

CHAPTER-I

This chapter deals with the meaning, characteristics and importance of local self-government and also analysis the brief concept of political participation. It also deals with the women participation of local self-government especially 74th amendment of Indian constitution, introduces the research problem and its importance and lists objectives , hypothesis, scope and significance and limitation of the study. This chapter scans the existing literature on Local-Self-Government Institutions and research done on people's participation in local self government particularly women's participation. In the end this chapter gives Chapterisation frame of the study.

INTRODUCTION

Local self-government institutions have become part and parcel of a democratic state. Local self-governing institutions are called the cradles for democracy. They are the training grounds for the future politicians of a country.

Local government refers to the operations of corporations, municipalities, district boards, Panchayats and other bodies which are entrusted with the execution of functions relating to and concerning the residents of a given area or locality. Local self governing institutions come into being as per law passed by the legislature. In India local self government is a state subject. Hence it is the state legislature which can create local institutions by laws. ¹

1 Paul Kripesh Chandra, "Political Science :Political Theory & Indian Constitution", Arun Prakashn, Guwahati, 2005,P.116-117

G.M. Harris opines, “Local government is a ‘government by local bodies, freely elected while subject to the supremacy of the national government; are endowed in some respect power, discretion and responsibility, which they can exercise without control over their decisions by the higher authority. The extent of power, discretion and responsibility which the local bodies possess is a matter of degree, which varies considerably in the various countries”.²

According to **John J. Clarke**, “Local government appears to be that part of government of a nation or state which deals mainly with such matters as concern the inhabitants of particular district or place.”³

According to **V.V. Rao**, “Local Government is that part of the government which deals mainly with local affairs, administered by authorities subordinate to the state government but elected independently of the state authority by the qualified residents”.⁴

CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Local self governing institutions exist in every democratic country. They are considered as the grass-roots of democracy. These institutions cater to the local needs. It is not possible for any government to look into the local problems properly. The local institutions are in a position to deal with these problems. These institutions have certain

2 G.M.Harris, “comparative Local government ”, London, 1948,p-1

3 John J. Clarke, Local government in united kingdom, London, 1948, p-1

4 Rao.V.V, “ A Hundred Years of Local Self-government in Assam”,(3rd ed), Bani prakashan,1967, p-1

basic features. To understand the organization and working of the local institutions, these characteristics must be analyzed first. They are discussed as below:-

1. **Corporate Body**:-A local self governing institution is a corporate body. It is a legal body in the sense that it is created under law and its recognized by law. A local institution has a separate identity of its own. It is a legal body which has a seal of its own. Its activities are carried out legally under its seal.
2. **Governmental character**:-Local self- governing institutions are governmental in character. They are organized on certain principles like the central and state governments. These institutions have the statutory bodies duly elected by the people.
3. **Autonomous** :- Local institutions are also autonomous bodies. They are entrusted with certain powers and functions. The government is not expected to interface in their activities under normal circumstances. Within their sphere of activities, they are free so long they discharge their duties according to the law.
4. **Non-Sovereign** :-Local bodies have autonomy, but they are not sovereign. These institutions are subordinate to the central or state governments. The government has control over them. They cannot do whatever they like.⁵
5. **Local Territory**:-these institutions have their own administrative areas. Their activities are confined to their own areas only. The territory of a local institution is determined by the government.
6. **Local Problems** :- Local institutions do not deal with national or international problems. There only concern is the solution of local problems. The fruits of labour

5 Bhattacharjee T., "An Introduction to Political Science", Oriental Book Company Pvt. Guwahati, Ltd. 1999, p-264

of a local institutions are enjoyed by the people of the locality. These institutions are entrusted with functions which are purely local in character. They are not concerned with the problems of other localities.⁶

CONCEPT OF URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Urban local government mainly operates in towns and cities through Municipal Committees or Councils, Municipal Corporations, Cantonment Boards, Town and Notified Area Committees.

The scope of urban local government extends to the study of the phenomenon of urbanization and its problem, urban planning, structure of urban governments and their classification, municipal legislation, personnel management, financial administration, state local relations, special purpose agencies and attached offices, as also that of the State departments of urban local government.⁷

The work of urban local government in cities or towns are to be administered by various institutions forms such as Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Committees, Municipal Corporations and Cantonment Boards and town Committees under the 74th amendment act of Indian constitution 1992.

Urban local government in our country has gradually been gaining importance with the increase in urban population since 1961. However, it could attract due attention only after the National Commission on Urbanization studied all aspects of urban management. In

6 Sharma Manoj ,“Local Government :Rural and Urban”, Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi,2004, p.4-6

7 Myneni S.R, “Local Self Government”, Law Publishers, Hyderabad, 2016, p-53

this context, the Indian Parliament passed a bill in 1992, which became the 74th Amendment to the constitution. It is a landmark in the history of urban governance in the country. The act not only Constitutionalism the urban local government but also provides it with stability in addition to facilitating democratic decentralization and revitalizing these grass root institutions.⁸

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Local institutions are of much important for the people of respective areas in so far as their day to day life is concerned. Local self governing institutions as a rule are more efficient and economic. They are supposed to work more judiciously and sincerely.

(i) Its operations make people conscious :- When the people get themselves involved in its operation, they become conscious of their problems and they try to find out solutions.

(ii) It is the empowerment of the ordinary people :- Generally it is seen that the ordinary people are neglected in every political system at the top. It is only in the local government the people get the taste of true democracy. It is really intimate to the ordinary people.

(iii) Ordinary people understand ordinary problems:-

8 Ibid,p-56

The issues at stake at the local level are well known and easily understood by the people. These problems effect them in their day to day life. When no local government exists, the people remain ignorant. In the midst of the local government institutions, they are forced to learn about their environment. They become true citizens of the country.

(iv) Democracy is meaningless without local governments:-In every democracy, the institution of local government is deliberately encouraged to function properly. It is a precondition of a functional democracy. In our country, democracy at the local level existed in the ancient times. In the moderm times too, we acknowledge its similar importance.

(v) It lessens the burden of the national government :- A national government is concerned with national issues. If the local issues are effectively handled by the local government, than the burden of government by the national government is truly lessened. A heavily over burdened government crumbles under its own weight. Only the true local government may save it from utter destruction. ⁹

MEANING OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation is defined as a process in which people try to effect the government by taking part in the voting by persuading others to vote, by becoming a member of any political party, joining campaigns, by keeping oneself informed about politics or by

⁹ Bhattacharjee T, "An Introduction to Political Science" Oriental Book Company Pvt. Guwahati, Ltd,1999, p-266

discussing politics with friends, colleagues or any family member, by attending political meetings, political rallies or protest meetings, by joining public or street demonstrations, by agitating to get public officials to correct political wrongs, by becoming an active member of an organization engaged in solving community problems, by giving money for a political cause and by working with others in their locality in trying to solve some of the problems.¹⁰

Political participation is a dependent variable that depends upon many factors such as the psychological, socio-economic and political, which orient the individuals towards or away from political participation, psychological variables refer to the degree to which citizens are interested in and concerned about politics and public affairs. Persons who are more interested, concerned about political matters and surrounded by political conflicts are more likely to be active in politics than those who are totally occupied in their private lives. Those, who have some preferences for a party and candidate have feeling of efficacy and some political goals, participate more actively in political affairs.¹¹

According to **Ashraf Ali & L.N. Sharma** “ political participation is the involvement of groups and individuals at various levels in political system”¹²

10 Pattanaik, Anjali and Swan Rani Snigdha, “ Women Education”, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2007, P-17-18

11 Ibid, p-19

12 Asraf Ali and L.N. Sharma, “political sociology: a new grammar of politics”, university press, Hyderabad, 2010, p-140

According to **Myron Weiner** "The concept of political participation refers to any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended in influencing the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs or the choice of political leaders."¹³

Verba & Pye define "Political participation is those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and the actions they take".¹⁴

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

Through the ages, oppressed people in different parts of the world have fought for the right to participate in the political process. By exercising this right an individual feels that he has become the master not only of his own fate but also of the fate of his fellow beings. Participation helps the individual to be effective and associates him with the political system. The higher the rate and levels of political participation, the more varied are its forms, the healthier is the democratic system. Particularly in a society where certain groups are rationally behind the others, where they can be categories as a 'weaker section'

¹³ Myron Weiner quoted by Sampa Guha, Political Participation of Women in Changing Society, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p. 24.

¹⁴ Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, "Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality", Harper Row, New York, 1972, p.44.

or as 'disadvantaged groups' wider participation and mobilisation at higher and higher levels would be necessary for its up lift for the democratic system.¹⁵

In India, the 74th amendment of the Constitution may be regarded as watershed in the history of the state initiatives in regard to empowerment of urban women. It has indicated a paradigm shift in the approach of the Indian State towards women. Earlier women were generally regarded as objects of development only. This amendment made women the subjects of development and an indispensable part of the decision-making process. Women are instrumental to development, its repercussions has stimulated greater integration and induction of women in the development process.

Another debatable issue has been whether the reservation provided to women through the 74th constitutional amendment resulted in the genuine political empowerment of women alongside their male counterparts. It has been held that while the strategy of reserving seats for women in the local bodies has resulted in quantitative changes in women's representation in local politics, qualitative changes in their representational role has not yet taken place as per expectation.

Although the 74th Amendment provides a vast opportunity to women to participate in their urban local areas, they have not been able to effectively utilize the opportunity due to many factors such as, the "domestic responsibilities, lack of financial clout, rising

15 Ghosh Jayashri , "Political Participation of Women in West Bengal : A case study" Progressive Publishers Calcutta, 2000, p.-1

criminalisation of politics and the threat of character assassination” which have made it increasingly difficult for women to contest elections.

The 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution in 1992 ushered in a new era in the democratic process of the country as it not only provided constitutional status to the municipal bodies but also provided an enabling environment of women to directly take part in the local self government and brought women to the forefront and center of local development. The different political parties in India have shown great reluctance to field women candidates. Reservation of seats at Municipal level have put pressure on political parties to locate and field more women candidates. Sharing power and responsibilities with immense control over resources for city development and social change will be an empowering instrument for women in India.¹⁶

The 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution, has served as a major breakthrough towards ensuring women’s equal access and increased participation in local government. The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 aims at Constitutional guarantees to safeguard the interests of urban local self governments to enable them to function as effective democratic and self governing institutions at the grass root level. This Amendment provides for reservation of 33% per cent of elected seats for women at level of local government in urban and rural areas. There is also a one-third reservation for women on posts of chairpersons of these local bodies. A very active role for women in local governance is envisaged as compared to governance at the state and national levels

16 Singh U.B, “Empowerment of Women in Urban Administration”, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2006, p-83

in India. These provisions have provide great opportunities and challenges to women in India, particularly in local government field. This is of great significance, since this grass-roots level participation in politics at city level.¹⁷

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Gender discrimination has completely been banned by the constitution suggesting that all men and women enjoy equal opportunities for their multi-dimensional growth. Women, nearly half of the human race, are suffering from inequality in every walk of life. They have been considered as second rate citizens in one way or the other. If we analyse the participation of women in the social, political, cultural, economic and religious fields, we find that their participation is not equal to their male counterparts. But modernization has opened the floodgates for women in every area. Democracy and globalization have given them voice and ample space to express their views about the society, polity, culture, economy and religion. Democracy has provided equal opportunity to them to elect the representatives of their choice, who in turn from the government.

But in spite this right to equality given to women civil societies in all countries also present another picture where women are less represented in the decision making process at every level and in every sphere. Thus, the policy of affirmative action in the form of reservation of seats in the legislative bodies, are opted in many countries. In an era a globalization and openness, there is a growing need to

17 Op.cit,-p-8

associate all sections of society in the processes of nation building and development. This is why in India the Constitution through its 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 weft. 1993 and 74th constitutional amendment act 1992 weft. 1993, makes provisions of 33% for reservation of 1/3rd of the seats for women in Panchayats & Urban Local Administration. About one million women have entered into the local politics in different capacities after the implementation of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. Among them about 40% of the elected women belong to the marginalised sections of society. However, out of the total women representatives, nearly 70% are illiterate and most of them have no previous political experience; but this very entry of women in local administration has deep impact on gender equality. Initially, there was an apprehension that these women representatives would work like puppets at the hands of the male members of their families, but the experience of their work has disapproved it. One of these is the lack of participation and representation of certain sections of society, especially women. The recent 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution though have been major steps forward in fulfilling this gap. The present study tried to examine the question of political participation women in Local self government specially in Urban area and how far the objectives of the Constitution (74rd Amendment) Act; 1992 has executed in Assam with special reference to two Municipalities bodies viz., Bilasipara and Chapar town committee under Bilasipara Sub-division in Dhubri District.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of related literature in the area of enquiry is a crucial component of the research process. Numerous studies on political participation of women in local self Government in India have been conducted both by the government as well as by the individual scholars. There is very rich literature on local self Government in India in the forms of books, reports and articles. However, there are quite a few studies dealing with post 74th Amendment particularly regarding women participation in urban local self government.

The book '**Women Education**' co- authored by **Anjali pattanaik and Snigdha Rani swan** (2007) attempt to asses the present role of women in political, economic and social sphere of development. The authors have noted with dismay that the education among women must given utmost priority to integrate them fully in the process of development in terms of equality of rights, roles and responsibility.

B.P Maithai (1997) in his Edited book '**Local self government in North east India ' An appraisal**' compiles the papers contributed by the experts in their fields highlighting the steps taken by the government since 1990 in the direction of creating local self-government in North east India. He points out the steps needed to fully implement the 73rd and 74th Amendment Act. The book also deals with the political issues, allocation of functions and powers, financial resources, role of Local self government in developmental and planning and the steps that could be initiated to avoid pitfalls that blot the pages of the history of democratic decentralization in India.

Dr. Pankaj Singh (2013) in his study '**Urban local self government in India**' tries to explain the meaning and significance of local government along with various conceptual aspects of its utility. The book also suggests the ways and means of improving the system of local government in India including the structure, personnel, finance, state control techniques and working of the urban local government in India.

The book **women in 'Indian society'** co-authored by **Neera Desai and Usha Thakkar** (2007) is an attempt to paint a picture of the working of changing perception of the role and status of women. The book also attempts to present an account of Indian women's journey towards gender equality, in the context of a changing political, economic background and values which legitimize inequality.

Niroj Sinha (2006) in his edited book '**Women in Indian politics**' tries an attempt at analyzing the problems related to women's political participation in Indian context. The book also makes an attempt to highlight some factors like social, economic, political and culture are in some way or other, directly related to the norms of 'gender' and 'patriarchy'.

Dr. Anita Arya (2000) in her book '**Indian women : Education and Empowerment**' provides information on women education and empowerment in historical perspective. This book also designed to provide information on gender and economic participation and the related problems of working women at various levels.

M.P. Sharma (1977) in his book '**Local self- Government in India**' tries to explain the historical, detailed and critical survey of local self-governing bodies, mainly the

municipalities, district boards and panchayats in India. He further dealt with in detail of the many reform committees appointed to examine the municipal affairs and administration by the government.

K. Subha (1994) in his book ‘ **Women in local governance** ’ focuses on the working of the municipal corporation and evaluate the role of women councilors in policy making, administration and the extent to which it has met with the requirements of women, thereby holding the empowerment of women in proper perspective.

Purnendu Sekhar Das (2005) in his Edited book ‘ **Decentralized planning and participatory rural development** ’ the issues like people’s participation in the local level development planning and governance with case studies from different states, problems of integration of physical and financial planning in the decentralized planning framework, decentralized planning and women empowerment, experiments in rural development planning at the village and the gram sensed levels, gram panchayats and rural development, micro-credit planning, and the Panchayats and NGO’s etc. are analysed elaborately.

Kalpana Roy (1999) in her study ‘ **women in Indian politics** ’ very clearly explores the inadequate position of women in Indian politics. Besides the process of upbringing of women at home, other factors like lack of education, and knowledge about party politics, corruption in politics growing violence against women also restrict their space in politics. Women movement in the country must look in to this. It needs to be understood within the colonial past and present state of developing nation, a sharply stratified society with

ongoing caste and class conflict, paternalistic religion and cultural tradition .In the pre independence period women use to be great force in freedom struggle . Overall the book gives more importance on political party, which can mobilize and create space for women.

Dr. Marino R. Pinto(2000) in his book '**Metropolitan city government in India**', this book rightly emphasises that any urban local government established under whatever system can be judged only by the criteria of rendering satisfactory civic services, efficiently and economically. At the same time he also has argued that the mechanism of local government has to be highly professional as well as participative.

Hezel D. Lima (1983) in his book '**Women in Local Government : A Study of Maharastra**' which is based on the research study elaborately explains the level of women participation in local governments at the levels of urban and rural areas. He also reviews the hurdles and problems in their ways for effective participation in decision making at the local level.

Dr. Dipti Sharma (2013) in her book '**Assamese women in the freedom struggle**' deal with the historical aspect of the status of and position of women in Assam. She also highlighting the women of Assam in the freedom struggle, their activities, their trials and tribulation, their sufferings all throughout the period.

V. Venkata Rao (1963) in his '**A hundred years of local self-government in Assam**' deals with meaning, problems and origin of local self government. He also explain the origin and development of local government in India as well as Assam.

Manoj Sharma (2004) in his book '**Local government: Rural and Urban**' tries to explain the meaning, nature and conceptual framework of Local Government. He also explain the structure and provision of 74th amendment of Indian Constitution.

Dr. Pitam Singh(2003) in his book '**Women legislatures in India Politics** ' tries an attempt at analyzing the role of women legislators and their involvement in two different but related arenas of political process; namely, the legislature and party organizations.

U.B. Singh (2006) in his book '**Empowerment of women in urban administration: Experiences and strategies**' a collection of scholarly papers contributed by academics, administrators and practitioners at national seminar revealed that 74th Constitutional Amendment Act has empowered the women leaders and it had opened a channel for them to occupy a legitimate space in the power structure. But there are obstacles in the process of their empowerment like control of their party men, husband, relatives and responsibilities at home. Some measures are being undertaken by women leaders themselves to overcome the obstacles.

Parismita Borah in her article (2015) '**Political Participation of Women in North-East**' tries to analyze the participation of women from Assam in the Lok Sabha Elections and State Legislative Elections in comparison to male participation. India with Special Reference to Assam after Independence.

Veena Poonach's (2001) in her article '**Feminist theorizing and politics**' **economic and political weekly** reveals that paradoxically, the 1990s also saw the enactment of the 73rd

and 74th constitutional amendment aimed at the progressive devolution of political powers to local communities. Through these enactments, more than one million women for the first time in history enjoyed political power within local communities.

Makhanlal Kar (2005) in his book ‘ **Evolution of constitutional Government and Assam Legislatures**’ specifically and elaborately studies the evolution and development of self government institution or local bodies such as municipalities.

Afsar Bano (2003) in her book ‘**women and social change**’ tries to explain the position of women and their participation from ancient to freedom struggle in India. Besides the book elaborately studies the various women organization and their participation in Indian freedom movement.

K.A. Kunjakan (2002) in his book ‘**Feminism and Indian Realities**’ primarily focus on the Indian situation in the context of feminism with special references to the political participation of women in ancient period to post independence.

Uttam Das (2014) in his unpublished PhD thesis ‘Local Self Government and Women Empowerment: A comparative study of Women’s Participation in Rural and Urban Local Bodies in South Assam’ examines the nature of participation women in Local Self-Government elections. Besides attempt is made to understand the awareness level of women members about the goals, functions, workings, proceeding of meetings and financial matter of local bodies. Attempt is also made to examine the nature of their participation in various aspects such as their contribution to development of their locality.

RESEARCH GAP

A brief analysis of the existing literature on the political status of women shows that such studies have not had sufficient reference to the actual behavior of women and the relevance of important social, economic and cultural variables, to the participation and the decision making by women although there are some valuable contributions by scholars and researchers. Moreover, political participation of women and their attitude towards politics can properly be understood not from an analysis of their political activities and attitudes alone, but perhaps much more clearly from a thorough comparative analysis with those of men. In addition, there has been almost no attempt at a comparative analysis of the attitude and participation by the general body of women and by the women who are directly associated with the decision-making process, The researcher believes that here lies an obvious gap in the research on Indian women specially in Assam.

Studies conducted so far have not thoroughly examined the problem of participatory politics and that of personal influence. Here also exists a gap in the area. Moreover, there are no studies on the political participation of women in Dhubri district in General in particular there is no specific case study on the participation of women in Bilasipara and Chapar town Committee area of 27th East Bilasipara Assembly of Assam. This study seeks to bridge some of the existing research gap.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study was confined to two town committees of Bilasipara Sub-division i.e. Bilasipara and Chapar town Committee belong to the Dhubri district of

Assam. Bilasipara sub-division is one of the popular commercial but educationally backward Sub- division of lower Assam. That is why the area was chosen to find out the extent of its women's participation in the urban local self government in Bilasipara and Chapar were selected as it is considered as the epitome of development where a good number of women participate in decision making process. From this point of view both the town committees selected which would provide a good parameter for comparison within the district of Dhubri of Assam.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Do the socio-economic backgrounds of the elected member determine the participation and empowerment of women?
2. Do the urban areas provide favourable environment for the active participation of women members ?
3. Whether political participation has led to bringing about or moving towards improving quality of life for women?
4. Does the male dominant social system hamper the participation of women in both urban areas?

HYPOTHESIS

The present study tested the following hypotheses:

1. Participation of women in urban local self government institution is satisfactory
2. Women's role in family and decision making level is fairly good.

3. There is a no significant relation between level of awareness and the level of political participation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main focus and objectives of proposed study are as follows:

1. To examine the impact of socio-economic background on women members of their participation in politics.
2. To examine the obstacles to political participation of the women in the urban local self government elections.
3. To study in detail and analysis the urban government system and participation of women in the wake of 74th amendment act of Indian constitution
4. To examine the nature of participation of women members in urban local bodies.

METHODOLOGY

As the title of the research concerns the political participation of women in Urban local self – government in particular constituencies the collection of information is of fundamental necessity to clear the theoretical concept of participation. The present study is confined to present women elected representatives at Bilasipara and Chapar town Committee of Dhubri district . The study is descriptive, empirical and analytical. It is

descriptive in so far as the study is concerned with having a in-depth analysis of the status of women, Constitutional provisions for their protection and women's participation in urban Local self government. It assumes the empirical and analytical character when the study examines the socio-economic profile, their participation in Urban / Municipal Bodies functioning and problems faced by them. The Data is collected for the present study from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data is collected from the field study through questionnaire schedule from elective representative of women (Ward commissioner) of both town Committee ; Secondary information is collected from books, journals and such other relevant documents and news papers like Assam tribune, Pratidin etc. Census report, basic statistics of Assam, District statistical Handbooks have also been consulted.

The area of the present study is confined only to Bilasipara sub-division of Dhubri district of Assam. Study area is taken only about the present elective representative of women in urban/ Municipal Bodies of two town committee one is Bilasipara town committee and another is Chapar town Committee. For the purpose of collecting primary data field study is conducted in the selected areas of study. The respondents have been administered schedule. In addition to this the Minutes of the meetings and other related information of selected urban local bodies is consulted. At present in Bilasipara there are 14 wards under the Bilasipara town Committee where 8 elected women members; and 4 elected women members in Chapar town Committee out of 8 wards. Sample is drawn

from 100% of the select town committees then through schedule interview data is collected from the women representative of the selected wards.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

All the available and accessible sources were fully explored to collect required information and data on all 12 women elective representative in two different stages.

At the initial stage, a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the existing literature on the political processes and decision-making bodies in particular was made. In the second stage, a structured questionnaire was formulated to extract information from women elective representative on specific areas and issues. The questionnaire was designed to obtain facts on personal attributes, information on involvement in politics, association with political party/parties, involvement in electoral politics, and proceedings response to certain general and women specific issues, suggestions on an increased and qualitatively better participation of women in political process and decision making bodies.

For the present study a number of tools developed for the purpose of proper collection of data. Keeping in view the objectives and importance of the study, an interview schedule was developed which comprised of two sections. The first section pertained to the socio-personal profile of the respondents, the second section consisted of the data regarding the political participation and behavior of the respondents.

The interview scheduled was prepared in English language but during the course of the interview it was translated to the mother tongue of the samples for their better

comprehension. Again each sample was given a minimum of half an hour to be interviewed thoroughly. The interview schedule was filled up by the investigator after a detailed discussion with the respondents. One of the important criteria for selection of the case studies was their experience as member, the number of times they had represented their locality and their position as ward commissioner.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study entitled “political participation of women in urban local self-government: A Case study” examines the nature of women participation in Local Self-Government. In order to do this attempt is made to understand the awareness level of women members about the goals, functions, workings, proceeding of meetings and financial matter of local bodies. Attempt is also made to examine the nature of their participation in various aspects such as their contribution to development of their locality, whether they are able to perform all the functions which they were like to perform, whether they perform their functions by themselves or by someone else, if functions perform by ‘other’ who does it, their nature of participation in the meetings of local bodies and etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has also certain limitations. The study is confined only to two town committees that is Bilasipara and Chapar. The primary data collected from the sample of women representatives with the help of an interview schedule may not be accurate as none of the respondents are in the habit of maintaining proper accounts/records with

regard to income and the extent of political Participation etc. Apart from the limitations of the study the researcher has faced many difficulties during the data collection at the field survey. Some respondents were not ready to respond as the work was taken care by their husbands. The interference of husbands during the interview was also a great hurdle. The researcher made many efforts to overcome the above hurdles.

DATA ANALYSIS

Simple statistical techniques such as percentages, averages and frequency were used for the analysis and interpretation of data. Attempt was also made to study the inter-relationship between the socio-economic attributes of women's representatives such as age, education, caste, house hold income as independent variables on one hand and their political status, modernization and their participation in urban local self government as dependent variables on the other.

CHAPTERISATION

Following is the Chapterisation frame of the study:

1. Background of the study. (Introduction)
2. Political participation of women.
3. History and evolution of local- self government .
4. Political participation of women in Municipal Bodies of Bilasipara and Chapar Town Committee.
5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study has been organized into five chapters

Chapter -1: First chapter is deals with the meaning , characteristics and importance of local self-government and also analysis the brief concept of political participation . It also deals with the women participation of local self-government especially with 74th amendment of Indian constitution .This chapter also introduces the research problem , importance and lists objectives, hypothesis, scope and significance and limitation of the study. This chapter scans the existing literature on Local-Self-Government Institutions and research done on people's participation in local self government particularly women's participation. .

Chapter -2: Second chapter gives a brief profile of the meaning and types of political participation, history and evolution of women political participation global to local context. This chapter also analysis the participation of women in electoral politics as well as decision making level in government .

Chapter -3: This chapter deals with the traces the evolution and history of urban local self-government from global to local context .

Chapter -4: Fourth chapter has two sections. First section deals with a brief profile of the study area i.e., Bilasipara and Chaper under the Bilasipara Sub-division, second section deals with the socio-economic profile of respondents i.e. elected women members of both the town committees. In addition to socio-economic background, their awareness level, efforts made by officials to make them aware of municipal administration , role played by them in urban local self-government, impact on their social status and problems

in their effective participation in municipal government have been specially emphasized. This chapter also explains the data collected with the help of interview schedule from the elected representative of women members; With the help of data collected tables have been arranged and explained.

Chapter -5: Finally, chapter Five presents the conclusion of the study. It also presents some recommendations for improvement of women participation in local self government.

After presenting an introduction to the present study in this chapter like meaning , characteristics and importance of local self-government and also analysis the brief concept of political participation . This chapter also deals with the women participation of local self-government especially 74th amendment of Indian constitution .This chapter also introduces the research problem and its importance and lists objectives , hypothesis, scope and significance and limitation of the study. Now we propose to present a overview participation of women from global context to Local politics in the next chapter.

CHAPTER-II

In this present chapter deals with the meaning and nature of Political Participation; besides it also deals with the political participation of women from global level to local politics. This chapter also analysis the participation of women in electoral politics as well as decision making level in government.

CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political Participation is a very important function in every political system; particularly in democratic political system it has an added dimension. It provides a scope to the people to ventilate their discontentment and opposition against any policy. The aspirations of the people are translated into policies through their participation in the political system. In fact, political participation is the involvement of groups and individuals at various levels in the political system. Structurally, the orbit of political participation includes those legal activities by private citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and their actions.¹⁸

¹⁸Panda Achyutananda ,“Situating Indian Women” , Abhijeet Publications, New Delhi, p-18-19

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation can be of different types; which are as follows

1.Active or passive.

It is active when it is goal-oriented or instrumental and passive when it implies or means mere observation; for example, the act of following some political developments attentively without being involved can be regarded as passive political participation.

2. Conventional or unconventional

It may also be conventional or unconventional, When participation is according to the accepted norm of the dominant group it is regarded as conventional; if not, it is regarded as unconventional; in the unconventional sense, though the form of participation is legal it is not accepted by the dominant group as permissible.

3. Symbolic and instrumental

A distinction is also made between symbolic and instrumental political participation, some acts, such as, saluting the national flag, singing the national anthem, reciting the pledge of allegiance, etc. are examples of symbolic political participation. Instrumental participation deliberately attempts to achieve a definite goal. Political participation as instrumental action is performed with a view to obtaining a specific personnel or policy out come.

4.Broader or narrower

Political participation can be broader or narrower taking into account the nature and extent of involvement in the political process and the issues at stake. While one is very involved in all kinds of political activities it can be regarded as political participation in the broader sense, but when it is limited to only some definite activity like voting in the election or performing an activity to achieve a specific goal it can be regarded as narrower political participation.

5. Violent and peaceful

Political participation can also be violent and peaceful. When the act of participation is associated with violence it is violent political participation; for example, the act of rioting for or against some political goal can be considered as violent political participation. But political participation is peaceful when it is devoid of violence; for example, peaceful demonstration in support or against some public policy can be regarded as peaceful political participation.¹⁹

INDICATORS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

So far as women are concerned, political participation has been conceived of in a narrow sense. It has been mostly conceived of in relation to party politics. But it is not the only expression of political participation. Women's participation does not mean only the mobilization of power to solve their problems. It is much more. It is necessary to apply the women's point of view in policy-making which affects the whole society.

19 ibid-p-20-21

Participation of women in politics involves:

(i) women as voters;

(ii) women as members of political parties, trade unions, pressure groups;

(iii) women as elected members of Parliament, state Assemblies and various bodies of local self-government and taking part in decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation;

(iv) women as members of women's organization and their association with voluntary organizations and NGOs.²⁰

Thus, the participation of women includes the gamut of voluntary activities with an effect on the political process, including voting, support of political groups, communication with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

In almost all societies in almost all periods of history women have been treated as men's inferiors. Sex discrimination has been particularly evident in politics and public affairs. History tells of few powerful queens-Elizabeth I, Anne and Victoria of England; Catherine the Great of Russia, Christina of Sweden. But in most nations of the ancient regime the laws excluded women from succeeding to the throne and so women could play political

20 *ibid*-p-206

roles only as wives and mothers or mistresses of kings.²¹ But women are poorly represented in political field throughout the globe. Women make up less than five percent of the world's heads of the State, heads of major corporations and top positions in international organisations. In Britain, where women were granted franchise way back in 1918, the first woman member took her seat in 1919. In 1970 election, only 26 were returned to the House of Commons, which constituted only 4.1 per cent of the total membership. In US, where women got franchise as far back as August 1920, there were only 10 members, 2.03 per cent only, in House of Representatives. Thus even voting rights were not given to them for such a long time. Their active participation in legislative and executive bodies is only a recent phenomenon.

The right of women to vote had been propagated in America and England since 1850. Wyoming was the first State in the World to adopt female suffrage in 1869 and thirteen American States followed suit before female suffrage was enacted at the national scale by IX Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. New Zealand was the first sovereign state to adopt women suffrage in 1893. Great Britain extended after famous struggle of suffragettes, to women over 30 years in 1918 and to women over 21 in 1928. However, by 1950 in nearly all countries, except Switzerland and some Latin American states, women were given voting right. In Switzerland in 1959 a referendum was held on the question of federal enfranchisement but was defeated. In 1971 similar proposal was accepted.

21 Nagendra S ,“Role of women in Panchayatiraj”, A.B.D Publishers, Jaipur,2006,p30-31

However, in three French speaking cantons women had right to vote and sit in cantonal Legislatures.²²

The Year 1975 was declared to be the women's year. This was followed by the World Conference on Women convened by the United in Mexico City. By way of serious follow-up United Nations declared 1976-85 as Women's decade.

Thereafter on December 18, 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted by the General Assembly on December 18, 1979 reiterated the norm of non-discrimination on the basis of sex and reaffirmed the goal of equality between men and women in nationality, education and employment. It also covered special problems of rural women. At the end of the decade the United Nations convened a World Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, Kenya to appraise the achievements made during the decade for women.

The Fourth World Conference of Women, held in Beijing in September, 1995 included in Platform for Action measures to remove obstacles to women's full participation in public life and decision making at all levels and to ensure women's equal access to and all participation in power structure.

International Labor Organization in its several conventions envisaged protection to working women in respect of maternity relief, working hours, prevention of work during

22 Pande G.S, "Political Participation of Women India", New Royal Book Co. Luck now, 2001, p-4

and underground work to facilitate conditions of work so as to attract women to come forward and attain economic independence by earning livelihood themselves and support family members instead of being dependent upon the earnings of their husbands.²³

WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIA

Position of women in Indian society starts from the early *Vedic* age. This is the period of *Rigveda*, the oldest literary work of mankind. During this period women were given equal status with men in every walk of life i.e., in the matter of production, education, religious rights and freedom of movement. They were given freedom regarding the choice of their husbands. Marriages were performed with the approval of parents though it was not absolutely essential to obtain their consent. Basic features of ancient times of Indian women were as follows:

1. Patriarchal social structure with eldest male member as the head of the family. He enjoyed absolute control over his children.
2. The joint family system existed in which often the relations of wife were also found.
3. Property passed from father to son and the daughters were not given any share but if the daughter happened to be the only child she could claim the property.

23 Ibid-p-18

4. Dowry and bride price were practiced. Dowry was also given when the girl had some physical defects.²⁴

PARTICIPATION OF WOMAN IN ADMINISTRATION DURING MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

Muslim rule in India produced many distinguished women, including Razia Begum, who was prudent and capable daughter of Iltumish, Sultan of Delhi. Razia's military and administrative leadership was superb. Her reign was, therefore, short and she was murdered in 1240 A.D. Rani Durgawati is famous for her heroic resistance to expansionist drive of Akbar, the Great Mughal.²⁵

Nur Jahan (1574-1646), which means the light of the world, was brilliant and beautiful wife of Emperor Jahangir. She was blessed with great artistic, intellectual and administrative talent.

Chand Bibi was the caretaker of the infant King Bahadur in Ahmednagar and died fighting the Mughals setting an example of bravery and courage. Jahanara Begum (1613-1683 A.D.), talented daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan, took great interest in both architecture and decorative gardens.²⁶

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

24 K.A. Kunjakkam, "Feminism and India Realities", Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2002, p-187

25 Ibid-p-201

26 Singh Pritam, "Women Legislators in India Politics", Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003, p.26-27

Women's participation in the Freedom Struggle dates back to 1905. The Swadeshi movement, which was triggered by the British decision to partition Bengal in 1905 saw women's entry into the movement, and the skilful tactics of several women leaders contributed to increase the participation of women in public life. Attempts at mass mobilisation also facilitated this participation. Sarla Devi, daughter of Swarna Kumari Devi started physical culture clubs, began a Swadeshi store for Women's work and organised festivals which celebrated Bengali traditions. She played an important role in the Swadeshi movement until she moved to Lahore. In 1905 some British women who made Indian nationalism their own cause, played important roles as helpers as well as 'catalysts'. such as Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinaragadasa, Margaret Cousins. all Irish feminist and Sister Nivedita.

The Swadeshi movement also marked the formation of several women's organisations, Mahila Shilpa Samiti (1906-1908) was clearly inspired by the Swadeshi movement. Earlier, in 1901, Sarla Devi Choudhrani had formed the Bharat Stri Mahamandal after serious differences with the male leadership of the National Social Conference (NSC).²⁷

In 1908 Seva Sadan was started by the reform oriented leaders of the different communities. In 1904, the leaders of Maharashtra Social Conference (MSC) organised a women's section which held an annual conference during MSC sessions. This conference, the Bharat Mahila Parishad (BMP) organised educational and inspirational programmes in

²⁷ Bano Afsar, "Women and Social Change", Reference Press, New Delhi, 2003,p.53-54

which women of distinction - Ramabai, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu and several others - gave speeches before women. After 1910, women experienced in organising and working in local women's associations, and convinced that women should take the leadership into their own hands, started provincial and national women's organizations. These associations were inevitably elite, bourgeois and urban, consisting of women from the upper class with the advantage of social status, education and privilege. but redeemed by their desire to serve all women. The Young Women's Christian Association of India (YMCA) had become national in 1896. The Women's India Association (WIA) was formed in 1917 in Madras (now called Chennai). In the same year, Sarojini Naidu led a delegation of women formed by Margaret Cousins to the Constitutional Reforms Committee, demanding universal adult franchise .

The National

Council of Women in India (NCWI) was formed In 1925, All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927. By mid-1935, WIA and AIWC claimed membership of over 10,000 women. NCWI developed eight provincial councils by 1934 and had 180 affiliated societies with a membership of over 8000. WIA did not limit itself to fund raising, social service and women's education but also sought to influence government policy on equal rights for women in some areas, and was involved with the issue of suffrage education and social reform. WIA founders included women like Margaret Cousins and Annie

Besant who were not only suffragists but political radicals and critics of imperialism in their own country.

AIWC, which had originally convened only to discuss women's education, became a permanent body which succeeded in developing branches all over India. It called itself a political even had a clause in its constitution prohibiting its engagement in party politics. But by 1932, however, AIMC had involved itself with political rights of women. Although its major focus and priority remained women's question and elimination of women's backwardness. From the beginning, WIA had an interest in home rule and women's suffrage, which was clearly patriotic.

Although women's associations could never decide their stand on the involvement of women in politics, the women in general were ultimately drawn into the vortex of the Freedom Struggle by Mahatma Gandhi. In South Africa, his Satyagraha 'army' had women in it. With his experience of South Africa behind him, Gandhi was aware of the potentialities of women as passive resistance. As he experimented with his weapon of Satyagraha in India, he realised that women could participate in it together with men. With the belief that for the Freedom Movement to be successful it had to be a movement of masses, Gandhi felt that swaraj would be meaningless without reform of social structures and upliftment of the weaker sections, namely the women and the lower social strata, to a position of equality with others.

The salt Satyagraha launched by Gandhiji in March 1930 was extended to a mass campaign at the beginning of April 1930. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay met Gandhi and expressed her desire to be involved in the satyagraha. Durgabai Desmukh met the local leaders of Madras and suggested that they be included in the movement.

On April 6, 1930, the salt laws were ceremoniously broken by Gandhi. Sarojini Naidu and Muthuben Patel were with him. Many women had walked to Dandi and the awakening in the villages was astonishing. Gandhi was arrested and in a statement to the press on 7 April, 1930, Gandhi said that he was becoming increasingly certain that in the struggle for swaraj, the women of this country could contribute a greater share than men.²⁸

In the Civil Disobedience Movement inaugurated by Gandhi in October 1940, women courted arrest in large numbers. One of the first to do so was Sucheta Kripalani, who had been in charge of the women's department of the All India Congress Committee since 1939.

In the 1942 'Quit India Movement' almost all the top leader were immediately arrested, and the movement was practically leaderless. However, women joined in taking out processions, holding meetings and demonstrations and organising strikes. In Assam, young girl, Kanaklata Barua, led a procession of 500 and was killed in the police firings. In Midnapur, Bengal, women played a notable role and were victims of police atrocities. In Bombay, Usha Mehi operated an underground radio station. The Congress Radio,

28 Ibid-p-56-57

broadcasted news at 7.30 PM. from August to November 13th1942, till Usha Mehta along with her colleagues were arrested. She as sentenced to few years rigorous imprisonment and was sent to Yeraveda jail, where she found herself among 250 women political prisoners.²⁹

Aruna Asaf Ali was one of the most important figures of 1942. For four years she remained underground, avoiding arrest. She published bulletins and edited along with Ram Manohar Lohia '*The Inquilab*'.

In January 1942, the Indian Independence League was formed in Kuala Lumpur and Indian women in Southeast Asia worked for the cause of India's freedom. In March 1943, a women section of the league was started and Indian women in Malaya, Thailand and Burma, enlisted as volunteers on the call of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Women's participation in the freedom struggle paved the new era for nation as well as for women themselves.³⁰

WOMEN AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The Independent India continued the process of enacting legislative measure to raise legal status of Indian women. The status of Indian women after Independence during 1947 is well known to us and to the entire world. The Indian constitution explicitly and

29 Jha Madhu, "women in decision making positions: where number matter", Kanishka publishers, New Delhi, 2005,p-25-26

30 Desai Neera & Thakkar Usha, "Women in India Society", National Book Trust, India,2007, p.12,14

categorically granted sex equality. Indian women have political rights fully equal to those of men.

The Constitution of India from 1950, guarantees equal opportunity for participation in politics to both men and women. Women were given this right equally with men in recognition and as a token of appreciation by the national leaders for the massive role played by them in the freedom struggle. The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolves to secure to all its citizens. Justice, social and economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all, fraternity, assuming the dignity of all individuals and the unity of the nation.

The Indian constitution came into force in 1950 guaranteeing Indian citizens and non-citizens certain basic human rights called as fundamental Rights.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN

Fundamental rights

The Constitution of India has guaranteed certain rights to women, so that their interest can be safeguarded. They are as follows: •

Art. 14: The State shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of law within the territory of India.

Art 15(1): The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

Art. 15(2): No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition.

Art. 15(3): Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

Art. 16(1): There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under state.

Art. 16(2): No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the state.

Directive Principle of State Policy

Art. 39: The state shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:

(a) That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

(b) That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

(c) That the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength.

Art. 42: The state to make provision for recurring just and humane condition of work and for maternity relief.

Local self government

Art. 243 (D) (3): Not less than one-third (including the number or seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Art. 243 (0) (4): Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women.

Art. 243 (T) (3): Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes)” of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

Art. 243 (T) (4) : Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide. ³¹

31 Sharma Seema & Sharma Kanta ,*“Women and Politics”*, Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi,2006,p.141-142

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN POLITICS

The participation of women in the electoral process is an indicator of their political consciousness as well as their aspiration for status enhancement. The active participation of women in the freedom struggle simultaneously developed among them an increasing sense of awareness to organise and lead the cause of their liberation from oppression and subordination. After independence, a large number of legal and socio-economic measures have been taken to elevate the status of women. Women too, have become politically conscious as they have started participating in national and state politics. Independence of India opened the doors for the women of the country to find their due place in society and partake in the political, social and administrative life of the country. The advent of democracy in India brought forth the spectacle of women moving up along in the corridors of political power, which has brought them new opportunities both as voters and candidates. They entered the two houses of the Indian parliament in their own way and some of them made a mark therein.

Table 1
Women Members in the Lok Sabha (1952-2014)

Year of Lok Sabha Elections	Total No of Seats	No. Of Women Contestants	No. Of Women Member Elected	Percentage of Women
1952	499	51	22	4.4
1957	500	45	22	4.4
1962	503	66	31	6.1
1967	523	67	29	5.5

1971	521	86	22	4.2
1977	544	70	19	3.4
1980	544	143	28	5.1
1984	544	162	42	7.7
1989	529	198	29	5.4
1991	544	326	37	6.8
1996	541	599	40	7.3
1998	545	274	43	7.8
1999	543	284	49	9.02
2004	543	355	45	8.2
2009	543	556	59	10.8
2014	543	631	62	11.4

Source: Statistical Report on General Elections, Election Commission of India, New Delhi-2014

Women representation in Indian political system has remained abysmally poor even after seven decades of Indian independence. The table 1 shows the trend of women participation and representation in the Lok Sabha of Indian Parliament. It can be observed that there has been a steady growth in women participation especially in contesting the Lok Sabha elections. From 51 in 1952 to 631 in 2014, the women contestants has increased manifold. However, women representation in Parliament has not significantly grown up. Women parliamentarians constituted 4.4 percents in 1952 where as the representation rose only up to 11.4 percent only in the 2014. In 1977, the year marked

with victory of democratic forces after the Emergency, women contestants as well as share of women representation went down significantly.

Table 2
Women in the Council of Ministers (1952-2014)

Year of Lok Sabha Elections	Total No. Of Ministers	No. Of Women Ministers	Percentage
1952	26	2	7.6
1957	38	3	7.8
1962	52	8	15.3
1967	51	5	9.8
1971	53	4	7.5
1977	44	4	9.09
1980	51	6	11.7
1985	40	4	10
1989	39	2	5.12
1991	39	9	23.07
1995	49	5	10.20
1996	39	4	10.25

1998	42	4	9.52
2002	80	7	8.75
2004	67	7	10.4
2009	79	7	8.8
2014	46	7	15.2

Source: Statistical Report on General Elections, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.2014

Not only in terms of political representation, but also in matters of highest decision making, women are lagging far behind in India. As we have seen in the tables above, women representation in the Parliament has remained negligible. Similarly, the highest decision making body of the country, the Council of Ministers, also lacks proper representation from the women. The table 3 shows the trends of women representation in the Council of Ministers of India. Although, the size of the Ministry has been increasing during different regimes, the share of women Ministers has not been increased. The share of women ministers was 7.6 percent in 1952 where as in 2009 the share was only 8.8 percent showing a marginal increase. Although, the share of women ministers had been 23.7 percent in 1991, the number of women minister has never reached a double digit figure during the last seven decades of Indian democracy.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ASSAM

Women of Assam have their glorious history right from the ancient times. It is mentioned in the religious scriptures that Lord Sri Krishna, the supreme deity of the Hindus, came

personally to Kundil Nagar (near present Sadiya of the district of Dibrugarh) to marry Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhiamaka and the people of Assam are still proud of it. History has witnessed the heroic role performed by Assamese women at various ages. Sati Jaymati, Sati Sadhani, Mula Gabharu, Ramni Gabharu are some of the heroines of the history to whom the people of Assam pay their homage for their bravery and idealism. Woman forms an integral part of any social structure. Society in Assam has by and large a tribal background. Although Vedic or Hindu influences played an important role in moulding her social status, many accepted social values long prevailing in the society could not be disregarded. Status of women in tribal societies being high, this had its impact in non-tribal societies enabling women to play an active role in administration and politics.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL ASSAM

Medieval Assam witnessed the participation of women in different fields in administration. The history of medieval Assam beginning with the 13th century till the implementation of the British colonial rule in the early 19th century was marked by the formation and disintegration of a number of tribal states like those of the *Morans*, the *Barahis*, the *Shuteyes*, the *Kacharis*, the *Koches* and the *Jayantiyas*. Throughout this period, the form of government in all the states was monarchical. As there was no representative system of government, the question of enjoying political rights by men or women does not arise. In the village assemblies which were democratic institutions, it was the men folk who participated in the deliberations. Though there was no formal share for

women in the administration of the country, yet there are instances of some of women who played important role in the politics either behind the screen or outside it.

The long rule of the Ahoms extending for six centuries was full of such examples of accomplished women who participated in politics and administration. The first instance is of the chief queen of king Taokhamthi (1380-89) When this king was out on an expedition against the *Chutiyas*, he appointed his chief queen, she was power-loving and jealous. She misused the authority entrusted to her and created resentment by ordering the execution of her co-wife and making and unmaking officers at her own sweet will.

Queen Chuauching, the consort of Swargadeo Suklenmung, the Gargaya Raja (1539-1552) Contrary to the queen of Tao-Khamthi she was possessed of qualities of head and heart..³²

Nangbakla Gabharu, the wife of Taomung Bar Gohain sets and example of bravery and determination. When she had to send her son to the Koch Kingdon as a hostage, she appeared in the court, rebuked the King Sukhampha (1552-1603) alias Khora Raja and his ministers for their disastrous defeat at the hands of the Koches.

Assamese women are proud of the heroine Mula Gabharu, wife of Phrasenmung Borgohain, who died fighting against the Muslim General Turbak in 1532 A.D. When she get the news of her husband's death at the hands of the Muslims, she took up arms along with five of her companions to take revenge on the enemy. She fought from the horse-

32 Baruah S.L, "Status of Women in Assam", Omson Publication, New Delhi, 1992, p.103-104

back and greatly impressed the enemy camp by her skill in fighting. But finally she fell in the battle-field.

Phuleswari, Ambika and Shareware, the three consorts of the Ahom King Siva Singha (1714-44) had directly ruled the country assuming the title 'Bar-Raja' When it was predicted by astrologers that king Siva Singha was under the evil influence of the stars (Chatra-Bhanga-joga) as a result of which he might lose his throne, he was advised to hand over the charges of government to someone. The king at the instruction of his priest Krishna ram Battacharyya decided to hand over the reins of the government to his chief queen Phuleswari. The latter taking the reins of the government to her hands assumed the name pramatheswari, took the title 'Bar-Raja' and minted coins in the joint name of herself and her husband, where she used the persian legend, the first of its kind in Assam. She changed the old burial system of the Ahoms and introduced the system of burning the dead. She arranged a *Durga Puja* where all the Vaishnava preceptors were invited. They were compelled to bow their heads before the image of Durga and take '*Nirmali*' and '*prasad*'. Their fore-heads were also besmeared with the blood of the sacrificed animals which was a great insult to the *Moamariya* Mahanta in Particular and which served as one of main causes for the Moamariya Rebellion. Queen Phuleswari offered many important portfolios to her own relatives, Phuleswari was succeeded by her sister Ambika as Bar-Raja, who was a great patron of learning and education. She was the inspiring soul behind the composition of the *Hasti Vidyaranava*, a work on elephant logy of international repute. She also had the famous tank at Sibs agar excavated and on its bank three temples

were constructed dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Devi, Women particularly of the upper classes were conscious of political affairs. Jaymati, the daughter of Laithepena Bargohain and wife of the great Ahom king Gadadhar Singha(1680-96), was well aware of the political situation of the kingdom. She was greatly confident that her husband was the man of the hour to set things in order in the prevailing situation of anarchy and misrule and she was reluctant to say anything about the whereabouts of her husband and sacrificed her life for the good of the country. Ramani Gabharu, daughter of king Jayadhavaj Singha (1648-63) was sent to the Mughal harem when she was a minor as a sequel to the treaty concluded between the Mughals and Ahoms after the latter's defeat at the hands of the great Mughal general Mir Jumla. When she was grown up, she was married to the third son of Emperor Aurangzeb, Sultan Azan and named Rahmat Banu. Her maternal uncle Laluksola Bar-Phukan, with a view to becoming the king of Assam sought help from Sultan Azam, as a reward for which, he proposed to surrender Guwahati to the Mughals. When this came to be known, by Ramani Gabharu, she wrote a very spirited letter to her uncle urging upon him not to take this ignoble action and stating that surrendering Guwahati means offering the heart of Assam to the Mughals. The power-loving official did not listen to her words but Ramani Gabharu will always be remembered for her genuine love towards her country and people.

Kuranganayani, the Manipuri queen of Rajeswar Singha (1751-69), was instrumental in terminating the rule of the Moamariyas. Pijau Gabharu, the daughter of Badanchandra

Borphukon married to Oreshenath, the third son of Purnananda Buragohain also played a important role in politics.

Numali Rajmao, the mother of Kamaleswar Singha and Chandrakanta Singha took much interest in politics. During the minority of Chandra anta Singha, though the reins of the Government was actually in the hands of Premier Purnananda Buragohain. he always sought the advice and guidance of Rajmao and consulted her in all complicated efficient.³³

There were heroic and talented women among the Chutiyas, Morans, Kacharis and Koches also. The Chutiya queen Sadhani, wife of Nitipal took active part in politics as Nitipal had a humble origin, he had no knowledge about statecraft and diplomacy. He was therefore at all times guided by his queen Sadhani. When the Chutiyas were defeated at the hands of the Ahoms in 1523. A.D. She refused to part with her family heirloom and preferring death to dishonour jumped from the Chandangiri hill with family heirloom and thus met her death.

In tie Koch court also, female attendants played an important role in deciding the fate of a king. In the Koch politics also, particular1y in the Ahom-Koch relations women often.Influenced political matters. Naranarayan, after his imprisonment of his brothers Chilaral at Gauda wanted to release the Ahom hostages with a view to winning the goodwill of the Ahom King. Then the Chief Queen told that a direct release would amount to protesting his weakness before the Ahom King. She suggested him to hold a game of dice and pretend defeat at the hands of Sundar Gohaing the brother of the Ahom King,

33 Ibid-105-106

who was staying at his court as a hostage. Thus women in different capacities played an important role in societies of medieval Assam. There were women like Radha and Rukmini, wives of the Moran leader Nahar Khora Saikia, who showed much courage in the battle-field and took a leading part in the Moamaria rebellion. In the second stage of the rebellion women were even receiving military training under the leadership of Harihar Tati of the north bank.³⁴

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN ASSAM

The participation of the women of Assam in the early nineteenth century state polity was restricted only to the female members of the royal or noble families, mostly in connection with issues like claims for the throne for near relatives or attempts to install a prince on it. The contemporary social condition was also not congenial for the emergence of the womanhood as a socio-political force. The Burmese invasion in the early part of the 19th century followed by the British annexation and import of alien cultural elements into the province adversely affected the otherwise free and simple life of the women of the Brahmaputra valley. Prior to these changes, the women belonging to the fold of the traditional peasantry in Assam enjoyed a social status almost at par with their male counterparts. They were free from the social evils, like Sati, Purdah, dowry, etc. before the import of the alien culture. But under the changed socio-political environment, the liberty of the women became restricted and they became more dependent on men which led to

34 Tungkhungia Buranji,ed, S.k. Bhuyan, 2nd Edition, Gauhati,1964,p.200

greater male domination. Even then practices like, Sati, infanticide, etc. could not enter Assamese social life.³⁵

In the period before 1915, there was no organized movement or women's participation in social and political fields, The Assam Association as a socio-political organization of that period could not enlist the women folk to play any direct role in it. However, the formation of the Dibrugarh Mahila Sarniti in 1915 marked the beginning of women's organization in the Brahmaputra valley districts of Assam.

The emergence of Gandhiji in the political scene, his tremendous confidence in women's capability and his high impression of the women of Assam, encouraged the women to fight for the cause of the nation throwing away their nineteenth century seclusion. Gandhi's visit to Assam in 1921 gave enough sense of self-confidence to the women and they were drawn to the national political life by his charismatic personality. But the participation of women in the 1921 movement was, however, shall in scale and their involvement was largely elitist in character. The important factor for this was traditionalism and the family influence. Political awakening in the national context was confined to the women relatives of provincial Congress leaders and workers with middle class background of the urban areas and very few women associated themselves with other socio-cultural activities. The sense of nationalism and identification with the freedom movement among the message of the rural women was negligible during this

35 Sharma Dipti , "Assamese Women In the Freedom Struggle", Ashok Book Stall, 2013,p.240

period. However small in number, the contribution made by the women of the Brahmaputra valley in the noncooperation movement was significant. They gave the lead to the vast mass of energetic and confident women to come forward to participate in the movement.

In the days when the rural people could not think of any alternative to the British Raj, few women workers with great dedication took up organizational work among the rural women to inform them about the socio-political situation of the state, enlighten about their duties and responsibilities towards the state, about their dues, to spread the message of Gandhi and Congress, to educate them in the art of the expressing their views, the need of being aware of the danger if they continue to be ruled by foreigners and to become involved in the programmes of the Congress. During the post 1921 period, the anti-opium and anti drinking campaigns penetrated deep into the minds of the people and herein a significant contribution was made by the women. Malati Mem, alias Mungri, whose name should have figured among the martyrs of this period, had sacrificed her life for the cause of the effect of movement in 1921. The most important achievement on the part of the women Congress workers of 1921-22 period was the revitalization of the during craft of spinning and weaving as a medium to make the programme of boycott of foreign goods more effective.³⁶

With the widening of the scope of the freedom movement, the women of the rural areas were gradually drawn to it in even large number. It was achieved either through the

36 Ibid-p.242

efforts of the Mahila Samitis or through efforts of women leaders. The formation of the Dibrugarh Mahila Samiti in 1915 was followed by formation of organizations in different parts of Assam. The effort on the part of women of different places of Assam and the participation by a section of women in the 1921 phase of the movement paved the way for the development of the Asom Mahila Samiti at the provincial level in 1926. The formation of the provincial organization was a landmark in the history of women's organization in Assam. It afforded a common platform for the women of the province to ventilate their views and assert their political and social rights. The forty-first session of the Indian National Congress held at Pandu (Assam) gave the women of Assam an opportunity to display their devotion to the Congress. By producing the entire Khadi required for the decoration of the Congress pandal and other temporary constructions of the complex, the women of the valley demonstrated their skill in spinning and weaving on the one hand and their sense of duty and patriotism on the other.³⁷

The incorporation of the ideals of constructive Programme of the Congress in the objectives of the Asom Mahila Samiti (AMS), helped in the mobilization of women to participate in the programmes of the freedom movement. The Asom Mahila Samiti emerged in this period as an action-oriented body, which supplemented the Congress efforts in drawing more and more women to the movement.

37 Bhuyan, A., (ed), Nationalist Upsurge in Assam, Das P., 'Women Satyagrahis and the Quit India Movement', Government of Assam, Dispur, Guwahati, 2000, p 146.

In the period between 1930 and 1934, the women throughout India came to the forefront of the movement. In Assam they took up publicity works, held meetings, organized processions, picketed liquor, opium and foreign goods shops, and in the course of participation in these activities they faced police lathi charge, courted arrested and suffered imprisonment. The large scale participation by the women of the Brahmaputra valley in this phase of the movement indicated their identification with ideals and ethos of the national movement.

In the 1940-41 Satyagraha, because of the restrictions in the first two phases, the women could participate only in the third phase. The opening of the women's Department in the APCC in 1941, was an important step in the direction of drawing the women closer to the Congress. In reality, the activities of women's organizations were merged with those of the Congress with the formation of the women's department within the Congress.

The quit India movement drew the largest number of women to the forefront of the movement. They came out to join the movement with the preparedness to face any eventuality that might come in the way of attaining the independence of India. At least thirteen (13) women of the Brahmaputra valley, in the age group of 13 to 65 years, had laid down their lives in the quit India movement, and many became invalid for the whole life because of police and military beatings, bayonet charge and firing. The women of this region possibly surpassed all other women of the country in terms of their courage and sacrifice in the 1942 upheaval.

The sufferings of the women of this part of Assam, in 1942-43 period knew no bounds. Police and military atrocities of all kinds became a part of daily life for the women of all ages. The womenfolk of Now gong were subjected to the worst types of atrocities in the name of suppression of the uprising. In the jails too, the women prisoners had to face diverse types of maltreatment.

The 1944-46 period of the movement in Assam is marked by the achievements of women in constructive programmes. This programme found a fertile ground in Assam. The women made immense contributions to the success of these programmes in Assam.

The women of Assam in their heart of hearts were Indians and were wholly wedded to the ideal of Indian nationalism. The women of this part of Assam once again demonstrated their loyalty to the nation and their determination by playing a commendable role in the anti Grouping movement in 1946-47.³⁸

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

In pre independence period women were also participated in electoral politics. In 1937 legislative election women contested in that election, Miss Mavis Dunn was elected to Assam legislative assembly from Shillong, She was the first women of Assam to be elected to provincial legislative Assembly.

38 Chandra, B, Tripathi. Barun, D.E, Freedom Struggle, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 129–30.

The government of India Act of 1935 provided representation of women by reservation in the Assam Legislative Assembly because there was greater number of women in Shillong than in any other state. The Act permitted women to contest in general elections also. In 1937 two women candidates contested the reserved seats as independent candidates. For the first time in political history of Assam. One woman became a member of the Legislative Assembly. The number of women who contested the general election. in 1946 was five. Only one candidate was nominated by the Congress. Four candidates contested the reserved seats for women in Shillong. Padma Kumari Gohain, who was the first Assamese to contest elections, was a municipal commissioner prior to her candidature contesting the elections as an Independent candidate. But she lost her security deposit as she polled only 839 votes. ³⁹

39 Dutta Anuradha "Political parties and women: Aspects of the issue with reference to the situation in Assam" in Niroj Sinha (Ed) - "Women in Indian Politics" Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi-2006.p-223

**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS AFTER
INDEPENDENCE**

Table-3

Participation of women in Lok Sabha Elections from 1952 to 2014

Year of Elections	Female Contestants	Total Elected Male	Total Elected Female	% of women Participation
1952	2	10	1	9.09
1957	2	12	0	0
1962	3	10	2	16.29
1967	2	13	1	7.14
1971	3	13	1	7.14
1977	3	12	2	14.29
1980	2	14	0	0
1984	0	0	0	0
1989	0	0	0	0
1991	7	14	0	0
1996	9	13	1	7.14
1999	9	12	2	14.29
2004	4	14	0	0
2009	11	12	2	14.29

2014	9	12	2	14.29

**Source: Reports of Election Commission of India,
New Delhi-2014**

The scene of women participation in Assam has been even worse than that of the national level. Table 4 shows the trend of women representation in the national political system. Women representation has never been significant in case of elected members to the Lok Sabha. In six elections, women representation from Assam was zero and the same has never been more than 2 representatives in any of the Lok Sabha elections. It is important to note that number of women contestants has also not been increasing in case of Assam against an increasing trend in the national level. In Assam, number of women contestants in the Lok Sabha Election has rose from 2 in 1952 to 11 in 2009. However, in the national level the number rose from 51 to 631. It has been evident that Assam has poor women representation in the national level.

Table 4
Participation of women in Assam Assembly Elections from 1952 to 2011

Year of Election	Total no. of Contestant	Male contestant	Female Contestant	Total Elected Men	Total Elected Women	% of women Representation
1952	458	449	6	105	2	1.90
1957	312	304	6	102	5	4.68
1962	409	405	4	101	4	3.81
1967	492	486	6	121	4	3.17

1972	522	510	12	114	0	0
1978	938	916	22	125	1	0.79
1985	1133	1124	29	121	5	3.96
1991	1657	1607	50	121	5	3.97
1996	1228	1183	45	116	6	4.76
2001	916	861	55	116	10	7.94
2006	997	927	70	113	13	10.32
2011	981	896	85	112	14	11.11

Source: Statistical Report on General Elections, Election Commission of India, New Delhi-2011

In a similar line to the women participation in the national level, the state Assembly elections in Assam also demonstrate that women representation and participation has remained low. The share of women elected representatives in Assam Assembly was 1.9 percent only in 1952 which has increased to 11.11 percent in 2011. Table 5 shows a steady trend in the women representation in the state assembly elections. However, 1972 and 1978 assembly elections show the state of women representation in Assam. In 1972, not a single woman could win and in 1978, only one women member got elected. It has been observed that women participation in the political processes of the country has not achieved any mileage at a time when movements are going on for reservation of seats in the Parliament and state Assemblies.

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN URBAN LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT

In the urban local self- government politics the participation of women has increased after 1990s. The Assam Municipal act 1956 has provided ample opportunity for women to participation in grass root politics or municipal government. The 74th constitution amendment act 1992 provided for 1/3 reservation for women in Municipal government elections. As a result, thousands of women got the opportunity to participate in urban local politics.

CONSTRAINTS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

Some of the major constraints that prevent women from effective participation at local level are observed as follows:

1. Lack of orientation / training in urban development issues and municipal administration.
2. No proper knowledge / orientation about municipal acts and rules and regulations.
3. No prior experience about dealing with multidimensional urban development issues / civic issues and its complexities.
4. Lack of support from senior male / female colleagues in the party / municipal body.
5. Less co-operation from municipal officials understanding about various facets of the budget, such as allocation of budget at ward level .

6. Lack of party support and poor organizational structure.
7. Specific notions towards politics and political atmosphere.
8. Fear and insecurity.
9. Lack of confidence in public speaking.⁴⁰

After presenting a brief overview of meaning and types of political participation to the present study in this chapter like participation of women from global level to local level from administrative to local electoral politics. Now we propose to present a origin and evolution of local self government from global context to Assam in the next chaptre

CHAPTER-III

In present chapter deals with growth and evolution of local self government from global to local context.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

There are numerous local governments in the world. Hence it is difficult to make incontrovertible generalization about the nature of local government. It is difficult even to isolate the critical variables that shape it. However, five main systems of local government may be postulated in the world viz unitary decentralized, Napoleonic prefect, federal decentralized, local government system of communist countries, and post-colonial systems.

Unitary Decentralised:-

40 Srivastava sanjay "A study of the Political aspects of women empowerment in India", U.B. Singh (Ed) Empowerment of women in urban administration, serials publications, new Delhi,2006, p-125-126

Integration of local and central authorities is one of the salient features of the modern English local government and that of the Scandinavian countries. Both constitute part and parcel of one governmental system and their relationship is one of partnership and collaboration in a single Organism, Possessing one common, ultimate purpose, and an integrated system of institutions for that purpose. The relation between the central government and the local authorities is not that of an omnipotent controlling authority and its agents but of partners in an enterprise- the carrying on of efficient administration. Lockard categories unitary decentralized system as that system (that is non federal) which has stood for a considerable degree of decentralization of autonomous powers of localities.⁴¹

Napoleonic Prefect:-

Quite a different system or set up prevails in France. The French system of local government is highly centralized. In France the minister of Interior presses the button and the prefects, the sub-prefects, the mayors and the deputy mayors do the rest. According to lockard, such a system may be described as the Napoleonic prefect system. The peculiarity of this style of local government is that the central government places in sub-regions of the nation an agent of the central government to oversee and if necessary to countermand suspend or replace local government.⁴²

41 Duane, Lockard, An article on Local Government in International Encyclopaedia of social sciences, Vol, IX, (1968) p.451

42 Sharma Manoj, "Local Government :Rural and Urban" ,Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 2004, p-92-93

Federal-Decentralized System:-

In U.S.A, Canada, Australia, Germany and Switzerland, the underlying basis of local government is the principle of local self-determination, according to which every community is given a substantial measure of freedom in the administration of its own affairs. This saves the local government from rigid control from the above. However, the degree of autonomy of local governments varies from country to, but in all cases a considerable degree of local independence prevails. Such a system has been described as federal- decentralized system according to the international Encyclopedia.

Local Government System in Communist Countries:-

The government systems in the communist countries are examples of deconcentration of authority rather than decentralization. In other words, the local government unit is an agency of the central government and its functions are an integral element of hierarchical administrative system of the state. The area of local independence is narrow and extends only two minor matters whereas control devices are extensive and vigorously applied.

Post- Colonial system:-

Post colonial system is the fifth category of local governments in the world. The creation of new nations from former colonies involves varying degrees of change in local government. In some cases the imposition of a strong single party political system has subverted old patterns almost entirely, in others where adjustment rather than revolutionary change have been made, local government patterns have not altered

drastically. The legacy of colonialism is omnipresent however much the new leaders strive for break with the colonial past.⁴³

LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT ANCIENT INDIA

The earliest period in Indian history belongs to Indus valley civilization which was essentially urban in character. The excavations done at Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and other places in Punjab. Haryana and Rajasthan reveal that, they were amongst some of the oldest planned cities of the world. They were laid out with wide streets market places, public offices community baths and drainage and sewerage system. They thus testify to the existence of a vigilant and effective municipal government. The people of the Indus civilization had the proud distinction of giving to the world its earliest cities. Its first urban civilization, its first town planning, its first drainage system and its earliest example of city government. So far as urban local government of India is concerned, it has been said that the Vedic civilization was essentially rural. But the towns and cities had developed later. References of several cities are found in Mahabharata.⁴⁴

The urban local government had well developed during the Nanda, Maurya and Gupta periods. There were several cities in Punjab at the time of Alexander s invasion. Most of them were autonomous to a great extent being governed by their own councils. The chief

43 Bhagwan vishnoo and Bhushan Vidya, "Public Administration" S. Chand & Company Ltd. Ram Nagar, New Delhi-2003,p.706-707

44 Sharma M.P. & Sadna B.L, "Political Administration in theory and Practice", Kitab Mahal, Allahbad ,2010,p.840-841

officer of the town was called *Sarvarthachintaka* by this time. During the Gupta period this officer was usually called *purple*. Sometimes he was a district officer as well and very often *purples* were military captains as well. Sometimes these *purples* were selected from among the scholars. The *purple* or the governor was assisted by a non-official committee variously called as *goshithi panchkula* or *chaukadika* in different parts of the country. All classes and interests were represented in this committee. Sometimes the town was divided into wards and these wards elected their representatives on the committee. This committee used to have an executive of its own for the speedy and convenient dealing of business. In Rajputana and Central India this executive was called *Vara*. It was their duty to look after all the executive work the collection of taxes, the investment and recovery of public funds the administration of trust funds etc. The *varikas* were assisted in their work by a permanent office and staff. A permanent secretary (*Karnaika*) was in charge of the records and correspondence of the committee. An officer called *Kauptika* used to be appointed for collecting the market dues which probably were the major part of the local finance. Nasik in Maharashtra had its own town council. The city of Aihola in Karnataka had its own corporation throughout the Rashtrakuta and Chalukya periods.⁴⁵

LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT MEDIEVAL INDIA

Democratic and self-governing institutions of local government suffered a decline during the Muslim rule in India-both in the pre-Mughal and Mughal periods. The Muslim

45 Ibid-p-843

administration in India as in other countries of those times was feudal and non-democratic. Functions of the government were reduced in number. The Sultanate of Delhi was despotic with a highly centralized bureaucracy. The civil administration of the city was vested in *Muhtasib*. He had multifarious functions including looking after public utilities such as water supply and wells, provision of amenities for travelers, maintenance of public buildings, demolition of houses which were likely to collapse, supervising the markets, inspection of weights and measures and prevention of adulteration of food. etc. which in modern times are regarded as municipal functions.⁴⁶

Not much is known about the urban administration in pre-Mughal India. All Muslim rulers and especially the Mughals were urban living people. The Mughals had developed a fairly elaborate system of local government. Each town was generally divided into a number of wards, and each ward was inhabited by a particular community. There was a *Mir Mohalla* for every *Mohalla* or ward who was the spokesman of the people residing therein. The head of the town administration was an officer called *Kotwal* who not only exercised supreme authority in matters magisterial police and fiscal, but also performed many municipal functions. Abul Fazal in his book *Aini Akbari* described the functions of the *Kotwal*. He was the governor of the city who combined in himself the official powers and the duties of the chief of the city police, magistrate and prefect of the municipal administration. Since the structure of the society was feudal the vast powers and various functions of the state were concentrated in an individual or institution. The set-up of the

46 Singh Pankaj , "Urban Local Government in India", Kitab Mahal , Allahbad, 2013,p-24

Mughal administration was such that no democratic administration in the area of local government was possible. The local people were not associated with the management of civic affairs and the urban government functioned as direct dependence of and, rigorously controlled by the central administration.⁴⁷

LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT IN INDIA DURING COLONIAL PERIOD

Origin and evolution of Local self Government in colonial period is divided into five phases, Which are as follows:-

FIRST PHASE

The first phase of the development of local government in India began in 1687 when the Court of Directors ordered the setting up of a Corporation in Madras. The Corporation consisting of

British and Indian powers, was authorized to levy taxes for building a guildhall, a jail, a school house for meeting the expenses of municipal staff and for such further ornaments

47 Myneni S.R, "Local Self Government", Law Publishers, Hyderabad, 2016,p-77

and edifices as shall be thought convenient for the honour, interest, security and defence of the town and its inhabitants.

However, the experiment proved a failure because the residents strongly opposed payment of direct taxes. Therefore the Mayor sought permission from the authorities to collect octroi duty (an indirect tax) to meet the expenses for scavenging etc. The Charter Act of 1726 abolished the Corporation and set up a Mayor's Court. The Mayor's Court enjoyed more judicial and less administrative power. The Charter also set up similar courts at Bombay and Calcutta.

Another important step in the development of the local government was the passing of the Act of 1850 which provided for establishment of municipal bodies in the entire country. This Act was also of a voluntary nature and provided for indirect taxation, to which the Indians had been accustomed. Taking advantage of this Act municipal committees were set up in several towns of Bombay and North Western Province (present U.P.). A further impetus to the development of local government was provided by the publication of the Royal Army Sanitary Commission in 1868.⁴⁸

Lord Mayo's Resolution

Mayo's Resolution on Financial Decentralisation marked another stage in the evolution of local government in India. This resolution advocated decentralization from the centre to the provinces and emphasised the desirability of associating the Indians with the

48 Raychoudhary S.C., "History of Modern India". Surjeet Publications, Dehli, 2011, p-212

administration. It transferred the control of certain departments to the provincial governments. These departments included education, medical service, roads etc. The provincial governments were authorised to resort to local taxation to balance their budgets.

To implement the policy outlined in Lord Mayo's resolution of 1870 the various provincial governments passed numerous municipal acts. Bengal took a lead in this regard by passing the Bengal District Board Cess Act 1871, which introduced local self-government in rural Bengal. Similar acts were also passed by the governments of Madras, North West Provinces and the Punjab. It encouraged the general application of the principle of election in the municipal government. Pursuant to this Resolution, Municipal Acts were passed which enlarged the municipal powers, extended the election system and made a beginning of the system of local finance.⁴⁹

49 Ibid-213-214

SECOND PHASE

The second period in the evolution of local governments in India began with Lord Ripon's administration who earned the nickname of "Father of local self-government in India." Up to now the local government had remained almost wholly non-Indian. Therefore from the viewpoint of the people of India, the local government was neither local nor self-government. Lord Ripon's reforms constitute a landmark in the history of local government in India, because they attempted, for the first time, to put it on a popular elective basis.

Lord Ripon passed a resolution in 1882 which had the following main features:

- (1) Local bodies were to have elected non-government members and chairmen.
- (2) The state control over local government bodies was to be indirect rather than direct (from without and not from within).
- (3) Local bodies were to be endowed with certain local sources of revenue and grants from provincial governments in order to carry out these functions.
- (4) Local bodies personnel and deputed personnel were to operate under the administrative control of the local bodies.
- (5) Provincial governments were to pass necessary Acts according to local conditions prevailing in their respective provinces.

Thereafter several Provincial Acts were passed establishing local bodies in urban and rural areas. Bombay Municipal Act was passed in 1888. The Madras system was considered quite advanced. An important development after Lord Ripon's resolution was the appointment of the Royal Commission on Decentralization in 1907 to enquire into the financial and administrative relations of the Government of India and the Provincial governments and the authorities subordinate to them.⁵⁰

Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1908)

In 1907 the Government of India appointed a Commission to study the financial and administrative relations of the central government with the provincial governments and local bodies, and to report whether more decentralisation was desirable to improve the system of government at various levels. The Commission which submitted its report in 1909, came to the conclusion that Indian local bodies had not developed as anticipated by Lord Ripon, and suggested certain measures to tone up the local government system.

The principal recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Decentralization were as follows :

- 1.The village should be treated as the basic unit of local self-government institutions and every village should have a Panchayat. In urban areas Municipalities should be constituted.

- 2.Local bodies should have elected majority.

50 Singh Pankaj ,“Urban Local Government in India”, Kitab Mahal , 2013,p-27-28

3.The municipalities should elect their own President although the District Collector may continue to be the President of the District Local Board.

4.Municipalities should have authority to prepare their own budgets and determine the taxes. The Government should provide grants to municipalities for public works like water-supply, drainage etc.

5.Local bodies should have full control over their employees.

6.Outside control over local bodies should be confined to advice, suggestions and audit only.

7.Government should exercise control over municipal powers regarding raising of local loans etc. Prior approval of the government should be insisted for lease or sales of municipal properties.⁵¹

THIRD PHASE

Third phase of developments taking place in the area of local self-government after the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. By this time the national movement had become quite strong. The Indians were demanding Swaraj. Under the pressure of the national movement and to elicit the cooperation of the people of India in its War effort, the British Government issued a historic declaration on August 20.1917 announcing the establishment of responsible government in the country as its ultimate aim. In 1918 the Montague-Chelmsford Report for constitutional reforms in the country came out. It recommended that there should be as far as possible, complete popular control on local bodies and the largest possible independence for them from outside control.

51 Ibid-29-30

Consequently the Government of India in its resolution of May 16, 1918, recommended to the Provinces that municipal boards should contain a majority of elected members, voting qualification should be lowered, Chairmen should be non-officials, they should be free to raise local taxes within statutory limits. etc. Senior appointments in the local government service were to be approved by the government. Outside control was to be considerably reduced.

The Government of India Act 1919 established diarchy in the Provinces transferring local government to popular control. Ministers elected by the people and responsible to the Provincial legislature, too charge of the portfolio of the local government. The Act laid down schedule of taxes which could be levied only by or for the local bodies. This enlarged not only the sphere of action of the local bodies but also gave them a little more financial autonomy. Various Provinces amended their Municipal Acts to increase the powers and independence of municipal councils. The voting qualifications were also lowered an elected elements increased. Several princely states also emulated the example of British Provinces and gradually began to set up local bodies although their powers and democratic structure were limited.

The Act of 1919 made local self-government a transferred subject and some progress was made. The great difficulty was that Finance was a reserved subject and enough money was not available for the transferred subject of local self-government.

The Indian Statutory Commission (1930) gave a very balanced assessment of the working of local self-government in India. It held that the local government in India had neither been “unrelieved failure, nor unqualified success.” It observed “In every province, while a few local bodies have discharged their responsibilities with undoubted success and others have been equally conspicuous failures, the bulk lie between these extremes.”⁵²

The Act of 1935 introduced Provincial Autonomy. Finance was no more a reserved department and the Minister for Local Self-Government was able to get more money for his department. The Act of 1935 made all provincial subjects transferred ones and money was available for the development of local self-government.⁵³

FOURTH PHASE

The fourth period covers the years between 1937 and 1947 i.e. the year of Independence. The Government of India Act 1935 was passed by British Parliament and its provincial part was implemented in 1937. Diarchy in the Provinces was replaced by autonomy. Local Government which had been included in the Provincial List came under the control of the popular governments. Almost all Provinces enacted legislation which aimed at further democratisation of local bodies and improvement of administrative machinery.

The trend towards democratization was indicated by further lowering the franchise abolition of the system of nominations and separation of deliberative functions from

52 Sharma M.P. & Sadna B.L., “Political Administration in theory and Practice”, Kitab Mahal, Allahbad ,2010, p-848

53 Grover. B.L. & Mehta Alaka, “Modern Indian History”, S.chand & Company Ltd, New Delhi,2012,p-363

executive ones. Another important development was the implementation of the Janapada Scheme of local government in the Central Provinces. It sought to extend the sphere of activity of the District Board to the whole of the district administration.

However, the popular ministries in the Congress-ruled Provinces resigned in 1939 as a protest against the British war policy. Thus the period was too short for any significant progress in the areas of local government. After the start of the War the efforts of the local bodies in the whole country were directed towards civil defense. Thus it can be said that the local bodies in pre-Independence India were shackled with an extensive network of supervision and control and catered to the needs of the imperialist rulers. They did not emerge as true centers of power because they suffered from a number of weaknesses.⁵⁴

FIFTH PHASE

The fifth and the final phase of local government in India started with the inauguration of the Constitution in 1950. The Constitution allotted local government to the State list. The First Five Year Plan also made a strong plea for the integration of local government with State and Central Government. Significant changes have taken place in local government since 1950 and various Committees were appointed to look into the working of the various aspects of the local government institutions. These Committees suggested far reaching changes. The first such Committee known as Local Finance Enquiry Committee

54 Sharma Manoj - "Local Government "Rural and Urban" Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi-2004, p-72

was set up in 1949 and submitted its report in 1951. In its report the Committee drew attention to the desperate financial plight of the local bodies and made detailed suggestions for assigning certain new sources of revenue to them. It also pleaded for grant of independent power of taxation to these institutions. It felt that with the grant of large powers will come an increased realisation of responsibility and the growth of informed public opinion will constitute a check which will prove more effective than official intervention. Though the subject of local government belongs to the States as per the above provision of the Constitution yet the Union Government has played very significant role as initiator, guide and coordinator of several measures in the field of local government.

As early as in 1948 the Union Minister of Health (because then the Ministry of Health dealt with the local government) Rajkumari Amrit Kaur called a conference of the ministers in charge of local self-government in the Provinces to provide a forum where those responsible for this important arm of the administration all over India could meet together periodically exchange ideas and discuss problems of common interest.

In 1957 the Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service in its report recommended a three-tier system of rural government which has since been adopted in most of the states. The other important committees set up include the Committee on the Training of Municipal Employees of Urban Local Bodies (1963-64),

Rural-Urban Relationship Committee (1963-66) and Committee on the Service Conditions of Municipal Employees (1968) etc.⁵⁵

Commissions and committees on Local- self government

The central as well as the state governments have been aware about the weakness and problems of urban governments, therefore, they have tried through appointing commissions and committees, to look into the problems of urban governments and suggest the ways to improve their working. So the central government appointed seven committees/study groups to look into the working of urban local bodies and suggest measures to eradicate their problems. But, these committees/ commissions did not touch their organisational structural reforms at all.

1.The Local Finance Inquiry Committee,(1949-51) mainly suggested the widening of the financial sources of urban local bodies;

2. The Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-54) recommended certain taxes exclusively to be levied by municipal bodies for their use;

3.The Committee on the Training of Municipal Employees (1963) emphasised on training aspect and recommended for training of municipal personnel;

4. The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee (1963-66) dealt with personnel, planning, taxation and interdependence between the town and its periphery surrounding villages;

55 Raychoudhary S.C. - "History of Modern India", Surjeet Publications, Dehli- 2011,p-220-221

5. The Committee of Ministers on Augmentation of Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies (1963) dealt with improvement of finances of urban bodies and setting up of urban development boards;

6. The Committee on Service Conditions of Municipal Employees (1965-68) recommended for creation of a state cadre of municipal employees;

7. The Committee on Budgetary Reform in Municipal Administration (1974) suggested for budgeting reforms for full utilisation of municipal finances;

8. The Study Group on Constitutional Powers and Laws of Urban Local Bodies and Municipal Corporations (1982) suggested some measures for their efficient functioning, but these were ignored and finally the National Commission on Urbanisation (1988) mainly dealt with urban management, spatial planning, resource allocation, urban slums, urban poverty, alleviation etc.⁵⁶ In spite of all these efforts by the central government, urban local governments remained static and without any major change in their structural and functional domain.

Constitutionalisation of Local- self government

For their realisation, the central government headed by former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi, took the initiative for their constitutionalisation and on August 7, 1989, a bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha to strengthen urban municipal bodies. This bill was 65th (Constitutional Amendment) Bill, 1989. The bill incorporated many suggestions made by

⁵⁶ Singh Pankaj - "Urban Local Government in India". Kitab Mahal - 2013,p-33-34

the National Commission on Urbanisation, which had submitted its report in August 1988. The bill sought to create a third tier of effective urban government, below the level of the union and the states. It was passed by the Lok Sabha, but failed to pass in the Rajya Sabha when presented in 1989, largely due to the misgivings of states governments which considered it as a means of central/union interference into their areas of control. After some changes the bill was re introduced for ratification as the 74th (Constitutional Amendment) Act, 1992. This time it was passed and became the 74th (Constitutional Amendment) Act, 1992. The Act came into force in March 1993.⁵⁷

74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992

A major step in this direction was taken by amending the Constitution through 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. The Act inserts a new part IX A, in the Indian Constitution, which contains 18 articles, from Article 243P to Article 243ZG along with a Schedule, numbered as the 12th schedule. The amended act was meant for municipal administration, but it also deals with decentralised planning.

57 Ibid-p-35

Table-5**STATE WISE DATA OF URBAN LOCAL BODIES IN INDIA**

Sl.No.	State Name	Urban Local Bodies
1.	Andaman and Nicobar Island	3
2.	Andhra Pradesh	120
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	17
4.	Assam	133
5.	Bihar	136
6.	Chandigarh	1
7.	Chhattisgarh	189
8.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	2
9.	Daman and Diu	2
10.	Delhi	59
11.	Goa	14
12.	Gujarat	247
13.	Haryana	79
14.	Himachal Pradesh	50
15.	Jammu and Kashmir	77
16.	Jharkhand	41
17.	Karnataka	258
18.	Kerala	93
19.	Lakshadweep	N.A.

20.	Madhya Pradesh	421
21.	Maharashtra	402
22.	Manipur	37
23.	Meghalaya	9
24.	Mizoram	22
25.	Nagaland	19
26.	Odisha	110
27.	Pondicherry	5
28.	Punjab	183
29.	Rajasthan	229
30.	Sikkim	7
31.	Tamil Nadu	700
32.	Telangana	69
33.	Tripura	20
34.	Uttarakhand	92
35.	Uttar Pradesh	647
36.	West Bengal	128
Total		4621

Source: Electoral Statistics pocket book -2016

The table reveals that there are 4621 urban local bodies in India where Tamil Nadu has the highest numbers of urban local bodies in India out of 4621. Uttar Pradesh

deserve the second position and Madhya Pradesh is the third position, in comparison with other states Assam has only 133 urban local bodies after west Bengal. The table also shows that out of seven union territories only Delhi has highest numbers of urban local bodies where as other union territories the number of urban local bodies below the number of 10 and there is no urban bodies in Lakshadweep.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN ASSAM

The local self-government in Assam as we find today is the legacy of the British Administration. History shows that local self-government existed even before 500 years at the time of Sankardev the great saint of Assam. We find in his days the *Namghar* an institution like a village parliament and a village court where imp important decisions were taken on Assam recommended setting up of village councils and appointment of *Gaonburhas* (village headman) for management of local affairs, so that there is no constant interference of the Government in small matters of the village. History also shows that Scott, the firs commissioner of Assam set up Panchayats in populous villages.⁵⁸

The First Municipality

On petition from 113 of the 3000 inhabitants of 'Guarantee' dated 11 June 1852, the first Statutory Municipal Board was established there on 1 January 1853 with only three nominated European members as election was expressly prohibited. In October 1853, fifty inhabitants of the town submitted a petition to the Government pleading that 80 of the

58 Prasad R.N. - "Urban Local Self Government" A Mittal Publications, New Delhi-2006,p-84-85

earlier applicants had no social status and therefore the Board should be abolished. Though the petition was rejected, no other municipality was established in Assam under this Act, but it paved the way to establishment of a large number of such bodies in the non-Presidency towns. But as the Commissioners were mostly nominated, there was hardly any democratic elements and progress in the development of Local Self-Government in the Assam part of Bengal Presidency. However, the proceedings of the Gauhati Municipal Board recorded election held from 8th to 13th March 1858. Two persons secured equal number of votes and both were appointed Commissioners. The records of subsequent years did not refer to any election. Perhaps some kind of informal election was adopted to elicit public opinion about the popularity of the candidates.” The Board’s main function was the determination of persons and properties to be taxed for raising money.

The next step towards establishment and development of municipalities was the District Municipal Improvement Act of 1864. It empowered the Lt. Governor of Bengal to introduce the act according to his discretion in any town, to determine the jurisdiction of a Board to appoint Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to nominate Commissioners and to determine the tax to be levied on houses and landed properties. The amount so collected had to be spent for maintenance of police force and improvement of sanitation. The Government of India requested the Assam Commissioner to name places wherein the Act

could be implemented. At the same time they advised that this should be done gradually and in more populous towns excluding agricultural villages.⁵⁹

Lord Mayo's Resolution and its impact

It was during Lord Mayo's Governor Generalship from 1869-1872 that some real progress was made in the direction of Self-Government. His resolution of 1870 dealing with decentralisation of finances referred to the necessity of further steps to bring local interests and supervision to bear on the management of funds devoted to education, sanitation and public works. By that time confusing systems of Municipal Government with several independent Statutes" were there. In 1871 a Bill was proposed for consolidating the existing laws. It provided for classification of Municipalities into Class I and Class II, appointment of Commissioners, imposition of Municipal taxes, provision for elementary education and formulation of budget. The Bill was vetoed by the Governor General-in-Council.

The Ripon Reforms

Lord Ripon, Governor General of India from 1880 to 1884, called the "father of Local Self-Government" in India provided the starting point of a new outlook in this regard in the form of Government of India Resolutions of 1881 and 1882. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1884, which had been the result of Ripon's efforts, was adopted by the Assam Government in 1887. We have already referred to the Act of 1876. Thus this province had

⁵⁹ Kar Makhanlal, "Evolution of Constitutional Government and Assam Legislatures" ,Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi-2005,p-135-136

two separate sets of municipalities, one set each under the Acts since 1887. The Act of 1876 was retained as it provided for Station Committees and Union Committees and the Government of Assam wanted to retain the Committees wherever these existed. Both remained in operation till 1923 and did not differ from each other in essential principles. Under the Acts, normally Commissioners were nominated but with special permission of Government, could also be elected. Under the first Act the District Magistrate or the Sub-Divisional Officer was ordinarily to be the Chairman, though any other person was also held eligible for such appointment. Despite the accent of Ripon Reforms on an elected Chairman, the second Act allowed the Commissioners to elect their Chairman or the Municipal Board to request the Government to appoint him.

The First Municipality with Elected Commissioners

In 1882, the rate payers of Sylhet applied for the introduction of election in the town. Thus Sylhet had the Unique distinction of being the first municipal board to consist of only elected Commissioners. The Chief Commissioner also advised the Deputy Commissioners to consider extension of the elective principle to other municipalities. By that time persistent demand for reforms, particularly election of Chairmen and reduction of tea planters representation in proportion to their share of revenue went on. A lengthy debate which followed in official circles was characterised by divergent views on the elective principle. Ripon favoured election in some form or other in “towns of any considerable size and its extension more cautiously and gradually to smaller municipalities. Sir Charles Elliot, Chief Commissioner between 1881 and 1885 was

'extremely anxious' to introduce the elective system in the local authorities not only because of the Government's decision but because the principles set forth in the resolutions of His Excellency-in-Council thoroughly commended themselves to his judgment as sound and

Wise . Some of the officers, however, opposed Ripon reform, Local Self -Government as well as election on the characteristic plea that people were not sufficiently advanced to understand the significance of election. Between 1882 and 1900, six Municipalities were allowed to elect their Commissioners. By 1915 the system was extended to eleven of the nineteen Boards and by 1919, it was in force in all, except Shillong. The slow progress of elective system can be guessed from the fact that in 1885, there were 59 elected Commissioners out of 125. In 1901, 53 out of 144 Commissioners were elected. Even in 1913, ten out of nineteen Municipal Boards had no elected members. In both the years Europeans constituted one- fifth of the total strength. Except Sylhet since 1887, Everywhere else, for about three decades, since the Ripon Reforms, the District Magistrates or the Sub-Divisional Officers continued to retain Chairmanship at the ostensible request of the Boards themselves". This was perhaps due to indifference of the people entitled to participate in the functions of the Boards. In this connection, we may note that in 1853, the Europeans constituted 100 per cent of all local authorities. In 1885 their strength came down to 20 per cent. As a consequence of the reduction of numbers of

Europeans and officials, their influence over the Boards disappeared. Also there was a rapid Indianisation. Indians formed only twenty per cent of the total strength in 1885 but by 1940, 277 out of 293 Commissioners or more than 90 per cent were Indian. In 1905, the Government decided to introduce election in the Station Committees also with the exception of Shillong even though such a Committee existed there since 1880. It was decided by the Chief Commissioner that in Shillong, candidates informally elected by rate payers would be formally appointed Commissioners subject to Government approval.⁶⁰

Right upto 1912 Municipalities in Assam except in Sylhet had ex-officio European Chairmen. Parasuram Khound, an Assamese honorary magistrate was the first non-official Indian to be elected Chairman of the Dibrugarh Municipality on 11 April 1912. Thus a beginning was made in Assam for Indianisation of this office. However, “European pressure” compelled Khound to resign within a month. Almost after a year on 15 February 1913, Radhanath Changkakati became the second non-official Indian to be elected Chairman of the same Municipality. The Silchar Municipality similarly elected another non-official Indian in 1913.⁶¹

By 1918, thirteen Municipal Boards had non-official elected Chairmen. The Assam Municipal Act of 1923 completely did away with official appointment to the post. Another significant development was extension of the “provisions for separate electorates” in Municipal elections though the Chief Commissioner had earlier opposed it and observed

60 Ibid-136-138

61 Guha, Amalendu, “Planter-raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947”, Indian Council of Historical Research, 1977, p-94-95

in connection with the Local Boards, By 1921 the right to vote was extended to all those who were voters for election of members of the Assam Legislative Council and resident in the circle concerned for twelve months preceding the elections. In other words, the electoral rolls of the Council were adopted for Local Government elections. Between 1923 and 1926 further modifications were made in the electoral rolls in general. But the most important and progressive step was the removal of gender disqualification entitling women to vote. The second reformed Legislative Council of Assam met on 24 March 1924. Sadananda Dowerah of Dibrugarh, an Independent member and supporter of the Swarajya Party, moved a resolution on 25 March recommending franchise for women and their rights to contest elections. The official block opposed the move. But with the support of others including Muslim members, the resolution was adopted. Sex disqualification was abolished by the Government Notification of 24 November 1924. However, women were not allowed to contest elections till 1928. The Act also made the following provisions. All Municipal Boards were allowed to elect one of their own Commissioners a Chairman except in case of Shillong. In case a Board was not willing to elect a Chairman, it might request the Government to appoint a non-official. But the Vice-Chairman had to be elected by the Commissioners. In 1924 except Shillong, all the Chairmen were elected non-officials. The Act of 1923 was amended in 1931 and 1932. The first one authorised the Government to nominate a Chairman during a vacancy for a part of the tenure on a

casual vacancy. The second amendment authorized the Commissioner of Division to do so, the ostensible purpose in both cases being avoidance of administrative inconvenience.

Assam Municipal Act of 1923, which also brought about other under-noted important changes. The minimum strength of a Board was raised to ten, the maximum remaining as before. The number of Commissioners was based on population of a municipal area. No official but supernumerary members could be appointed. They were allowed to participate in the proceedings but not to vote. Number of nominated members was reduced from one third to one fifth of the total strength. The Government of course continued to exercise control over the Boards through its nominees as well as its power of audit and inspection. In course of the Non-Co-operation Movement the Government's authority was not much slackened. In one Municipality all non-official members resigned together due to disagreement with the Chairman on the question of Gandhi's visit to that town. Even 14 years later in 1937, in the Assam Legislative Assembly constituted under the Government of India Act 1935, two attempts were made by non-official elected members in both houses at abolishing nomination. Hem Chandra Datta, member of the Legislative Council moved the Assam Municipal (Amendment) Bill seeking to do away with the system and making election of Commissioners by rate payers statutory. Of the ten elected Hindu Members nine voted for the amendment. But all the six Muslims en bloc and two nominated Hindus voted against the motion. Rajendranath Barua sought to refer it to a Select Committee of the Assembly. Ninety three out of one hundred five members

attended the Session. As expected, after introduction of separate electorate the voting was of course on communal line and the planters sided with the Government.⁶²

URBAN INSTITUTIONS IN ASSAM

The first municipal institution in Assam was established at Guwahati in 1865 under the district town improvement Act, 1864. The process of introducing urban institutions in Assam was started haltingly as there was good deal of opposition to its introduction. Looking back, we see that the development is spectacular quantity wise. The present Municipal administration in the state is controlled by the Assam Municipal Act, 1956. A place having a population of 10,000 may be elevated to be a municipality. At present, all district towns, sub divisional towns and same other places have municipal institutions. The Assam Municipal Act of 1956 is still in force in Assam with some modifications as provided in the „Assam Municipal (Amendment) Act, 1994.⁶³

After presenting a brief profile of the origin and development of local self government from global context to Assam in this chapter we propose to present the socio-economic profile and participation of women in urban local institution (Town committee of Bilasipara and Chapar) the respondents of the study in the next chapter.

62 Rao V.V, “ A Hundred years of Local Self Government in Assam”, Bani Prakash Mandir, Pathsala,1963,p.94-95

63 Bhattacharjee T, “An Introduction to Political Science” Oriental Book Company Pvt. Guwahati, Ltd.,1999,p-276

CHAPTER-IV

The present chapter consists of two sections first section deals with socio-economic profile of Elective representatives of women members while second section deals with participation in the decision-making process of Municipal Administration in Bilasipara and Chapar Town Committee under Dhubri District. The aim of this chapter is to examine the nature of women participation urban local bodies.

The present study is conducted to the all the elected women members of both the town Committee. There are 12 elected women members in both the town committee 8 from Bilasipara town committee and 4 from Chapar town committee. All the women members have been selected of the study area.

This chapter includes Case studies of some women elective representative in terms of their entry into politics, their socio-economic background, their involvement in party decision-making processes and participation in municipal bodies. The details of twelve women elective representative as case studies are described focusing mainly on the aspects of the proposed questions raised in the problem of the present study. Efforts have been made to arrive at findings and establishing relationships with the questions in each case and then summing up of those clearly depicting their relationships.

TOWN COMMITTEE:

The Government may decide to establish a Town Committee in a place on public demand, the population of which is below 10,000. The Assam Municipal Act 1956 made provisions for its establishment. It is 'small Town' or 'deemed Town'. Number of wards are few. The functions of the Town Committee are only those which can be managed by it. It has an Executive Body where there are chairman/women and vice chairman/women. The Government may nominate these office bearers of the Town Committee may elect them from among its members. Two members are nominated from the scheduled castes and tribes inhabitants of the small town. The Government may raise revenues by imposing taxes on the inhabitants for the maintenance of the services. The powers mentioned in the Act of 1956 may also be extended to the town committee subject to its capability. The power of suspension or dissolution of a town committee lie with the Government. ⁶⁴

BACKGROUND OF THE BILASIPARA TOWN COMMITTEE

Bilasipara is a city under the Dhubri district of Assam state , its geographical coordinates are 26° 14' 0" North, 90° 14' 0" East. According to census (2011) the total population of Bilasipara is 37412 of which which 19,139 are males while 18,263 are females. Sex ration of Bilasipara is 955. Proportion of slum population in towns is 7571 with 20.24 %, in 2011 Bilasipara town Committee was constituted under the Municipal act of Assam 1956. Bilasipara town committee was first established

64 Paul Kripesh Chandra ,“Political Science :Political Theory & Indian Constitution”. Arun Prakashn, Guwahati-2005,p252-253

in 1959 with four wards. After that in the year 1989 area of Bilasipara town was extended and thereafter in Jun 1997 the wards has been increased from 4 to 14.⁶⁵

BACKGROUND OF THE CHAPAR TOWN

Chapar Town situated in Dhubri, district of Assam state. Its geographical coordinates are 26° 16' 0" North, 90° 28' 0" East. According to census 2011 of Assam the Chapar Town has total population of 20320 of which 10,306 are males while 10,014 are females .Population of Children with age of 0-6 is 2568 which is 12.64 % of total population of Chapar (TC). In Chapar Town Committee, Female Sex Ratio is of 972 against state average of 958. Moreover Child Sex Ratio in Chapar is around 919 compared to Assam state average of 962. Literacy rate of Chapar city is 80.30 % higher than state average of 72.19 %. In Chapar, Male literacy is around 85.63 % while female literacy rate is 74.86 %. As per the Census 2011, the literacy rate of Chapar is 80.3%. Thus Chapar has higher literacy rate compared to 58.3% of Dhubri district. The male literacy rate is 74.5% and the female literacy rate is 65.7% in Chapar.⁶⁶

SECTION- I

65 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/bilasipara>

66 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/chapar,_dhubri

In this section an attempt has been made to know the socio-economic profile of the elected women members of Bilasipara and Chapar Municipal bodies. The analysis and interpretation of data are presented below.

Table-6
Profile of the Respondents by Age:

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) 18-30	00	00 %
(b) 31-45	11	91.7%
(c) 46-60	01	8.3%
(d) 61 and above	00	00%
Total	12	100%

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Age is a biological attribute and an important socio-economic variable. It influences the political, economic and social life of a person. In the present study the age group of the women members is divided into four categories: 18 to 30 years, 31 to 45 years, 46 to 60 years and 61 and above. It is evident from the above table (Table No- 6) shows that majority of women members (91.7%) belong to the age group of 31 to 45 years, only one respondents that is 8.3% of member belongs to the age group of 46 to 60 . There is no respondents belong to the age group 18-30 and 61 and above in the town committee under the area of study.

Table-7

Profile of the Respondents by Religion

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Hindu	07	58.3
(b) Muslim	05	41.7
(c) Christian	00	00
(d) Any other	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Religion plays an important role in Indian politics. In present study religion of the respondents divided into four groups that is Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other group. The finding is presented in (Table No- 7) reveals that majority of the women members 58.3 % is belonging to Hindu religion where as 41.7% belongs to Muslim religion. There is no Christian and other group in the present study.

Table-8

Profile of the Respondents on the basis of Caste

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Gen	07	58.3
(b) SC	03	25
(c) ST	00	00
(d) OBC/MOBC	02	16.7
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Caste plays an important role in the emergence of a leader in Indian society. It is an important factor which determines the result of an election In present study, caste of the respondents is categorized into four groups i.e., General, SC, ST, OBC/MOBC. The (Table No-8) shows that majority of respondents 58.3 % belongs to General category only 25% belongs to sc category and 16.7% belongs

to backward class category. There are no ST women representatives in present study of local government.

Table-9

Profile of the Respondents by Educational qualification:

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Illiterate	00	00
(b) Primary	00	00
(c) ME	00	00
(d) High	01	8.3
(e) Matriculate	02	16.7
(f) H.S.	05	41.7
(g) Graduation and above	04	33.3
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Education is the most important socio-economic variable. It has a direct influence on every aspect of life. It acts as an important media through which knowledge and information is acquired. Education is one of the primary conditions for women's empowerment. In the present study educational qualification of the respondents is categorized into seven groups .

The (Table No-9) shows that majority of respondents 41.7% passed the H.S. level only one respondents 8.3% passed the high school, 16.7% had education up to Matriculation level. One important fact that is seen from the above table is that none of the members is either illiterate or educated up to primary level of education. 33.3 % are Graduates and above level .

Table-10

Profile of the Respondents by Occupation:

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Cultivation	00	00
(b) Business	01	8.3
(c) Housewife	10	83.4
(d) Wage-earner	01	8.3
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Occupation is an important variable to determine the economic background of Individual and leadership. In the present study occupation of the respondent is categorized into four groups. The above (Table No-10) shows that majority of respondents (83.4%) belong to Housewife category. The table also reveals that only 8.3% of women members are business category and only one respondent engaged in wage-earner.

Table-11

Profile of the Respondents by Income

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) NIL	00	00
(b) 1-3000	00	00
(c) 3001-6000	08	66.7
(d) 6001-9000	02	16.7
(e) 9001-12000	01	8.3
(f) 12001 and above	01	8.3
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Income status plays is an important variable that has more conditioning influences on every aspect of life. In the present study monthly income of the respondents is categorised into six Groups The (Table No-11) shows that that majority of urban respondents 66.7% belong to the category of

monthly income of Rs. 3001-6000 only. Only one respondents 8.3% which has The sound economic background (12001 and above). There are no respondents monthly income (below 3000).

Table-12
Profile of the Respondents by Nature of the family

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Joint	01	8.3
(b) Nuclear	11	91.7
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Family is a social institution in which a group of persons related by marriage, blood and kinship live under one roof and take their food from the same kitchen. In order to find out the nature of family present study categorised into two family one is joint and another is nuclear family. Joint families are those which member of the family live together and share common feelings among them. Nuclear families are households in which the women resides alone or with her spouse with or without unmarried children and with or without unrelated individuals.

In the present study (Table No-12) shows that majority of women members 91.7% belongs to Nuclear family and only one respondent 8.3 belongs to joint family.

Table-13
Profile of Status of the respondent in the family:

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Head	04	33.3
(b) Other	08	66.7
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

In present study (Table No-13) shows that majority of women elective representatives 66.7% does not play the role of head in the family they are guide either by their husband or other family so to say they are belongs to ordinary category, where as only 33.3% respondents are the head of the family.

Table-14
Profile of the Respondents by Material status

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Married	10	83.4
(b) Unmarried	01	8.3
(c) Widow	01	8.3
(d) Divorce	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Marriage plays an important role in human life. Marital status of women member to the large extent Influence in participation of decision making process. In present study material status of the respondents is categorised into four Groups. (Table No-14) shows that majority of women elective representatives 83.4% are married where as only one respondent 8.3% is unmarried, there is no divorce women member in present study has lost her husband and taking the responsibility of the family. This result is a reflection to the fact that women who are married are in advantageous position in both the town committee.

Table-15
Profile of respondents by support of political party in contest

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Congress	04	33.3
(b) BJP	60	50
(c) AGP	00	00
(d) AIDUF	00	00
(e) Independent	02	16.7

(f) Any other	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

Party system has become an indispensable factor in the working of a representative form of government. Political parties are said to be the life blood of democracies. In order to know the position of respondent to contest election on the basis of party affiliation present study is categorized into six groups.

The (Table No-15) reveals that half of the women representatives belongs to BJP party affiliation where as only 33.3% respondents belongs to congress party. There are no respondent belongs to either regional party like AGP or AIUDF. Only small number of respondents 16.7% belongs to independent party.

SECTION- II

In this section an attempt has been made to know political participation of the women members in Municipal bodies. The analysis and interpretation of data are presented below.

Table-16

How many times you have elected in Municipal elections?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) First	11	91.7
(b) Second	01	8.3
(c) Third	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

During the study it was observed from the table (Table No- 16) that majority of the respondents (91.7%) had been elected for the first time, only 8.3% second timer and there is no third timer

women members elected to town committee under study area. It is evident from the fact that women members are not so interested to contest election in municipal elections.

Table-17

What is your objective to contest in the Municipal /Town committee election

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) To serve the people	01	8.3
(b) For all round development of the locality	09	75
(c) Interest in politics	00	00
(d) Women reservation	00	00
(e) Political family	02	16.7
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-17) reveals that majority of the respondents (75 %) stated for all round development of the locality only one respondent 8.3% as the main reason for contesting the election to serve the people's problems. There was no response either from interest in politics or women reservation system. In present study also shows two respondents contested election from political family their family influenced them to contested in municipal election.

Table-18

Do you take part/play any role in the decision making process of your family?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	11	91.7
(b) No.	01	8.3
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

During the study it was observed from the (Table No-18)shows that majority of respondents 91.7% plays an important role in decision making process of family only one respondent who do not play

any role in decision making process of family. From study it was found that women now a days consider important decision maker in family.

Table-19

What were the attitude of the family members to contest election in Municipal Board/ Town Committee?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) They are happy	08	66.7
(b) They take pride in it	03	25
(c) There was objection from the family by I insisted.	01	8.3
(d) Any other	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-19) reveals that majority of 66.7% family members are happy for women's election to Municipal bodies and 25 % family members view that women's contest election to town committee as the pride of their family. One women member 8.3 % after objection from her family member though she had to contested in election.

Table-20

Do you think that money received by the MB/TC is sufficient for requirements?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	01	8.3
(b) No	11	91.7
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

In the present study (table No-20) it was observed that majority of respondents 91.7% admitted that money received by the town committee is not sufficient to meet its requirement where as only one respondent 8.3% admitted that money received by the town committee is not sufficient to meet its requirement'

Table-21

Do you think that ‘reservation system ‘in urban local bodies help in women empowerment?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	11	91.7
(b) No	01	8.3
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No-21) reveals that 91.7% of respondents agreed that reservation seats for women had enhanced the great steps towards women empowerment in urban local bodies where as one respondent 8.3% disagree that reservation seats for women has not influenced in empowerment of women.

Table-22

How did you help/contribute in getting different schemes implemented in your area?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) By informing the people about the schemes	06	50
(b) By encouraging/ motivating the people to come forward for the schemes	02	16.7
(c) By monitoring the implementation of the schemes	01	8.3
(d) By maintaining close contact with the official/ persons responsible for the implementation	03	25
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No- 22) shows that there are half of the respondents 50% through various ways informed the people contributed in getting different schemes implemented in their area only two respondents 16.7 % by encouraging/motivating the people to come forward for the schemes only small number of respondent by monitoring the implementation of the schemes (8.3%). The present study also shows that 25 % of respondents they were by maintaining close contact with officials/persons responsible for implementation the schemes.

Table-23

How often do you attend the meeting of the Municipal Board/Town Committee?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Always	10	83.4
(b) Often	01	8.3
(c) Rarely	01	8.3
(d) Any other	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No-23) shows that 83.4% women members always attend the meetings, one 8.3% often attend the meetings and 8.3% rarely attend meetings. From this result we can say that woman's attendance in the meetings of urban local bodies is good for women participation as majority of them stated that they always attend the meetings.

Table-24

How do you take the decisions in the meetings?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Consensus	06	50
(b) Majority	06	50
(c) Any other	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No- 24) shows that in half of respondents 50% under study decisions are taken on the basis of majority principle and rest of respondent followed the consensus method .

Table-25

If there is division of opinion in the meeting how do you take the decision?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Majority principle	01	8.3
(b) Convince for consensus	10	83.4
(c) Deferred	00	00
(d) Drop the issue altogether	01	8.3
(e) Any other	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-25) reveals that majority of the respondents (83.4%) are of the view that they follow ‘convince all the members for a consensus’ in decision making when there is any division of opinion in the meetings, only two respondents one follow the majority principle and another always drop the issue if some kind of division opinion on any matter in the meeting.

Table-26

How often do the other members accept the ideas given by you?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Always	01	8.3
(b) Often	11	91.7
(c) Rarely	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No-26) shows majority of respondents 91.7% agreed that the ideas given by them are during meeting ‘often’ accepted by other members, only one respondent 8.3% agreed that others members always accepted the ideas given by her.

Table-27

How do you rate your participation in the meetings?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Most active	07	58.3
(b) Active	05	41.7
(c) Keep silent most of time	00	00
(d) No answer	00	00
Total	12	100

Field survey April, 2017)

It is evident from the above table (Table No-27) it shows that majority of respondents 58.3% rate their participation as ‘most active’, 41.7% rate their participation as only active . This result reveals that there is positive aspects regarding the rating of performance in meetings. It is evident from this that majority of respondents remains ‘active’ in the meetings and this reveals that women participation in the MB/TC meetings is satisfactory.

Table-28

How to expenditure of money received from Town Committee ?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) MB/TC meeting	12	100
(b) Unable to answer	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source-

Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No-28) reveals that majority of women members (91.7%) are of the view that they prepare the plan of expenditure in the MB/TC meeting. Only one respondent was unable to answer the question how to expenditure of money received from municipal bodies. This result indicates that majority of women member have knowledge about how planning of expenditure of fund is prepared.

Table-29

Do you have any knowledge on 74th Amendment Act of Indian Constitution?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	00	00
(b) No	12	100
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

During the study it was observed that in table (Table no-29) all of the respondent have no knowledge about 74th constitutional amendment act 1992 it is really a matter of shame that though they are working under this act but there is no basic knowledge about the provision of 74th constitutional amendment act of Indian constitution.

Table-30

30. Do you have any knowledge on the Assam Municipal Act 1956?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	00	00
(b) No	12	100
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No-30) shows that during the study it was observed that they have no knowledge about Assam municipal act 1956. It is a matter of surprised that majority of respondent in spite of their higher educational qualification they are unknown regarding Assam municipal act 1956.

Table-31

31. Did you receive any formal training regarding your duties & responsibilities under the 74th Amendment Act?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	00	00
(b) No	12	100
(c) No Response	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-31) Out of the 12 respondents 100% nobody received any formal training regarding their duties and responsibilities from ministry of urban development. This is a major drawback of urban local self government.

Table-32

Who motivated you to contest the elections?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Husband	03	25
(b) Family	01	8.3
(c) Own	02	16.7
(d) People of your locality	06	50
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-32) reveals that half of the respondent 50% was contested election in town committee after getting support from local people, 25% of the respondent is being motivated by their husband and three respondent 25% contested election who was motivated by their husband and rest 25% respondents contested election by their own choice.

Table-33

Do you agree that women members are being prosily represented by male members in town committee meetings?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	11	91.7
(b) No	01	8.3
(c) No Response	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-33) shows that from the available sources of data from the sampled respondents this fact has been proved that the male members of the family of the elected representatives do not take keen interest in town committee meeting. Majority of respondents 91.7 % agreed that male member never being prosily represented instead of female member, only one respondent 8.3% agree that male member of family is being prosily represented.

Table-34

What is the attitude of bureaucracy towards you?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Helpful	12	100
(b) Indifferent	00	00
(c) Rude	00	00
(d) No Response	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-34) shows that majority of respondents admitted that bureaucracy always help them in many ways .During the study it was observed that all the respondents 100 %was praised the activities of bureaucracy no body were against the officers whenever they approached to bureaucracy.

Table-35

20.Do you agree that Women’s local political awareness, has increased?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	09	75
(b) No	03	25
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The above table (Table No-35) shows that majority of respondents 75% agreed that political awareness of women’s regarding local politics has increased where as 25% of respondents did not agree the local women’s awareness in politics.

Table-36

21.Do you support reservation of seats for women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Yes	12	100
(b) No	00	00
Total	12	100

(Source- Field survey April, 2017)

The table (Table No-36) reveals that all of the respondents 100% admitted that they supported reservation of seats for women no one respondent is not against the reservation system for women.

After presenting the nature of political participation of women in urban local Bodies namely Bilasipara Town committee and Chapar Town committee in this chapter we propose to present the finding and recommendations of the present study in the next chapter

CHAPTER-V

This chapter deals with the conclusion and finding of the present study. It also presents some recommendations for improvement of women participation in local self government.

Since the advent of independence in India, development of women has remained the top priority of the government at the center and in the states and local level. This effort has paved the way for empowerment of women in every walk of life through provision of equal opportunities for their development. In the present study attempt has been made to look into different aspects of women's political participation in urban local government

The present study " Political participation of women in Urban local self government: A case study" was undertaken to assess the extent of women's participation in political, economic and social spheres of development.

Political participation is a wide term that includes a variety of modes, which are conditioned by a myriad of socio-personal, psychological and political variables. The socio-personal characteristics taken in the present study had a relation with political participation.

The variables like age and education of the respondents, educational status and income of the women members had positive association indicating their influence on political participation of women.

The findings of the study in respect of the role of women in political participation is revealed in terms of the right to vote, to hold public office, to speak of and challenge incumbent leadership in political meetings and to associate freely with one's fellow citizens in political activity. It was found that though women were conferred equal political rights by the Constitution and legally there was no bar on women's participation in the politics of the nation, still very few women were actively involved in

political affairs. A wide disparity existed between women's formal political equality and their meaningful exercise of political power.

The decision-making behavior of women at home, in the community and in the state was also studied in the present Endeavour. The findings showed an enhanced privilege of women in the household decision-making. This was the impact of education, employment opportunities of women and the attitudinal change in the male family members. Their decision-making behavior in community organizations was somewhat good in urban areas.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

SECTION-I

Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

1. During the study it was observed that the percentage of elected women leaders is more prominent than the older women leaders. As majority of women members belong to the age group of 31-45 there are only small number of women member belongs to the age group 46-60. Majority of women members (91.7%) belong to the age group of 31 to 45 years, only one respondents that is 8.3% of member belongs to the age group of 46 to 60. There is no respondents belong to the age group 18-30 and 61 and above in the town committee under the area of study.

2. The finding of the study reveals that Hindu women members are in a dominant position than Muslim and Christian women members. There is no Christian religion women members in both the

town committee. Majority of the women members 58.3 % is belonging to Hindu religion where as 41.7% belongs to Muslim religion. There is no Christian and other group in the present study.

3.Regarding the caste position it was found that majority of women members belongs to General category. It was also found that there is no belongs to ST category.

Majority of respondents 58.3 % belongs to General category only 25% belongs to sc category and 16.7% belongs to backward class category. There are no ST women representatives in present study of local government.

4. Regarding the educational background, it is revealed that majority of women members passed the H.S. level followed by graduation level. The study also found that there is no illiterate women members in the study areas. Majority of respondents 41.7% passed the H.S. level only one respondents 8.3% passed the high school, 16.7% had education up to Matriculation level. One important fact that is seen from the above table is that none of the members is either illiterate or educated up to primary level of education. 33.3 % are Graduates and above level

4.During the study it was observed that majority of women members are housewives. The significance finding of the study shows that though majority of women members are housewives they perform two fold function one maintain the family another is attend the meetings regularly. Majority of respondents (83.4%) belong to Housewife category. The table also reveals that only 8.3% of women members are business category and only one respondent engaged in wage-earner.

6. The study finding disclose that majority of the women members belongs to nuclear family only small number of women members comes from joint family. Majority of urban respondents 66.7% belong to the category of monthly income of Rs. 3001-6000 only. Only one respondents 8.3% which has the sound economic background (12001 and above). There are no respondents monthly income (below 3000).

7. The study revealed that Majority of women members are married and only one women member is unmarried and similar proportion of women member are also widow in study area. Majority of women members 91.7% belongs to Nuclear family and only one respondent 8.3 belongs to joint family.

8. Regarding the political party affiliations the finding study shows that majority of women members contested under the banner of Bharatiya Janata Party followed by Indian National Congress. The study also revealed that no women members elected from regional political party. Bharatiya Janata Party are in a dominant position in study area. Majority of women elective representatives 66.7% does not play the role of head in the family they are guide either by their husband or other family so to say they are belongs to ordinary category, where as only 33.3% respondents are the head of the family.

SECTION-II

1. During the study it was found that large number of women members have been elected first timers while only one member has been elected for second timer in municipal election under the study area. Majority of the respondents (91.7%) had been elected for the first time, only 8.3% second timer and there is no third timer women members elected to town committee .

2. Regarding the attitude of the family members towards elected women members it was found that large number of family members are happy and only one women member who got the objection from family member while contest in municipal elections. So from study it was found there is no place for traditional or conservative nature of family where women are confined in only household activities. Majority of 66.7% family members are happy for women's election to Municipal bodies and 25 % family members view that women's contest election to town committee as the pride of their family. One women member 8.3 % after objection from her family member though she had to contested in election.

3. During the study it was found that majority of women members admitted that reservation of seats for women in urban local bodies is a great step towards women empowerment. Majority of women 91.7% of respondents agreed that reservation seats for women had enhanced the great steps towards women empowerment in urban local bodies where as one respondent 8.3% disagree that reservation seats for women has not influenced in empowerment of women.

4. It was observed that a majority of women members always attend the town committee meetings while only small number of women member often attend the meeting in town committee. From the

study it was found that in spite of majority of women members are housewives but they play significant role in meeting. Majority of women 83.4% women members always attend the meetings one 8.3% often attend the meetings and 8.3% rarely attend meetings.

5. Regarding the rate of participation the study shows that large number of women most active participation in the meetings .From the study it was found that they are never keep silent in most of the time in meetings in local bodies. Majority of respondents 58.3% rate their participation as most active', 41.7% rate their participation as only active This result reveals that there is positive aspects regarding the rating of performance in meetings.

6. The significant finding of the study shows that regarding the expenditure of money received from municipal a majority of women take decision after the meeting of town committee only one member is unable to answer the question put by researcher in present study. Majority of women members (91.7%) are of the view that they prepare the plan of expenditure in the MB/TC meeting. Only one respondent was unable to answer the question how to expenditure of money received from municipal bodies.

7. With regard to knowledge on 74th amendment act of Indian constitution it is observed that a majority of women do not have any knowledge about 74th amendment act of Indian constitution as well as Assam municipal act 1956. It is evident from the fact that though large number of women always attend the meeting but they do not know the provision of both the act which conduct all the administration functions of the urban local bodies in National and state level.

8. The study indicates that most of the women members did not received any formal training regarding their duties and responsibilities from ministry of urban development as well as bureaucracy this is a great setback of local self self government in present study area.

9. It is evident from the study that almost half of women members they contested election motivated by people of their locality and there are few women members was motivated by their husband only a small number of women member contested in election with their own choice. So from present study it was found that people of locality played a major role to motivated the women member to contested in municipal election. Half of the respondent 50% was contested election in town committee after getting support from local people, 25% of the respondent is being motivated by their husband and three respondent 25% contested election who was motivated by their husband and rest 25% respondents contested election by their own choice.

10. Regarding the attitude of bureaucracy towards women members it is found from the study that a majority of women members admitted that bureaucracy are always help them in different field of activities in study area. Majority of respondents admitted that bureaucracy always help them in many ways . During the study it was observed that all the respondents 100 %was praised the activities of bureaucracy no body were against the officers whenever they approached to bureaucracy.

11. The question regarding the reservation seats for women a majority of women was replied yes and support the reservation seats for women in urban local bodies. The study reveals that reservation seats for women to larger extend empowerment of women members. Majority of the respondents 100% admitted that they supported reservation of seats for women no one respondent is not against the reservation system for women.

12. As far as urban local governments are concerned most of the women elected representatives are either first or second timers to the municipality. Hence they are not having experience of municipal functioning and are unable to participate effectively in the decision making. Generally they were forced to come to this area because of the pressures created by their respective husbands, relatives and local people

13. Except one or two elected representative all have denied any difficulty or resistance to their entry in politics. During the course of interview held with them, one elected representative, however, said that their family initially were not happy and had objections to their entry in politics.

14. Majority of them have to bear the double burden of carrying on their familial responsibilities as well as carrying out their political career.

16. As far as the domestic chores are concerned there has been no concession in these even after becoming the elected representatives in the urban local bodies. The social norms and taboos associated with the women folk affect adversely the participation of women in the affairs of urban local government.

17. Most of Women elected representatives are divided on the political lines because they have contested under the banner of various political parties. So in the process of confirming the political ideologies and commitments of the political parties they belong they are not able to get themselves united on the women cause.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

H.1. Participation of women in urban local self government institution is satisfactory

Table No-27 shows that majority of respondents 58.3% rate their participation as 'most active', 41.7% rate their participation as only active. This result reveals that there are positive aspects regarding the rating of performance in meetings. It is evident from this that majority of respondents remain 'active' in the meetings and this reveals that women participation in the MB/TC meetings is satisfactory.

Regarding the rate of participation the study shows that a large number of women most active participation in the meetings. From the study it was found that they are never keep silent in most of the time in meetings in local bodies. This finding proves the hypothesis that Participation of women in urban local self government institution is satisfactory.

H.2. Women's role in family and decision making level is fairly good .

Table No 18 shows that majority of respondents 91.7% play an important role in decision making process of family only one respondent who do not play any role in decision making process of family. From study it was found that women now a days consider important decision maker in family. The Table No-8 also shows that 83.4.% women members always attend the meetings, only one 8.3% often attend the meetings and 8.3% rarely attend meetings. It was observed that a majority of women members always attend the town committee meetings while only small number of women member often attend the meeting in town committee. From this finding also proved hypothesis.

H 3. There is a no significant relation between level of awareness and the level of political participation.

Table No-29 shows that all of the respondent have no knowledge about 74th constitutional amendment act 1992 it is really a matter of shame that though they are working under this act but there is no basic knowledge about the provision of 74th constitutional amendment act of Indian constitution.

Table No-30 also shows that during the study it was observed that they have no knowledge about Assam municipal act 1956. It is a matter of surprised that majority of respondent in spite of their higher educational qualification they are unknown regarding Assam municipal act 1956. This finding proves the hypothesis that though their awareness level is not good in comparison level of participation .

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the present study the result discussion had led to the following recommendations, which are considered pertinent to the situation in Bilasipara sub-division in general and the selected town Committee in particular.

1. Women in themselves should develop a favorable attitude towards politics. They should spare time and should come out of their homes to take part in political activities. It is also up to women to prepare themselves for participating in all the processes that they have been demanding their representation in. Family members should also co-operate with women by sharing their family responsibilities and encouraging them to take part in political activities. In fact, there is the need for a paradigm shift in the traditional value system.

2. Proper training in political organizations regarding the operational knowledge of political affairs can be organized to attract more women towards politics.

3. The socio-economic characteristics of women have positive correlation with the extent of participation in development activities. This emphasizes the adoption of special efforts to strengthen the socio-economic status of women.

4. In the study women's participation in legal services as legal practitioners had shown a poor image. As it is believed that a woman can better solve a woman's problem adequate encouragement should be provided for inclusion of more women in the legal field.

5. Government should effectively secure participation of women in decision-making processes at National, State and local levels. This would imply use of special measures for recruitment of women candidates, More women need to be inducted in ministries at the centre and in state governments and they must be allowed to function in areas suitable to their capacities and not be restricted to 'soft' sectors.

6. It has been observed through various studies, that education of citizens not only builds up knowledge and information but also helps the citizens to understand the complexities of political process. It is, therefore, recommended that the programme of free universal education up to the age of 14 should be vigorously implemented. Further, serious attention needs to be paid to the content of

education. The courses of studies and the textbooks should inculcate value of gender equality, self-respect, courage, independence, etc. which would help develop the personalities of women.

7. All women members of municipal and other executive bodies must be trained and empowered to exercise their authority. Both men and women members must be sensitized to women's issues. A committee should be formed to look into the training needs of women members and to help in designing modules separate allocation may be made for this purpose. Particular attention must be paid to the development of interpersonal communication skills among the trainees and community leaders.

8. In a democracy, political parties have a very significant role to play. The parties should take such measures which would facilitate participation of women. All political parties must be requested to ensure that at least 50 per cent of the candidates fielded for election are women till such time as women can stake their claim to nomination as equals. It is the bounded duty of political parties to provide political education to the people. They should organize study circles in which not only political understanding of the complex situations is provided, but controversial issues having implications on gender relations is also discussed.

9. Media should play a productive role in enhancing women's participation. It should give wider coverage to different activities and measures taken by women and should highlight the problems of women. In order to project women's issues and achievements, perhaps mainstream media may not be

adequate and.. therefore, it is necessary to develop In alternate media system that could portray women's, struggles and experiences, help generate values which encourage gender equality and justice, and build up a positive image of women taking part in public life.

Concluding Remarks

Thus, we conclude by saying that though women are socially and politically empowered through local Institutions, they are yet to be empowered economically. Local government institutions are the larger platform of development planning, development dialogue, and development agency of people in grass root level Active participation of women on this platform can bring about desirable change, progress and development. By providing gender friendly environment, optimum use of women resource can be made for the proper functioning of these institutions for delivery of timely and quality of services. This has a bearing on ensuring quality of life of masses.

In fine we can say that the participation of women in the grass root level has been ensured by reservation system and many women are playing a constructive role in the development and welfare activities. Women members of local bodies are gradually becoming aware of their responsibilities. Their participation is leading towards their empowerment but there are many obstacles which hinder women representatives to perform their work effectively and so they need time, support, resources and training. If women members gets all these definitely there will be full involvement of the women of grassroots in the decision making process.

However, the majority of urban women leaders gave priority to local problems in comparison to national problems. The study of the political value orientation and participation of women leaders can

be concluded that women leaders of local bodies are highly aware of the political situation that prevails in the country and the state. Their outlook towards the political issues is by and large positive and rational. They showed faith in the democratic institutions and believed in the constitutional methods of change. They are found to be strong in beliefs and clear in vision.

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APPENDIX-I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTIVE REPRESENTATIVE

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT: A
CASE STUDY**

SECTION-I

Socio-economic profile of the Elected Women Members of Town committee

1. Age Profile:

- (a) 18-30 (b) 31-45
(c) 46-60 (d) 61 and above

2 Religion:

- (a) Hindu (b) Muslim
(c) Christian (d) any other....

3 Caste:

- (a) Gen (b) SC
(c) ST (d) OBC/MOBC

4 Educational qualification:

- (a) Illiterate (b) Primary
(c) ME (d) High
(e) Matriculate (f) H.S.
(g) Graduation and above

5 Occupation:

- (a) Cultivation (b) Business
(c) House wife (d) Wage-earner

6 Income (in Rs.) per month:

- (a) Nil (b) 1 – 3000 (c) 3001-6000
(d) 6001-9000 (e) 9001-12000 (f) 12001 and above

7 Nature of the family:

- (a) Joint (b) Nuclear

7. Status of the respondent in the family :

- (a) Head (b) Other

9 Marital status:

- (a) Married (b) Unmarried
(c) Widow (d) Divorce

10.1 Do you belong to any political party?

- (a) Yes (b) No

11. What was your political party basis in the contest?

- (a) Congress (b) BJP (c) AGP
(d) AIUDF (e) Independent (f) Any other.

SECTION-II:

1. How many times you have cast votes in Municipal elections?

- (a)First (b) second (c) third

2. What is your objective behind your contest in the municipal election /Town Committee member?

- (a)To serve the people (b) For all round development of the locality
(c) Interest in politics (d) Women reservation
Political family

3. Do you take part/ play any role in the decision making process of your family?

- (a) Yes (b) No

4. What were the attitude of the family members to contest election to the Municipal Board/ Town Committee?

- (a)They are happy (b) They take pride in it
(c) There was objection from the family but I insisted
(d) Any other.....

5.Do you think that money received by the MB/TC is sufficient for requirements?

- (a) Yes (b) No

6 . Do you think that ‘reservation system ‘in urban local bodies help in women empowerment?

- (a) Yes (b) No

7. How did you help /contribute in getting different schemes implemented in your area?

- (a) By informing the people about the schemes
- (b) By encouraging/motivating the people to come forward for the schemes
- (c) By monitoring the implementation of the schemes.
- (d) By maintaining close contact with officials/persons responsible for the implementation

8. How often do you attend the meetings of the Municipal Board/ Town Committee?

- (a) Always
- (b) Often
- (c) Rarely
- (d) Any other

9. How do you take the decisions in the meetings?

- (a) Consensus
- (b) Majority
- (C) Any other ...

10. If there is division of opinion in the meeting how do you take the decision?

- (a) Majority principle
- (b) Convince for consensus
- (c) Deferred
- (d) Drop the issue altogether
- (e) Any other

11. How often do the other members accept the ideas given by you?

- (a) Always
- b) Often
- (C) Rarely (3)

12. How do you rate your participation in the meetings?

- (a) Most active
- (b) Active
- (c) Keep silent most of time
- (d) No answer

13. How to expenditure of money received from Town Committee?

- (a) MB/TC meeting (b) Unable to answer

14. Do you have any knowledge on 74th Amendment Act of Indian Constitution?

- (a) Yes, (b) No

15. Who take important decisions at your home?

- (a) Father (b) Husband
(c) own (d) family members

16. Did any male member or your husband unduly interfere with your activities?

- (a) Yes (b) NO

17. Do you have any knowledge on the Assam Municipal Act 1956?

- (a) Yes (b) no

18. Did you receive any formal training regarding your duties & responsibilities under the 74th Amendment Act?

- (a) Yes (b) No

19. Who motivated you to contest the elections?

- (a) Husband (b) Family

(c) Own (d) People of your locality

20. Do you agree that women members are being prosily represented by male members in the town committee meetings?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) No Response

21. What is generally the attitude of bureaucracy towards you?

(a) Helpful (b) Indifferent
(c) Rude (d) No Response

24. Do you agree that Women's local political awareness has increased?

(a)Yes (b) No

20. Do you support reservation of seats for women?

(a)Yes (b) No

APPENDIX -II

THE ASSAM MUNICIPAL (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2015

ASSAM ACT NO. XVIII OF 2015
(Received the assent of the Governor on 20th May, 2015)
THE ASSAM MUNICIPAL (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2015

An ACT

Further to amend the Assam Municipal Act, 1956

Preamble

Whereas it is expedient further to amend the Assam Municipal Act, 1956, hereinafter referred to as the principal Act, in the manner hereinafter appearing; It is hereby enacted in the Sixty-sixth year of the Republic of India as follows:-

Short title, extent and commencement

1.(1) This Act may be called the Assam Municipal (Amendment) Act, 2015.

(2) It shall have the like extent as the principal Act.

(3) It shall come in to force at once.

Amendment of section 37

2. In the principal Act, in section 37, in sub-section (1), in the first proviso, the words "where such officer is", appearing in between the words "officer" and "appointed" shall be deleted.

Amendment of section 53

3. In the principal Act, in section 53, after sub-section (2), the following new sub-section(3) shall be inserted, namely:-

"(3). (i) Every order or instrument of the Municipal Board or the Town Committee shall be expressed to be made in the name of the Municipal Board or the Town Committee concerned, as the case may be.

(ii) Save in cases where an Officer has been specifically empowered to sign an order or an instrument of the Municipal Board or the Town Committee, every order or instrument shall be signed by the Executive Officer with approval of the Chairman, Municipal Board /Town Committee and such signature shall be deemed to be proper authentication of such order.

(iii) The Executive Officer shall sign any Notification of the Municipal Board or Town Committee on behalf of the Municipal Board or Town Committee with approval of the Chairman, Municipal Board/Town Committee for publication in the Official Gazette."

APPENDIX-III

NAME OF THE RESONDENTS OF ELECTIVE REPRESENTATIVE

NAME OF THE RESONDENTS BILASIPARA TOWN COMMITTEE

Sl.No	NAME OF THE RESPONDENTS	WARD NO
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1	Monalisha Das	WARD NO-04
2	Suparna Chakrabarty	WARD NO-10
3	Iti Saha	WARD NO-12
4	Ijafa Aktar Hussain	WARD NO-03
5	Laila Anjuma Begum	WARD NO-08
6	Moriom Begum	WARD NO-07
7	Anjuma Begum	WARD NO-02
8	Tahmina Begum	WARD NO-09
Total		08

CHAPAR TOWNCOMMITTEE

Sl.No	NAME OF THE RESPONDENTS	WARD NO
1	Sabita Rajbangshi	WARD NO-01
2	Ripa Pathak	WARD NO-06
3	Lalita Mallha	WARD NO-05
4	Latika Ch. Roy.	WARD NO-07
TOTAL		04

APPENDIX-IV

MAP OF ASSAM



Source-www.mapsofindia.com

APPENDIX-V
MAP OF DHUBRI DISTRICT



