related labor work in Ongole division of study area. As per as agriculture labor activity of OC is concerned, a major chunk of respondents 22 (91.66 %) are involved. The percentage was higher in Tangutur mandal (73.33%) followed by Ballikurva (55.55%) and Santha Magalur Mandalam (44.44 %). It is interesting to note that only two respondent's one each from Chirala and Santha Magalur are involved in business activity. Most of the women representatives are labourers and they hardly get time to involve in panchayat work. This is a major inhibiting factor which limits the participation of Dalit women representatives in decision making process. Poor economic conditions also force them heed to the dominating caste rural elites instead becoming a political force. (Dinesha. P.T 2004) (12)

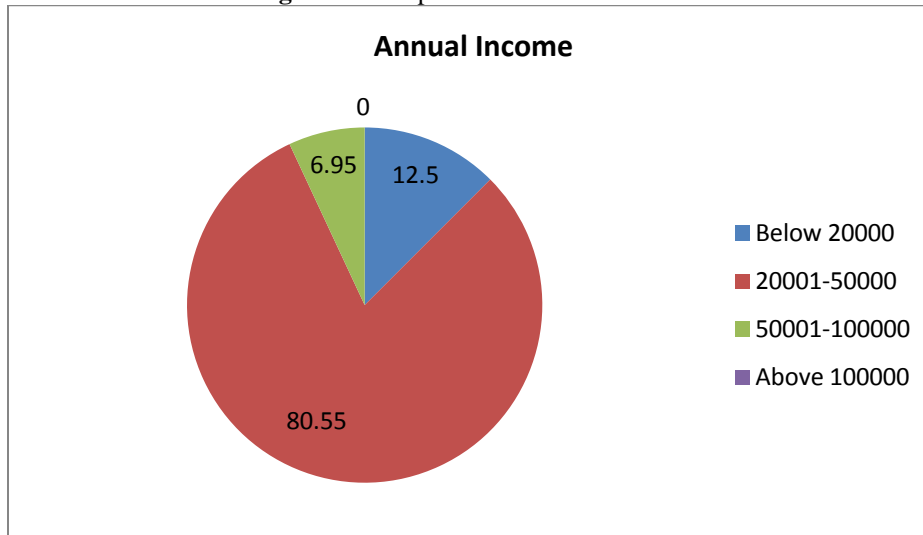
#### Annual Income of Respondents Family

Family income is one of the parameters to determine one's role in rural political life. A well-off family has been influenced in the political field of rural society. The women leaders have no income of their own; consequently, they have to depend their families.

**Table -6:-** Distribution of Sample Respondent's by Annual Income (in Thousands).

Sl.No	Annual Income (Rs)	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha Magalur	Total	
1	Below - 20000	05 (71.42) (20.83)	02 (28.57) (16.66)	07 (100) (19.44)	01 (50.00) (5.55)	01 (50.00) (5.55)	02 (100) (5.55)	09 (100%) (12.5)
2	20001-50000	16 (61.53) (66.66)	10 (38.46) (83.33)	26 (100) (72.22)	16 (50.00) (88.88)	16 (50.00) (88.88)	32 (100) (88.88)	58 (100%) (80.55)
3	50001-100000	03 (100) (12.5)	00 (100) (00)	03 (100) (8.33)	01 (50.00) (5.55)	01 (50.00) (5.55)	02 (100) (5.55)	05 (100%) (6.94)
4	Above-100000	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)	00 (00) (00)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b> <b>(66.64)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(33.33)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>72</b> <b>(100%)</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Table 6 and Figure 1 indicate the respondent's information relating to annual income. It clearly shows that an overwhelming majority 80.55 percentages of women leaders are under below poverty line and covered income group of Rs 20001 to 50000. It is serious concern that none reported above the income of Rs 1lakh from all four mandals of study area. Of the total sample a few per cent (6.94) of respondents in all mandals had income belong to group of Rs. 50001-100000. A considerable per cent (12.5) is covered under below Rs.20000. It is assumed from the study that majority of the respondents have a low economic profile.

**Figure-1:-** Respondents Annual Income.

#### Factors for Motivating Women to Join Panchayat Politics

All the respondents were asked a question who persuaded to enter rural public life in Table 7 and figure 2. There are various factors contributing women candidates to enter lower level political institution. The responses are varied from respondents to respondents.

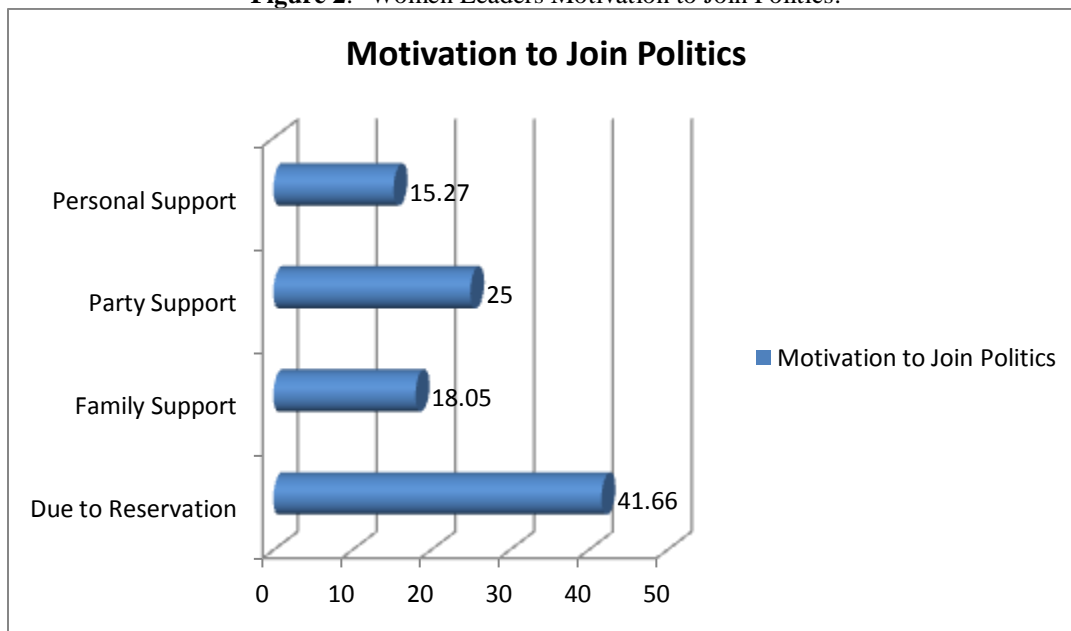
**Table-7:-** Distribution of Sample Respondent's Perceptions to Join Politics.

S.No	Motivation to Join Politics	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha Magalur	Total	

1	<b>Due to Reservation</b>	7 (46.66) (29.16)	8 (53.33) (66.66)	15 (100) (41.66)	8 (53.33) (44.44)	7 (46.66) (38.88)	15 (100) (41.44)	30 (100%) (41.66)
2	<b>Family Support</b>	4 (80.00) (16.66)	01 (20.00) (8.33)	05 (100) (13.88)	04 (50.00) (22.22)	4 (50.00) (22.22)	08 (100) (22.22)	13 (100%) (18.05)
3	<b>Party Support</b>	10 (100) (41.66)	00 (100) (100)	10 (100) (27.77)	04 (50.00) (22.22)	4 (50.00) (22.22)	08 (100) (22.22)	18 (100%) (25.00)
4	<b>Personal Interest</b>	03 (50.00) (12.5)	03 (50.00) (25.00)	06 (100) (16.66)	2 (40.00) (11.11)	3 (60.00) (16.66)	05 (100) (13.88)	11 (100%) (15.27)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b> <b>(66.64)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(33.34)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>72</b> <b>(100%)</b> <b>(100%)</b>

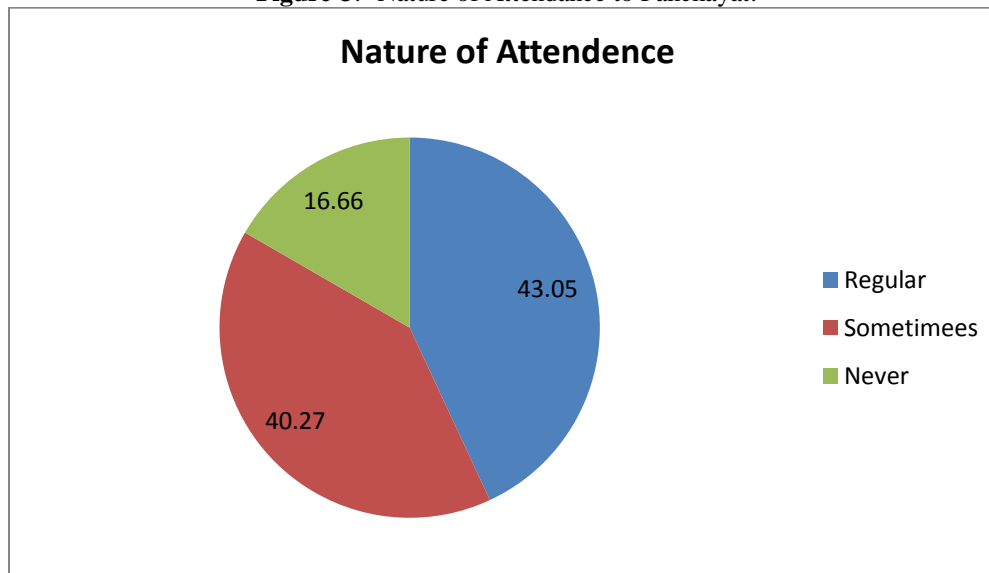
Regarding reservation variable is concerned, 41.66 % respondents reported, while 18.05 contributed family support. Of the total sample, 11 respondents (15.27%) came to grass-root public institution on their own interest. As per as party force is concerned, a considerable percentage (25.00%) of respondents are elected Grama panchayat politics.

**Figure 2:- Women Leaders Motivation to Join Politics.**



#### Frequency of Attending Gram Panchayat Meetings

Table 8 and Figure 3 provided information concerning women leaders' nature of attending grama panchayat meetings. The study shows that majority of the respondents are attending the meetings. However, when it was regularity, a few of female leaders are actively participated in meetings. Some leaders said that they do not attend meetings due to lack of meeting information in time and this practice was found mostly members belong to the opposition party. It is observed that non-attending for panchayat meetings are reported due to traditions of the orthodox rural society at the village level and busuy domestic work. It is found that most of the leaders who are not attending the meetings stated that their family members attend on behalf them.

**Figure-3:- Nature of Attendance to Panchayat.****Table-8:- Distribution of Sample Respondent's by Attendance GP Meetings.**

Sl.No	Attendance of GP Meetings	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha Magalur	Total	
1	Regular	12	05	17	04	10	14	31
		(70.58)	(29.41)	(100)	(28.57)	(71.42)	(100)	(100%)
		(50.00)	(41.66)	(47.22)	(22.22)	(55.55)	(38.88)	(43.05)
2	Some times	9	06	15	11	03	14	29
		(60.00)	(40.00)	(100)	(78.57)	(21.42)	(100)	(100%)
		(37.5)	(50.00)	(41.66)	(61.11)	(16.66)	(38.88)	(40.27)
3	Never	03	01	04	03	05	08	12
		(75.00)	(25.00)	(100)	(37.5)	(62.5)	(100)	(100%)
		(12.5)	(8.33)	(11.11)	(16.66)	(27.27)	(22.22)	(16.66)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>
		<b>(66.64)</b>	<b>(33.33)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(50.00)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>
		<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

A good per cent (43.05) of respondents from four mandals were attending panchayat meetings regularly. The percentage is higher in Tangutur mandal (70.58%) and Santha magalur mandal (71.42%). As per as sometimes attending respondents are concern, a sizable number of 29 women leaders (40.27%) have been reported. A considerable percentage (16.66) of respondents was also admitting that they never attending meetings of panchayat. It is seen more in under-developed mandals of Ballikurva and Santa Magalur.

#### Women Leaders Knowledge on Panchayat Activities.

A question was asked in Table 9 and Figure 4 women leaders' knowledge regarding panchayat activities. It is noteworthy to note that more than three-fourth of respondents said that they did not have knowledge about panchayat affairs. The data clerly shows that a major chunk of respondents 16 (88.88 per cent) from Ballikurva mandal are not familiar on various aspects of panchayat. As per as source of finance is concerned, a low percentage of women leaders are having awareness with a panchayat procedure. (Tangutur 4.16%, Chirala 8.33% and Santha Magalur 11.11%). It is assumed from the above table that women leaders had little knowledge on various aspects of panchayat affairs.

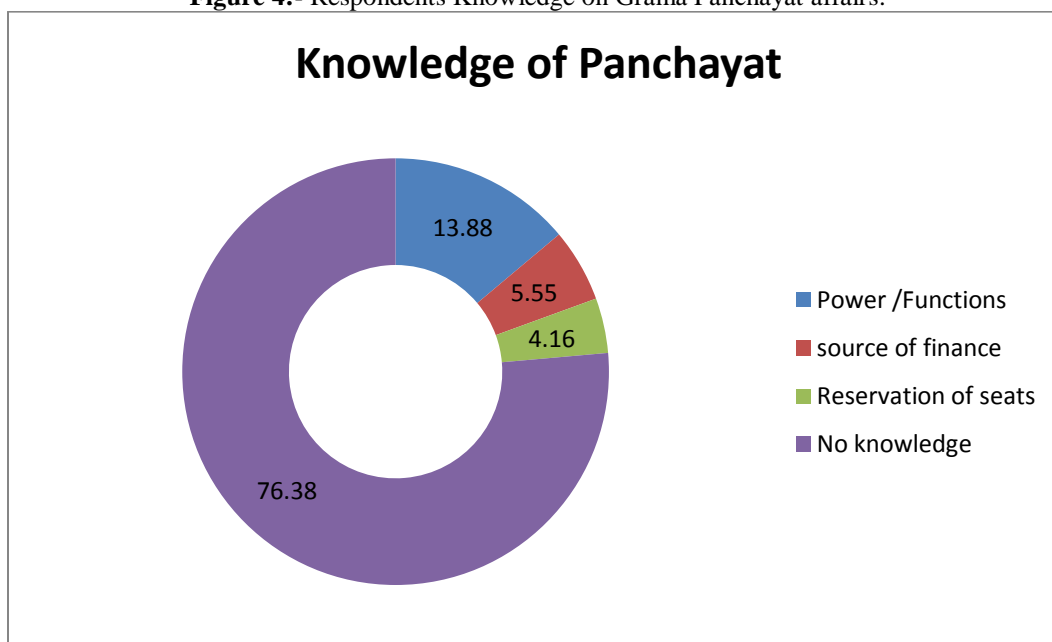
**Table-9:- Distribution of Sample respondents Perceptions by Knowledge on GP affairs.**

Sl.No	Knowledge on GP	Developed Mandals			Under-developed Mandals			Division
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Balliku	Santha	Total	

	Affairs				rava	Magalur		Total
1	Powers / Functions	5 (71.42) (20.83)	2 (28.57) (16.66)	7 (100) (19.44)	02 (66.66) (11.11)	01 (33.33) (5.55)	03 (100) (8.33)	10 (100%) (13.88)
2	Source of Finance	01 (50.00) (4.16)	01 (50.00) (8.33)	02 (100) (5.55)	0 (00) (00)	02 (100) (11.11)	02 (100) (5.55)	04 (100%) (5.55)
3	Reservation of Seats	01 (50.00) (4.16)	01 (50.00) (8.33)	02 (100) (5.55)	00 (00) (005)	01 (100) (5.55)	01 (100) (2.77)	03 (100%) (4.16)
4	No Knowledge	17 (68.00) (70.83)	08 (32.00) (66.66)	25 (100) (69.44)	16 (53.33) (88.88)	14 (46.66) (77.77)	30 (100) (83.33)	55 (100%) (76.38)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b> <b>(66.64)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(33.33)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>72</b> <b>(100%)</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Similar results are also found in the Vikas Nandal (13), study. The representatives have very less awareness and very little knowledge about the Panchayati Raj Institutions. They have very tiny knowledge about the Panchayati Raj Act 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, power and works of the gram panchayats, sources of income of gram panchayats and reservation of seats PRI's, assemblies and parliament.

Figure 4:- Respondents Knowledge on Grama Panchayat affairs.



#### Women Involvement towards Decision- Making

Involvement of women leaders in decision making process is the key indicator for women empowerment. Elected women leaders were asked to respond on taking decisions in various aspects of panchayat in the Table 10 and figure 5. They are expressed different opinions regarding decision-making.

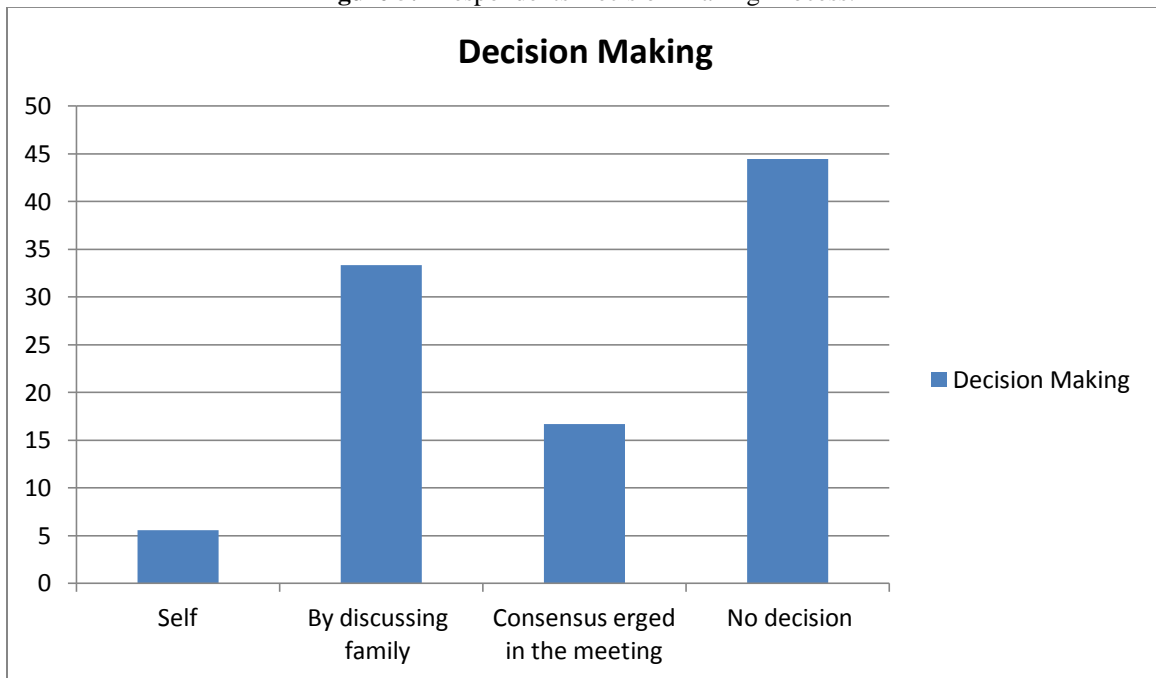
Table-10:- Distribution of Sample Respondent's by Decision- making Process.

Sl. No	Decision-making	Developed Mandals			Underdeveloped Mandals		Total	Division Total
		Tangutur	Chirala	Total	Ballikurava	Santha mgalur		
1	Self-Decision	02 (66.66) (8.33)	01 (33.33) (8.33)	03 (100) (8.33)	01 (50.00) (5.55)	01 (50.00) (5.55)	02 (100) (5.55)	05 (100%) (6.95)

2	<b>By Discussing Family</b>	08 (66.66) (33.33)	04 (33.33) (33.33)	12 (100) 33.33	04 (40.00) 22.22	06 (60.00) 33.33	10 (100) 27.77	22 (100%) 30.55
3	<b>Consensus Emerged in Meeting</b>	04 (66.66) (16.66)	02 (33.33) (16.55)	06 (100) (16.66)	02 (40.00) (11.11)	03 (60.00) (16.66)	05 (100) (13.88)	11 (100%) (15.28)
4	<b>No Decision</b>	10 (66.66) (41.66)	05 (33.33) (41.66)	15 (100) (41.66)	11 (57.89) (61.11)	08 (42.10) (44.44)	19 (100) (52.77)	34 (100%) (47.22)
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b> <b>(66.64)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(33.33)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(50.00)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>36</b> <b>(100)</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>72</b> <b>(100%)</b> <b>(100%)</b>

It is observed from the data a considerable number of respondents 34 (47.22 per cent) are not contributing in taking decisions in panchayat affairs, while only 6.95 per cent of women leaders admit that they are involved in taking own decisions in all four mandals. It is 66.66 per cent from developed mandal of Tangutur and 57.89 per cent from Ballikurva of under-developed mandal. It is evident that the women leaders who are not attending the panchayat meetings reported that they are not involved in decision making process. Regarding discussing with family members are concerned, a good percentage (30.55) of sample respondents is reported from four mandals of study area. With regard to the consensus emerged in the meeting, of the total sample 15.28 per cent of women leaders were taken decisions in relating to grama panchayat activities.

Figure 5:- Respondents Decision-making Process.



**Results and Discussions:-**

It is obvious from the analysis that the rural political institution has been generated a large number of new leaderships among women leaders after reservation seats for women. With the change in the power structure marginalized women representatives have been elected as young and middle age group with no education. Their political awareness is very low. It has become a major barrier in their effective participation for performing their duties and responsibilities as representatives of rural local body. The marginalized women members are landless agricultural laborers, and they are engaged most of the time for searching for livelihood. Hence these women were unable to spend time for exercising their legitimate powers in the panchayat.

The study indicates that the respondents are under below poverty line and none reported above the income of 1lakh from all four mandals of the study of area. The most important aspect of the deprivations faced by the women is related to their economic position. As they were involved in finding livelihood, it was very difficult to involve actively in public life. In addition to these women were chosen politics after attending to the family responsibilities. It is observed that women candidates do not get time to attend meeting, felt that participation is useless due to male dominance and hostile environment prevailing in the local political sphere.

The study shows that most of the SC and ST women representatives were entered local politics with the support extended by family members and political party. Huge number has been elected for the first time mainly due to fifty per cent reservation in Panchayat Raj Institutions. It is interesting to note that of women candidates joined local body on personal interest is insignificant. The women representatives came from those families where there were no members earlier elected to Grama Panchayat. They did not have any political background and has not been associated with any social organization except Development of Women and Child in Rural Areas (DWACRA) group. It is interesting to note that women are encouraged as family members could not contest the election due to the constituency was reserved for women. They are being received support till the election is conducted and after that they are kept out of the power. The study made it clear that marginalized women would not have entered public life without reservation and their representation in the rural governance would be insignificant.

It observed that the women members are made to contest election at the instance of political parties and will have its negative impact on women getting politically empowered. They have been interfered at various stages in the functioning of panchayat starting with the selecting the candidates for election.

It is observed that male family members attended the meetings of panchayats on behalf of women representatives. Even officials do not object to this evil practice. Sometimes they were discouraged elected women representatives to attend panchayat meetings. It is found that low attendance due to no convenient time, limited role in decision making, burden of house hold work, unable to attend alone, caste prejudice and male dominance.

It is noteworthy that they are not known about knowledge on panchayat affairs. The study reveals that even after four years of term in their office, majority of them are not conscious about their functions and responsibilities about their role in Grama panchayat.

The study found that many times the decisions are taken by the male members of their family and later it was informed to the women. The male members are not allowed to women in discharging their duties and responsibilities in independent manner. No opportunity has been given to express their views and also taking decision without their consent. She is forced to comply with the decision taken by the family and party leaders. Women leaders are not as effective as local elites in decision making process due to lack of knowledge on rural local body functions and role in the grama panchayat.

The study found that most of the women leaders have perceived that Grama Panchayts are working due norms. The women have been side-lined while taking decisions and actions plans in the panchayats. The meetings held as per norms and officials are completed formalities. The records are created for having conducted meetings and other development schemes and programs.

Women's participation in rural governance may be severely constrained by various socio-economic pressures. Negative public opinion regarding women's leadership capacity has been prevailing in the rural society of Andhra Pradesh. The women have been discriminated in the rural politics by the dominant caste leaders of village. Obviously, the dominant groups in the village have always had an upper hand in deciding the affairs of panchayat.

The caste and patriarchy have major hurdle for marginalized women to exercise their rational legal authority as elected representatives of political institution. The parochial rural society does not allow the women to free mixing with men. They continue to dictate women's role in local governance and constrained to become political force. These cultural ethos have been restricted to women while performing their roles in panchayat viz., supervising, making arguments, taking initiatives and independent decisions.

The study shows that most important problems like literacy, traditionalism, prejudices, economic dependence, and the unfavorable political structures are the barriers to women participation in the rural electoral politics. The gender

norms and values not only discouraged their participation but also located women outside the realm of politics and the role of women in the grama panchayat. Consequently, women get little opportunity to make independent decision.

**Suggestions:-**

1. As these women representatives are illiterates and low education need to train them to handle the affairs of panchayat and exercise their legitimate power. There is a need to make women more conscious and aware of their rights. It is required to take measures to enhance women leader's communicational skills, sensitization of gender, change of their attitudes and knowledge of the functions and responsibilities of GPs through better education and training facilities.
2. Women members in the Grama Panchayat required to train to conduct panchayat independent. Non-governmental organizations, women organizations, universities, research institutions be allowed to empower and to exercise their authority to participate effectively in the deliberations of local institution and ensure better involvement of women in local political activities.
3. There is responsibility on political parties to encourage women to participate effectively and create sufficient scope for discharging their duties. Family also has a major role in women's participation in grassroots governance. Rural people should be encouraged to show respect for the dignity of women and make them a significant political force in grass root political institution.
4. The government should also make efforts to make the women realize their powers, functions and leadership capacities through various programs. Development activities meant for women should be connected with panchayat to involve more affective.
5. Mere attendance in the meeting is not enough; they need to effectively involve in the deliberations of panchayat activities. Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making will be viewed women political empowerment. The women also should be constantly vigilant. They should resist attacks on their rights. Women should develop awareness and knowledge of human rights.
6. Besides this a change in the rural ethos in favor of women's equality, respectability, participation and leadership capability is required to create a favorable atmosphere for their empowerment. Rural women empowerment is possible when a change in the attitudes of not only women but simultaneously in the approaches of men and society at large.
7. The marginalized women representatives felt being treated as low status in the society. The government should take severe action versus those persons who create problems to these women and develop leadership among the disadvantaged women in the rural democratic process.
8. Proxy politics in panchayat has been there in almost every panchayat, resulting women remain only as meek subservient to male domination. Male members do not allow taking up the women assigned work. Rule should be framed to discourage this type practice.

**Conclusion:-**

The study observed that mere political reservation will not help for empowerment of marginalized groups in the absence of economic and social equality. It will go long way to create a political space and avenues for the deprived sections of women. The landmark of 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of India has definitely empowered the women in terms of numbers. Despite seats have been reserved in favor of marginalized women but very little have been changed at ground level. The women elected representatives need adequate support systems as well as education to make them effective leaders. It requires their initiative to realize their potentialities to be effective in decision making process.

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