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## **Political Representation and Empowerment: Women in the Institutions of Local Government in Orissa after the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution**

by

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# **Political Representation and Empowerment**

## **Women in the Institutions of Local Government in Orissa after the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution**

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The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the discourse of economic and social development in the last decades. Virtually every international and bilateral development agency has proclaimed policies to integrate women better into economic and social processes. The promotion of women in politics, however, especially if it is supposed to be implemented through affirmative action is still contested. This is in spite of the fact that women, who form around 50% of total world population, share a considerably lower presence in elected political bodies: Women made up only 11.6% of MPs in 176 parliaments in 1995 (IDEA 2002).

Apparently universal franchise is inadequate to overcome structural constraints that impede female presence in political offices. Thus, despite their numerical strength, women are still a minority in respect to political power and positions occupied. In industrial countries the reasons for this state of affairs are mainly seen in the neglect of different time budgets of women (who still mainly care for the offspring) and traditional recruiting practices of political parties, whereas women in some of the so-called developing countries are furthermore handicapped because of lower educational achievements and the prevalence of social norms that severely restrict their freedom of movement in the public space.

The quota for women has proved to be a viable strategy to overcome these structural obstacles. Countries that managed to considerably enlarge the number of

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female representatives have succeeded only with the means of reservation of seats – either through self-imposed party-regulations or through legal action by the state (IFES 2001; Bunagan et al. 2000; Pintat 2001). Although the positive results for women’s political presence ensuing from quotas are undeniable, this strategy is still highly debated. Under-proportional presence is certainly lamented in many democracies or international bodies and usually the critique is expressed in terms of justice and the neglect of female interests if women are not present at the decision-making level. However, arguments against reservation policies are based on the argument of justice as well, since quotas are seen to be discriminatory against those not favoured by it and thus violating the anti-discriminatory tenet of most constitutions. What is more, is the challenge from those who suppose that “women” are not a political category. Since women are divided by caste, class or location it is doubted that they share common interests, which could be represented by female legislators.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, although this academic as well as popular debate is far from being resolved, various democracies or political parties have already opted for quotas to promote women or other marginalized groups in politics.

#### THE WOMEN’S QUOTA IN INDIA

Interestingly enough India is one of the countries where a women’s quota of 33% was introduced at least at the local level. The same strategy for the State Assemblies and the National Parliament is still highly contested and the so-called “Women’s Bill” failed thrice to be passed so far (Rai 1999).<sup>3</sup> At the same time, some readers might be astonished that India has realised a women’s quota at all, since India is often portrayed as backward in regard to women’s position in society. News on dowry deaths, widow burning, and the abortion of female foetuses still dominate the rather undifferentiated public image of India. Nevertheless, in 1992 the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution laid down new rules for the establishment and design of rural local government (called Panchayati Raj). This Amendment also stipulates that at least 33% of the seats and positions have to be filled by women. Proponents of this measure believe that the quota for women will lead to their empowerment, whereas critics claim that those women will be mere “proxies” for influential males and will be mainly drawn from the elite. The opponents furthermore point out that women in rural India are not equipped for

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the quota debate and the theoretical and normative justification for a women’s quota see Phillips 1995, especially the first three chapters.

<sup>3</sup> However, the bone of contention is not the women’s quota as such, but whether there should be sub-quotas for “OBCs” (Other Backward Classes) and Muslim women. Generally speaking, the device of reservation of seats is much less controversial in the Indian polity than in most of the European countries. Seats were reserved right from the beginning of enfranchising the population: first for Muslims, after Independence for “SCs” (Scheduled Castes) as well as “STs” (Scheduled Tribes) and later OBCs. In this respect the quota has been accepted as a tool for speeding up social transformation by most political parties. That women became included as a group in need of reservation, however, is partly related to the pressure of women’s movements and partly due to *realpolitik*, which induced Rajiv Gandhi to propose the 33% quota for women already in the late 1980s.

participating in politics, since they lack basic qualifications. Indeed, India's rural social structure can still be characterized as being predominantly patriarchal.<sup>4</sup> Women face restricted mobility in the public space; yet, this differs with respect to caste, class, religion as well as age and family status. As already mentioned, treating women as a political group with common concerns provokes the question in how far gender actually transcends caste, class or ethnic affiliation. Which interests should the elected women represent — those of other women, of their caste, clan or religious community? How can rural women, who are initially without doubt less equipped for political office (lower formal education, less political experience, less public exposure etc.), overcome these inhibitions? And how do male colleagues, officials and the village communities react if they are forced to elect and deal with female representatives?<sup>5</sup>

### THEORETICAL BACKDROP OF THE STUDY

I have argued that proponents of the women's quota in India suppose that the reservation system will lead to women's empowerment.<sup>6</sup> However, they state this without suggesting how the one really leads to the other. Actually, the theoretical link between the concepts of political presence and empowerment is not that clear and thus some theoretical reflections are called for.

The concept of "political presence" as developed by Phillips (1995) is basically a top-down approach. She argues that a quota in politics is imperative because of the need for symbolic recognition of disadvantaged groups, the need for a more vigorous advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged groups, and the importance of a politics of transformation in opening up a fuller range of policy options.<sup>7</sup> Approaches of empowerment (e.g. Batliwala 1993; Bystydziensky 1992; Chandra 1997; Rowlands 1998), on the other hand, are basically bottom-up in nature: Disadvantaged groups have to gain awareness of their disempowered status first and then measures can be introduced to empower them in various areas, for example through education or economic measures. However, there are also strong links between the two concepts.

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<sup>4</sup> As India is a vast country one has to keep in mind that degrees of social oppression differ. Kerala is often referred to as a state where women occupy a higher position. The same holds true for various tribal communities. All in all, it is still fair to assume that the majority of women in rural India are situated in a male-dominated environment.

<sup>5</sup> The quota is implemented through reservation of constituencies. The Indian election system is fashioned after the Westminster model, with a first-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies. Thus, 33% constituencies and positions get reserved in order to meet the target. In these reserved constituencies only women can file nominations. In order not to block constituencies for women eternally, they do rotate after every election. There is an ongoing debate about the merits and draw-backs of rotating reserved constituencies that cannot be discussed here for lack of space.

<sup>6</sup> There are various definitions for empowerment. Here I use the term very broadly to denote a process that gives women more power over their lives.

<sup>7</sup> A further key-argument is the need to tackle the exclusions inherent in party packaging of political ideas. Since political parties are not operating at the level of the Orissa Panchayati Raj, this argument was seen as less relevant for the present study; see Phillips (1995: 43).

One common feature is that both notions are highly normative in nature. They are based on the assumption that the marginalisation and subordination of women as a group is the result of structural forces that need to be rectified. Thus, biological properties are not believed to be the main factor for women's marginalisation, since in such a case the attempt to change the status quo would be futile. Instead, putting the stress on structural constraints opens up avenues for change. Though patriarchy has once been identified as a universal structural force oppressing women, the debate has become much more sophisticated today. It has been accepted by most that the analysis of women's marginalisation has to be contextual, given that structural forces differ between regions, castes, classes, religions and cultures. Though stratifications among women are thus acknowledged, both approaches assume that women form indeed a group who have substantial interests in common. They argue that most women are discriminated against in respect to employment, personal freedom, or public activities, which thwart women's aspirations often regardless of their individual social background.

However, the most obvious link between the demand for political representation and empowerment is the dimension of bringing women into formal positions of power. Power is what politics is all about, the power to define what to decide upon, the power to influence decisions, the power over who gets what, how, and when — the power over values, ideas, and resources. Power is also the most conspicuous ingredient of the term empowerment. The normative argument for bringing women into positions of power and to empower them in a more general sense lies in the assessment of structural barriers that have historically marginalized women in politics, society and economy. As a consequence, bringing women into the political decision-making bodies should be seen as the compensatory aspect of women's empowerment. Conversely, the rationale behind a women's quota is that the presence of women is supposed to lead to a transformation of politics. In this respect the teleological aspect of the claim for political representation of women is to challenge the existing hierarchies of power. The aim of a quota is to subvert and reform, to introduce new issues and also different ways of doing politics. Likewise, there is also the notion that women will gain productive power, power to change the rules of the game and also to negotiate the gender relations. And this is exactly the stated goal of empowerment.

An inherent problem is that there are no guarantees that female legislators will really work for the benefit of women, and it is also not that clear what the common benefit might be. Hence, certain proponents of empowerment approaches do not believe that the quota for women in politics is a successful strategy. In this context it seems that the road to women's empowerment via political representation is abundant with uncertainties, and if one wants guarantees for success, one definitely has to look for other and/or supplementary strategies.

A further corresponding feature is the belief that disadvantaged groups might not be able to formulate their preferences for several reasons like internalised oppression or diversity of interests between individual members of such groups. Proponents of a quota for women believe that women might not be able to really formulate these interests and needs unless they are drawn into the political process.

Here is a basic source of theoretical tension because the traditional empowerment approach focuses on awareness raising methods as prerequisite to understanding the structural forces and becoming conscious of one's interest. Consequently, the empowerment approach is somehow ambiguous as to whether the inclusion of women into the political process will really lead to empowerment if there is no prior awareness raising, or if it is not coupled with strategies to make the representatives gender-sensitive. However, there is no universally accepted strategy that would provide for such a new consciousness.

To sum up, the reservation for women in political bodies can only be an enabling condition for the larger project of women's empowerment. We should also pay attention to Anne Phillips. She argues that finally gender might be less formative than the political career, that initial differences between the genders might be mitigated, and that the inclusion of women will not serve all women in the same way (1995: 75).

## METHODOLOGY

In order to pay tribute to the contextual nature of empowerment the study was conducted in a single State. Orissa was selected because it is in one of the most "backward" States in the Indian Union and thus presents an environment that is not very conducive for women's empowerment to begin with.<sup>8</sup> The social structure of non-tribal Orissa is fairly patriarchal; literacy rates for women are low, and the general infrastructure (like roads, electricity, irrigation) is rather bad. All these factors are believed to have an adverse impact on women's empowerment. Hence, if one can prove that empowerment happens in such a setting, it is fair to assume that it should definitely take place in a location which provides better conditions, like, e.g. in a State like Kerala. Therefore, the selection of a "worst-case scenario" permits to draw more general conclusions.

Aiming at a comparative analysis as well, two blocks<sup>9</sup> were selected that differ in their historical and present development, political culture, and literacy rates for women. Baliptna block of Khurda district— the "forward" one — is part of the coastal region that came under British rule in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is economically comparatively well-off, and has high literacy rates above the Orissa average, namely 51.5% for women and 80.65% for men (Government of Orissa (a) 1993). Block Gania in Nayagrah district — the "backward" one — lies in the western hinterland, was part of the kingdom Daspalla until Independence, has still a rather feudal political culture as well as bad infrastructure and low economic development. Literacy rates of women are below Orissa average, namely 37.17% for women and 71.54% for men (Government of Orissa (b) 1993).

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<sup>8</sup> Orissa was the poorest State of India in respect to per-capita income (3082 Rs p.a.) and percentage of population below poverty line in 1996 (Haq 1997: 32). Concerning "backwardness" in social and political terms see Mohanty (1990).

<sup>9</sup> The local administrative set-up in Orissa consists of three tiers, namely Village, Block and District. The corresponding political structure is *gram panchayat*, *panchayat samiti* and *zilla parishad*.

A quantitative survey was conducted with 105 women and 80 men mainly at the *gram panchayat* and few at the *panchayat samiti* level during the first field trip in 1998/99. In the second round in 1999/2000, selected female representatives, male panchayat members, officials, villagers and women's groups were interviewed in intensive semi-structured interviews. The empirical data gathered will be presented in three subchapters.

The first deals with the socio-economic background of the representatives, the modalities of their election, and their participation in the political bodies. The second subchapter is concerned with the question, whether women indeed exercise power. The point here is whether women can influence the political agenda as well as the way politics is done. The last sub-chapter deals with the procedural aspects of empowerment. Main questions are: In how far have women gained in knowledge? Have they overcome their shyness to speak in public? Have they gained in confidence? Has their status improved? Since supporters of the quota argue for an empowerment of women per se it was also imperative to find out whether the female representatives actually see their mandate as representing women's interests. Furthermore, one has to look at those women who remain outside of the political institutions. What have they gained from women's political presence in local politics? To incorporate women outside the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) into the analysis is mandatory if we want to assess whether a women's quota leads to women's empowerment in general. This aspect has been neglected by all studies on women in the Panchayati Raj that have been available to the author.

## STATE OF THE ART

So far only a few studies have empirically tested the effects of women's quotas in politics. Those available were predominantly conducted at the national level in Scandinavia and lately also in the UK (e.g. Childs 2001; Lovenduski/Karam 1998; Pippa/Lovenduski 2001; Skjeie 2001; Waengerud 2000). The reason for this is that the number of female representatives was too low in most parliaments to qualify as "critical mass" — the minimum representation regarded as a prerequisite for change to happen.<sup>10</sup> After the implementation of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment several studies were conducted pertaining to women in the Panchayati Raj. However, these studies were mainly concerned with socio-economic aspects of the newly elected women or narratives of individual women (e.g. Athreya/Rajeshwari ca.1998; Banerjee 1998; Bhaskar 1997; Ghosh 1995; ISED 1998; Kaushik 1997; MARG 1998; Pai 1998; Santha 1999). Men were no objects of analysis in the Indian studies. In that respect the reader was left rather clueless as to what extent the situation really differs between the genders. In the following study it will become obvious that the neglect of men as objects of analysis is a serious methodological fallacy. The present study, in contrast, aims to provide the reader with a gender- as well as context-sensitive analysis. This will help to identify which of the observed processes might be due to gender and which might be caused by other factors.

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<sup>10</sup> For the concept of "critical mass" in the political context see Dahlerup (1988).

In view of the fact that this study is interested in changes taking place since the implementation of the quota, two factors have to be mentioned that limit the overall impact. First, the duration of women's incumbency is very short. Elections under the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment in Orissa were held in January 1997 only — that is, at the time of the field research women were just two and three years in office. One cannot expect revolutionary changes to happen in such a short time. Nevertheless, interesting trends can be detected even at this early stage, which will be highlighted in this paper. A second limitation is posed by the structural properties of the PRI themselves. The scope for real change is very restricted at the lowest political level. The work of the PRI is mainly concerned with implementation of state-sponsored programmes that have been designed at higher political levels. Furthermore, financial resources are severely restricted and thus restrain the scope for designing policies according to local preferences.

## THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

This part of the paper is divided in three main subchapters, namely “political presence”, “exercise of power”, and “women's empowerment”. The results will be analysed gender- as well as region-wise.<sup>11</sup>

### *Political Presence*

It is important to examine who was elected to the PRI and how the (s)election of a specific candidate actually took place. The analysis illustrates how and why representatives decided to run for election, the representatives' socio-economic background, the preferences of the electorate in regard to female candidates, and in how far women representatives really participate in the working of the PRI.

To begin with the study established that the required number of not less than 33% of women has indeed become elected. The relevance of the reservation of seats for the new political presence of women is obvious, because women were only elected from seats set aside for them by the quota system. This result suggests that women were either not able to successfully compete with men in non-reserved constituencies, or, what seems more likely, that women did not compete for general seats at all. However, 25% of the elected women could at least imagine standing for election against a man in future. The regional comparison reveals that a larger number of women could envision this in Balipatna (namely 31.6% vs. 18.6% in Gania), pointing towards a greater confidence of women in the more “forward” block (table 1).

Before elections under the new quota-regime took place, many critics believed that the reserved seats would not be contested at all, but that village communities would select a “compromise” candidate. Indeed, 63% of the women faced no rival (table 2). However, that also holds for 36% of the male candidates. It appears that

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<sup>11</sup> For a full account of the study see Hust, E.: *'A Million Indira's Now?' Political Presence and Empowerment of Women in Indian Local Government*, forthcoming. For more details on the quantitative data see also the appendix of this paper.



village communities attach an independent value to unanimous decisions that is not necessarily linked to the gender of the candidate — a fact that was also frequently mentioned in interviews. Nevertheless, the higher number of uncontested women suggests that initially only few women might be encouraged to come forward for election. That, however, should be mitigated in the elections to come.

The representatives were asked for the reasons of their successful election (table 3). Women (12.8%) were less convinced than men (37.3%) that their personal qualities mattered at all. In this question there is again an interesting regional trend — only women in Balipatna perceived their personality as important for their (s)election; and even among the men the representatives from Balipatna showed greater confidence in their personal charisma than their colleagues from Gania (46.2% vs. 28.0%). Thus, the issue of self-esteem shows a gendered as well as a regional pattern. Other factors responsible for successful selection were seen in support by the village community, whereas support by family members was rated most probably lower than was actually the case.

The village community was also held responsible for the decision to stand for election at all. Only few women (16.2%) and hardly more than one-third (36.2%) of the men stated that they had decided at least partly on their own to participate in the election. Most said that they had been persuaded by villagers. The regional trend is again revealing and more pronounced between the male representatives. In Balipatna 19.3% of women showed own interest to run in the elections vs. 11.6% in Gania; 55% of the men in Balipatna claimed this vs. only 17.5% in Gania (table 4). It seems that the village community has a greater influence on political decisions in “backward” Gania than in Balipatna. The enhanced influence of the “village community” might appear positive if one assumes that representatives are basically mandate holders for their electorate. However, situated in the context of rural India one has to keep in mind that the “village community” basically denotes the elite — i.e. high-caste and rich male elders. In that respect accountability is to the village elite only, which might be detrimental to the common good. What is interesting for our topic, however, is the fact that less men in Gania than women in Balipatna have made their own choice. This suggests that lack of autonomy in decision making, which is normally attributed to women, is in fact less due to gender than it is to the socio-political framework.

Before presenting the deliberations of the voters which candidate to (s)elect, I shall provide a short socio-economic profile of the elected representatives.

Female representatives are younger than their male colleagues (average age is 37.7 vs. 41.3 years; see table 5). Women generally come from lower class as well as from lower caste families (table 6). It appears that families of higher social status are not yet ready to introduce their womenfolk into the public space. Thus, the argument often voiced by critics that the reservation will benefit mainly the elite can be ruled out at least for the lowest political level.<sup>12</sup> Most female

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<sup>12</sup> One should mention, however, that it holds mainly for the lowest political level. One reason for this is a bias introduced through the mode of reservation. The rules lay down that if only two seats have been reserved for SCs, one has to go to a SC woman. Thus, the percentage of SC women in the PRI is higher than those of men because of the mode of

representatives said that they were unpaid family workers (on family income, see table 7); only few follow a paid occupation outside their home. In this respect public exposure — apart from the new political office — is very low. Women are less educated than their male colleagues — a result that was expected considering the literacy rates of the general population. 19% of the female representatives never went to school and most went up to primary level only. Men have at least primary education and many attended higher schools. Surprisingly the higher literacy rates among women in Balipatna that are reported for the general population did not translate into the election of better educated women there as compared to Gania: the differences between the representatives from both regions are negligible. Those women who have secured higher positions, like *sarpanch*, are usually better educated than simple wardmembers. Women also come from households with overall lower educational achievements in comparison to their male colleagues (this was assessed by the educational background of their husbands). This provides another compelling indicator for the fact that women come from comparatively modest social backgrounds (see tables 8-10).

Before the elections took place critics believed that women would predominantly be recruited from so-called “political” families. This assumption implicates that those women would be sheer proxies standing for politically active male family members and keeping the seat warm for the following election. Indeed, 32% female representatives declared that other family members are active in politics. However, that holds for a comparable number of male incumbents as well: 26% come from politically active families (table 11). Thus, a political family background appears to be a socio-political phenomenon that is not necessarily connected to gender. It seems furthermore doubtful that women coming from political families are necessarily “surrogate” politicians. It seems convincing that families who have political ambitions are also more eager to encourage their womenfolk for such a career. Furthermore, some female representatives claimed that they had developed some interest in politics even prior to the women’s quota, because they followed the political activities of their husbands. One should acknowledge that family ties and backing can serve as an important political resource, since female representatives do not have many other feasible networks that could give them support especially at the initial stage of their political careers. In respect to political family background apparently a double standard is attached to the genders. The Indian political scene is replete of sons, sons-in-law or nephews — but this fact does not encourage mockery that they are only political proxies. This is not to deny that some of the elected women are indeed stand-ins for their politically ambitious husbands or fathers-in-law — but one cannot deduct this

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reservation. Generally speaking, *sarpanches* (mayors) or representatives at *samiti* or *zilla parishad* level are normally drawn from better-off families. Nevertheless, women are recruited from less prestigious backgrounds when compared to men occupying the same position. The connection between economic status and political position is due to the fact that election campaigns are a costly affair — an issue that will be spelled out in greater detail at a later stage. However, this holds for both genders. Consequently, the pattern that representatives at higher political bodies and positions are drawn from economically potent families is not a result of the quota but is part of the political culture in India.

merely from the fact that their relatives are active in politics. The issue of proxy should furthermore be treated as a function of time — women, who initially might be dependent on male mentors, will possibly develop an own political profile and start acting autonomously. A good example for this is Indira Gandhi.

Having presented the profile of the mandate-holders let us now turn to the electorate. If one looks at the preferences of the voters it becomes clear that they were not inevitably interested in electing a mere proxy. The preferences of the electorate were established in interviews with village communities. However, only men gave answers to the questions. Important for the (s)election of a female candidate was her education, her oral capabilities and the anticipated support she would get from her husband. The support of the husband is perceived as crucial especially for undertakings that need to be taken care of outside the confines of the Panchayat office. This criteria shows that women are indeed restricted in dealing freely in the public space. Nevertheless, support by the husband does still not incorporate that the wife is completely dependent on him.

An interesting sociological phenomenon is the aspect that villagers expressed their preference for women who have married in their native village. Usually parents select matrimonial partners from villages around 10 to 20 km apart. Nonetheless, marriages do take place between partners resident in the same village, but such matches have marginal occurrence in Orissa. Women who were born in a respective village are called *gaanjhias* (daughters of the village). They have a greater freedom of movement and are generally less oppressed by social restrictions regulating their public behaviour than are *bahus* (daughters-in-law), who have moved to the village after marriage. *Gaanjhias* know the men of the village since childhood and can deal with them in a more care-free way. A *bahu*, on the other hand, has hardly any social intercourse with men of her husband's village. The preference of the electorate for *gaanjhias* indicates that villagers consciously employed a social resource that eases traditional restrictions on women's activities.

Nevertheless, though lip-service was often paid in support for the women's quota, it became obvious that most male villagers were not very enthusiastic about this legislation. Many argued that women like Indira Gandhi could and should be in politics, since they are educated and "enlightened". The simple rural womenfolk, on the other hand, was seen as not fit for politics, since they allegedly do not understand politics, are too shy, and need the support of men for all their undertakings. The same negative stand was taken by many officials in the PRI. All this is an indicator for the fact that the dominant discourse is still opposed to women's political role in rural politics. That discourse poses a formidable obstacle for women's political activities in the PRI and one has to observe how it will change over time.

A further issue to be analysed is the actual political presence of the representatives. There are tales from regions in northern India, like Rajasthan, that female representatives sign up the panchayat records at home while their husbands actually participate in the panchayat meetings. Such practices were not observed in Orissa (table 12). Women do take part in the meetings of the panchayats on a

regular basis and many informants confirmed that impostors are not allowed to participate. It appears that the panchayat office has even been transformed into a semi-private space. That becomes visible in the fact that some women remove the *pallu* (the end of the sari) that normally covers their head and face outside home, after entering the panchayat office. Many female representatives said that they feel comfortable in the panchayat meetings and that they are at ease with their male colleagues. Some added that the presence of other women positively supports that feeling. This should be rated as a proof that the “critical mass” of a minority has indeed great relevance for members of a given minority. However, some female panchayat members are still quite shy and remain in the background, whereas others have managed to make their voices heard. The *sarpanches* especially show hardly any restraint in dealing with the predominantly male *gram panchayat*. This ease, on the other hand, is not detected during public gatherings like the *grama sabha* (meeting of all villagers on the electoral role). Such meetings are usually held in the open or in school buildings and are still mainly attended by the male population. Women by and large do not turn up since social norms prohibit social intercourse with men from the same village.<sup>13</sup> A quote from a young wardmember from Gania block exemplifies the problem:

I have no problems to speak with men in the [Panchayat] meetings. They do not belong to my village. I do speak to them like I do speak to the women. Outside the panchayat office I do not speak to the men. After the meeting I go home immediately and stay in the house. [...] I do not go to the *grama sabha*. My husband attends the *grama sabha*. I am a *bahu* of the village.

However, there is again a regional trend. More female representatives in Balipatna claimed that they participate in the *grama sabha*, and it was observed that even women of the general population turned up there (table 13).

Yet generally work that needs to be conducted outside the panchayat office, like solving disputes or supervising development work, is mainly taken care of by male relatives. Traditional codes of behaviour are definitely an obstacle for women that cannot be removed over night. Women who dare to venture too far into the public space become often victims of character assassination. Such women are chastened as too bold, as behaving “unwomanly”, and as having a bad reputation. Women therefore devote less time than their male colleagues for their work in the panchayat. Women spend in average 15 hours per month, whereas men claim to work more than 50 hours per month for the PRI. Apart from the curbed freedom of

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<sup>13</sup> In Orissa, especially in the hinterland, villages are so small, that a *gram panchayat* represents various villages. Thus, female representatives normally sit together with men who do not come from their village. More social taboos are attached to the interaction between females and males of the same village since (fictive) family relationships are constructed that forbid social intercourse between them. See for such social regulations also Jacobson (1999).

movement another factor for this state of affairs is that women have hardly been relieved from their household duties which impinge heavily on their time-budget.<sup>14</sup>

### *Exercise of Power*

It has been established above that women are indeed present in the formal institutions of power. However, in how far do they really exercise power? Can women actually influence the political agenda? Do they voice gender-specific concerns? Can they change the rules of the game? As many villagers as well as Indian social scientists propose that women are less corrupt this issue needs to be scrutinized. Special attention is also given to the matter whether the representatives are actors in their own right and in how far they are dependent on others. One precondition to act informed and independently is the command over relevant knowledge, especially if we keep in mind the link between power and knowledge as proposed by Foucault.

During the quantitative study the incumbents were asked about features of the political system (e.g. name of the ruling party in Orissa), about specific rules and regulations of the Panchayati Raj System, and concerning the government schemes that are supposed to be implemented by the PRI. Generally speaking women scored less than men. They have very scant knowledge on general politics, and most women were hardly interested in politics prior to their election. They argued that there was no space for women in rural politics — so why should they have been interested? This attitude has changed dramatically between the two field trips. After a further year in office women were better informed and also more interested in their work than during the previous visit.

An important result is that knowledge about government programmes shows a gendered pattern. Female representatives more often named schemes that benefit girl-children or widows. This could be an indicator that greater priority will be attached to such programs in future. Knowledge is without doubt a necessary condition for performing well in politics, and it is obvious that women lag behind. However, that should improve over time and one has to mention that also men are not sufficiently informed — especially concerning rules and regulations of the PRI. Again it appears that the issue of lack of knowledge is treated in a biased manner: if applied to women it is used to demonstrate that they are not capable to fulfil a public function. That men are often ill informed as well is not taken that seriously!

Another question addressed was in how far women really participate in the decision-making of the institutions and in how far they can deal autonomously. The incumbents were asked how often they had participated in the decisions of the PRI. Women do participate less: 61.9% of the women and 90% of the men stated that they have participated in every decision (table 14). However, participation in decision-making is also dependent on the respondents' position in the PRI — *sarpanches* or *samiti* chairpersons do participate more often than ordinary

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<sup>14</sup> This is a phenomenon not specific to India. Studies in Germany have found that in case both partners are working outside the home, women still carry the major burden of household duties or get supported by other females (Rerrich 1996).

wardmembers regardless of gender. Interestingly enough the male representatives were rather undecided whether their female colleagues participate in the same way or not: 45% believed women do participate equally, 48.8% said they do not, and 5% were not decided. However, besides taking part in the decision-making it is important to establish whether the incumbents really decide autonomously or whether they voice the ideas of somebody else. Personal autonomy is definitely hard to measure. Thus, the participation in the legislative assembly elections was taken as a proxy-indicator for autonomy in decision-making. Members in the PRI were asked whether they participated in the election and how they decided whom to vote for. Furthermore, the Assembly elections taking place in February 2000 were observed and many qualitative interviews were taken. In the conversations it appeared that the degree of sovereignty in decision-making is dependent on the socio-political environment. In Gania most respondents stated that the “village community” decides for a specific candidate and that everybody follows this decision. Again, village community here denotes either the dominant male elite or the male caste-elders (depending on whether a village consists of more than one caste or not). This indicates that men are also bound to follow this decision, though they might be more involved in reaching a given conclusion. In Balipatna the decision was mainly taken by the head of the family. In both cases women had not much influence over the decision-making process, though one should not forget that men, especially in Gania, are also very restricted in their choice. Thus it appears that lack of autonomy in decision-making is not only dependent on gender but also on the political culture. In the more feudal set-up in Gania the autonomy of all PRI members is compromised and the influential male elite dominates over men and women alike.

A further issue was to see whether women can indeed influence the way politics is done. As mentioned above, many ordinary citizens as well as social scientists in India believe that women are less corrupt and that a positive outcome of the women’s quota would be cleaner politics. However, this hope cannot be empirically verified. In many informal talks the issue of corruption was touched upon and basically everybody complained about corrupt practices. Two main types of “corruption” can be identified. The first one is the spending of money in order to get elected. Money is either used to bribe competitors to drop their nomination, or it is spent to woo the electorate with gifts, food, or entertainment. Many women acknowledged that substantial sums were spent for their successful election. However, this bribing or lavishly spending money on the electorate is not defined as “corruption”, neither in the eyes of the giver nor in those of the taker. Respondents openly referred to these practices and understand it as the way politics works. However, they do not appreciate that this practice actually leads to corrupt habits once the candidates successfully secured office, since at least the amount spent for elections has to be recovered. And this cannot happen through the nominal remuneration for PRI members alone. The sum spent (and normally more than that) is accumulated through corrupt practices like taking bribes for including somebody in a beneficiaries list or channelling money sanctioned for public works into one’s own pocket. This practice is regarded as corruption and representatives

try to defend themselves against such charges. However, behind closed doors an astonishing number did mention that they took money for certain services. Furthermore, some cases could be established through matching reports from various informants, although the offender did not accept the charges. While some female representatives might have been induced to corrupt practices by their husbands or male colleagues they neither appeared to be very embarrassed nor to resent the fact. Some women might indeed be not or less corrupt than some male colleagues. However, the same might hold for male representatives. It appears that corruption is basically institutionalised in the Panchayati Raj. Mostly officials and representatives work hand in hand — money sanctioned for specific purposes get diverted and everybody involved gets a certain share. One could actually speak of the “transparency of corruption” since many people are informed on who gets what share. That becomes obvious in remarks made by a male *samiti* member in Balipatna block:

The main mischief is done by the top-bureaucrats — if they are not corrupt, how could the others be corrupt? The politicians are corrupt as well. It works like this: When money is sanctioned for a public purpose, every officer takes his share. The BDO will take 7%, the Junior Engineer 5%, the Collector 3% and so on. Then the politicians also take shares, and the contractor in particular will not utilise the whole amount he gets. So at the end not much development work gets done. A further problem is that many officials and politicians work hand in glove.

In view of the fact that officials spent a lot of money to get transferred into “lucrative” positions, and as politicians spent money to get elected, incentives are big to mint money during the period of incumbency.

Women are so far the weakest segment in the PRI set-up and it does not seem reasonable to expect that they will be able to stem the tide against institutionalised corruption, even if they would wish to do so. However, it seems to be questionable to assume that women are morally superior to men. Women appeared to be less corrupt since they hardly had any opportunities in the past. However, once they get into important positions they might misuse their power in the same way as men. Indian politics has no dearth of high level female politicians without a cleaner record than their male counterparts. It is therefore obvious that one expected positive result of the women’s quota is not materialising. Will this be used to argue against women’s involvement in politics? It often appears that a quota for women can only be justified if one postulates that women will be the better politicians. Nonetheless, it should be sufficient to argue that women have the same right and in principle the same capability to be present in politics. That does not deny that women will introduce changes in the way politics is done. But such transformations are difficult to predict and the termination of corruption is unfortunately a rather unrealistic expectation.

An additional argument for women's presence in politics is the representation of specific interests. It is assumed that women carry interests that are neglected by an all-male political body. Accordingly representatives were asked what they wish to achieve for their constituency. In broad terms the answers did not differ much between the genders. Nevertheless, different coding showed that women were more inclined to do something specifically for women or children, like better implementation of the widow pension and programmes benefiting girl children, or the establishment of women's groups (table 15). In this respect some women attached different priorities to existing programmes than men, but they hardly came up with revolutionary new preferences. One reason for this should be seen in the fact that the financial as well as conceptual space is very limited at the lowest political level. Answers are induced by the availability of funds from state sponsored programmes and the range of preferences was thus very limited to policies already decided at higher political levels. An important feature of the slightly gendered pattern, however, is that only women in Balipatna wanted to do something specifically for women at all. In Gania no woman showed interest to promote specific interests of women or girl children.

#### *Women's Empowerment*

I have argued above that women neither exercise much power yet, nor are they able to influence policies or the rules of the political game in a major way so far. Reasons for this are seen in obstacles resulting from social norms that are gender-specific, as well as from structural properties of the general framework of the PRI. The question that concerns us now is in how far a process of empowerment is taking place. What did the female representatives gain from their inclusion into politics? And have women as a group benefited from their presence?

In regard to the process of empowerment of the female representatives one can positively claim that they have gained in many respects. The female PRI members mentioned their gain of new knowledge about politics in general as well as about local issues relevant to their constituencies as one positive effect of their presence. In discussions during the panchayat meetings they get informed about specific problems of their locality and planned projects. Furthermore, they are now involved in solving part of those problems. They also attain information concerning government programmes. As a result of their new knowledge and their participation in local politics they have thus acquired a greater interest in politics. Additionally it became evident that women highly valued their new freedom to move out of their homes and as well as their integration into village affairs. Prior to their election they could only leave their home in order to visit relatives or to perform household duties, like fetching of water and fuel. Now they can venture out to participate in the panchayat meetings, to go to the Block office, and some even discuss with villagers about current problems. Generally speaking women have achieved a higher visibility in the village communities, which should be rated as a very important development for rural India. One can claim that the quota has created a space for women in the public sphere that can be occupied and used by



some of the elected women. Furthermore, 40% of the female incumbents perceive that their status has been elevated in the family as well as in the village community. They believe that they are now regarded more as persons in their own right. A *sarpanch* from Gania Block expressed it like this: 'I feel good in Gania. People know me now, know that I am the *sarpanch*, and they respect me. Before I became the *sarpanch* they did not know me'. Women have also become more confident to speak in front of others and many have lost their shyness to deal with people unrelated to them. As argued above, the presence of several women does positively contribute to this. One OBC wardmember in Balipatna said:

Before my election I [...] never went out or mixed with people. But now I am more confident and mix with others. When I met our *sarpanch* the first time [a very respected senior Brahmin] I was very nervous, but after the meeting I was very happy. Also the other wardmembers helped me to overcome my nervousness and it helped that there were also other women, not just me. I also adjusted slowly to sit together with men, and now I can also speak to men in the village. Before I could not talk to them, but now I think that they do respect me.

Their newly established confidence and satisfaction concerning their presence in the PRI is also rendered obvious by the fact that 70% of the elected women would like to remain in politics after their present term is over (table 16). Women in Balipatna show more ambitions than their colleagues from Gania on that issue. What is problematic, however, is that only a small number of female representatives demonstrate sensitivity concerning women's interests — as seen, mainly in Balipatna one could detect inclinations at all.

However, one example from Gania shows, that there are further obstacles for female politicians to implement women-friendly politics. A young and energetic female *sarpanch* in Gania Block discussed with me the issue of alcohol consumption. Alcoholism has been frequently referred to in the literature as a women's problem, since husbands squander scarce household resources and might resort to wife-beating when intoxicated. The *sarpanch* perceived the problem and would like to do something against it. However, she asked how she could work against alcohol consumption if she wants to become elected in future? The voting decision in her locality is dominated by the male elite who are potential liquor consumers. If she were to annoy them through agitating against alcohol sale and consumption, she would lose her political support. This case shows that although the *sarpanch* was actually aware about a gendered problem she felt unable to remedy it. It appears that she could only succeed if there were vigorous women's groups in her Panchayat who would support her in this issue and would pressurise the dominant males to submit to their wish. That would demand as precondition obviously the existence of such women's groups. In Gania Block, where the above case was reported, several *mahila mandals* had indeed been formed through government endeavours in the 1980s. But most of these *mandals* were defunct at

the time of my research. In Balipatna, the situation of women's groups looked much brighter. Here the NGO I was staying with had organised women around saving groups (for details on their work see Harper 1998). However, the women used their meetings only for the purpose of collecting and distributing the money, but did not perceive it as a venue to discuss other problems relevant to them. In that respect these women's groups, who were satisfactorily working for the original purpose of saving money, could not contribute to supporting the elected female members of the PRI to press for women-friendly politics.

That state of affairs has evidently repercussions on the effect of the quota on women as a group. Generally speaking it is quite difficult to measure the overall impact of the quota. The time span is too short to be able to establish major policy changes that benefit women in a direct way. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the scope for change is rather limited (in regard to finances as well as policy making). Thus, materially nothing has changed so far. However, there are positive effects of the quota that are perceivable already at this early stage. Village women in both blocks expressed their pride that other women are now elected into the institutions of local government. They perceive it as an acknowledgement of female capabilities to contribute to the political process and to assume public office. Thus, symbolic recognition of women through enhanced political presence is a positive effect of the quota that holds for women as a group. Another significant aspect is that village women perceive that they can now address the person in power. Earlier the representatives were all men and women could not directly deal with them because of social taboos. Now women can envisage seeking access to female politicians and placing their demands before them. This result indicates that the women's quota has an additional relevance in societies that are highly gender-segregated in nature.

## ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Reconsidering the empirical results presented above it becomes clear that the processes ensuing from the women's quota do not follow the same course in every given socio-political context. Women in the more "forward" Balipatna evidently gained more than their colleagues in Gania. The elected women are more present, autonomous, confident and gender-sensitive than their counterparts in Gania. They devote more time for their work in the PRI and are more likely to take part in public gatherings like the *grama sabha*. Even women who are not present in the PRI are more likely to participate in public gatherings and are more curious about the work of the PRI in Balipatna than in Gania. How can this regional variation be explained?

It appears that what is to be gained by the quota — namely empowerment — is partly a precondition for its actualisation. Women in Balipatna had a greater freedom of movement already prior to the reservation in politics. Women had assumed some public presence due to functioning women's groups and the historical participation of women in the freedom struggle. In Gania such role models and previous presence in the public realm are missing. Nevertheless,

though the preconditions for enhanced participation of women in politics are rather dim in Gania, changes have taken place there as well. But the process of empowerment is slower and more difficult there. Still, for both regions it could be established that the female representatives have gained in many respects. They have acquired a legitimate space in rural political institutions that can be used at least by some, though they are still a minority.<sup>15</sup> But the elected women participate in the meetings; they interact with officials, and they take part in important discussions. Some of these elected members can be expected to serve as desperately needed role models in the countryside. Furthermore, women as a group have gained in regard to symbolic recognition and new access to their representatives.

Apart from regional differences, the comparison between the genders yielded important results. It became discernible that the dominant male discourse is a major obstacle for women to perform well in politics — and this comes on top of those impediments women face in any case because of structural discrimination, like restricted mobility or lack of knowledge. Even women, who contribute to the political process in a relevant way, either become victims of statements concerning their lack of abilities, or are criticized for their “unwomanly” behaviour. It seems that it is very difficult for women to please their electorate. If they follow the ordained ideal of the dutiful wife, they are criticised for not being effective. If they dare to act more boldly they are chastened for their unwomanly behaviour. All this proves to be a major stumbling block for women’s public endeavours and it will presumably take a long time until these discourses are altered.

Moreover, women’s weaknesses are condemned beyond proportions, and conditions that apply to both genders are interpreted in a male-biased way. This was visible in the question of political family background as well as in respect to the limited autonomy of the representatives. To illustrate this problem in a more general way one can refer to an international example: Bill Clinton, e.g., was hardly portrayed as incompetent or a proxy only because his wife Hillary was known to be responsible for many of his political programmes.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion then, it can be stated that the quota for women is indeed an important impetus to women’s empowerment in rural India. On the other hand it became obvious that the process will take a long time and that the goal of women’s empowerment will not be secured by the quota alone. In order to support and accelerate the process one has to employ additional strategies which promote the self-reliance of women (economically as well as socially), build women’s

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<sup>15</sup> Though female representatives are still a minority in relative terms, the absolute number is quite impressive. In 1997 there were 716.234 elected female PRI members in the whole of India excluding Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir, where elections had not taken place at that time (ISS 1997: 7). The Bihar election in April 2001 has added roughly another 45000 women to this score (see for number of reserved seats for women in the PRI elections in Bihar [www.pria.org/cgi-bin/lsg/activity.pl?ac\\_id=13](http://www.pria.org/cgi-bin/lsg/activity.pl?ac_id=13)). This is a substantial amount of newly politically active women in local politics.

capacities, and remove structural obstacles. Furthermore, it seems not very realistic to expect that women will necessarily represent women's interests. That holds especially if there are no strong women's movements that could pressurise the representatives as well as support them in their undertakings. I referred to the fact that so far the decision-making on who gets elected is mainly taken by the male elite. Thus, female politicians act rationally if they are catering more to the demands of those who are important for their re-election. It is also amazing to see, how these "incapable" women quickly understood how politics works! Only when women will become independent voters or manage to pressurise the male elite can we hope for enhanced women-friendly politics at a larger scale. Furthermore, female representatives also need the support of men, especially at the initial stages of their political careers. As we have seen, social practices still prevent most rural women to take over responsibilities outside the confines of the panchayat offices. Thus, men need to be co-opted for the cause of women's empowerment as well. In cases where the support by men is not sheer dominance one should rather see this as positive than as negative.

While one cannot claim that women are really "empowered" now, one can also not deny the fact that a certain gain of power has taken place as a direct consequence of the quota. Especially if one takes into consideration that other strategies for women's empowerment that have been employed for more than 50 years by the Indian state (or even the colonial regime before) have paid less dividends. In this respect it appears that the quota can be a viable instrument, especially in the given framework. What is more, Orissa presented a rather difficult environment to begin with and one can speculate that the effects of the quota should be greater in settings that are more conducive. Above all, considering the fact that change has been taking place already in a very short time span one can propose that these trends will lead to greater transformations in the long run.

## APPENDIX

*Political Presence***Table 1: Would you contest a non-reserved seat — female sample?**

	Yes	No	Can't say/D.K.	Total
Balipatna	19 (30.6)	27 (43.5)	16 (25.8)	62 (59)
Gania	8 (18.6)	33 (76.7)	2 (4.7)	43 (41)
Total	27 (25.7)	60 (57.1)	18 (17.1)	105 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 2: How many candidates apart from you contested the seat?**

	0	1	2-3	4-5	6-10	> 10	Total
Fem. B	41 (66.1)	11 (17.7)	8 (12.9)	2 (3.2)	-	-	62 (59)
Fem. G	26 (60.5)	6 (14.0)	9 (21.0)	2 (4.7)	-	-	43 (41)
Total	66 (62.9)	19 (18.1)	16 (15.3)	4 (3.9)	-	-	105 (100)
Male B	14 (35.0)	13 (32.5)	8 (20.0)	2 (5.0)	3 (7.5)	-	40 (50)
Male G	15 (37.5)	11 (27.5)	9 (22.5)	2 (5.0)	1 (2.5)	2 (5.0)	40 (50)
Total	29 (36.3)	24 (30.0)	17 (21.3)	4 (5.0)	4 (5.0)	2 (2.5)	80 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 3: Why do you think you have won the seat (n=90)?**

	own personality	support of villagers	support of family	support of caste/tribe	support of party	Cannot say	Total
Fem. B	5 (22.7)	17 (81.0)	1 (4.8)	-	-	2 (9.5)	22 (55.3)
Fem. G	-	16 (94.1)	2 (11.8)	2 (11.8)	3 (17.6)	-	17 (44.7)
Total	5 (12.8)	33 (86.8)	3 (7.9)	2 (5.3)	3 (7.9)	2 (5.3)	39 (100)
Male B	12 (46.2)	19 (73.1)	-	1 (3.8)	-	-	26 (51.0)
Male G	7 (28.0)	22 (88.0)	1 (4.0)	-	-	-	25 (49.0)
Total	19 (37.3)	41 (80.4)	1 (2.0)	1 (2.0)	-	-	51 (100)

Key: Multiple answers were possible; percentages calculated according to number of persons interviewed in each category; does not add up to 100%.

**Table 4: How was your decision formed to participate in the election?**

	own decision	husband	other family members	village leaders	villagers	caste/tribe	any other	Total
Fem. B	12 (19.3)	3 (4.8)	11 (17.7)	8 (12.9)	42 (67.7)	1 (1.6)	-	62
Fem. G	5 (11.6)	9 (20.9)	4 (9.3)	-	36 (83.7)	-	1 (2.3)	43
Total	17 (16.2)	12 (11.4)	15 (14.3)	8 (7.6)	78 (74.3)	1 (0.9)	1 (0.9)	105
Male B	22 (55.0)	-	-	1 (2.5)	18 (45)	-	3 (7.5)	40
Male G	7 (17.5)	-	2 (5.0)	1 (2.5)	29 (72.5)	-	5 (12.5)	40
Total	29 (36.2)	-	2 (2.5)	2 (2.5)	47 (58.7)	-	8 (10.0)	80

Key: Multiple answers were possible; percentages calculated according to number of persons interviewed in each category; percentages do not add up to 100%.

**Table 5: Age-structure of respondents**

	21-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+	Total
Fem. B	9 (14.5)	9 (14.5)	25 (40.3)	10 (16.1)	7 (11.3)	2 (3.2)	62 (59)
Fem. G	5 (11.6)	9 (20.9)	19 (44.2)	5 (11.6)	4 (9.3)	1 (2.3)	43 (41)
Total	14 (13.3)	18 (17.1)	44 (41.9)	15 (14.3)	11 (10.5)	3 (2.9)	105 (100)
Male B	2 (5.0)	8 (20.0)	9(22.5)	15 (37.5)	4 (10.0)	2 (5.0)	40
Male G	2 (5.0)	5 (12.5)	14 (35.0)	6 (15.0)	11 (27.5)	2 (5.0)	40
Total	4 (5.0)	13 (16.3)	23 (28.8)	21 (26.3)	15 (18.8)	4 (5.0)	80 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 6: Caste of representatives — percentages according to gender**

	General (Brahmin & Karan)	OBC	SC	ST	Shia	Total
Fem. B.	5 (8.1)	34 (54.8)	19 (30.6)	-	2 (6.5)	62 (59.0)
Fem. G.	2 (4.7)	19 (44.2)	16 (37.2)	6 (14.0)	-	43 (41.0)
Total	7 (6.7)	53 (50.5)	35 (33.3)	6 (5.7)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)
Male B.	8 (20.0)	25 (62.5)	6 (15.0)	-	1 (2.5)	40 (50.0)
Male G.	-	28 (70.0)	8 (20.0)	4 (10.0)	-	40 (50.0)
Total	8 (10.0)	53 (66.3)	14 (17.5)	4 (5.0)	1 (2.3)	80 (100.0)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 7: Total family income per annum of respondents in Rupees (n=177)**

	<5000	5000- <10,000	10,000- <15,000	15,000- <20,000	20,000- <30,000	30,000- <50,000	50,000- <100,000	100,000 and more	Total
Fem. B.	12 (22.2)	9 (16.7)	11 (20.4)	2 (3.7)	10 (18.5)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.5)	1 (1.8)	54 (55.7)
Fem. G	6 (14.0)	22 (51.2)	3 (7.0)	4 (9.3)	3 (7.0)	2 (4.7)	1 (2.3)	2 (4.7)	43 (44.3)
Total	18 (17.1)	31 (29.5)	14 (13.3)	6 (5.7)	13 (12.4)	8 (7.6)	4 (3.8)	3 (2.9)	97* (100)
Male B	-	9 (22.5)	8 (20.0)	7 (17.5)	5 (12.5)	6 (15.0)	1 (2.5)	4 (10.0)	40 (50)
Male G	3 (7.5)	14 (35.0)	9 (22.5)	4 (10.0)	5 (12.5)	1 (2.5)	2 (5.0)	2 (5.0)	40 (50)
Total	3 (3.8)	23 (28.8)	17 (21.3)	11 (13.8)	10 (12.5)	7 (8.8)	3 (3.8)	6 (7.5)	80 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

\*Eight women could not give their financial position and other family members were not available. Thus they have been deleted from the sample.

**Table 8: Educational level of female respondents**

	illit.	sign name	primary (I-V)	VI-IX	X	XI < Grad.	Grad.	Post- Grad.	Total
Balipatna	-	11 (17.7)	29 (46.8)	16 (25.8)	4 (6.5)	-	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (59.0)
Gania	1 (2.3)	8 (18.6)	21 (48.8)	9 (20.9)	4 (9.3)	-	-	-	43 (41.0)
Total	1 (0.9)	19 (18.1)	50 (47.6)	25 (23.8)	8 (7.6)	-	1 (0.9)	1 (0.9)	105 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 9: Educational level of the husbands of female respondents (n=98)**

	illit.	sign name	primary (I-V)	VI-IX	X	XI < Grad.	Grad.	Total
Balipatna	6 (10.2)	6 (10.2)	19 (32.2)	18 (30.5)	7 (11.8)	2 (3.4)	1 (1.7)	59 (60.2)
Gania	1 (2.6)	4 (10.2)	17 (43.6)	10 (25.6)	1 (2.5)	5 (12.8)	1 (2.5)	39 (39.8)
Total	7 (7.1)	10 (10.2)	36 (36.7)	28 (28.6)	8 (8.2)	7 (7.1)	2 (2.0)	98 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

Note: Some of the widows gave the educational level of their expired husbands.

**Table 10: Educational level of male respondents**

	primary (I-V)	VI-IX	X	XI < Grad.	Grad.	Post-Grad.	Total
Balipatna	5 (12.5)	16 (40.0)	12 (30.0)	4 (10.0)	2 (5.0)	1 (2.5)	40 (50)
Gania	21 (52.5)	7 (17.5)	5 (12.5)	5 (12.5)	1 (2.5)	1 (2.5)	40 (50)
Total	26 (32.5)	23 (28.8)	17 (21.3)	9 (11.3)	3 (3.8)	2 (2.5)	80 (100)

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 11: Is anyone in your family involved in politics?**

	Yes	No	Total
Fem. B	16 (25.8)	46 (74.2)	62
Fem. G	18 (41.9)	25 (58.1)	43
Total	34 (32.4)	71 (67.6)	105
Male B	10 (25.0)	30 (75.0)	40
Male G	11 (27.5)	29 (72.5)	40
Total	21 (26.3)	59 (73.8)	80

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.



**Table 12: How many meetings of the Panchayati Raj body did you attend?**

	none	few	most	every	Total
Female	-	2 (1.9)	13 (12.4)	90 (85.7)	105
Male	1 (1.3)	-	7 (8.8)	72 (90)	80
Total	1 (0.5)	2 (1.1)	20 (10.8)	162 (87.6)	185

Key: Percentage in rows calculate the percentage of gender separately.

**Table 13: Do you participate in the Grama Sabha (n=179)?\***

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
Fem. B	49 (83.1)	10 (16.9)	-	59
Fem. G	22 (52.4)	17 (40.5)	3 (7.1)	42
Total	71 (70.3)	27 (26.7)	3 (3.0)	101
Male B	38 (97.4)	1 (2.6)	-	39
Male G	39 (100)	-	-	39
Total	77 (98.7)	1 (1.3)	-	78

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

\*Three women in Balipatna and one in Gania could not answer, whether such meetings take place. Two men claimed that the meetings do not take place. All these people have been deleted from this sample.

### *Political Power*

**Table 14: In how many decisions of the Panchayati Raj body did you participate?**

	none	few	most	every	Total
Fem. B	6 (9.7)	9 (14.5)	10 (16.1)	37 (59.7)	62
Fem. G	6 (14.0)	6 (14.0)	3 (6.9)	28 (65.1)	43
Total	12 (11.4)	15 (14.3)	13 (12.4)	65 (61.9)	105
Male B	-	1 (2.5)	6 (15)	33 (82.5)	40
Male G	1 (2.5)	-	-	39 (97.5)	40
Total	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	6 (7.5)	72 (90.0)	80

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

**Table 15: Special concern for the poor, women and children**

	for the poor	for women and children	for both	for none	Total
Female B.	13 (21.0)	13 (21.0)	2 (3.2)	34 (54.8)	62
Female G.	3 (7.0)	-	1 (2.3)	39 (90.7)	43
Total	16 (18.8)	13 (12.4)	3 (2.9)	73 (69.5)	105
Male B.	6 (15.0)	1 (2.5)	1 (2.5)	32 (80.0)	40
Male G.	7 (17.5)	3 (7.5)	-	30 (75.0)	40
Total	13 (16.3)	4 (5.0)	1 (1.3)	62 (77.5)	80

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

### *Empowerment*

**Table 16: Do you have any future aspirations in the Panchayati Raj?**

	getting out	running for the same post	going up	Can't say, don't know	Total
Fem. B	9 (14.5)	18 (29.0)	27 (43.5)	8 (12.9)	62
Fem. G	10 (23.3)	15 (34.9)	12 (27.9)	6 (13.9)	43
Total	19 (18.1)	33 (31.4)	39 (37.1)	14 (13.3)	105

Key: Percentage in rows for Balipatna and Gania are calculated for each sample separately.

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