

**Women Empowerment and Political Participation:
A Study of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and
Gorkhaland Territorial Administration**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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February, 2018

DECLARATION

Date: _____

I, **Monica Lakandri**, do hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institute.

This is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of **Master in Philosophy** in the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Women Empowerment and Political Participation: A Study of Darjeeling Gorkha Hil Council and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration**” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in Political Science is the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Ms Monica Lakandri** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associateship and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

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PLAGIARISM CHECK CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that plagiarism check has been carried out for the following M.Phil dissertation with the help of URKUND software and the result is within the permissible limit decided by University.

**“Women Empowerment and Political Participation: A Study of Darjeeling
Gorkha Hill Council and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration”**

Submitted by **Ms. Monica Lakandri** under the supervision of **Dr. Gadde Omprasad** of the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok, India.

Signature of the Candidate

(Ms. Monica Lakandri)

Countersigned by

Supervisor (**Dr. Gadde Omprasad**)

Dedicated to

My Grandmother Late Lamu Sherpa (Aaji Aama)

Who introduced me to women empowerment without
actually using the term.

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- Monica Lakandri

Abbreviations

DGHC : Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

GTA: Gorkhaland Territorial Administration

GNLF: Gorkha National Liberation Front

GJMM: Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha

GNWO: Gorkha National Women's Organisation

GJNM: Gorkha Jan Mukti Nari Morcha

UNO: United Nations Organisation

USAID: United Nations Agency for International Development

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

AATWWF: All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation

ABWWF: All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation

ABSU: All Bodo Students Union

BPPF: Bodoland People's Progressive Front

BTC: Bodoland Territorial Council

NEBULA: Nepali Bhutia Lepcha

AIGL: All India Gorkha League

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Abstract

Empowerment is defined as processes in which people are given freedom make decision for themselves so that they can decide what is best for them. So women empowerment was considered as one of the measure to improve the status of women. In the present state system government takes most of the decisions for its citizens, be it personal like family planning to social, economic, cultural and political. The one who holds the government holds the power to make decision and almost all the cases government is dominated by men. So women having access to political power holds access to make decisions for them and can have control over the decisions that affects their lives. And Political participation is a process though which political power is accessed. Participation in politics can be of two types direct i.e. being part of the government and indirect i.e. influence the government through movement, rallies, protest. In India there are many communities demanding state of their own within the Indian union one such is the Gorkhaland. Many movements were held in favour of Gorkhaland but instead of the state a semi autonomous bodies namely DGHC and GTA were formed to rule themselves. Thus the present study is an initiative to study women empowerment and political participation through DGHC and GTA.

The study is divided into five chapters- first chapter deals with the introduction to the study where theoretical study, its objectives and scope are discussed. The second chapter deals with the concept and historical discourses of the term empowerment, women empowerment, political participation, political empowerment of women, India's initiatives for political empowerment of women etc. The third chapter consists of the history of Gorkhaland Movement form women's perspective and political participation of women in DGHC and GTA. The fourth chapter is the field study done on Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong in which impact of DGHC and GTA on women are discussed. The fifth chapter is the conclusion to the study in which major findings are discussed.

Chapter I

Introduction: Framework of the Study

I.1. Introduction

Empowerment is seen as a measure through which an individual is enabled to have full control over her/his life (Selvam, 2001:1). Kabeer (2001:19) defines it as a process of change through which disempowered are made able enough to make choices. Disempowerment is the state of condition in which, one is devoid of any ability to make any choices (Ibid: 2001). World Bank (2002) stresses on the point that the ability to make choices must be purposive which should be strong enough to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment is a multidimensional and interdependent process involving social, political, economic and legal changes that enables marginalised people to participate meaningfully in shaping their own futures (Pettit, 2012:2). It talks about the transformation of 'passive' recipient of government programmes to 'active' participants and managers of their own affairs' (Mohanty, 1995:1435). Beteille (1999:590) comments that 'empowerment is both means to an end and end in itself'.

Women constitute almost half of world population (Statistical Times, 2015). Their contribution to social and economic life is comparatively more by virtue of their both reproductive and productive functions (Bari, 2015:1). In spite of this they continue to be subjugated and placed unequally in economic, social and political status (Pandey, 2013:1). This status can be changed if women are economically independent, have a positive self-esteem which would enable them to deal with any situation they face and would make them able enough to participate in the process of decision-making (Fadia, 2014:539). Here economic independence equates with economic empowerment, positive self-esteem equates with social empowerment and the process of decision making equates with the political empowerment.

While tracing the emergence of women empowerment Fadia (2014:537) opines that women empowerment as a phenomenon was present in history and shifted its attention from women's welfare to development and now to empowerment. According to him what was new to the idea of women empowerment was identification of girl children and women as special groups and acknowledging their importance and need of specific focus. The realisation and recognition that empowering women is essential for familial, societal, national and international development and progress were some other recent developments to the idea of women empowerment.

I.1.1. Political Empowerment of Women

Bargava and Subha (2002), defines political empowerment 'as the capacity to influence decision making process, planning, implementation and evaluation by integrating them into the political system'. It implies political participation which includes right to vote, contest, campaign, taking membership in political parties and representation in political office at all levels which will enable to influence decision and effectively influences decisions thereby leading to political empowerment. The most effective way of bringing empowerment among women is through political participation (Mandal, 2013:22). Fadia (2014:539) has drawn three bases for the empowerment of women. They are -the equality between women and men; women's right to the full development of their potentials; and women's right to self-representation and self-determination.

Mathur (2010, 1-2) has given two arguments in support of the equal participation. Firstly the 'human rights- based democratic argument' which holds that all the adult citizens from all walks of life should have equal right to political participation and secondly is the 'efficient-based pragmatic argument' which advocates women's participation would result in better decision making with broad perspectives and in congruence of the need of society. He further adds, 'women's participation in political life will not only uplift their personality but will open the ways for their social and economic empowerment, their participation will solve many problems of society'.

According to the Jakarta Declaration (2015), “Empowerment of women is not only an equity consideration; it is also a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development. Involvement of women in the political arena and in decision-making roles is an important tool for empowerment as well as monitoring standards of political performance.” The application of the philosophical underpinnings of Jakarta Declaration is necessary, because in the countries where women have gained near equal representation such as in the Scandinavian countries, they have begun to alter the very nature of politics (Fadia, 2014:540). Thus women empowerment is not only participation of women in decision making process but also sharing of equal powers. The decision making process can be split as right to choose the representatives, being representatives themselves and influencing the political process through various movements to bring changes in the existing system. From this context empowerment of women through political participation amounts to voting in the elections, getting elected and participating in the movements demanding for change in the existing system and so on.

I.1.2. Evolution of the Concept

The idea of inclusion of women in policy making and decision making process was given by Plato in his book Republic (Gupta and Sharma, 2010). In eighteenth century Abigail Adams suggested her husband John Adams that the women should have some voice of representation in the new code of laws being drawn for the nation after American War of Independence of 1776 (Adams, 1776). In 1790, Judith Sargent Murray an American advocate for women’s rights published an essay titled “On the Equality of the Sexes” in Massachusetts paved the way for new thoughts and ideas proposed by other feminist¹ writers of the century. (Scobell, 2000). She was one of the first American proponents of the idea of the equality of the sexes that women like men had the capability of intellectual accomplishment and should be able to achieve economic independence (Ibid, 2000). During French Revolution voices for the representation of women in the Parliament were raised by Olympe de Gouges through her pamphlets entitled *Les Droits de la Femme* meaning ‘Declaration of the Rights of

¹ Feminist is an adjective of feminism. Feminism is the theory of the political, economic and social upliftment of women and equality of sexes. It is an ideology that guides political and social movements which advocates women’s right on the ground of the equality of sexes. It refers to an intense awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems.

Woman and of the Citizen' similar to that of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 and by Mary Wollstonecraft through her 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (1799) (Rowbotham, 2001). In England, the voice for the inclusion of women in decision making process was raised by John Stuart Mill through his 'Subjection of Women' (1869) (Smith, 2001).

New Zealand became the first country to give women right to vote in parliamentary election in 1893 (Adams, 2010). By the end of 20th century right to vote has become such imperative that except for Saudi Arabia² all the countries of the world have given women the right to vote at par with men in the elections. In terms of being representatives themselves, United States was the first country to allow women to stand in election in 1788 but it was only in 1920 that women were given right to vote, the first three countries to grant women right to vote and to stand in election simultaneously was Finland in 1906, Denmark and Iceland both in 1915 (Mathur, 2010).

I.1.3. Political Participation and Empowerment of Women: Constitutional and Legal Provisions in India

The idea of democracy, political participation was introduced to India by the British colonial rule which was later became the base upon which new India after the colonial rule was build. The constitution of India provides equal position to women and men. Women are entitled to vote in elections, eligible to contest as a candidate for all publicly elected bodies, hold public office and exercise all its powers at par with men. However that was not the case before the independence from the colonial rule where women were deprived of any such kind of right or equality. In 1917 Lord Edwin Montague, Secretary of State for Foreign Policy India came to India to bring constitutional reforms along with the then viceroy Lord Chelmsford and on December 15 of same year Sarojini Naidu along with other prominent women led an all-India delegation to meet Montagu and Chelmsford to ask for franchise similar to men (Dingra, 2014:33). The head of the franchise committee Lord Lothian remarked after meeting with women delegates led by Sarojani Naidu that 'they were very firm in

² In Saudi Arabia women are allowed to vote only in municipal elections.

their demand for equality as a basis of the new constitution (Yadav, 2010). Three Irish women theosophists Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa formed Women's Indian Association and prepared a memorandum which was signed by 23 women from different parts of the country demanding right to vote for women as par with men. The memorandum was submitted to Montague and Chelmsford. Both Indian National Congress and Muslim League supported the demand for allowing women right to vote. It was in Indian National Congress session of 1918 in Calcutta, the issue was discussed was preside by Anne Besant herself (Tejasvi, 2014).

The Southborough Franchise Committee travelled all over India in 1918 to gather information as to whether women should be granted right to vote or not. Initially the committee was reluctant as they felt Indian women are not yet ready but later they accepted the petition. The Joint Parliamentary Committee of Parliament removed the 'sex' as provision for disqualification and left it to the discretion of provincial legislatures for its applicability. Thus the first province to give women right to vote in 1920 was Princely state of Travancore-Cochin which was followed by Madras and Bombay constituencies in 1921 and later by other provinces. However women could only vote if they fulfil the criteria of wifehood, property and education (Dhingra, 2014).

The Act of 1919 not only gave women right to vote but they were also declared eligible to stand for elections and become legislative councillors. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya fought the Madras Legislative Council election of 1926 from Mangalore but was defeated by very less margin. But in 1927 Muthulakshmi Reddy stood for the Madras Legislative Council election and became the first women legislative councillor (Tejasvi, 2014). The Government of India Act 1935 removed the criteria of wifehood for women so the number of women voters escalated from 3, 15,000 in 1919 to 6 million in 1935 (Ibid, 2014). However women's dream of universal suffrage became reality only after the independence from colonial rule.

The makers of Independent India ensured equal participation of women and men in political affairs. Article 14, equality before law and equal protection of law. Article 15, prohibition of discrimination on ground of sex, Article 15(3), affirmative discrimination in favour of women, Article 16, equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Article 39A, enjoins state to provide equal justice and free legal

aid, Article 42, state to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief, Article 51A (c) renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women are some of the constitutional provisions which provided constitutional guarantees to the equality of women.

In addition to these constitutional provisions various other Acts were passed by the Parliament, such as Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961; Hindu Succession Act, 1956; Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; Representation of Women (prohibition) Act, 1986; The Muslim Women (Protection on Divorce Rights of Divorce) Act of 1986 etc. In 1985 Department of Women and Child Development was set up as part of Ministry of Human Resource Development which was later upgraded as full fledged ministry in 2006. In order to advice government on various policy matters relating to women a statutory body National Commission for Women under National Commission for Women Act 1990 (Act no. 20 of 1990 of Govt. of India) was set up. However the most landmark Act by the government of India for the empowerment of women is the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 and 1994 which ensured 33% reservation of women in local governing bodies. In 2008 similar efforts were made to bring 33% reservation of women in Lok Sabha and State legislative bodies through Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill. The bill was passed in Rajya Sabha but could not gather support in Lok Sabha. The efforts are being made by the Government of India to increase 33% reservation to 50% in local governing bodies. The year 2001 was also declared as 'Year of Women's Empowerment' by Government of India.

I.1.4. Women and Gorkhaland Movement

The demand for a separate state by bifurcating West Bengal within Indian Union for Indian Nepalese/Gorkhas is manifested as a series of mass protests, agitations, discussions, and debates as Gorkhaland Movement. The movement is said to have its origin during the British rule and has still continued even after the end of more than half of the century of the rule (Pakhrin, 2017). The Hillmen's Association in early twentieth century voiced the said demand which lacked involvement of women. Since 1980's the history of Gorkhaland movement has been marked by the two major movements lead by two dominant political parties namely Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) from mid 1980s and end of

2000s respectively. The movement led by Gorkha National Liberation Front in 1980s were of militant in nature because of which there were scanty involvement of women but Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's method of the Gandhian notion of nonviolence lead to maximum participation of women (Lama:2014, Rai:2016; Pakhrin:2017). However the women's wing of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha is seen as a supporting organ to the parent body of the party dominated by men, it also lacks the democratic procedures (Lama, 2014). The efforts of these parties ended up with the establishment of autonomous bodies namely Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1989 and Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2012 respectively.

I.1.5. Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC)

The DGHC was formed by the West Bengal Act XIII of 1988. It was an autonomous body having administrative and executive functions in state legislative constituencies of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and some parts of Siliguri sub-division. DGHC had two functioning wings; they were the General Council and Executive Council. The General Council of DGHC comprised of 42 members, among whom 28 were elected and 14 were nominated. The nominated members were to consist of members of Parliament, MLAs from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong constituencies and Chairpersons of the municipalities of hill areas and remaining members were nominated from the people belonging to a category of Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe and women. The Act was amended in 1994 as The DGHC (Amendment) Act 1994L/ West Bengal Act III of 1994 which brought some changes (Section 5 (1A)) in the Council. Among the 14 nominated members, 11 were to be nominated by the Government and 3 by the Chairman of DGHC. There were 23 departments under the DGHC like Public Health (other than TB sanatorium), Engineering, Irrigation, Tourism, Public Works Department (Road Construction), Education (other than Higher Education), Fisheries, Animal Resources, Agriculture, Informal and Cultural Affairs (only Drama and Song Unit and Nepali Printing Press), Forest (other than Reserve Forests), Labour (only Industrial Training Institutes, Tung and Creche Houses).

I.1.6. Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)

Sharma (2014) holds that the formation of the new political party Gorkha Janmukti Morcha in 2007 was largely a result of the GNLF- run-DGHC failing to meet the aspirations of the people of Darjeeling hills and failing to fulfil the demand of a separate Gorkhaland state. GTA is formed with the West Bengal Act XX of 2011. The Act covered the hill sub-division of district of Darjeeling namely Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and 18 *mauzas*³ in sub division of Siliguri. Section 5(1) of the said Act allows GTA to have 50 members among which 45 would be directly elected through adult franchise and (2) 5 would be nominated among from Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, women and minorities by the state government. According to the chapter 2, section 26 of the West Bengal Act XX of 2011 the ‘Gorkhaland Territorial Administration shall have administrative, financial and executive powers’ in the said region in relation to 48 items in which at number *xiv* includes the Woman, Child Development and Social Welfare.

I.2. Theoretical Framework

The term empowerment is often denoted as a process enhancing one’s capacity to make choice and transform those choices in desired actions or outcomes. Alsop and Heinsohn (2015) hold that the capacity to make effective choices is dependent on two factors; they are *agency* and *opportunity structure*. They have defined agency as the ability to make choice and opportunity structure as the circumstances under which one has to operate and this can be formal and informal. For Alsop and Heinsohn in order to bring empowerment both choice and circumstances (formal and informal) under which one has to operate is important.

Pettit (2012) holds that meaningful empowerment and participation require significant changes in power relations, both at the level of *agency* and *structure*. Agency can be defined as the ability of individuals and groups to think and act in their own interests,

³Mauza is a type of administrative district, corresponding to a specific land area within which there may be one or more settlements, number of villages may come together to form a mouza. In the context of GTA 18 mousazs from Siliguri sub-division includes- Lohagarh Tea Garden, Lohagarh Forest, Rangmohan, Panighata, ChotaAdalpur, Paharu, Sukna Forest, Sukna Part I, Pantapati Forest I, Mahanadi Forest, Champasari Forest, SalbariChhat Part II, Sitong Forest, Sivoke Hill Forest, Sivoke Forest, ChhotaChenga and Nipania.

and structure as the formal and informal institutions, rules, norms and beliefs that enable and constrain thinking and action.

Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) through their theory of empowerment attempt to link individual with social and political environment. They have distinguished empowerment into process and outcomes, the process includes action, activities and structures and the result of such process is the outcome which would mark the level of being empowered. Perkins and Zimmerman have stratified empowerment in to three levels of individual, community and organisational. At the individual level empowerment process includes participation in community organisation, at organisational level it includes collective decision making and shared leadership and at community level it includes collective action to access government and other community resources. Similarly empowered outcomes at the individual level consist of situation specific perceived control and resource mobilisation skills, at organisational level it comprises of organisational network, organisational growth and policy leverage and at community level it embraces evidence of pluralism, existence of organisational collation and accessible community resources.

I.3. Statement of Problem

The Gorkhaland movement has witnessed massive involvement of women. It has created a space where women can come forward to express their views, opinions and demands. The results of the Gorkhaland movements were establishment of the autonomous administrative bodies namely Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in 1989 and 2012 respectively. Both the autonomous bodies ensured reservation for women in the nominated seats. Still visibilities of women in the autonomous bodies were very minimum. If Gorkhaland Movement is put into hierarchy, participation of women in ground level is massive but as the level increases visibility of women decreases. Although from 1986 to 2007 women have come a long way from being supporting agents of the movement to being the important part of the movement but still number of women in the decision making process is marked with slow progress. From 1994 to 2005 there were consistently 4 women in DGHC out of 40 members. Since number of members was comparatively more in GTA than DGHC i.e. 50, number of women also increased to 9.

Empowerment is the capacity to make choice and transform those choices into desired outcome (World Bank, 2002). Empowerment also depends on the ability of individuals and groups to think and act in their own interests, structure such as the formal and informal institutions, rules, norms and beliefs that enable and constrain thinking and action (Pettit, 2012). Thus the study is an attempt to look into empowerment that the two autonomous bodies DGHC and GTA has brought among women which has provided opportunities to women to be part of power sharing and decision making process.

1.4. Review of Literature

Women's Political Participation: Researching the Past and Designing the Future (ed.) by Gupta and Bhandari (2010) is the book contributed by many authors focusing on the political participation and empowerment of women in India. The book covers varied areas such as political participation of women in ancient India, Constitutional provisions such as 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, issue and challenges faced during the political participation by women, political participation of women in panchayati raj etc.

Women Empowerment by Yadav (2010) is a comprehensive book covering different shades of women empowerment. It deals with the importance of education for the empowerment as well as the policies and schemes at national and local level by government. It also highlights the significance of women in decision making process and in active politics. However no effort has been done on the part of author to critically analyse the initiatives made by the state and central government for women empowerment.

Women's Empowerment and Gender Insecurities: A South Asian Perspective (ed.) by Chakraborty and Choudhury (2014). The book is the collection of articles by number of authors and has explored the multi-dimensional aspect of women empowerment. It deals with the gender based violence, Human Rights violation of women, Women's Rights etc. focusing on South Asian regions. The contributors to this book have tried to scrutinise the process of women empowerment and to identify the obstructions in the said process.

Women and the Vote: A World History by Adams (2014) is a book dealing with the historical aspect of women and their journey to get right to vote all over the world. It tells the story of women in the politics from the ancient time till the modern period citing their personal experiences. He argues that it was nationalism not feminism that led women to achieve right to vote. He holds that even women achieved right to vote in most of the countries and their number increased in active politics but women's involvement had no profound influence on the structure of political systems neither good nor bad.

Empowerment of Women by Selvam (2011) is the book dealing with the detail analysis of the vulnerable condition of women in India and provides education as the only solution. Author has also tried to do in depth study of the various initiatives and policies by the government of India such as National Policy for the Empowerment of women (2001), schemes to educate girl child etc. The book is fully dedicated to the efforts of the government to empower women through various schemes and policies but how far those policies and schemes are effective and are helping women to get empower is a part not evaluated by author.

Dynamics of Women Empowerment by Kumari (2006) is a book focusing on empowerment of women in rural areas. It has led emphasis on diverse nature of empowerment and has lead importance on the economic self-dependence and active participation of women in decision making process at home and outside home. It has also discussed local self-government bodies and other informal groups that have helped in empowerment of women in rural areas.

Women Empowerment in Garwal Himalayas: Constrains and prospects by Nautiyal and Bourai (2009) covers social, political, economic and cultural aspects of women Uttarakhand. This book explores the challenges and constrains which hampers women's participation as decision makers and identity as a group in Garhwal Himalayas. Focusing on women the book touches the participation of women in rural local bodies, impact of education, participation in watershed management programmes, female foeticides etc. In light on women's contribution in economy and society the book looks into the empowerment of women in the region.

Fadia (2014) in the article Women's Empowerment through Political Participation has discussed the basic concept of women empowerment, initiatives on women empowerment by international organisation like United Nations and various conventions and conferences by various countries regarding women empowerment and the major focus has been the women empowerment in Indian context through political dynamics. According to Fadia the term empowerment is not a new concept and has been present in the history what Fadia found new was the highlight of women's issue in public, identifying women as a group that needs special attention and increasing realisation of immediate need of women empowerment. Author also discusses various international initiatives in favour of women empowerment. The major focus of the article has the need of women empowerment in politics in India. Author has discussed the number of women legislatures in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha which was very low but the winning percentage of women were comparatively higher than men. The initiatives by Indian judiciary and other commissions set up for women was discussed in the article. The success of the one third reservations of seats in local self governing bodies (panchayats and municipalities) for women which had played major role in empowering women has also been discussed in the article.

Role of Women in Gorkhaland Movement: Assessing the Issue of Power Sharing by Lama (2014) is an article dealing with the participation, nature and activities of *Nari Morcha*. *Nari Morchai* is a women's wing of the Gorkha Jana Mukthi Morcha, a leading political party in Darjeeling hills. The main agenda of the party was the formation of the separate state within the Indian union called Gorkhaland. Thus various movements and activities were taken up by the party to meet their demand in which women's wing played a major role. However author has found that due to lack of the experienced leadership among women in the movement has created space for the male domination within the party. He has also pointed out that the organisation is thoroughly undemocratic as the distribution of the post were handpicked by one person not taking into the consideration of women's consent and the women's wing didn't had its own plan of action and are just taking orders front he party high command.

In 'Women in Gorkhaland Movement: A Question of Empowerment', Rai (2016) has tried to draw a historical background of women in Darjeeling hills during different

political regimes. She has attempt to give a rough idea of social, economic and political status of women in Darjeeling hills and how they have evolved in due process of the demand for Gorkhaland movement. The article has dealt with two major parties who led the movement for Gorkhaland, the Gorkha Nationalist Liberation Front (GNLF) and Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM). Rai has drew the conclusion that women's participation during the GNLF was scanty due the militant nature of the movement but since GJMM led a movement based on Gandhian technique of nonviolence, the participation of women were massive. She accepts the fact that there is still a huge disparity in power sharing and decision making process in the latter organisation but has acknowledge the increase in political participation of women along with their family support.

In 'Challenging the Hegemons: Unheard Story of Brave Woman Putalimaya Devi Poddar' Pakhrin (2013) has given a brief history of Indian Nepali/Gorkha community from their migration to the active participation in the Indian politics. In the said article she has focused on the deplorable condition of women in Darjeeling hills during the colonial period and how a young lady named Putalimaya stood against all odds. Taking instance from the life of Putalimaya Devi Poddar author has tried to reveal the strong patriarchal Gorkha society and how political participation can actually bring empowerment. As due to her consistent participation in freedom movement she was later respected and honoured by that community which earlier criticised her activities.

Pakhrin (2017) has written another article titled The Developing Political Role of Women in the Darjeeling Sub-Division which has discussed the role, functions and participation of the women in the Gorkhaland movement. In the history of Gorkhaland movements there were two major two political parties namely Gorkha National Liberation Front and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha who led the movement for the separate state of Gorkhaland under the Indian union, but in this article author has only dealt with the later political party's women wing Gorkha Janmukti Morcha Nari Morcha. According to the author the massive participation of women in the movement was due to Anger against Subash Ghising's autocratic rule, democratic and non-violent nature of the movement, GJMM and leadership of Bimal Gurung, women rationally and technically equipped, emotionally involved, waiting for opportunity to express themselves. Although author has made list of the tremendous activities and

participation of women in the movement but has acknowledge the fact that they are still lagging behind in taking up leadership roles and in decision making process.

In the article 'Fair Trade Organic Tea Production and Women's Political Futures in Darjeeling, India', Sen (2017) has done a comparative study of women tea farmers (independent farmers growing organic tea in their own land) and women plantation workers (wage labourers). In the article Sen has tried to look into the level of awareness among women regarding fair trade and their political participation. And has found that the despite having more representation women plantation workers are less politically and economically aware of the movement of fair trade and their rights than the women tea farmers. However women tea farmers are double marginalised as their work are considered as the extension of household work thus lack the acknowledgement and the perceived notion of business as the domain of men results in the marginalisation of women.

Concept and types of Women Empowerment by Mandal (2013) is a comprehensive article on dealing with the basic questions of women empowerment. The author has first tried to look into the epistemological and ideological origin of the empowerment and has categorised women empowerment into social, political, economic, educational and psychological. For the author empowerment can be achieved through acquiring property, education, increasing entrepreneurial qualities, holding high post jobs in local, state and national level. Out of all the forms of empowerment author has given special attention to the political empowerment of women as he holds that politics is the most easy way through which women can be empowered after with other forms of empowerment shall follow. At the same time he has also tried to disclose the deplorable figures of worldwide political participation of women.

In the literatures so far reviewed have covered the issues of women empowerment, political participation of women, Gorkhaland movement and the condition of women in the purposed territory but so far no efforts are being made to look into the empowerment among women that has brought by the Gorkhaland movement and the autonomous bodies established after that. Thus the present study attempts to contribute in that aspect.

Gorkhas and Gorkhaland: A Social-Political Study of the Gorkha People and the Gorkhaland Movement by Roy (2012) is a comprehensive book dealing with the origin, history and the present scenario of Gorkhas and the movement for Gorkhaland. The book is divided into three parts, the first part deals with the sociological and anthropological study of Gorkhas dealing with their origin, ethnic groups, culture, traditions customs etc. The second part deals with geo- demographic study of the proposed demand for the separate state within Indian union called Gorkhaland, the study analyses the territory and the population composition of the proposed area. The third part of the book deals with the origin of the demand for Gorkhaland.

Variegated Women in an Ostensibly 'Masculinised Public Sphere': Participation and Women in Darjeeling Hills by Chakraborty (2014) is an article dealing with second phase of Gorkhaland Movement in which role of Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morch (women's wing of the then leading political party Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha) is discussed. The author has traced the activities of Nari Morcha since its foundation and is of the opinion that after the Sibchu incident in January 2009 the activities of Nari Morcha changed from active to passive. Chakraborty has used the term 'variegated' for women in Gorkhaland Movement to denote the existence of women as combat troops, cultural troops, social activists etc. However author is of the opinion that all the activities of women's wing were scripted by patriarchy and it hardly permits any vocality and mobility of women in the public spaces.

I.5. Scope of the Study

Gorkhaland movement ended up with the formation of autonomous bodies namely Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1989 and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in 2012 respectively in which seats were reserved for women. These autonomous bodies provided an opportunity to women to be part of decision making process and have their share in power structure. Empowerment is the capacity to make choice and transform those choices into desired outcome (World Bank, 2002). Thus the study has looked into women's representation and influence in the autonomous bodies namely DGHC and GTA, pro women activities of DGHC and GTA, impact of DGHC and GTA on women and the efforts of DGHC and GTA in empowering women. For the effective results, field study was done in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong subdivisions. The time period of the study was from 1989 to 2016.

I.6. Objectives

The study was based on following objectives

1. To study the empowerment of women and political participation.
2. To examine the participation of women in DGHC and GTA autonomous administrative units.
3. To explore the contributions of DGHC and GTA in empowering women.

I.7. Research Questions

1. How far political participation can bring empowerment among women?
2. What is the level of women participation in DGHC and GTA autonomous administrative units?
3. What are the contributions of DGHC and GTA in empowering women?
4. How far DGHC and GTA have been successful in empowering women?

I.8. Methodology

The study has employed qualitative and quantitative research method and the data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from government reports, district gazetteers, interviews etc. and the secondary data was collected from books, journal articles etc. Qualitative study was done through the analysis of various actions, decisions taken by DGHC and GTA. For that purpose descriptive or evaluative method was used.

For the effective results a field survey was done with survey schedule in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong sub-divisions. Sample size will be 194 with 60 each in three areas will be common people and 14 political party leaders from the three sub-divisions. For the 194 samples, sample type was purposive sampling in which age, sex, region was taken into consideration and for the 14 samples snowball sampling was used as it was not possible to get hold of them directly.

I.9. Chapterisation

The study is divided into following chapters.

Chapter I: Introduction: Framework of the Study

The first chapter consist of introduction, theoretical framework, statement of problem, review of literatures, scope of the study, objectives, research questions and methodology.

Chapter II: Understanding Women Empowerment and Political Participation

This chapter includes the conceptual study and historical background of the term empowerment, women empowerment, political participation, political participation of women, international concerns and some instances of political empowerment of women, history of political empowerment of women and the initiatives by the Indian government for political empowerment of women.

Chapter III: Political Participation of Women in DGHC and GTA

This chapter incorporates the political participation of women in DGHC and GTA. This chapter also discuss the political participation of women in Gorkhaland movement from the historical perspective since 1986. The role of the women's organisation Gorkha National Women's Organisation and Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha is also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter IV: Women Empowerment and Political Participation in DGHC and GTA

This chapter comprises of impact of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration on women. It has also looked into the function of DGHC and GTA and their pro women activities. A field study is also included to see how far DGHC and GTA have enhanced political participation and empowerment of women.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This last chapter deals with the evaluation of the entire study and research findings.

Chapter II

Understanding Women Empowerment and Political Participation

II.1. Empowerment: Concept and Definitions

Since the second half of the twentieth century the term empowerment has become popular in press, television, in political, academic and legal arenas (Beteille, 1999:589). The term is widely used concerning the less disadvantageous section of the society for instance empowerment of women, of poor and other backward sections of the society etc. thus considering as the only effective answer to oppression, exploitation, injustice and other maladies with which the society can be freed (Ibid, 1999:589). Empowerment is defined as multi-layered, multi-faced, multi-dimensional concept (Khanday et.al, 2012:1494). In which it includes self-confidence, ability to make choice or decision, capable of fighting for one's rights, independence and is significant at individual as well as collective levels. It covers social, political, psychological and economical dimensions. The accesses to opportunities and resources refers to economic dimension, welfare implies social dimension, participation and control implies political dimension and conscientisation refers to psychological dimension of empowerment (Sharma, 2000:19-21). Empowerment is described as a process which enables people to have control over the factors which control their lives (Moktan, 2014:474) and the major aim of empowerment is to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives (Rappaport, 1987:119). Empowerment exist in three levels- at personal level it is obtaining more control and influence in daily life and community participation, at small group level it is sharing experience, analysis, and influence of groups on their own efforts and at community level it revolves around the utilization of resources and strategies to enhance community control (Lord and Hutchison, 1993:4).

Empowerment is defined by various scholars in different dimensions. Batliwala (1994) has put 'power' in focus while defining empowerment. He defines empowerment as 'a process of challenging the existing power relation and gaining greater control over the source of power'. Fadia (2014:539) further explains empowerment as distribution of power to lowest section of society. He defines empowerment as fashionable buzz word that focuses on decentralisation of power and

authority. It aims at getting participation of deprived sections of people in decision-making process.

Rappaport (1987:121) took empowerment to more personal level and defines it as a psychological sense of personal control or influence that concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. Whitmore (1988:13) defines empowerment as ‘an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live’.

For Nath and Chatterjee (1996) empowerment is true when it controls the ideology which leads to control over thoughts perceptions that shapes individual beliefs, attitudes and values, thinking, feeling, analysis, way of perceiving things. This control enables decision making power and increase in control over the resources. Empowerment involves power to, power with and power within, it is process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity building leading to greater participation, effective decision making power and control leading to transformative action (Hazra, 2012:1-2).

II.1.1. Historical discourse and scope of Empowerment

Before twentieth century the term empowerment denoted ‘to give power to’. It was first used in seventieth century to mean delegate, enable and authorise. Over the years the term empowerment understood to be transfer of powers in a dynamic way and has become an acceptable term in the modern idea due to the success of democracy which has provided space for the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society (Mandal, 2013:18). Empowerment as an idea is an outcome of the new radical social movements that swept through America voicing individualism and reaction against traditional authority during 1960s and 1970s (Chakraborty, 2009:15). Paulo Freire (1996) for the first time in 1970s discussed ‘empowerment’ in a formal way in his book *Padagogy of the Oppressed* (Rahman, 2013:9). Initially the idea of empowerment emerged out of the Civil Rights Movement in 1960. Civil Rights movement was a fight for giving power to disenfranchise people through democratic reforms by challenging unjust law which remains the core idea of empowerment. However the term empowerment was not in fashion back then (Gillon, 2017). Hence

the term empowerment is highly associated with the upliftment of disadvantaged section of the society. Later on the idea of empowerment was carried forward by the feminist movement 1980s which upheld similar ideas.

The idea of Power is the nucleus in the entire concept of empowerment. Chakraborty (2009:15-16) talks about two perspectives on power- one as the agent of fundamental social transformation and other as the one that emphasises the possibility for a rational discussion and evolutionary change within modern societies. Apparently both converge on the point that power is the ability to exert power over institutions, resources and people. Barchrach and Baratz (1962) pointed out problem in the concept of power, they opined that power is the ability of getting others to do something which otherwise they would not have performed as well as it is the ability to prevent or resist people from doing something otherwise they would have performed. This leads power to be conceptualised as conflictual relationship among self determined agents consciously following their own agenda which may be directed against each other.

Robert Dahl (1957) opines that individual cannot hold power when used against others; power is visible only when people use it that brings some changes in their behaviour. In that sense empowerment is defined as the capacity to bring change in one's behaviour. Discussing about the relation between the state, people and power Foucault (1982) opines that state does not possess power instead it positions people in a set of relations constructed by it for the working of political system. Power is something that circulates and the individual is not possessor but its point of application. For Foucault power has to be continuously performed rather than achieved or imposed. Foucault's work centres on disciplinary and disempowering nature of modern power so he holds that people are empowered and changed through resisting disciplinary power relations. Black and Third world feminist regard the issue of participation as central to empowerment. They argue that participation in the hegemonic system and discourses has often inspired both greater self understanding and political action in women's private and public lives. Involvement in the politics of subversion is thus empowering in itself even if it does not immediately transform dominant power relation. However Anna Yeatman opines that the term 'empowerment' reproduces the hierarchy between the powerful protector (the state

and the elite) and the powerless (i.e. women, children and poor) who are seen as helpless, passive and needy, hence she propose the term ‘empowering’ which is interchangeable with capacitating and enabling instead of empowerment (Chakraborty, 2009:15-19).

II.2. Empowerment and Women

Empowerment is a varied concept to some it is a political concept that involves a collective struggle against oppressive social relations and to others is the consciousness of individuals and the power to express and act on one's desires (Luttrell et. al, 2009:2). Women are the most deprived group in the human history (Mandal, 2013:17). Their subjugation has been continued since ages in all aspect of human life, be it political, economic, social and this subjugation is almost omnipresent in all human settlements (Panday, 2013; Mandal, 2013:17). However the intensity of subordination may vary from society to society but the rise in the idea of women empowerment has become a most powerful global trend to take women out of this subordination (Alexander and Welzel, 2011:364).

The concept of women empowerment emerged in second half of the twentieth century but many people believe that even before the emergence of the term women empowerment women were raising voice about gaining control over their lives, and participation in decision making that affect them in their home, community, national and international platforms (Fadia, 2014:537; Alexander and Welzel, 2011:364). Since the realisation that the comprehensive development of human kind upliftment in the status of women becomes immediate necessity and one of the effect ways to achieve it, is through women empowerment.

II.2.1. Definitions of Women Empowerment

Shettar (2015:13) defines women empowerment as the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women in the society by building up a political environment wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure.

Khanday et.al, defines women empowerment as a process through which women gain greater share of control over resources –material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision making in home, community, society and the notion to gain power.

Kalos (2015) defines women empowerment as process of opening new opportunities for women within the household, the community, state agencies and civil society

Kate Young (1993) sees empowerment as a process that leads to sustainable upliftment in the status of women. She opines that empowerment is based on a 'transformatory potential' which leads to complete change in process and structures responsible for women's inferior status in the society.

II.2.2. Historical discourse of Women Empowerment

In order to uplift the status of women two perspectives emerged- women's development and women's empowerment. Women's Role in Economic Development by Ester Boserup's in 1970 paved the way for rise of women's development perspective. It provided an overview of women's role in the development process where their contribution was highly ignored. The empirical study of Boserup in Asian and African countries analysed the correlations between women's work and factors such as population density and land holding where she observed the existence of a relationship between these factors and different forms of women's subordination. The ultimate solution provided by Boserup to get rid of exploitation and have share in the development process is through education of women (Beneria and Sen, 1981:279-298). The term empowerment became the common when it got associated with women's movement. Although most of the thinking on feminism was dominated by the Northern developed countries but the idea on empowerment was the work of the mind of the third world countries. Around mid-1980s the idea of 'empowerment of women' emerged as an important part of debate on gender and development. The concept of empowerment was further boosted by feminist critiques of development (Luttrell et. al, 2009:2). The idea of women's development failed as it could not deliver the promise to rise above the subjugation and treated women as partners of development rather than beneficiaries of development (Sharma, 2000:19-20). The

decade of 1990s saw the emergence of the perspective of women empowerment and has still continued to be a major perspective in order to bring upliftment among women (Ibid, 2000).

II.2.3. International concerns for Women Empowerment

The end of Second World War, decolonisation of states and the establishment of the international organisation led to the political, social and economic liberation of women. In 1972 General Assembly of United Nations declared 1975 to be International Women's Year which was dedicated to promote equality between men and women, ensure full integration of women in the total development process and to increase women's contribution in strengthening world peace. In the World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico City in 1975, The World Plan of Action was adopted for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year which was certified by the General Assembly. Further General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace which was later joined by sub theme "Employment, Health and Education". In 1980 Copenhagen World Conference was adopted to review and evaluate the work done over the decade for women. Meanwhile the General Assembly in a resolution adopted International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. However International Women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi introduced the concept of women empowerment associating with redistribution of social power and favouring women's control of resources (Moktan, 2014:473-474). The conference also adopted the Nairobi Forward- looking Strategies which would provide blueprint for action until 2000 that link the promotion and maintenance of peace to the eradication of violence against women. It urged member states to take constitutional and legal steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and adapt national strategies to facilitate the participation of women in efforts to promote peace and development. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) and Beijing Platform for Action (1996) gave a direction to government and civil society organisation to address women empowerment and deal gender inequalities at all levels in society. It asked state to have adequate representation of women in all decision making bodies so that

decision making body should be 'critical mass' comprising of both men and women to voice the concern of whole society. (Nasreen, 2009: 37).

It was identified that without the incorporation of women's perspective in decision making process and the active participation of women the objective of development, peace and equality in the world cannot be achieved (Hazra, 2012:1-2, Nasreen, 2009:37-38). World Bank (2001) holds that women empowerment is the nucleus of development without which Millennium Development Goals⁴ cannot be achieved. Societies with high level of gender inequality have greater poverty, slow economic growth, weaker governance and low standard of living. Thus World Bank suggests women empowerment should be the key aspect of social developmental programmes.

Thus it becomes immediate necessary to equip women to be economically independent and self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem which would enable them to deal with any situation they face and would make them able enough to participate in the process of decision-making (Fadia, 2014:539-40). Women's participation in decision making is important to incorporate women's interest in governance, since women actively participate in household and community work and have different need and perspectives on political and social issue which makes them well aware of the problems faced by the common people and this can be instrumental in sustainable development of human kind (Shanker, 2014).

Empowerment is making women able enough to have control over their lives and not disempowering, exploit or over power men. It is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources- material, human and intellectual like ideas, information, knowledge and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision making at home, community, society and nation (Khanday et.al, 2015, Sigh and Zote, 2012). Women empowerment also amounts to raising self esteem and self confidence of women, elimination of any form of discrimination against women, constructing and strengthening involvement of women in civil society including formation of women's organisation in order to safeguard women's right,

⁴ Millennium Development Goals includes eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empowerment, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensures environmental sustainability and development a global partnership for development.

proper enforcement of constitutional and legal provisions for women and building a positive image of women in the society and recognising their contribution in social, economic and political spheres (Moktan, 2013:473-475). Pallai (1995:1-2) states empowerment is an active multidimensional process which enables women to realise their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.

For Zohra (2012:229-230) 'empowerment is not an automatic or spontaneous process but requires deliberate and consistent efforts. It is through the combined and coordinated effort of the government, people and the women the task can be fulfilled. Women cannot be effectively empowered by statutory provisions or governmental effort alone. Women are empowered through women emancipation movement, education, communication, media, political parties and general awakening'.

II.3. Political Participation: Concept and definitions

Politics is a process in which group of people make decisions involving social relations, authority or power, regulating political unit and formulation and application policies that affects the entire group (Prakash, 2010:91). Thus political participation refers to the involvement in this process where one gets opportunity to make decision or become the part of decision making. Political participation is considered as one of the basic condition for the functioning democracy (Norris, 2002:5). Even Aristotle placed participation at the centre of political life when he described citizen as "one who has the right of sharing in deliberative or judicial office". In his view citizenship was associated with sovereignty and participation, initiating policy in a public assembly and administering justice in a court of law (Scaff, 1975:450).

Political participation mainly concerns with influencing making, implementing and influencing governmental decisions. Huntington & Nelson (1976:3) have kept political participation exclusive to the common citizens when they define political participation as the activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making. However for Verba (1995:38) 'political participation refers to activity that has intent or effect of influencing government action, either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies.'

Myron Weiner (1977:273) has given more broad definition to political participation by defining 'political participation as voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intend to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choice of political leader at any level of government local or national.'

Scaff (1975:449) has discussed two concepts of political participation one concept emphasizes the idea of sharing in common life and acting on the basis of reciprocity in order to promote the "public good." The other looks upon participation as an act of exchange, as an instrumental means for gaining power in order to increase the probability of realizing private benefits.

II.3.1. Factors influencing political participation

According to Mandol (2016) there are nine major factors that influence political participation. They are as follows:

Psychological or cognitive traits: Social psychologist believes that there is a relation between cognitive status of individual society and political activity. These traits include sociability, sense of efficacy, authoritarianism, sense of civic responsibility and sense of alienation.

Social environment: It includes income, education, occupation, sex, race, age, caste, ethnicity, habitation and mobility.

Political Environment: An individual's level of political participation is highly depended on the kind of political environment one lives in. Political parties, pressure groups also play important role to create such environment.

Level of modernisation and urbanisation: Urbanisation is the first stage of modernisation which characterised by increase in literacy, media exposure, income etc. both modernisation and urbanisation helps in increasing political communication which leads to greater political awareness.

Political Socialisation: it usually affects both quality and amount of political participation as socialisation makes people aware of existing ideologies, identity, issues to which they associate.

Modes of participation: there are various ways of participating in political process such as by directly associating with the electoral sub-system or by voting campaigning.

Voting: in a modern democracy voting is a common citizen activity. It determines leadership issues and policies of party and that of nation.

Campaign activities: it is one of the major factors that encourage people to vote and can also turnout voters thus increasing the political participation.

Co-operative activity: it includes movements, revolts, and protests dealing with social and political problems.

Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995:16) used labels 'can't' and 'don't want to' to refer two types of predispositions that explain why people do not participate in politics. First consists of individual resources consisting of education, income and age and the second consists of political motivation and attitudes.

II.3.2. Modes of Political Participation

Initially when the study on political participation was initiated political participation was understood in terms of electoral perspective like voting in elections and attending public meetings (Sabucedo and Arce, 1991:93). But the increase in the level of education and the population which further increased the political awareness among people led to the generation of new methods of political pressure enhancing people's ability to involve in political process (Sabucedo, 1984).

Modes of political participation include conventional and unconventional actions. Conventional political participation refers to institutionalized actions that a dominant political culture recognizes as acceptable and that are related to (Conway, 1991:20) they are casting vote in electoral process, standing for elections, being part of government etc. Unconventional political participation refers to non-institutionalized

actions that fails short of laws and customary norms of a specific society and relate to frequently directed against the system itself that at least aim at transforming its socio-political structure (Kaase and March, 1979:41) they are organising or participating movements, demonstrating protest through various means.

II.4. Women Empowerment and Political Participation

Politics is the arena in which major societal decisions are taken that affects the each and every individual of that society by influencing their choices and outlawing others. To be in a political position is to have political authority (Sundstrom et. al, 2015:4). In the present world system the most celebrated form of government is democracy which thrives in the participation of people. In this democratic set up politics ultimately decides the fate of the people as the political leaders after winning in elections hold various posts of political decision making they formulate laws for the people within their jurisdiction which has to be obeyed, formulation of laws and regulations they give benefits and allocate resources to the people. They open job opportunities, hike salary, give or stop dearness allowance, open or close markets for foreign investors, reserve seats for particular sections in government jobs, or legislative assembly or local governments, play important role in preserving culture by giving cultural rights etc. As most of these members are men, they are ignorant about the lower socio-economic and political position of women. Hence, women's participation in political activities and especially in decision-making bodies is very vital to promote women's social, educational, economic and political empowerment.

Nasreen (2009:37-38) opines that political participation is one of the major instruments to ensure women empowerment. It increases women's share in decision making and more ability to influence the matter that affects their lives in the community and society at large. Political participation is not just voting and election to public office but it brings consciousness among women about their rights, capabilities, potentials, awareness of gender, socio cultural, economic and political factors that affects their lives. Women political empowerment is a crucial input in women's struggle for freedom from patriarchy subjugation. Mandal (2013:24) opines that 'the most easy, congenial and befitting way of empowerment is participation in the political process'.

II.4.1. Political Empowerment of Women

Empowerment is the process of challenging the patriarchal ideology and redistribution of powers and political empowerment of women is a part of overall empowerment process. Political empowerment of women ensures participation of women in the decision making process which is a major crux of the idea of empowerment (Devi and Laxmi, 2005:75-76).

Mahmood (2009:152) holds that:

Women's political empowerment is not a goal in itself but it is instrumental in stimulating the society for political and social empowerment which would further stimulate the overall development and refinement in the society. The presence and participation of women in decision making process would enable them to revise the gender discriminatory policies and laws on one hand and would support equality based new laws and policies on the other.

Kate Millet (2005) in her Theory of Sexual Politics holds that 'politics deals with structured power relationships and arrangements where one group of person is controlled by another'. The age old ideology of women's domain should be confined to domestic affairs and politics is exclusively men's domain is being challenged by the emergence of the idea of women in politics. However one has to widen the definition of political space when discussing women in politics by questioning the very politics behind the conventional definition of politics (Hazarika, 2008:354). Women in politics include two parameters: first is women's participation in formal politics, i.e. in government through representation in political governance and decision making and second is women's participation in movements and struggle of various kinds outside the conventional politics (Niranjana, 2003:359-360).

Gender equality and equity are emerging as major challenge to the 'human development' which has now become a centre of global debate in which political empowerment of women is very much highlighted topic in all world platforms but still participation of women in public policy making and decision making that affects their lives is very marginal (Hazarika, 2011:200-201). Empowerment of women in all spheres, in particular the political sphere is critical for the advancement and the

foundation of a gender-equal society. Women's political empowerment is premised on "three fundamental and non-negotiable principles: (a) the equality between women and men; (b) Women's right to the full development of their potentials; and (c) women's right to self representation and self-determination" (Fadia, 2014:540-541).

II.4.2. Political Participation and Women Empowerment: International experiences

Participation of women in politics has become vital issue in all discussions around the world. USAID (2016) holds that it is right of women to participate in political process that affects them, their families, and their societies. Countries with high women's participation and leadership in civil society and political parties tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian, and democratic. Various methods have been adopted by the countries to bring women in politics and one such is through quotas. Many countries have given certain percentage of quotas to women at various levels of government like in parliament, local government but the result has been very slow growth. According to UN Women (2017) there were only 22.8 per cent women in national Parliaments till June 2016 with the increase from 11.3 percent in 1995 and till January 2017, 10 women were serving as Head of State and 9 were serving as Head of Government. Till June 2017 Rwanda had the highest women in parliament which has given 30 percent reservation to women in Parliaments and in terms of region Nordic countries stands highest with 41.7 percent. However these countries with high representation of women and participation in decision making process have revealed different results regarding women empowerment.

The process of becoming the country with highest women representatives began since 2000 when Rwanda initiated its decentralisation process in administrative, political and local level government with the aim to strengthen the power and political capabilities of local communities so that they can be part of the efforts to reduce poverty and to favour national reconciliation, the goals set by Vision 2020 and to promote sustainable development. Women played key role in reconstruction of country after civil war and genocide of 1994 and the sustained advocacy conducted by women's CSOs in favour of reforms aimed at improving the status of women were determining factors which led to the legal provisions and a number of institutional mechanisms have been gradually set up since 1994; these include the Ministry of

Gender and Family Protection, the national committee for the monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing Platform, the National Council on Women (CNF) and the Gender Observatory. It was the active participation of women in the drafting of transitional constitution adopted in 2001 which made 30 percent women's representation quota for all levels of decision making included in the draft, this provision continued in post-transition Constitution of 2003. Thus by 2017 Rwanda became the country with highest women parliamentarians. However this did not really helped to provide a space which could have allowed women to influence the policies defined at the local governance level and the major reason for that was lack of effective implementation of 30 percent quota and in 2006 legislation was passed to correct this. The study conducted by International Alert (2012) reveals that the women's participation is significantly diminishing in higher-level local government positions and in the key roles where policies are adopted and implemented. Pre-concept notion that women are unable to serve as leaders are still rooted at the local community level and most women are limited to positions, which are mere extensions of their traditional roles and reflect the gender division of labour.

Nodic Countries comprises of five north European countries namely Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland and they are known for having high participation of women in politics. The process of political participation of women in this region began with the radical voting system by Finland in 1906 which introduction of universal franchise for both men and women which was the first event in the entire world of its kind. It was followed by Norway in 1913, Denmark in 1915, Iceland in 1920 and Sweden in 1921 (Raaum, 2006). However till 1970 all Nordic Parliaments were highly dominated by men so Denmark, Sweden and Norway introduced voluntary gender quotas in 1970s resulting in the massive representation of women in the Parliaments (Zahidi, 2014). Skard holds that the major increase in the participation of women in formal politics was also due to increase in socio-economic factors such as education, jobs and political and cultural factors like liberal egalitarian democratic system that encouraged women in politics. The increase in women in politics has resulted in the increase concern for child care, widows' and widowers' pensions, equal pay for equal work and measures to help single parents and married women join the labour force; after which the lowest paid female employees received better pay, part-time jobs and flexible working hours were introduced and members of the local

councils received compensation for child-care costs during council meetings. In the Nordic countries it has been observed that many female politicians involve themselves in women's issues than male counterpart.

Both Rwanda and Nordic countries have high representation of women in the decision making process but there is a difference when it comes to the impact factor. Women in Nordic countries have more influential powers than that of the women in Rwanda. Women representatives in Rwanda are performing the task that is either extension of their domestic role or some stereotypical role that are assigned to them just because they are women. For example a study conducted by International Alert (2012) observed that there were 80 percent women vice mayors and only 20 percent were mayors, also women in Rwanda were mainly secretaries of health, welfare, social service etc. The process of representation of women in politics happened in Rwanda within a span of decade but in Nordic countries is started in early 1900s. All the Nordic countries have almost 100 percent literacy and are economically developed, these countries have stable democracy and gender equality in terms of employment and education which have provided convivial environment for women to participate and have influential role in politics.

II.5. Political Participation and Women Empowerment: Indian context

Niranjana (2013) holds that participation of women in politics includes two aspects one is direct involvement of women in politics such being part of the government or being representatives themselves and making policies that governs. The other is women's participation in the struggles, protest and movements to make government hear their grievances or their refusal to accept the existing system.

II.5.1. Direct Participation

Direct participation of women in Indian politics began with the process of formation of Constitution for Independent India. For the formation of the Constitution a constituent assembly was formed which met for the first time on 9th December 1946, out of 296 members there were only 9 women present in the assembly (Prashad, 2010). This was followed by the first general election in 1952 in which out of total 499 seats women could occupy only 22 seats. Similarly in Rajya Sabha in the same

year number of women were 16 out of total 219 members. Total sixteen general elections were held from 1952 to 2014 but the number of women in Lok Sabha increased from 4.41 percent to 11.2 percent and in Rajya Sabha increased from 2.31 percent to 11.8 percent. According to Rai one of the major reasons for the less participation of women in Parliament is due to party system which is organisationally weak and depends on local elites which further leads to marginalisation of issue based politics. She further observes that women candidates are usually fielded from 'losing' constituencies where the party does not want to 'waste' a male candidate. Activities of women Parliamentarians are highly restricted by party they belong to but when it comes to women issues they have most of the time stood for it. For example in most women MPs supported the 81st Amendment, which would ensure a 33 per cent quota for women in parliament, even though party discipline has not allowed them to vote for that.

In order to encourage women in grassroots politics initiative was made through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1973 and 1974 in which one third of total seats are reserved for women in Panchayats and Municipalities respectively. After which it was observed that the percentage of women at various levels of political activities formally increased, another positive impact of the grassroots level experiment is the increase in the female literacy rate. Studies reveal that after two years of their election to Panchayati Raji Institutions (PRIs), many women demanded literacy skills and also felt the need to educate their daughters. UN Women observes that the involvement of women in grassroots politics has given opportunity to women to demonstrate their skills for instance the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led councils. Singh (2009) observed that Issues in which women representatives in local self government generally take interest are drinking water supply, primary health, child care, public distribution system and environmental protection. Women in the Parliament are mostly educated middle class, professional women or the ones having political family background but still their influence in decision making process is much lesser than the women in the grassroots politics.

II.5.2. Indirect tool of Political Participation in India

Niranjana (2013) holds that participation of women in politics includes two aspects one is direct involvement of women in politics such being part of the government or being representatives themselves and making policies that governs. The other is women's participation in the struggles, protest and movements to make government hear their grievances or their refusal to accept the existing system. According to Sharma (2000) Women's movement in India has experienced three board phases: women's mobilisation as a part of anti- colonial struggle, mobilisation as activism of women's front in political parties and mobilisation as the rise of autonomous women's organisation. In all these mobilisation women's empowerment has been a continuing theme.

The first struggle in which women participated in the national movement was Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905-1908). After the emergence of Gandhi as a national leader in the freedom struggle against colonial rule attracted many women into the struggle. Under his leadership many women participated in the satyagraha movements. In 1921 non cooperation movement started which agave a major push to participation of women in independence movement. In the Dandi March many women walked with Gandhi from Sabarmati ashram to Dandi to violent salt laws considering it as inhuman after which women became major participants in the Civil-Disobedience movement. In the Quit India movement when prominent leaders of Indian National Congress including Gandhi were arrested women like Aruna Asaf Ali lead the movement. In order to mobilise women in the struggle for independence many organisations such as Ladies Picketing Board, Desh Sevika Sangh, Nari Satyagraha Samiti, Mahila Rastriya Sangh were formed. Apart from Indian National Congress and Gandhi many other women worked to bring women in the struggle. Anne Besant along with Malathi Patvardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Dadabhoy and Ambujamal formed Women's Indian Associations in 1917. However in this phase women's issues were undermined by the urge to get freedom from the colonial rule. Women received equal constitutional rights in the independent India.

After independence from colonial rule women continued to play a significant role in less conventional political activities such as environmental movement, anti-alcohol agitation, peace movement etc. One such example of the activism of women is Chipko Movement of 1970s. Ramachandra Guha (2001) in his *Environmentalism: A Global History*, observes that the major difference between the environmental movement in the eastern and western countries is, the environmental movements in the east was initiated by women. Chipko Movement of 1970s in Uttarakhand is an example of how women in the rural villages came forward against the rampant felling of trees. Talking about the success of the Chipko Movement the renowned environmentalist and scientist Vandana Shiva told *India Today* magazine in December 2011: “The Chipko Movement gave us the environment department initially and then the Environment Ministry. It also gave us whole set of laws, The Environment Protection Act, the entire legacy that governs us today. I always tell people that I learnt my quantum theory in the University of Western Ontario in Canada and I learnt my ecology in the University of Chipko in Uttarakhand”.

In Assam participation of women in the movements can be seen since Ahom dynasty reign. In 1769-70 Maomaria⁵ revolt broke out in Assam as a protest against the exploitative rule of Ahom monarchy through *pyke*⁶ system. Women took arms to support men when required in the revolt (Hazarika, 2008). The nationalists in Assam made efforts to mobilise women during freedom struggles against colonial rule (Mahanta, 2002). Another important event that marked the participation of women in political affairs in Assam is the Bodoland Movement. Bodoland is a demand for a separate state within Indian Union. Bodo women actively participated in the movement and were organised under the banners All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation (AATWWF). Later Bodo movement established military wing to bring armed struggle in the movement in which women also participated. Since AATWWF was not in favour of bringing armed struggle in AATWWF changed its name to All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993. All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) along All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation worked to spread movement in

⁵ Maomaria is a Vaishnavite sect, and the name applies to disciples of Maomara Sattrā. Although the followers of this sect belonged to different communities like Moran, Chutia, Cachari, Kaivartya, Brahmin, Kalita, and Kayasta, its close association with lower castes

⁶ The pyke system was a sort of forced compulsory labour to the Ahom state.

all corners of proposed Bodoland territory. In April 2005 Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF) was formed but in May it was fragmented to Bodo Liberation Tigers and the All Bodo Students Union took over Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF). Since All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) was a key player in the Bodo politics, in the election to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) it lend its support to Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF) initially and later withdrew its support since not a single woman candidate was nominated (Dutta, 2008).

Despite major participation of women in the movements in pre and post independence period women did not benefited much as the political movement created a bias where women were mobilised only to increase the numbers, they were ignored and marginalised when voiced their own agendas (Hazarika, 2008). It has been noticed that in times of conflict and crisis, women have often negotiated private issues like household, childrearing, sexuality, etc. with issues of the public domain like class consciousness, exploitation, wage labour, and inequality. Politics, in such a situation, is not just limited to the outer public domain, where women are dispossessed of rights of decision making; instead, it concretises its presence as an extension of home or the private domain.

Chapter III

Political Participation of Women in GTA and DGHC

III. Introduction

Local self government is the basic type of political arena where there is best possibility of participatory democracy as it involves direct participation of people which also maximises the scope for achievement of good governance (Olufuunke, 2014:223). The most widely accepted form of local government in India is panchayats for rural population and municipalities for the urban population. The people of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong experienced local self government through autonomous councils along with panchayats and municipalities. The autonomous council was the result of the movements for the demand for separate homeland for Indian Nepalese i.e. “Gorkhaland” within Indian Union. Participation of women in contemporary social movements in India has not only influenced the ground level demonstrations but has also been able to influence the decision making processes of the movements, thus in turn, affecting the whole decision making process in general (Lama, 2014:73). If we look into the participation of women in Hill politics the graph will be ascending. When the demand for autonomy first raised in 1907 for Darjeeling presence of women was almost nil. Then it was followed by few women faces in the freedom struggle against colonial rule in 1940s and then the large participation of women in 1986 agitation for Gorkhaland under Gorkha National Liberation Front. The participation of women reached its heights in 2007 when the demand for Gorkhaland was again raised by another political party Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. The two major movements of 1986 and 2007 in which women were seen in the forefront lead to the formation of semi autonomous bodies Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. So the present chapter seeks to analyse the participation of women in Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration

III.1. Gorkhaland movement

Gorkhas are the unified people of fragmented ethnic groups and tribes, they are the indigenous people of North and Eastern India. Indian Nepalese, Nepalese, Pahariyas

are the other terms to describe them. Before the advent of the British rule Gorkhas were the strong power in the North and North East India but after Indo Nepalese war they got divided into two groups one belonged to the kingdom of Nepal and the other to the regions rule by East India Company (Roy, 2013:23). In order to differentiate Khawas (2009:3) opines that the term Nepalese represents Nepalese citizenship and the term Nepali denotes Nepali population of Indian National. However according to Sherpa (2016:13) 'both the nomenclature Nepali and Gorkha represents Nepali speaking population of India and Nepal but the difference lies in the vocabulary and socio cultural aspect of both the countries. Thus Nepali speaking population forms Gorkha ethnicity in India which is fragmented in the entire territory of the country forming majority in Darjeeling and Kalimpong district bound by common culture, common history, common medium of communication.

The history of Darjeeling amounts to being part of the former Kingdom of Sikkim, Bhutan, and the Gorkha Kingdom (present-day Nepal). According to Dasgupta (1999:47-48) present Darjeeling as the whole territory came under the British occupation in three phases at the interval of thirty years from 1835 to 1865. The first phase began in 1835, when the Raja of Sikkim by a deed of grant ceded to the British rulers a portion of the Sikkim hills which covered the areas of the Great Rangit river, east of the Balasan, Kahel and Little Rangit rivers and west of the Rangnu and Mahananda rivers. In the second phase kingdom of Sikkim had war with East India Company which resulted in the annexation of Sikkim 'Morang' or 'Terai' at the foot hills as well as a portion of the Sikkim hills which was bounded by the Rammam river on the north, by the Great Rangit and the Teesta rivers on the east, and by the Nepal frontier on the west. These areas were always under Sikkim, excepting the Morang or Terai in the foot hills which was for a time (1788-1816) conquered by Nepal. The war between East India Company and Nepal in which a treaty was signed the Treaty of Segauli (1816) to the British rulers who, in turn, temporarily returned it to the Raja of Sikkim by the Treaty of Titaliya (1817). In a war with Sikkim, British ceded territory was annexed by them which was ratified by the Treaty of Tunlong (1861). The third phase began with the outbreak of the Anglo-Bhutan war which ended in the Treaty of Sinchulia (1865) and led to the British annexation of the hill tract which was situated to the east of the Tista River, the west of the Ne-chu and De-chu rivers, and the south of Sikkim. Thus Kalimpong and the Dooars area at the southern fringe of Bhutan

were included in the Darjeeling district as sub-division, later in 2016 Kalimpong was made a fully fledged district.

III.1.1. Special Status for Darjeeling in British Colonial era and demand for Separation from Bengal: Beginning of Women Political Participation

Although Darjeeling was added to the Bengal Presidency, it always retained a special administrative status as an "excluded" and "scheduled" district and as a "backward tract" till colonial period. The rules and regulations regarding landownership and taxes did not apply to Darjeeling without the instruction of the governor (Samanta, 2000:23). Later the term "backward tract" was changed to "excluded" area under the Province of Bengal by The Government of Indian Act, 1935 (Lama, 2008:280).

With the increase in population and the migration from Nepal, Nepalese became the majority in Darjeeling. These Nepalese belonged to different caste, ethnic, and language groups so Nepali was accepted as lingua franca and gradually an identity of being "Gorkha" emerged (Subba, 1992:65). Since The Colonial State structure maintained the difference between hills from the plains for politico- economic reasons and had left Darjeeling by successfully invoking the idea into the minds of hill people that Darjeeling has been a segregated tract from the mainstream of Bengal, the discourse for the segregation from Bengal Presidency began and the first being the demand for separate administrative unit in 1907. (Sarkar, 2013:8). This demand was formulated laying stress on the geographical, racial, religious, linguistic, and cultural differences between themselves and other groups in Bengal (Samanta, 2000:232). In 1917 this demand was systematically placed by Hillmen's Association under the Presidentship of S.W Ladenla. S.W Ladenla a Tibetan Buddhist and a serving police officer, she also served as a Aide-de-Camp of the British Governor of Bengal for a while (Dasgupta, 1999:58). Hillmen's Association was the association of government servants, military pensioners, rich farmers and traders belonging to both Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali communities (Subba, 1992:77). Its other founding members were Yensing Sitling, Kharka Bahadur Chettri, Prem Singh Kumai and Meghbir Sing, Lachman Singh, Nar Prasad Kumai, Deonidhi Upadhaya (Roy, 2012:289).

The Hillmen's Association's demand for a separate administrative unit never became a reality but it spark the idea for the separation of Nepali speaking population of hills

from the Bengal in the plains. The only consolation Hillmen's manage to get was that Government of India Act 1919 made Darjeeling district a "scheduled area" but did not concede demand of the separate province (Roy, 2012). Darjeeling Planters, European Association also supported the cause of Hillmen's Association, but at the same time it was also opposed by Kalimpong Samity, under Sardar Bahadur Bhindal Dewan and People's Association led by Paras Mani Pradhan who argued that separation from Bengal would create more poverty and backwardness in the region. They in fact submitted a separate memorandum to the British Government demanding the regional autonomy of Darjeeling within the province of Bengal in 1920 (Dasgupta, 1999:59). During this period the movement was highly dominated by men and participation of women was almost nil, S.W Ladenla Additional Superintendent of Police in Darjeeling was the only woman to take part in the movement during the this phase. Surprisingly S.W. Ladenla being a woman herself formed an association called 'Hillmen' in which there was no woman except her.

III.1.2. Freedom Struggle in Hills and the Rise of Women Leaders

After the annexation of Darjeeling British sought to transform Darjeeling from primary agrarian society to an industrialised zone focusing on Tea, Timber and Tourism which resulted in the creation of large working class. As these industries explored so did the exploitation of natural resources, so people like Dal Bahadur Giri openly questioned this exploitation. He criticised the native elite who were partners in this exploitation. Giri joined congress in 1917 in the advice of Shyam Sundhar Chakravorthy and brought fires of freedom struggle in hills. Dal Bahadur Giri was joined by Bhagatbir Lama, Jungbir Sapkota, Helen Lepcha and Putali Devi. Dal Bahadur Giri formed Congress party and spread non cooperation movement in Darjeeling hills. Giri was joined by common masses and began to make impact on tea, timber and tourism. The personality of Giri was such that Gandhi referred to him as 'Pahari Bagh'. He was even arrested during the movement in 1921 but soon realised. But it was the arrest of 1923 which cost the life of Giri, it was rumoured that food served to him were poisoned. Giri was realised but died very soon which created huge vacuum in the freedom struggle in the hills. However this vacuum filled by Helen Lepcha.

Helen Lepcha was born in a village near Namchi, Sikkim in 1903 in a respected Rong Family. At the very young age she was influenced by nationalist leaders of Darjeeling hills. After the death of Dal Bahadur Giri she took major responsibility in keeping alive nationalist movement in hills. Her major highlight was the Civil Disobedience Movement after which she was recognised as a prominent leader of the Hill. Looking at the enthusiasm of the Helen Lepcha Gandhi gave her the name ‘Sabitri Devi’ and for rest of her life she was recognised by that name.

Another prominent women figure during this period is Putalimaya Devi. Born on 14th January 1920 in Burdwan road in Kurseong Putalimaya Devi was influenced by the nationalist leader Saryu Prasad Poddar at the very young age on 14-15 years. Considering her age she was not allowed to join the movement but she manage to keep all the information regarding activities of Congress all over the country. In 1936 a branch of Congress was opened in Kurseong and she took the membership of the Congress. Putalimaya at first started a Harijan Samaj in Kurseong in order to educate Harijan people she even started school for them. In the same year she also formed the women organization that manufactured Khadi cloths and were taught to spread patriotic feelings among the children. In 1942 when Quit India movement was spearheaded by Gandhi a huge Jan Sabha was organized in Kurseong in which Saryu Prasad was arrested following the next day On 13th August 22 years Putalimaya organized a huge procession in Kurseong along with Harish Chettri, Janaklal Kulmi where all of them were arrested. She was popular among the common people by the name ‘Mataji’. Even after independence she continued her work as Samaj Sevika and the member of the congress party and died on 1st December 1984.

III.1.3. Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese Unity and Acceptance of Nepali Language but Absence of Women

In 1934 on behalf of the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese of the region association presented a memo to Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir John Anderson demanding safeguard of minorities in the hills which was only possible by total exclusion of district from Bengal. So the Government of India Act 1935 made Darjeeling a “partially excluded area” from where only one member could be elected to the reserved seat which was in no way sufficient enough to safeguard the interest of minority against majority domination (Rai, 2015).

During 1940s a periodical known as NEBULA (NE for Nepali, BU for Bhutia and LA for Lepcha), made an effort to promote a sense of brotherhood among the three communities namely Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha inhabited in Darjeeling so as to get constitutional recognition for Nepali language. Samanta (2000) holds that it was the success of the NEBULA that all three communities agreed on the common ethnic term 'Gorkha' and the Nepali language. 1940s also experienced the emergence of Communist Party in the hills. Sushil Chatterjee, a leading member of the undivided Communist Party of India took initiative to organise the tea garden workers, he was later joined by the Communist activists of the district such as Ratanlal Brahma, Ganeshlal Subbah, Bhadrabhadur Hamal and Charu Mazumdar. (Dasgupta, 1999:60). Communist Party of India started highlighting the issue of Gorkha identity and in order to have a separate state named "Gorkhasthan" in collaboration with the tea plantation workers in the hills (Samanta, 2000:97).

After Second World War there was decline in employment opportunities in the tea gardens, in the wanton destruction of the rich forest resources, and in the constriction of recruitment possibilities in the service sector. So the representatives of the Nepali middle class came forward under the leadership of Dambar Singh Gurung to form a new political party named the All-India Gorkha League in 1943. (Dasgupta, 1999:60) The growth of the All- India Gorkha League signalled the gradual demise of the elitist organisations like the Hillmen's Association, and the Gorkha League began to put forward the demand for autonomy with a broader social base.

According to Chatterji (2007:126) it was formed to take the issues on the recognition of Nepali language and conferment of citizenship as Indian Gorkhas. In 1945, AIGL formulated its objectives as follow '(1) to recognise Gorkhas as a separate minority community, (2) to get representation of Gorkhas in the provincial legislature of the places they are settled, (3) to get representation in the interim governments and (4) to free all the Gorkhas as political prisoners by the British Government'.

However it was Pranta Parishad in 1980s which gave a systematic lead and solution to the identity crisis faced by Indian Nepalese. Pranta Parishad was not a political organisation but an association of intellectuals. It was formed in 1980 under the leadership of Indra Bahadur Rai. It is said that it got support from all the political

parties and was the first to highlight the demand of separate statehood in an organized manner. (Roy, 2012:124; Lama, 2008:214).

III.2. Gorkha National Liberation Front and Women Participation

The entry of Gorkha National Liberation Front in the hill politics gave a new dynamic turn to the demand of autonomy and separation from Bengal to Indian Nepalese. Many regard the entry of GNLFF as the land mark of second phase of the Gorkhaland movement as GNLFF led a movement for Gorkhaland in 1986 which not only accelerated the demand for autonomy and separation from Bengal but put the demand for Gorkhaland to another level. Rai (2015:47) opines that “The second phase of the movement was the most vigorous, vociferous and stabilized movement “Gorkhaland” spearheaded by Subash Ghising under the banner of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLFF)”. According to Roy (2012) foundation of GNLFF led to what later came to be known as Gorkhaland Movement or Gorkhaland Agitation.

Gorkha National Liberation Front was formed in 24 July 1980 under the leadership of Subash Ghising. Ghising started to garner support from the hill population on socio political issues as the feeling of landless and socio economically marginalised made suitable ground for him to appeal to the people (Sherpa, 2015:57). One of the first things GNLFF did after its formation was, it put up posters in Darjeeling saying “We are stateless. We are constitutionally tortured all over India. We want our own administration. Return our land from Bengal. Our future is in great danger. It is better to die than live as a slave. All are requested to fight for Gorkhaland” (Roy, 2012). Subhas Ghising coined the term ‘Gorkhaland’, he based his idea mainly on the perceived political insecurity of Indian Nepalese that reflects a perception of not being fully recognized Indian citizens but rather being stigmatized as people coming from Nepal (Wenner, 2013:2016). He explained the need for Gorkhaland in following words:

It is by being known as West Bengal that... its people affirm their Indian identity which is different from the identity of the people of Bangladesh who also are Bengalis. We Indian Nepalis who have nothing to do with Nepal are constantly confused with "Nepalis," that is, citizens of Nepal, a foreign country. But if there is Gorkhaland then our identity as Indians belonging to an Indian state... will be clear. If there is no Gorkhaland, we will continue to

be identified as Nepalis, under the stigma of being citizens of a foreign country residing here out of courtesy.

(Subash Ghisingh in Frontline 1986 (August), cited in Wenner, 2013:206).

The main demand placed by Ghising was to cancel the Indo- Nepal peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950, which according to him was the main hurdle in categorizing the Nepalese from Nepal and the Indian Nepalese which has created a doubt regarding their national identity. According to him Article VII of the treaty has made the Gorkhas absolutely stateless or identity less thus creating not only a national problem but the international problem as well.

Article VII “The governments of India and Nepal agree to grant on a reciprocal basis to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other, the same privileges in matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of the similar nature (Subba, 2009:150).

At the same time expulsion of the Nepalese from Meghalaya infused anxiety among Indian Nepalese in Darjeeling regarding their status in India which helped Ghising to gather support to unleashing the movement. Rai (2015) is of the opinion that ‘Earlier the movement led by different parties and organisations emphasise on ethnic homogeneity and separatism but Ghising credit lies in projecting the citizenship and identity issues which could whip up the emotion of people in a strong manner’.

Following the solution offered by the Pranta Parishad i.e. creation of separate state within the Indian union for Indian Nepalese, Ghising opt for the nomenclature ‘Gorkha’ for the Indian Nepalese, instead of Nepalese. He even rejected inclusion of Nepali language in the 8th Schedule of the constitutional and advocated Gorkha language instead, which would be an important step towards getting a separate state that is “Gorkhaland”.

Thus the movement for the separate homeland for Indian Nepalese or Gorkhas within Indian Union called Gorkhaland began in 1986. According to Sarkar (2013:74-75) the movement held in three phases. The first phase began 1986 which is marked by inter-party clashes in the hills where major political party offices were burnt, their

followers were killed resulting with more bloodshed among their own people, in which women and children were in a majority. The second phase started 1987 with the counter movement spearheaded by the CPI(M) men to combat the armed attack of the GNLF with similar counter offensive measures of killing and counter killing .In the third phase (1987 till the signing of the accord in 1988) government deployed armed forces to normalize the situation for the fact that GNLF went on more aggressive move on plundering the government/state property and resources.

Ghising had organised six frontal organisations to fight the movement namely Gorkha National Women Organisation, Gorkha National Youth Front, Gorkha National Students Front, Gorkha Volunteers' Cell, Gorkha Welfare Organisation which comprises different categories of followers and different spheres of activities although they were guided by a single thread i.e. the demand of Gorkhaland (Sarkar, 2013:69).

III.2.1. Gorkha National Women Organisation

The movement for Gorkhaland for the first time introduced women of hills in the wider spectrum of political participation. So far casting vote in the election was the only means political participation of women. Women participated in the movement under the banner Gorkha National Women Organisation. The formation of women's wing (GNWO) was proved to be influential in mobilising the women in the movement for the first time. Women presence could be seen in political activities like campaigning, protest, rallies, indefinite strikes etc. On 13th of March 1986, GNLF held it first public meeting with its 13 points programme at Ghoom, Darjeeling in which presence of women were in visible numbers. They took part in the events like Black Flag day observed on 13th April 1986 in protest against the alleged atrocities and discrimination faced by the Indian Nepalese. In the mass procession of 27 July 1986, when the clause 7 of the Indo-Nepal Peace Treaty was burnt which resulted in lathi charge and firing by the police forces, it was claimed that fifteen people died among which women and children were in majority (Sarkar, 2013:71). According to Rai (2015:83)

...inspite of the participation of women in impressive scale, it was not so influential and could not be sustained rather remained unnoticed. One of the reasons behind restricted level of women participation during that period was the violent mode of protest and principles which prevented women from involvement in totality. The other reason was the lack of media coverage which could not highlight the issues of the movement that impedes the awareness among women and in the hills.

III.2.2. Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC)

Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was a semi autonomous body formed as a result of movement for the demand for Gorkhaland from 1986 to 1988. DGHC was formed as a result of tripartite agreement between the Central Government of India, the West Bengal Government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front held in Kolkata on 22 August 1988 which resulted in the signing of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Agreement. Thus, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act, 1988 (West Bengal Act XIII of 1988) was enacted by the West Bengal legislature which was assented to by the President of India and was first published on 15 October 1988 in the Calcutta Gazette.

According to Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act 1988 section 2(i) DGHC shall comprising of the three hill sub-divisions of the district of Darjeeling, namely, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, and includes the following mouzas in the sub-division of Siliguri- they are Lohagarh Tea Garden, Lohagarh Forest, Rangmohan, Barachenga, Panighata, Chota Adalpur, Paharu, Sukna Forest, Sukna Part I, Pantapati Forest I, Mahanadi Forest, Champasari Forest, Salbari Chhat and Sittong Forest (West Bengal Act XIII of 1988, 2(i)).

The DGHC was the apex body replacing the existing Zilla Parishad. It would have supervisory powers over the Panchayat Samitis and Municipal bodies in the Darjeeling hill sub-divisions. It was semi autonomous body having administrative and executive functions. DGHC had two functioning wing, they were the General Council and Executive Council. The General Council of DGHC comprised of 42 members, among whom 2/3rd i.e. 28 were elected and 1/3rd i.e. 14 were nominated. The nominated members were to consist of members of Parliament, MLAs from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong constituencies and Chairpersons of the

municipalities of hill areas, and people belonging to a category of Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe and women (Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act, 1988 Section 5 (1A)). The executive council consist of chairman and vice-chairman of the general council and other members. The chairman and vice-chairman of the general council would be ex-officio-members of the executive council with the chairman of the general council functioning as the Chief Executive Councillor. The act was amended in 1994 as The DGHC (Amendment) Act 1994L/ West Bengal Act III of 1994 which brought some changes (Section 5 (1A)) in the Council. Among the 14 nominated members, 11 were to be nominated by the Government and 3 by the Chairman of DGHC (Roy, 2012).

There were 23 departments under the DGHC like Public Health (other than TB sanatorium), Engineering, Irrigation, Tourism, Public Works Department (Road Construction), Education (other than Higher Education), Fisheries, Animal Resources, Agriculture, Informal and Cultural Affairs (only Drama and Song Unit and Nepali Printing Press), Forest (other than Reserve Forests), Labour (only Industrial Training Institutes, Tung and Crèche Houses) (West Bengal Act XIII of 1988, 23(2))

III.2.2.1. Elections to the DGHC

The first DGHC elections were held on 13th December 1988, and the Council Office opened on 1st January 1989. Subash Ghising assumed office as Chief Executive Councillor on 18th January 1989. At the interval of five years two more elections were held in 1994 and 1999, after which from 1999 Subash Ghising continued as the caretaker chairman until 2007 when Gorkha Janmukti Morcha another newly formed political party forced to dissolve the council (Roy, 2012).

The first election to DGHC took place in 1988 for 20 seats as 8 seats were declared uncontested. The two women namely Nimcheki Pradhan and Hema Lama (Dolma) were given party ticket to fight the election and both of them won with the huge margin. When elected as the councillor Nimcheki Pradhan was the president of the Gorkha National Women's Organisation Kurseong branch and Hema Lama (Dolma) was the president of the Gorkha National Women's Organisation parent body. According to The West Bengal Act XIII of 1988 (Section 5 (1A)) DGHC was contested of 42 members in which 28 were elected and 14 was nominated by the West

Bengal government so following the provision of reservation of seats for women out of 14 nominated seats one was given to woman named Karuna Gurung. So in DGHC after its first election and nomination there were 42 members in which three were women⁷.

The second DGHC election was held in 1994 for 22 seats as 6 seats were declared uncontested. The two women namely in Gopimaya Gurung and Hema Lama got the chance to fight election and won by massive margin. When elected as the councillor Hema Lama (Dolma) was continuing as the president of the Gorkha National Women's Organisation parent body and Gopimaya Gurung was the president of the Gorkha National Women's Organisation Darjeeling branch. The West Bengal Act XIII of 1988 which formed the DGHC was amended in 1994 as The DGHC (Amendment) Act 1994L/ West Bengal Act III of 1994 which brought some changes (Section 5 (1A)) in the Council. Among the 14 nominated members, 11 were to be nominated by the Government and 3 by the Chairman of DGHC. Out of the 14 nominated members Nimcheki Pradhan was nominated to the council. So after the second election to the council there were again 3 women out of 42 members⁸.

The third DGHC election was held on 1999 for 27 seats and one seat was declared uncontested. Again in the third election to DGHC almost same set of women were repeated. The elected women were Gopimaya Gurung and Nimcheki Pradhan and Phurmit Lepcha and Shanta Chhetri were nominated. So after the third DGHC election out of 42 members 4 were women⁹.

If we look into the trend of the three general election of the council almost same set of women were repeated namely Hema (Dolma) Lama, Nimcheki Pradhan and Gopimaya Gurung who were at one time or the other were leading Gorkha National Women's Organisation (women's wing of the Gorkha National Liberation Front).

Gopi Maya Gurung hailed from Kulenbari Mongpoo village and began her political career from 1976 the chairperson of Himul milk production workers association, she continued this post till 1982. She became the convenor of Subash Gishing from 1982.

^{7 8 9} Data collected from the Election Department of Darjeeling and interview with the DGHC councillors.

On 13th April 1985 when the movement for Gorkhaland first started she became one of the prominent faces of the women's wing. After the movement when Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed she was elected twice to the council in 1994 and 1999 and took the responsibility of health department. Nimcheki Pradhan is another prominent name in the history of Gorkhaland Movement. With the great influence of Gishing she joined the party GNLF and took the responsibility of ward number 7 of Kurseong. She later became the president of women's wing of Kurseong. Hema Lama's politically active brother Navin Tamang introduced her with Subash Gishing after which she joined the party GNLF and became the Treasurer in 1986. She even became the president of Gorkha National Women's Organisation on 30th November 1985. She was elected as the councillors twice in 1988 and 1994 and was given the responsibility of health and education department¹⁰.

Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council for the first time gave an opportunity to the women of the hills to be part of the decision making process but the actual number of women in the council were reduce to minimum. All the elected women were given party ticket by the central committee of the party (Gorkha National Liberation Front) dominated by the then president Subash Gishing looking into their political activism in the women's wing of the party i.e. Gorkha National Women's Organisation. Even after being the part of the council the portfolios assigned to them were the extensions of their domestic roles, for example Gopimaya Gurung was given health department, Hema Lama was given the responsibility of education department. These elected women hardly took independent decisions, their role was always assigned by the central committee which were always dominated by men¹¹.

III.3. Gorkha Janmukti Morcha: Participation of Women

The third phase of the movement began when one of the DGHC councillors Bimal Gurung started a new political party in 2007 named Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. Bimal Gurung rejected the proposal of including Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and overthrow Subash Ghising almost permanently from the hill politics. At first Gurung acted as a chief patron of Prashant Tamang Fan club and played an important role in mobilising the people for the support of Indian Idol

^{10 11} Interview with the DGHC Councillors.

contestant to win the show. After the grand victory of Prashant Tamang this social issues took a new turn into a political agenda when a new political party named Gorkha Janmukti Morcha was launched by Bimal Gurung on 7th October 2007 (Ibid, 2015).

Immediately after coming to power new agitation for Gorkhaland started by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, entailing various bandhs (general strikes), demonstrations, pada-yatras (foot marches) to the demanded territories, hunger strikes, and tax boycotts etc (Wenner,2013:207). Sarkar (2012) observes that since Bimal Gurung was an erstwhile Councillor of DGHC led by Ghising. So the experience of his early political socialisation led Gurung to follow similar courses of action like those of his predecessor namely, restricting tea and timber movement outside the hills, non-payment of taxes, writing Gorkhaland instead of Government of West Bengal in the hoardings of all government offices, electricity bills, telephone bills, GL no. in vehicles instead of WB, etc. What was new was perhaps a blend of Gandhigiri and non-violence on the surface with that of force, threat, and violence at the core. Although movement remained more or less peaceful but cases of violence and of political murders did took place but not in a similar scale as that in the decade of the 1980s. What was also new was the consistent emphasised on the issue of inclusion of Duars and Terai regions within the proposed Gorkhaland territory. Besides the hills, the Terai and Duars region was made the epicentre of the GJM-led Gorkhaland movement.

Lama (2013:77) holds that ‘the birth of the new political party in the hills gave opportunity to the women to crave a space for themselves in the political arena that so long were dominated by men’. It was in this phase of Gorkhaland Movement that women in mass scale participated in the movement which was a historic moment of Hill politics. The activism of women in this phase was such then when the movement first started in 2008 the first person to be myrtle was a woman named Pramila Sharma. She was sort dead on 25th July 2008 from a bullet fired allegedly from the house of a GNLFF leader in Darjeeling.

III.3.1. Gorkha Janmukti Nari Morcha

A women's wing Gorkha Janmukti Nari Morcha was formed along with the formation of the GJMM with Dhan Maya Tamang as its first President. Lama (2013:78) argues that since the formation of Gorkha Janmukti Nari Morcha large number of Nepali/Gorkhey women joined the fray. Back then almost each household of Darjeeling hills had at least one woman as the member of Nari Morcha as permanent and non-permanent members, who participate in the movement. Initially women suffered from political and organisational inexperience but with the appointment of Shanti Chettri gave a concrete build to the organisation.

The main program of Nari Morcha includes organizing dharnas, bhhok hartaal (fast unto death), gherao, rally and picketing etc. They organised many programmes in support of the Gorkhaland Movement and one such was Dooars Chalo Andolan in 2009. From 25th January to 22nd February 2009, the GJMM leadership launched "*Dooars Chalo Andolan*", where women participated in large numbers. Nari Morcha also organised a programme at Nagarkata but the clash with some of the anti-Gorkhaland tribal outfits left many women injured. It was in this context Chakraborty (2014) remark that it was after this incident that the nature of the role of women in the movement changed from passive to direct participants. On 8th February Nari Morcha organized a rally from Chowrasta to Sadar police station and observed "Black Flag Day" in response to the suppression of "*Dooars Chalo Andolan*" (Lama 2013:80).

On 8th February 2011 GJMM took a padhyatra for the demand for Gorkhaland in Sibchu in Jalpiguri district where police lathicharge and firing leading the death of two women activists of Nari Morcha namely Neeta Khawas and Bimala Rai. Thus on 10th February, "Black Flag Day was organised under the leadership of Asha Gurung in order to secure justice for those assaulted and killed by the police action. Again on 15th February Gurung called for self-detention "*jail bharo Andolan*" for the cause of Gorkhaland where numbers of women were precisely higher than men, the program continued till 22nd February (Chakraborty, 2014).

In almost all the programmes carved by GJMM Nari Morcha always were in the forefront which was again controlled by the GJMM parent body dominated by men. The formation of Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha was actually the initiative of the

men leaders of the movement, that the organisation being massive of its own highly dependent on the parent body due to organisational set of the party and their president was handpicked by the GJMM president Bimal Gurung without consulting with women. Thus Lama (2013) observes that women during this phase of Gorkhaland Movement were used as political tool.

GJMM declared its movement for Gorkhaland in a Gandhian nonviolent and democratic way. In an attempt to revive the demand for Gorkhaland, Gurung sought to include the Terai and Doors in the proposed Gorkhaland territory, so he even announced the formation of a separate body called Gorkha Janmukti Adivasi Morcha (Sarkar, 2013:98). But in the state assembly election in 2011 Gurung announced unconditional support to Trinamool Congress in Terai and Doors and secured all three seats in the hill constituencies. After which the movement came to an end after the formation of Gorkhaland Territorial administration in the same year.

III.3.2. Gorkhaland Territorial Administration

Gorkhaland Territorial Administration was formed after three years of agitation for a demand for separate state of Gorkhaland led by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. On 2 September 2011 a bill for the creation of GTA was passed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly so GTA is formed with the West Bengal Act XX of 2011. The GTA has administrative, executive and financial powers but devoid of legislative powers. Like Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Gorkhaland Territorial Administration's jurisdiction is also limited to the hill sub-division of district of Darjeeling namely Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong¹² and 18 mauzas¹³ in sub division of Siliguri. 18 mousazs from Siliguri sub-division includes- Lohagarh Tea Garden, Lohagarh Forest, Rangmohan, Panighata, Chota Adalpur, Paharu, Sukna Forest, Sukna Part I, Pantapati Forest I, Mahanadi Forest, Champasari Forest, Salbari Chhat Part II, Sitong Forest, Sivoke Hill Forest, Sivoke Forest, Chhota Chenga and Nipania (West Bengal Act XX of 2011).

¹² On 14 February 2017 Kamilpong is made a 21st district of West Bengal.

¹³ mauza is a type of administrative district, corresponding to a specific land area within which there may be one or more settlements, number of villages may come together to form a mouza.

GTA comprises of GTA Sabha Council, Executive Body and the Principle Secretary. Section 5(1) and (2) of the said Act allows GTA to have fifty members among which forty five would be directly elected through adult franchise and five would be nominated among from Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, women and minorities by the state government. According to the chapter 2, section 26 of the West Bengal Act XX of 2011 states that the 'Gorkhaland Territorial Administration shall have administrative, financial and executive powers' in the said region in relation to 48 items in which at number *xiv* includes the Woman, Child Development and Social Welfare (West Bengal Act XX of 2011).

III.3.2.1. Election of GTA

In 2012 GTA elections were held for 45 seats. Most of the prominent parties of the hill including GNLF refuse to contest for election in protest of the formation of GTA, so it was only Trinamool Congress to give a fight to GJMM. Out of total 45 seats 28 was declared un-contested so there was election only for 17 seats. All the 45 seats were won by GJMM in which there were only five women. Out of five women four were declared un-contested namely- Asha Gurung, Urmila Rumba, Shanti Thapa and Prabha Chettri. Champa Bivar faced opposition by Rajen Mukhai of All India Trinamool Congress but she won by 8310 votes. Along with the five elected women Sabitri Rai was nominated to GTA which made six women in the Administration. Asha Gurung was given the health department, Urmila Rumba was given education department and Prabha Chettri was given Women and Child care department¹⁴.

Similar to Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council women in Gorkhaland Territorial Administration also got the party tickets to fight the election from the parent body. Out of 45 seats no women dare to fight election independently due to strong political party system in the region. The criteria to get the ticket to fight election under the banner of the party was to be active leader in the women's wing of the party i.e. Gorkha Janmukti Nari Morcha. All the women in the GTA were one hold some portfolio in the Nari Morcha. For example Asha Gurung, wife of the GJMM chief Bimal Gurung was the president of Gorkha Janmukti Nari Morcha, Sabitri Rai was the president of Nari Morcha Lebong Valley etc. Like DGHC, GTA also gave women

¹⁴ In conversation with the head clerk of GTA.

a chance to be a part of decision making process but due to strong party lineage their post remained mere puppet to the Chief executive. Again the roles assigned to women were mere extension of their domestic role for example Asha Gurug was given Women and Child Development department, Urmila Rumba was in charge of the education etc¹⁵.

¹⁵ In conversation with respondents.

Chapter IV

Women Empowerment and Political Participation in DGHC and GTA

IV. Introduction

The term empowerment basically denotes decentralisation of powers and authority where it aims at getting participation of deprived section of society in the decision making process which enables the deprived section of the society to change the existing circumstances and begin to have control over their lives and political participation can refer to a variety of activities through which people seek to influence the decision-making processes that shape their lives. Since women are one the most deprived groups in the society their empowerment is imperative. But the key centres of power in the present globalising economy are state, market and civil society and to transform the existing unequal power relation share of women in these centres of power is required which is possible through political participation (Fadia, 2014). Mahmood (2014) remarks ‘Women’s political empowerment is not a goal in itself but it is instrumental in stimulating the society for political and social empowerment which would further stimulate the overall development and refinement in the society. The presence and participation of women in decision making process would enable them to revise the gender discriminatory policies and laws on one hand and would support equality based new laws and policies on the other’.

According to Rousseau (1761) in his ‘The Origin of Inequality’ there exists two types of inequality natural or physical inequality due to difference in age, health, qualities of mind etc and the other is moral or political inequality which some enjoys due to being richer, powerful, honoured etc. Thus some enjoys more power than the other, if it is put within the context of ‘sex’ women are reduced to unequal due to preconception of gender that considers women as fragile, weak and incompetent as compared to men. Since women and men both live together in a society the damage to one affects the other. So involvement of women in decision making process will enable them to make decisions that affect their lives. One such was DGHC and GTA semi administrative units in which women got chance to be part of the decision

making process. Thus this chapter is dedicated to study to what extent the administrative units DHGC and GTA have been able to bring political participation and empowerment among women.

IV.2. Study Area and Methodology

Study Area

Darjeeling district is the northern most district of West Bengal state. The district is divided into two divisions hilly region i.e. hill subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri¹⁶ is under the semi autonomous body presently GTA and the plains under the state government of West Bengal. Kalimpong was declared a district in 2017, previously it was under Darjeeling district but it has continued to remain a part of semi autonomous body. According to 2011 census Darjeeling sub-division had the population of 430771 with 215084 male and 215687 female in which 181378 male and 159393 females were literate. Kurseong sub-division had the population of 193958 of which 97447 are males and 96511 are females. It had 81106 male and 69936 female literate. Kalimpong sub-division had the population of 248110 of which 125848 are males while 122262 are females with 99251 male and 84459 female literate.

Methodology

To examine the participation of women in DGHC and GTA autonomous administrative units and to explore the contributions of DGHC and GTA in empowering women a field study was done in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong administrative blocs with structured and unstructured survey schedule. The sample type was purposive sampling in which age and sex were taken into consideration. 180 women were taken from three regions who had voted in both DGHC and GTA elections. 14 political party leaders were also interviewed with snowball sampling. The survey was done from 20th October 2017 to 28th October 2017 and from 17th December to 30th December 2017.

¹⁶ Only the Mouzas included in the GTA.

IV.3. Social Status of respondents

IV.3.1. Age of the Respondents

Age is an important factor to determine the maturity and experience of people. It also plays a vital role in examining the thinking process of individual. Variation in age results in variation in perception of people.

Table: 1
Age of the Respondents

Age of Respondents	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Kurseong	Total Number of Respondents	Total Percentage
40-45	10 (17%)	22 (37%)	21 (35%)	53	30%
46-50	15 (25%)	10 (17%)	6 (10%)	31	17%
51-55	11(18%)	11 (18%)	14 (23%)	36	20%
56-60	17 (28%)	7 (12%)	12 (20%)	36	20%
61-65	3 (5%)	8 (13%)	4 (7%)	15	8%
66 Above	4 (7%)	2 (3%)	3 (5%)	9	5%
Total	60	60	60	180	100%

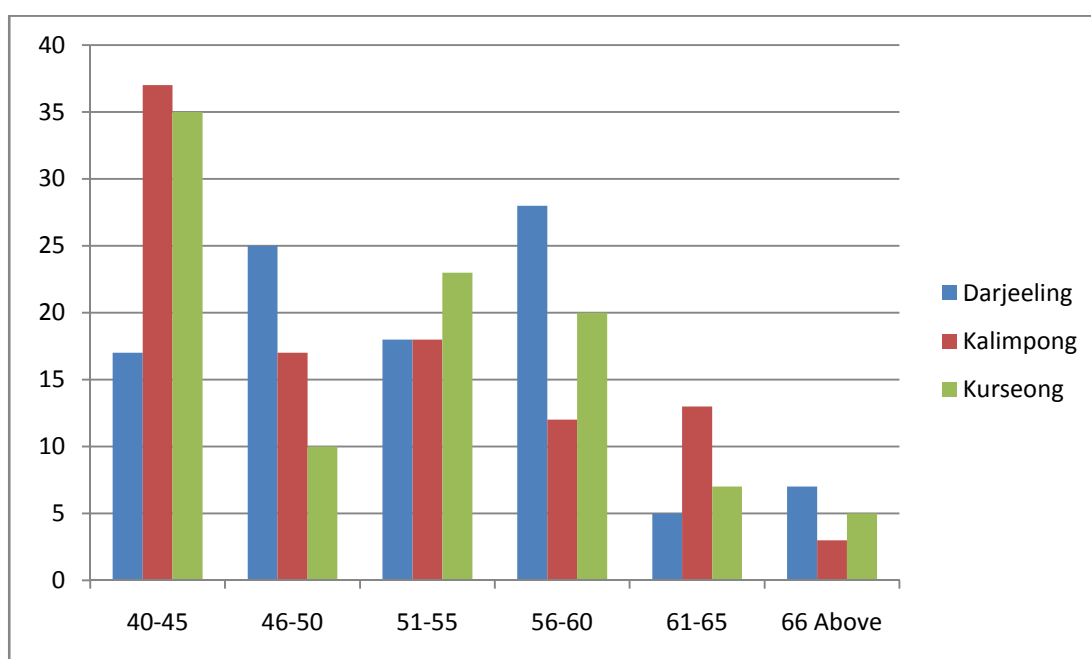


Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

In accordance with the purposive sampling only those women were taken who had voted in both DGHC and GTA elections. The first DGHC election was held in 1988 and the last held in 1999 because of which only women above the age of 40 years were taken as sample. 30% of respondents were between 40-45 years and 17% were from 46-50 years so most of them opt for voting with their own conscience with the major influence of the other, they went to public meeting to voice their opinion and seemed interest in political activities. The most of the women above 51 years were not interested in politics and were easily inclined to the opinion of their husband, family members, political party etc.

IV.3.2. Educational Status of Respondents

Education is an important factor to determine the level of understanding of people. It also determines the capability, awareness and a sense of self confidence among people. Education enables a person to know about things that affects their lives and once such is politics. Since political awareness leads to political participation and one of the major source of political awareness is by reading newspapers and watching news channels so it is widely observed that higher the education of a person higher will be the political awareness.

Table: 2

Educational Status of Respondents

Educational Status of Respondents	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Kurseong	Total Number of Respondents	Total Percentage
Never Been to School	7 (12%)	10(17%)	13(22%)	30	17%
Primary	11 (18%)	9 (15%)	15 (25%)	35	19%
High School	34 (57%)	19 (31%)	25 (42%)	78	43%
Higher Secondary	5 (8%)	15 (25%)	3 (5%)	23	13%
Graduate and Above	3 (5%)	7 (12%)	4 (6%)	14	8%
Total	60	60	60	180	100%

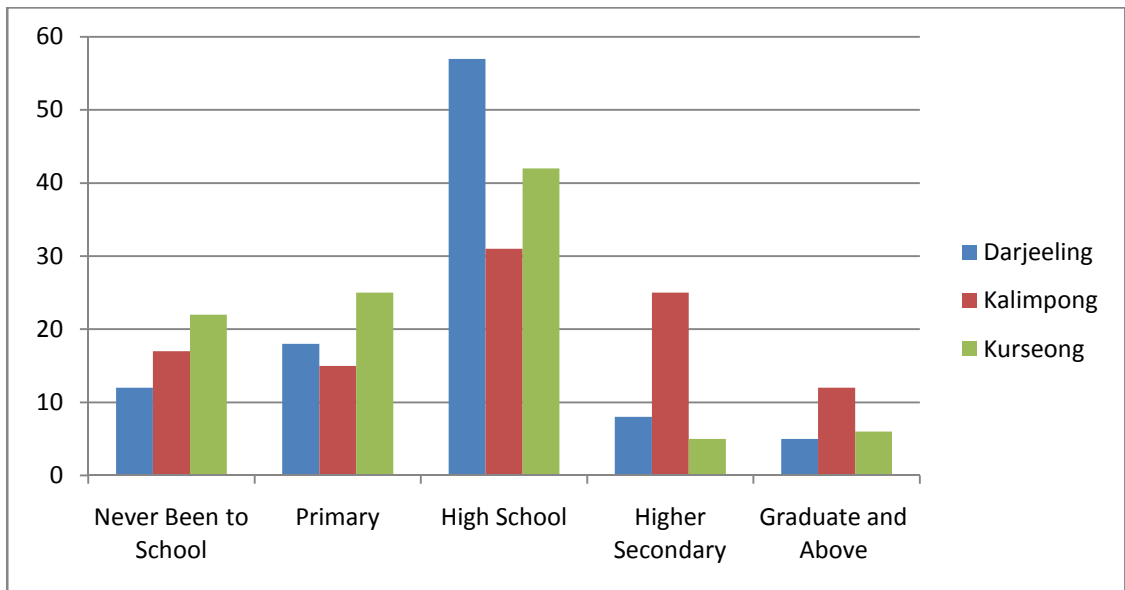


Figure 2: Educational Status of Respondents

In the above table 2 it was observed that only 83% of the women were literate and 17% never went to the school. Maximum number of women had attended high school but as the graph increases the number of women going to college was just 6%. Graph is highest in high school with maximum dropouts in class 7 and 8. Since women with the age above 40 years were taken as sample, education was not considered in the second half of the 20th century during which they were born in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong and the boundaries of higher education were limited to the handful of elites of the region. Due to Gorkhaland Movement women were forced to go to rallies and public meetings political participation is mixed in all the categories. Since 8% of women were graduates and above they were mostly employed and said to have no time but still whenever got opportunity they seemed to participate in the meetings and rallies. Women who attended high school and above were seemed conscious and independent voters than the rest. However women from all the categories were in some percent were interested in going public meetings and rallies saying it was for Gorkhaland.

IV.3.3. Occupation of Respondents

In the division of social roles men are considered the bread earners of the family and not women which enables them to go out and earn keeping women at home. Women are usually confined to their houses taking care of family. However with the increase in the in the level of education among women there has been increase in the number of earning women as well. An employed woman is more confident and independent to take a decision than a woman who is unemployed and depended on others for living.

Table: 3

Occupation of Respondents

Occupation of Respondents	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Kurseong	Total Number of Respondents	Total Percentage
Unemployed	46 (77%)	38(64%)	29 (48%)	113	63%
Government Job	7 (12%)	5 (8%)	8 (14%)	20	11%
Private Job	3 (5%)	12 (20%)	11(18%)	26	14%
Self Employed	4 (6%)	5(8%)	12 (20%)	21	12%
Total	60	60	60	180	100%

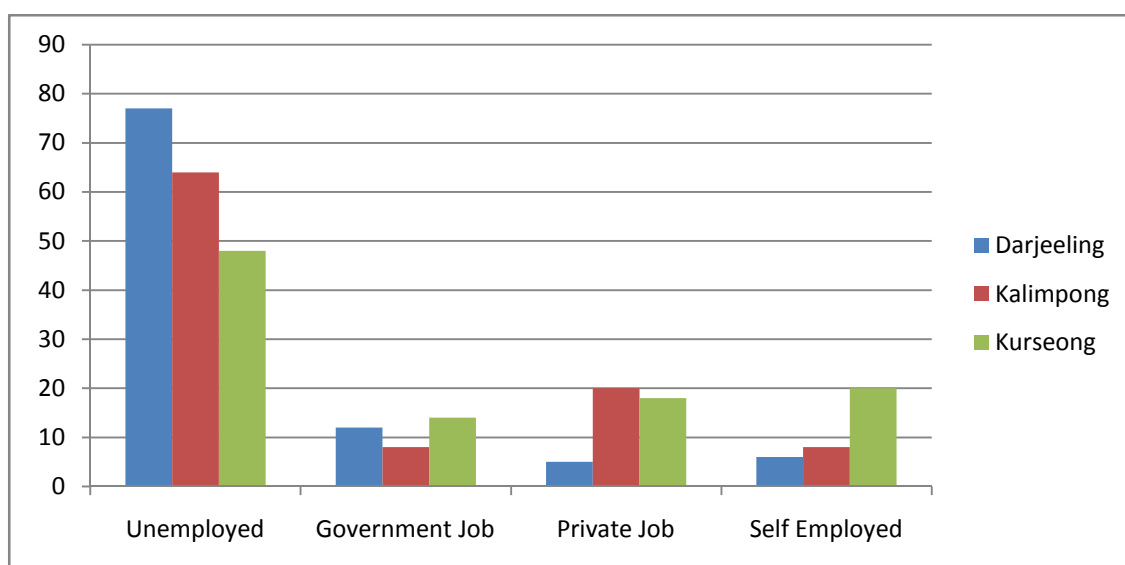


Figure 3: Occupation of Respondents

Table 3 reveals that 63% of women are unemployed because for employment education is one of the most important things and as shown in the table 2 in which maximum numbers of women were high school dropouts. 11% of women were in government jobs although most of them were retired and were in pension. 14% were doing private job mostly involved in working in hotels, private companies, the 12% self employed women were usually the ones running small shops in their homes. Most of the women doing private job and self employed seemed to have no time for going in public meetings and rallies although many of them were said to be interested. Due to the norm of one person each from the house they were forced to go to public meetings and rallies. Most of the women in jobs or receiving some kind of income were said to have voted independently than the women unemployed. Since unemployed women were often to go the public meetings and rallies so most of them were influenced by the political party and their leaders.

IV.3.4. Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status is an important factor to determine the living pattern of the respondents. It is usually observed that married women are more engrossed at household activities taking care of children where unmarried women are freer to take their decisions and have more time to participate in politics.

Table: 4

Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Kurseong	Number of Respondents	Total Percentage
Married	51 (85%)	47 (78%)	41 (68%)	139	77%
Unmarried	5 (8%)	10 (16%)	8 (14%)	23	13%
Widow	4 (7%)	3 (6%)	11 (18%)	18	10%
Total	60	60	60	180	100%

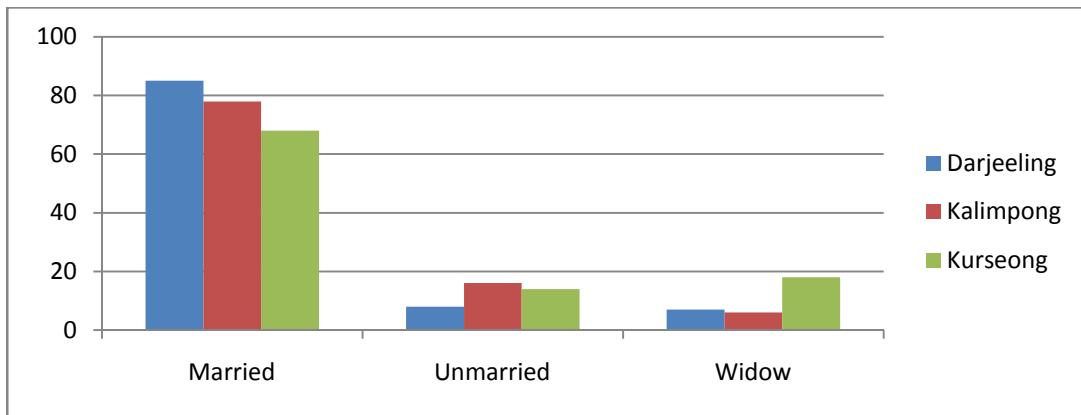


Figure 4: Marital Status of Respondents

Table 4 shows that 77% of women were married, it is because of the sample in which women above 40 years of age were chosen. 13% were unmarried and 14% were widow. The married women were more often to go to public meetings and rallies as they were unemployed and stayed at home. Most of the unmarried women and widow were at job. The married women were influenced by their husband and family members where as unmarried and widows were freer to take their decisions.

IV.4. Discussion of the field work results

IV.4.1. Interest in Going to Public Meetings and Rallies

Interest in going public meetings and rallies is an important indicator to determine the level of political awareness among people. It is the political awareness which leads to the political participation of people.

Table: 5

Interest in Going to Public Meetings and Rallies

Interest in Going Public Meetings and Rallies	DGHC	GTA
Very Interested	11 (6%)	26 (15%)
Interested	73 (41%)	89 (49%)
Not Interested	96 (53%)	65 (36%)
Total	180	180

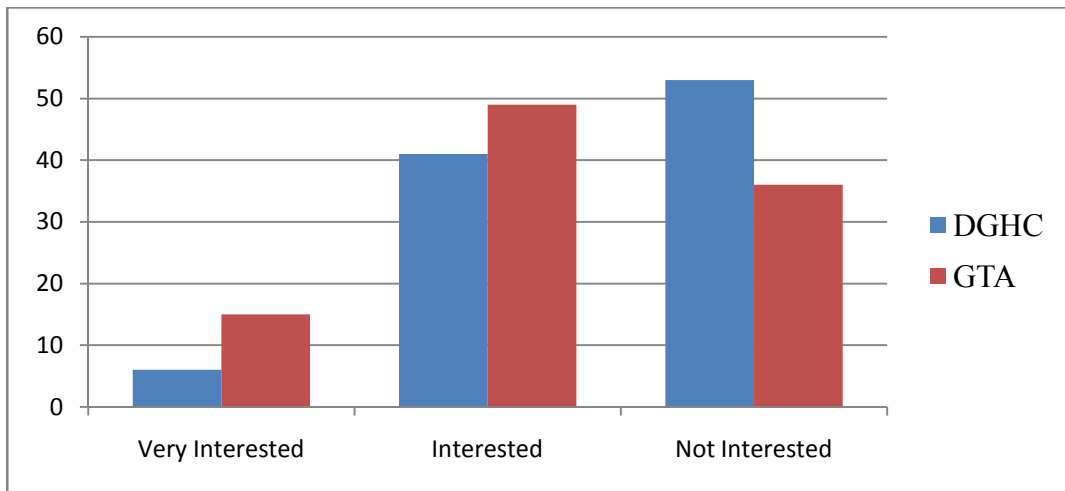


Figure 5: Interest in Going to Public Meetings and Rallies

The respondents during the time of DGHC were young and they aged during the time GTA, so in table 5 it was observed that interest of respondents in going to public meetings and rallies were comparatively low during the time of DGHC than GTA which gives an impression that people gain interest in politics after they age. 6% of women seemed to be very interested in going public meetings and rallies and the number increased to 15% during the time of GTA. Similarly 41% were interested during DGHC and 49% in GTA. However increase in the number of interest of women should not be perceived that women are climbing steps of political participation as there were many instances in which women very interested during the time of DGHC were not at all interested during the time of GTA and vice versa. It was observed that the interest of women is influenced by activities of political party in that region. But in aggregate it was observed that number of women not interested in going public meeting and rallies are reduced from 53% in DGHC to 36% in GTA. For both very interested and interested women the only reason to go for public meetings and rallies was for Gorkhaland. The very interested were of the opinion ‘if we don’t go who else shall go for us’ whereas for the interested ones they go to public meetings and rallies because of the compulsion of one person from one house has to come out for Gorkhaland and they like to go as well. The rest not interested were of the preconception that ‘politics is a dirty game and it is not for us’.

IV.4.2. Going to Public Meetings and Rallies

Public meetings and rallies are important platform to express opinions and to voice demands but over the time it has also become the weapon to show the strength of a political party so at times people are forced to go to the rallies as a result people go with the fear of social boycott

Table: 6

Going in Public Meeting and Rallies

Yes/No	Going in Public Meeting and Rallies	DGHC	GTA
Yes	Out of Compulsion	72 (40%)	83 (46%)
	For Time Pass	0	13 (7%)
	To Express Opinion	9(5%)	23 (13%)
No	Not Interested	92 (51%)	35 (19%)
	No Time	7 (4%)	19 (11%)
	No Use	0	7(4%)
	Total	180	180

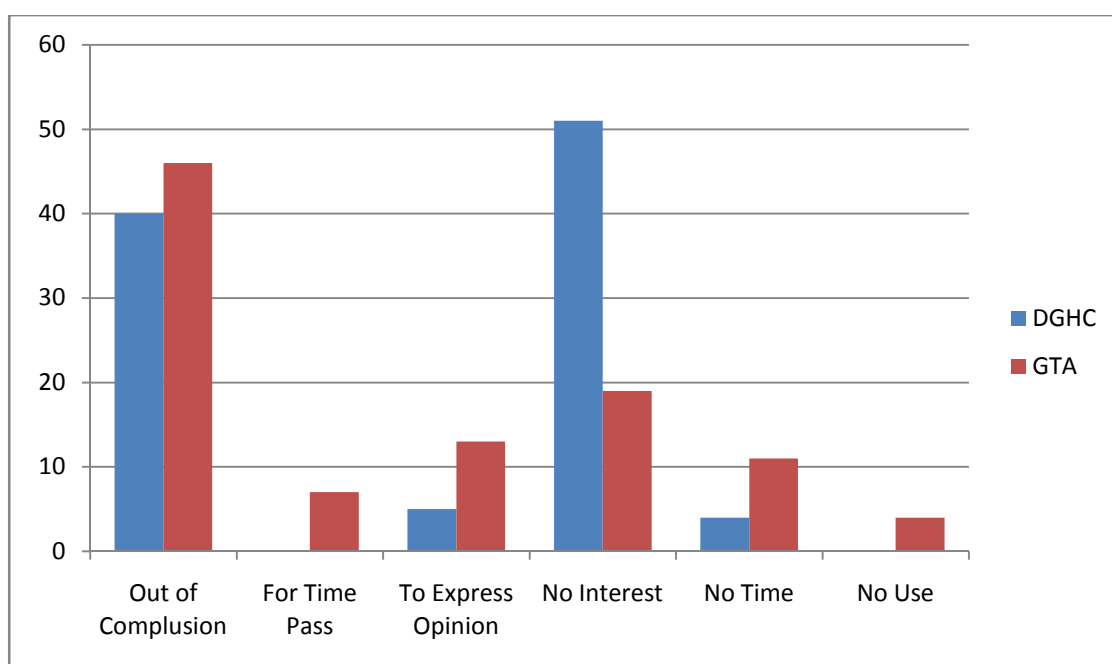


Figure 6: Going to Public Meeting and Rallies

In the table 6 it is shown that maximum number of women i.e. 40% in DGHC and 46% in GTA went to public meeting and rallies due to compulsion as in the region of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong ‘one person from one house’ is an unannounced order for the cause of Gorkhaland. Since men are busy at work women are left to escape the social boycott by going into rallies. No women claim to have been in public meetings and rallies for time pass during DGHC but 7% of women gone for time pass during GTA. During DGHC 5% women claim to go express opinions which was increased to 13% during GTA which shows increase in the awareness of political participation among women. The number of women not going to public meetings and rallies due to lack of interest also decreased from 51% in DGHC to 19% in GTA. 4% of women in DGHC and 11% of women in GTA said to have no time and 4% of women in GTA found no use in going to public meetings and rallies due to prior experience of DGHC.

IV.4.3. Factors that were considered while voting

While voting in election people look into certain factors that determine their voting behaviour. It also enables to know the thinking process of an individual. The environment in which one lives is an important factor to influence this indicator.

Table: 7

Factors that were considered while voting

Factors that were considered while voting	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Region	48	27%
Caste	0	0
Political Party	51	28%
Religion	0	0
Leadership of Political Party	31	17%
Qualities of Candidate	47	26%
Never Thought	3	2%
Total	180	100%

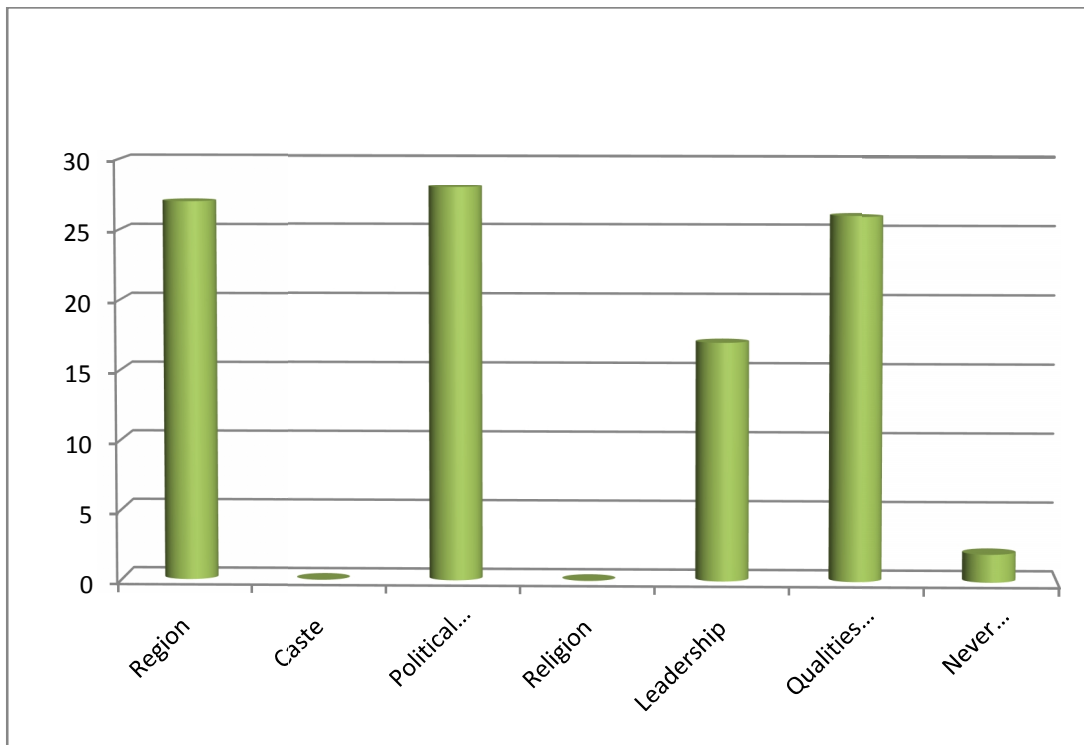


Figure 7: Factors that were considered while voting

In the table 7 it is observed 27% women look at the region from which the candidates belong so that the candidate after winning the election shall take care of their region. Nobody bothers about caste and religion but 28% women opt for political party and 17% for leader of a political party. However here political party and leadership are very closely related as almost all the political party in the hills rose to power due to charismatic leadership so for people leader is party and party is leader. Since the survey was done immediately after the third phase of the Gorkhaland movement which miserably and inactiveness of the political leaders were the major reason behind that so respondents were not ready accept the existence of charismatic leadership.

IV.4.4. Factors that were considered while voting in DGHC and GTA elections

DGHC election was the first of its kind in the hills. It took place right after the violent Gorkhaland Movement led by a political party GNLF with the promise of development and prosperity. DGHC had election thrice at the interval of five years. The first election was held in 1988 second in 1994 and third in 1999 after which it continued as a caretaker government till 2007. Similar to DGHC, GTA election also

occurred after the second phase Gorkhaland Movement led by another political party GJMM, so the dominance of the political party in these elections was obvious.

Table: 8

Factors that were considered while voting in DGHC elections

Factors that were considered while voting in DGHC and GTA elections	DGHC	GTA
Political Party	85 (47%)	111 (62%)
Leaders of Political Party	48 (27%)	24 (13%)
Region	9 (5%)	28 (16%)
Qualities of Candidate	18 (10%)	17 (9%)
Don't Remember	19(11%)	0
Total	180	180

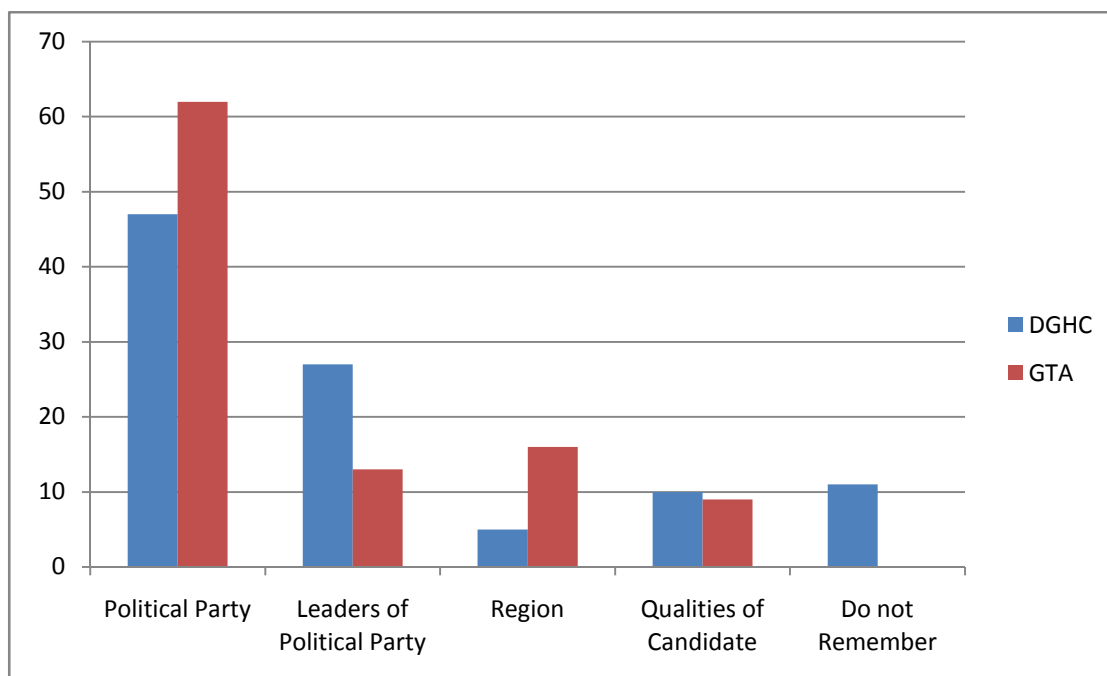


Figure 8: Factors that were considered while voting in DGHC and GTA elections

Since the DGHC election happened after the Gorkhaland movement led by a political party GNLFF, 47% respondents looked into political parties while voting. 27% opt for the leaders of political party. Although the strong charismatic leadership is one of the reasons of the success of any political party but since the survey was done after the time in which third phase of the Gorkhaland movement had failed and one of the major reason was failure of leadership so respondents wanted to stay away with the leadership. So here political party and leaders of political party are synonym. 5% respondents opt for the region with the hope that if a person from their region wins the election, he/she shall bring prosperity and development in their respective regions they belong. 10% voted for qualities of candidate and 11% does not remember.

During the GTA election all the political parties of the hills boycotted the election in the protest of the formation of GTA as their demand for Gorkhaland was substituted by GTA which they refuse to accept. So GJMM had competition only from the plains party Trinamool Congress. Since Trinamool was a political party of the plains and GJMM was of hills so most of the people looked for political party but region was also a major hidden factor. 62% went for political party and 13% leaders of the political party were synonymous. 16% voted for region and 9% for qualities of candidate.

The DGHC and GTA were formed after the Gorkhaland Movements so in the elections to these semi autonomous councils were dominated which had led the movement. Both DGHC and GTA was formed in the similar pattern but the dominance of political party and region seems more in the GTA elections than in the DGHC, this was because of the fact that during GTA election all the political party of the hills boycotted the election whereas in DGHC election was contested among the political party of the hills. Since last DGHC election occurred in 1999 claim not to remember but memories of GTA election was fresh in the minds of the people.

IV.4.5. Opinions that were considered while voting

Empowerment is a process and a goal in itself, as a process it enables the disempowered people to make choice (Kabeer, 2001) as a goal it enables to have a life in which they can make their own choice so as to have positive impact in their lives. So the choice an individual is making is an important factor of empowerment.

Table: 9

Opinions that were considered while voting

Opinions that were considered	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Parents	0	0
Family	23	13%
Husband	24	13%
Political Party	26	14%
Friends	21	12%
Own Conscience	83	46%
Never Thought	3	2%
Total	180	100%

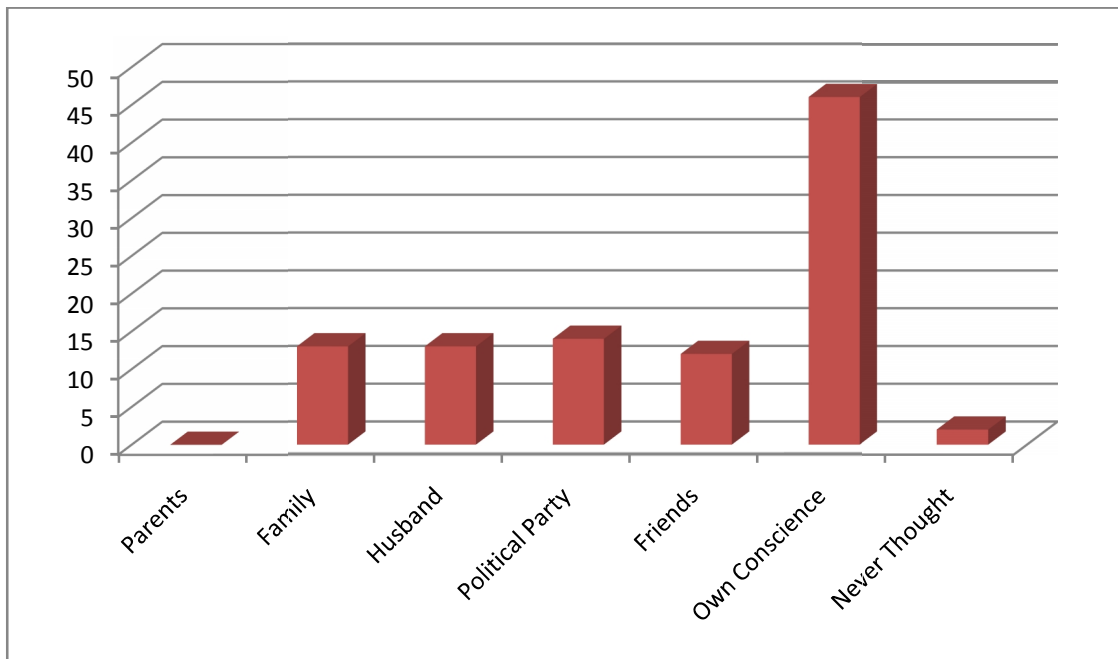


Figure 9: Opinions that were considered while voting

In the table 8 nobody took the opinion of parents as the sample was 40 years above but 13% listened to their family which includes their brothers, sisters, husband and children. 13% also took to advice of their husband saying husband is the head of

family so it is important to listen to him. 14% went with political party were the ones who were already affiliated to a political party or their family members had linked with the political party members. 12% took the advice of the friends were the ones who had no interest and knowledge of the political processes, they cast their votes wherever their friends and neighbours told them to. 2% of the respondents randomly voted because they thought if they do not vote their name in the voter list shall be cancelled.

IV.4.6. Opinion that were considered in DGHC and GTA elections

During the time of DGHC election respondents were young and at the time of GTA election they have aged so the preferences of the respondents had changed due to experience and the existing situations.

Table: 10

Opinion that were considered in DGHC and GTA elections

Opinion that were considered in DGHC and GTA elections	DGHC	GTA
Family	15 (8%)	16 (9%)
Husband	14 (7%)	9 (5%)
Political Party	84 (47%)	73 (41%)
Friends	17 (9%)	27 (15%)
Own Conscience	26(15%)	51 (28%)
Never Thought	3(2%)	0
Does not Remember	21(12%)	4 (2%)
Total	180	180

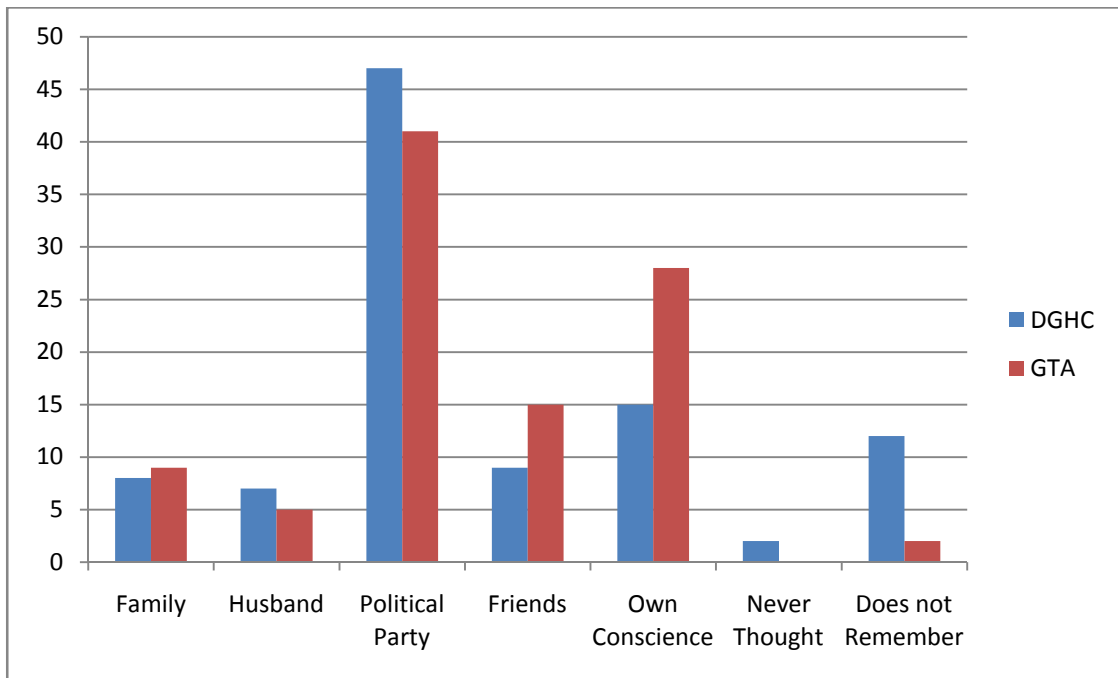


Figure 10: Opinion that were considered in DGHC and GTA elections

During the time of DGHC 47% respondents opt the opinion of the political party it was because of the fact that due to Gorkhaland Movement many people were affiliated to the political party or had sympathy for the political party that led the Gorkhaland Movement. 15% of the respondents voted with their own conscience without taking advice of suggestion of anyone. 12% did not remember whose opinion they considered while voting in DGHC election as the last election happened in 1999. 9% of respondents took the advice of friends, 7% and 8% took the advice of their husband and family members and 2% of respondents did not thought anything and voted just to maintain their name in the voter list.

Similarly during the time of GTA 41% respondents took the opinion of the political party who led the Gorkhaland Movement. 28% voted for their own conscience were the once who were not affiliated to any political party. 15% of the respondents were took the advice of their friends and this was mostly in the case of women being member of any organisation. 9% and 5% opt the advice of their family members and husband and 2% said to have forgotten whose opinion they considered while voting in GTA election.

In both DGHC and GTA election maximum number of respondents took the opinion of political party because of the Gorkhaland movement, as compared to GTA more number of respondents opt for political party in DGHC but more number of respondents opt for own conscience in GTA than DGHC. This was because DGHC was the first election of its kind in hills so people did not had much ideas about it so maximum number of respondents voted wherever party ask them to but in the time of GTA people were more conscious and had some idea some the number of respondents voting with their own conscience increased during the time of GTA and influence of political party decreased.

IV.4.7. Thoughts on standing in election of semi autonomous units like GTA

A thought on standing in election of semi autonomous unit like GTA is a major factor to determine the interest of the people in politics and their level of self confidence. It also determines how much accessible these administrative unit is to the common people.

Table: 11

Thoughts on standing in election of semi autonomous units like GTA

Thoughts on standing in election of Semi autonomous units like GTA	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Interested	47	26%
Not Interested	98	55%
No Time	11	6%
Age Bar	24	13%
Total	180	100%

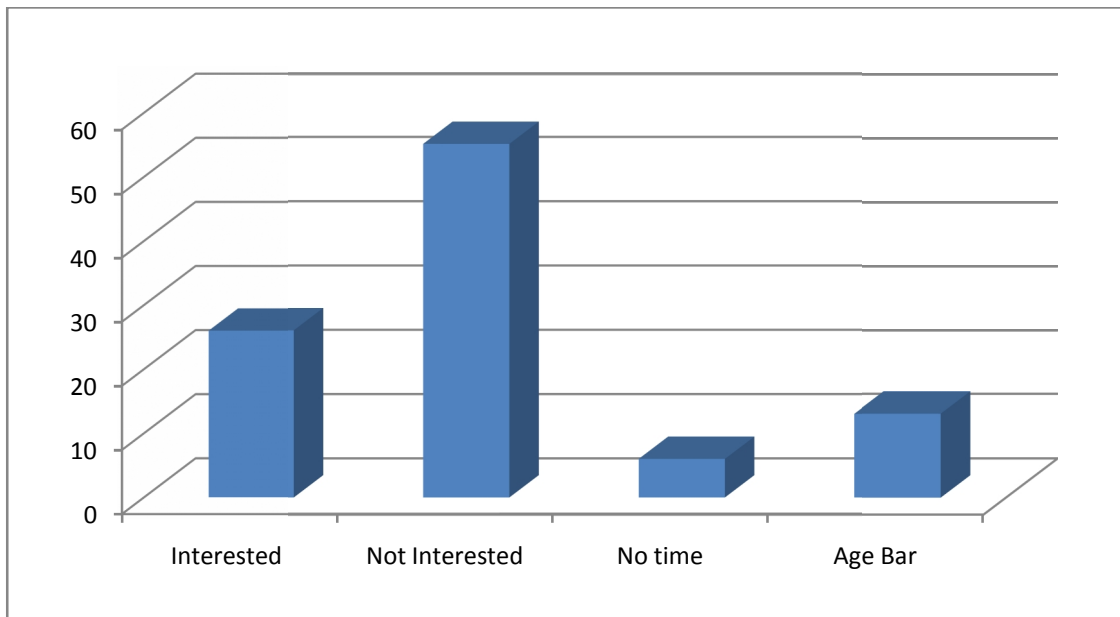


Figure 11: Thoughts on standing in election of semi autonomous units like GTA

Most of the women i.e. 55% said they are not interested and this non interest was mixed with the statement that “how common people like us can gets such opportunity”. Since majority of women had education till high school, married and unemployed their self confidence was also very low. However 26% showed interest saying if given chance why not. 6% said they have no time and 13% had already crossed the age limit.

IV.4.8. Holding a post of political influence in locality

Interest of holding a post of political influence in locality determines the level of self confidence one has. This indicator also determines the interest of a person in politics and the confidence of taking any responsibility.

Table: 12

Holding a post of political influence in locality

Holding a post of political influence in locality	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Interested	64	35%
Not Interested	77	43%
No Time	25	14%
Already Holding the Post	14	8%
Total	180	100%

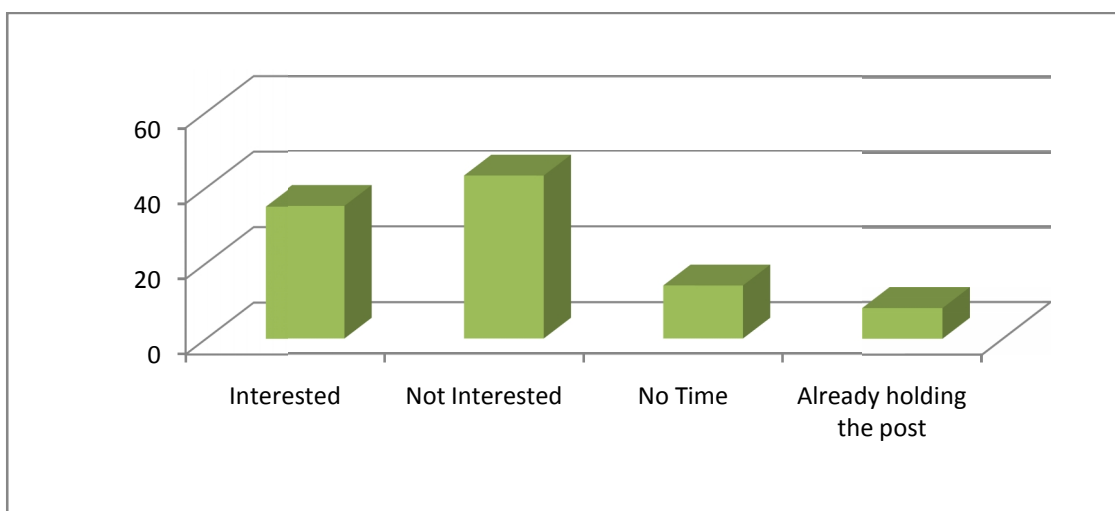


Figure 12: Holding a post of political influence in locality

At the local level the interest of women had increased also number of non interested women continues to be high which was because of the common ‘pre conceive notion is a politics is a dirty game’ which was also because of the lack of awareness among women. So 43% women were not interested and 35% said to have interest, 14% had no time and 8% were already holding the post.

IV.4.8.1. Types of Post Hold

What kind of post a person holds is a determining factor to examine an individual as well as the society in which one lives. In some of the society due to the emphasis on the representation of women some of the posts are filled for name shake. Usually the

secondary post such as the post of vice president, executive member in which there is not much responsibility and powers are given to women.

Table: 12.1

Types of Post Hold

Name of Post	No. of Respondents	Percentage
President	2	14%
Vice- President	1	7%
General Secretary	1	7%
Treasurer	2	14%
Executive Member	8	58%
Total	14	100%

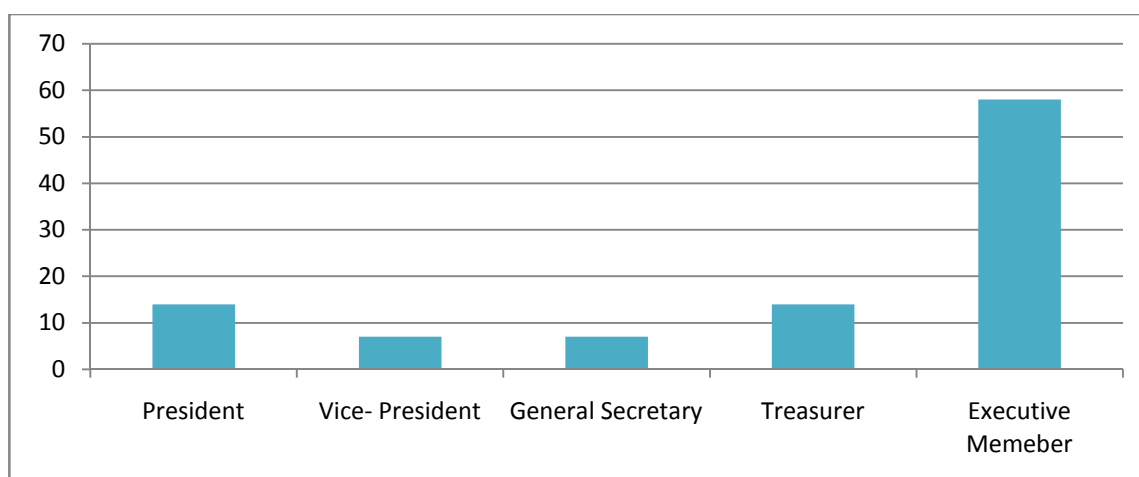


Figure 12.1: Types of Post Hold

In the table 12.1 it was observed that 58% of the women were holding executive post which was the highest of all, 14% each were holding the post of president and treasurer and 7% each were holding the post of vice president and general secretary.

IV.4.9. Impact of holding the post of political influence

Impact of holding the post of political influence is an important factor to determine what difference women have faced after coming out of the socially assigned gender roles.

Table: 13

Impact of holding the post of political influence

Impact	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Difference Felt	8	57%
No Difference Felt	4	29%
Never Thought	1	7%
Newly Formed	1	7%
Total	14	100%

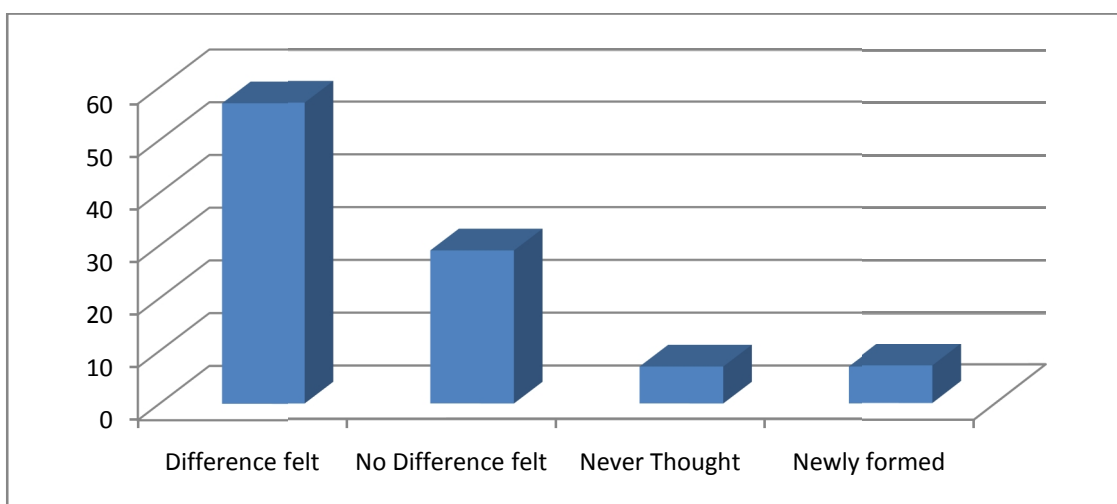


Figure 13: Impact of holding the post of political influence

57% women felt a positive difference which includes getting respected and heard in locality as well as in their homes where as 29% felt no difference as it was same as before it might be because most of the women who felt difference were holding the post of president, general secretary where as women who didn't felt any difference were common executive members. 7% never thought about it and another 7% had not started working.

IV.5. Political party leaders

Table: 14

Political Party Leaders

Category		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Sex	Female	10	71%
	Male	4	29%
	Others	0	0
	Total	14	100%
Age	45-50	1	7%
	51-55	4	29%
	56-60	3	21%
	61-65	5	36%
	Above 66	1	7%
	Total	14	100%
Education	Never been to school	1	7%
	Primary	0	0
	High School	4	29%
	Higher Secondary	5	36%
	Graduate and above	4	29%
	Total	14	100%
Occupation	Unemployed	6	43%
	Government Job	5	36%
	Private Job	0	0
	Self Employed	3	21%
	Total	14	100%
Marital Status	Unmarried	0	0
	Married	14	100%
	Others	0	0
	Total	14	100%

IV.5.1. Opinions regarding participation of women in DGHC and GTA

All the respondents agreed on the point that Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was the first of its kind that opened space for women in the decision making process. But differ regarding the intensity of impact some opined that DGHC opened the door but could not put women in the fore front where as some considered that due to the existence of strong patriarchy women could not come forward.

It was the existence of strong patriarchy that all the respondents opined that women were handpicked by the male members of the party to be specific the chairman of the party. The administrative units were the fruits of the Gorkhaland Movement so the women were given party tickets on the basis of their contribution and leadership in the movement. However during the time of first DGHC election in 1989 no woman was given party ticket from Kalimpong block. The name of the president of women's branch in Kalimpong was not taken into consideration whereas president all other women's branch was given the party ticket. Some respondents said she was not in good health to take up councillorship whereas some opined her name was not send by the Kalimpong branch committee members. The same legacy continued during the GTA as well.

Most of the women respondents opined women in the in DGHC and GTA were very vocal to voice their opinion, one of the respondent who was councillor even said the 'since women by nature do not shy away to ask for thing or do not hesitate to speak in between the conversation I often used to make chairman busy and discuss many problems. But on the other hand male respondents refuse the active participation of women and of the view that women were very quiet during the meetings and did not spoke much of their views

IV.5.2. Reason behind the less participation of women in DGHC and GTA

All the respondents agreed that DGHC and GTA were dominated by strong leadership namely Subash Gishing and Bimal Gurung who had absolute power to choose councillors or sabhasads, so the numbers of women were decided by them, although central committee of both the party had the power to suggest the chairman but to consider their opinion was not mandatory to the chairman. So when asked did nobody

tried to suggest or ask for more number of women in the administrative unit. A respondent replied referring to Gishing “bhaag jasto manchea lai ko le aat garne” (rough translation) ‘who would dare talk to the tiger like man’.

While some respondents agreed that the submissive nature of women and failure to put forward their demands that lead to the less number of women in administrative unit while some took pride in this submissive nature and said we women by nature are learned to give but never ask in return which was nothing but ‘patriarchal hangover’.

Some female respondents point out that women have more personal responsibilities take care of than men like home, family, children etc which is not the case for men. According to respondent economic independence and strong family support is also very important for women to be part of politics which is still lacking among women of hills

IV.5.3. Difference felt with the participation of women and by women themselves

All the women respondent agreed to have a positive difference in their lives after being elevated to a higher political status in their locality. None of the respondents reported to face any kind of discrimination by the male colleagues as well. But the male respondents felt no difference with the participation of women within the organisation due to their passive nature. Since for women had always been within the four walls of family, children and their responsibilities so coming to the public domain and to hold a post of political influence is in itself a positive difference for women which was not realise by the male members are they were comparatively larger in terms of numbers.

IV.5.4. Pro Women policies and resolutions made or passed by DGHC and GTA

All the respondents stated that no policy or resolution was made or passed by DGHC and GTA exclusively for women. However under DGHC and GTA women were given trainings for knitting and stitching (cutting classes) under handloom department.

IV.16. Initiatives by DGHC and GTA

DGHC was formed in 1989 after which state handloom industry was transferred to it. In the two handloom centres in Pokhrebong and Kurseong around 40- 50 women were trained and worked as weavers in making towel, sweaters and other woollen cloths. One of the councillors Gopimaya Gurung also kept first lady driver. In the irrigation department of DGHC women took up contracts for construction of their localities' drainage, paths, walls etc. One such lady was Surekha from Mirik.

GTA was formed in 2012. The handloom industry was transferred to GTA, under GTA the industry continued to have two centres in Kurseong and Pokhrebong with 40-50 weavers each with similar items to weave but under GTA women are taken to various other parts of countries in social gatherings like 'mela' to sell their items and get more market. The handloom industry also held training for common women in Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Mirik and Pokhrebong. Twenty each women were selected from five places on the basis of interview taken by Department Head Officer. The training was cutting and tailoring with the duration of 3 months during which women were taught to make petticoats, half-pants, shirts and pants. During the training women were paid Rs. 100 per day and at the end of the training they were given sewing machine. The handloom industry also held a training in which women were taught to recycle plastic bags. In the irrigation department number of women contractors increased during GTA. Since most of the women lack documents like license from Municipality they work in groups or with the male partner who holds the document. In a meeting held on 13.07.2013 of Executive Sabha of GTA a resolution was passed to revive the handloom industry of Kurseong. A resolution was also passed to establish a nursing college for women..

Chapter V

Conclusion

Empowerment is a process in which a dependent individual is transformed into a confident individual has full command of their lives to themselves. Empowerment enables the decision making power of an individual through which they can bring desired change in their lives. Empowerment covers political, social and economic dimensions out of which political empowerment facilitates the involvement of an individual in the decision making process. The modern state operated by the government controls the lives of individuals so it becomes important for individuals to be part of government to have control to their lives and to make desired change. Women are the most deprived section in the society and their upliftment is not only their necessity but the need of the society as a whole. Thus one of the possible ways to uplift women is by empowering them and political empowerment serves the best.

The study intended to study the empowerment of women and political participation of women in the semi autonomous bodies DGHC and GTA and to look into the contributions of DGHC and GTA in empowering women.

In the present study initiative was made to study women empowerment and political participation through semi autonomous bodies DGHC and GTA. The various definitions of empowerment put emphasis on the freedom of making choice but for Alsop and Heinsohn (2015) freedom to make effective choice is dependent on two factors *agency* i.e. the capacity to make choice and *opportunity structure* is the circumstances in which one have to make choice. Since both the semi autonomous bodies were born out of the movement for the demand for separate state within Indian union called Gorkhaland, thus the impact of the movements in these semi-autonomous bodies was tremendous. Before the formation of DGHC the movement that took place was of violent nature under the political party GNLF however it was the first mass movement of its kinds in the hills the brought women to the streets shouting for demand. Since men were in hide due to the raids of CRPF it was women taking up rallies and performing *dharna* and *ghereos* under their women's organisation GNWO (Gorkha National Women's Organisation). Under the another organisation within the party name Gorkha National Welfare Organisation women took up social activities

like distributing rations, taking care of migrants, injured and myator of the movement. However after the movement when DGHC was formed less than 10% women got the seats to the council. Similarly before the formation of the GTA the Gorkhaland movement that took place was of non violent nature under the political party GJMM. GJMM had many organisations under it but the most active one was the Gorkha Janmukti Nari Morcha its women's wing. Nari morcha was one the strongest mobilising force during the movement is evident from the fact that many rallies and ghereo were souly conducted by nari morcha. And very similar to DGHC even in GTA number of women were very less as compared to male counterpart. In both the semi autonomous bodies seats were reserved for women and every time one woman was nominated but still the aggregate number were not satisfactory in these administrative bodies. Due to strong leadership party tickets to fight elections were distributed by the party leaders women were hardly considered eligible to fight elections. But once elected as the councillors or sabhasaad women were seen taking fore front in all the activities they were given responsibility to. According to Pettit (2012) vital changes in power relations of *agency* and *structure* is necessary for empowerment, he defines *agency* as the ability of individuals and groups to think and act in their own interests, and structure as the formal and informal institutions, rules, norms and beliefs that enable and constrain thinking and action. But one of the major drawbacks of women and their organisation was is they never spoke up for themselves. In a conversation with the President of GNWO she stated that “appa (Subash Gishing, the leader of GNLF) had opened GNWO for us (i.e. women)” similar were the lines of women of Nari morcha as well which tells that women were not ready to take initiatives of their own but ready to take up responsibilities if assigned to them. Thus there was major change in power relation. It was also observed that most of the women lack political consciousness and for them rallies and public meetings were limited to the demand for Gorkhaland. Maximum number of the women went to public meeting and rallies out of the compulsion that one person from each house have to go for rallies if not have to face social boycott.

In oder to analyse the empowerment brought by the two autonomous units DGHC and GTA, the study has stratified empowerment into three levels. The first is at the institutional level i.e. direct involvement of women in DGHC and GTA, second is at the community level and third is at the family level.

During the study it was observed that the handful of women elected and nominated to the DGHC and GTA were the ones having political backing for example Hema Lama had her brother Navin Tamang in GNLF very close to the leader Subash Gishing, Asha Gurung was the wife of the head of GJMM Bimal Gurung. Thus when survey was conducted maximum of women seemed not interested saying “common people like us having no political backing shall never get chance”. Since both DGHC and GTA are highly dominated by the ruling party women in order to get seat had to persuade the male members of the party. However women themselves lack confidence due to absence of higher education higher education.

But in the local level women seemed confident and ready to take up responsibility. This happened because during the movement women had to go continuously for rallies and were given responsibility of distributing rations, picketing etc so most of them were involved in planning and executing the task which infused some sort of self confidence in them which was later boost their courage to take up responsibility.

At the family level women seem to feel more confident in placing their opinion. During the movement women on everyday basis had to go out of their houses gaining knowledge of day today happenings so back at home when discussing such things gave women a sense of self confidence thus when asked many women replied they vote with their own conscience.

As far as efforts of DGHC and GTA is concerned in empowering the women both the bodies did not directly made any such initiative. In fact following the gendered social order DGHC and GTA focused on training women on cutting and tailoring as a reward to them in their contribution in the movement. However after the movement women themselves had gained some sort of confidence so when these autonomous bodies were formed they learned to put themselves forward. For example after the formation of DGHC women themselves inquired and took up contracts from the irrigation department in groups, with male partners and as individuals which was for the first time in history of women of hills and the numbers further increased during the time of GTA as because of the rise in the education of women and the much more activeness of the women wing of the party i.e. Nari morcha.

Thus it must be understood that empowerment should not be treated as a gift of men to the women in the society, in fact it should be treated as a right which women themselves have to take in which support of men remains vital. Empowerment is not possible when given by men as provisions but it is possible only when women come forward and make provisions for them. Empowerment has various dimensions like social, economic and political but out of all these it is only political empowerment which enables women to gain confidence in all the levels of society which is followed by social and economic empowerment. But for political empowerment one of the key element is political participation, it is the direct and indirect political participation of women which enable them to have a choice to make decision which is directed towards having a desired change i.e. political empowerment. Thus political participation is one of the most viable ways to bring women empowerment.

V.2. Major Findings

- Political participation is an important factor to bring empowerment, as for empowerment consciousness/awareness is vital and the most viable way to bring awareness is through political participation.
- In the grass root level participation of women in DGHC and GTA were maximum but as the level increases the number has significantly gone low.
- In both DGHC and GTA the reserved seats for women were filled but that reservation could not make any changes in the status of women.
- The presence of women in GTA was higher than that of DGHC but was not enough to represent the women folk as a whole. In both the bodies women had some political backing or from elite background.
- The number of women in DGHC and GTA were comparatively lower than male counterpart but they were active in handling their assigned departments.
- The numbers of women in the semi-autonomous bodies were controlled by the male members of the political party specially the party president who had the supreme power in distributing party tickets.
- Both DGHC and GTA did not make any resolutions or programmes exclusively for political empowerment of women.
- The women member of the DGHC and GTA never took up women issues in their meetings.

- More than the semi autonomous bodies the Gorkhaland movement was successful in bringing political participation and empowerment among women.

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APPENDIX I

Election Results for General Council of DGHC (1988)

Candidate Elected	Party Affiliation	Name of Constituency	Vote Polled
Shiv Kumar Lama	GNLF	Rimbick Lodhama	8406
K.B.Watter	CPI(M)	Pulbazar Bijanbari	6807
Padam Lama	CPI(M)	Chingtong Rishihaat	7836
Rudra K Pradhan	GNLF	Singamari Tukvar Valley	7195
NetraKumar Thakuria	GNLF	Lebong Valley	6420
Ram Prasad Waiba	GNLF	Darjeeling Sadar	9620
Lal Bahadur Gurung	GNLF	Ghoom Jorebungalow	10545
KB Rai	GNLF	Lopchu Peshek	9645
Keshab Ch. Tamang	GNLF	Takdah Teesta Valley	NA
Binod Lama	GNLF	Mongpu Latpanchar	7540
Cheten Sherpa	GNLF	Sukhia Maneybhanjyang	NA
Dipak Gurung	GNLF	Pokrebung	NA
L.B.Rai	GNLF	Mirik Valley	5446
Subhash Ghisingh	GNLF	Panighata (Soureni Valley)	NA
N.B. Pradhan	GNLF	Rangbull Dhotre Rangmuk	6062
Nar Bahadur Khawas	GNLF	Sonada Tung	4050
Nimcheki Pradhan	GNLF	Kurseong Town	6021
Hema Delma	GNLF	Pankhabari Gidapahar	18820
Indra Narayan Pradhan	GNLF	Tindharia Sukna	10025
Benjamin Bhutia	GNLF	Kalimpong Khasmahal	NA
Dawa Sherpa	GNLF	Kalimpong Town (Dr.Grahams NA Homes)	NA
Bijoj Kumar Rai	GNLF	Bong Dungra	9082
Tshering Sherpa	GNLF	Gidabling Sinji	NA
Dawa Pakhrin	GNLF	Lava Pedong	NA
Chandra Kumar Pradhan	GNLF	Algarah	8081
Khus Narayan Subba	GNLF	Gorubathan	9257
Bhakta Kumar Jairu	GNLF	TodayTangta Jaldhaka	6085

Source: Election Department: Office of District Magistrate, Darjeeling.

APPENDIX II

Election Results for General Council of DGHC (1994)

Candidate Elected	Party Affiliation	Name of Constituency	Vote Polled
Shiv Kumar Rai	GNLF	Rimbick Lodhama	7810
Prakash Thung	GNLF	Pulbazar Bijanbari	6973
Padam Lama	CPI(M)	Chingtong Rishihaat	7136
R.K Pradhan	GNLF	Singamari Tukvar Valley	7195
Netra K.Thakuria	GNLF	Lebong Valley	4281
N.K.Kumai	GNLF	Darjeeling Sadar I	8445
Karna B. Gurung	GNLF	Darjeeling Sadar II	6521
Gopimaya Gurung	GNLF	Ghoom Jorebungalow	7488
R.B.Rai	GNLF	Lopchu Peshok	7835
Keshab Lama	GNLF	Takdah Teesta Valley	NA
KB Gurung	GNLF	Mongpu Latpancher	6967
Cheten Sherpa	GNLF	Sukhia Maneybhanjyang	NA
Dipak K.Gurung	GNLF	Pokrobong Nagri	9102
R.P.Waiba	GNLF	Mlirik Valley	2445
Subhas Ghisingh	GNLF	Soureni Valley	NA
N.B. Pradhan	GNLF	Rangbull Dhotre Rangmuk	8042
NB Khawas	GNLF	Sonada Tung	8644
Pasang Bhutia	Independent (supported by GNLF)	Kurseong Town	678
Hema Lama	GNLF	Onkhabari Gedhapahar	7773
Indra N. Pradhan	GNLF	Tindharia Sukna	8878
C.K. Pradhan	GNLF	Kalimpong Khasmahal	NA
Tara Sundas	GNLF	Bong Dungra	7068
Tshering Sherpa	GNLF	Gidabling Sinji	NA
Dawa Pakhrin	GNLF	Lava Pedong	NA
Reshan Rai	GNLF	Algarah	8082
Khus Narayan Subba	GNLF	Gorubathan	8949
Bhakta Kumar Jairu	Independent Today (supported by GNLF)	Tangta Jaladhaka	5095

Source: Election Department: Office of District Magistrate, Darjeeling.

APPENDIX III

Election Results for General Council of DGHC (1999)

Candidates Elected	Party Affiliation	Name of Constituency	Votes Got	Total electors
S.K.Lama	GNLF	Rimbock - Lodhama	4764	14,779
Prakash Theeng	GNLF	Pulbazar Bijanbari	5638	14,145
Aitaraj Dewan	GNLF	Chongtong Rishihaat	5096	15,383
R. K Pradhan	GNLF	Singamari Tukvar Valley	2897	18,562
Amar. 8 Thapa	GNLF	Darjeeling Sadar I	4480	17,340
Karna.B Gorkha	GNLF	Darjeeling Sadar II	5418	18,459
Gopi Maya Gurung	GNLF	Ghoom Jorebungalow	5954	19,545
Bhanu Lama	Independent Candidate	Lopchu Peshok		
I.N.Norbu Tamang	GNLF	Tukdah Teesta Valley	6924	19,703
Kul Bahadur Gurung	GNLF	Mungpoo Latpancher	7625	19,334
N.K.Kumai	GNLF	Sukhia Maneybhanjyang	4685	17,854
Deepak Gurung	GNLF	Pokrebung Nagri	7582	17,360
Basant Kumar Rai	GNLF	Mirik Valley	4298	17,441
Subhash Ghisingh	GNLF	Soureni Panghatta	9062	17,412
N.B.Pradhan	GNLF	Rangbull Dhoteria Rangmuk	6750	16,231
N.B. Khawas		Sonada Tung	8755	18,948
Nimcheki Pradhan	GNLF	Kurseong Town	5467	19,808
Rajen Dewan	United Front	Pankhabari Giddapahar	5719	17,802
I.N. Pradhan	GNLF	Tindharia Sukna	7636	16,252
C.K.Pradhan	GNLF	Kalimpong Khasmahal	7525	17,829
Dawa Sherpa	GNLF	Kalimpong Town Dr. Graham's Homes	5897	17,829
Hangu Limbu	GNLF	Bong Dunga	5565	20,127
Tshering Sherpa	GNLF	GidablingSinji	8059	18,257
Dawa Pakhrin	GNLF	Lava Pedong	8139	17,290
Roshan Rai	GNLF	Algarah	7333	16,159

K.N.Subba	GNLF	Gorubathan	7276	16,180
Shakarmani Rai	Independent	Today- Jaldhaka	Tangta 5178	16,404

Source: Election Department: Office of District Magistrate, Darjeeling

APPENDIX IV

Result of General Election for Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (2012)

Winning	Name of Constituency	Affiliation Party	Opposition	Vote polled
Prakash Gurung	Rimbick Lodhoma	GJMM	Unopposed	
Satish Sharma	Relling-Kaijalia	GJMM	Unopposed	
Kajiman Lohdagun	Pul Bijanbari-Goke	GJMM	Unopposed	
Binoy Tamang	Bloomfield-Rishihat	GJMM	Unopposed	
Bimal Gurung	5-Tukver	GJMM		
Deo Prakash Pradhan	Lebong Badamtam	GJMM		
Bhupendra Pradhan	Phoobsering-Pandam	GJMM		
Asha Gurung	Darjeeling I	GJMM		
Urmila Rumba	Darjeeling II	GJMM		
Shanti Thapa	Darjeeling III	GJMM		
Taranga Pandit	Darjeeling IV	GJMM	Gopal Sing Chettri (AITC)	5594
Pemba Tshering Bhutia	Ghoom Jorebunglow	GJMM	Milan Dukpa (AITC)	8755
Tilak Chand Roka	Chongtong Marybong Tamsang	GJMM	Manjit Subba (AITC)	8589
Uday Dewan	Sukhia ManeyBhanjyang	GJMM		
Dipen Malay	Pokhriabong Chamung	GJMM	Dhan Bahadur Mukhia (AITC)	8336
Jyoti Kumar Rai	Nagari Dhajia	GJMM		
Rabindra Lama	Rungbull Dhotria	GJMM		
Mahendra Pradhan	Sonada Pacheyang	GJMM		
Sanjay Rai	Takdah Glenburn	GJMM		
Ramesh Lama	Takling Peshok	GJMM		
Narbu Lama	Takdah Teesta Valley	GJMM		
Ratan Kumar Thapa	Mungpoo Labdah	GJMM		
Phoebe Rai	Seeyok Gopaldhara Okaity	GJMM	Anil Chettri (AITC)	7782
Arun Tamang	Mirik Thurbo	GJMM	Brihas Subba	6203

	Duptin		(AITC)	
Arun Singchi	Soureni	GJMM	Rajesh Chettri (AITC)	7286
Champa Bivar	Sukna Panighatta	GJMM	Rajen Mukhia (AITC)	8310
Anus Kumar Thapa	Tung St. Mary's	GJMM		
Yogendra Rai	Kurseong Town Deorali I I	GJMM		
Anit Kumar Thapa	Kurseong Giddapahar	GJMM		
Pranoy Thapa	Pankhabari Ambootia Longview	GJMM		
Prabha Chettri	Mahanadi Tindharia	GJMM		
Roshan Giri	Sittong Latpanchar	GJMM		
Kajem Bhutia	Chibo Tashiding	GJMM	Mahendra Gajmir (AITC)	6655
Neema Tamang	Homes Bhalukhop	GJMM		
Sunil Chandra Pradhan	Bong Durpin	GJMM		
Ramesh Allay	Dungra Pudung	GJMM		
Kalpana Tamang	Algarah Dalapchand	GJMM	Sukbahadur Subba (AITC)	7457
Chandra Prasad Sharma	Lava Lingsay	GJMM	Chandra Prakash Sharma (AITC)	5600
Gopal Ruchal	Rongpo Munsong	GJMM		
Dawa Lepcha	Pedong	GJMM	Chewang Lendup Bhutia (AITC)	7413
Kalyan Kumar Dewan	Gitdabling Nimbong	GJMM	Sanchabir Subba IND)	677
Ram Bahadur Bhujel	Relli Samthar	GJMM	Michael Lingdamo (AITC)	9020
Chandra Kumar Tamamg	Gorubathan	GJMM	Prem Bahadur Adhikari (AITC)	13185
Samuel Gurung	Samsing Kumai	GJMM	Urgen Sherpa (AITC)	5903

Lopsang Yolmo	Rongo Jaldhaka	Today	GJMM	Pema Dorjaymoktan (AIC)	8360
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APPENDIX V
Survey Schedule

Personal Information of Respondent

1. Name:
2. Place:
3. Age:
4. Sex: (a) Male (b) Female (c) Others
5. Education: (a) Never been to school (b) primary (c) High school (d) Higher Secondary (e) Graduate and Above.
6. Occupation:
7. Marital Status: (a) Married (b) Unmarried (c) Widow (d) Divorced (e) Separated

Part I

Political Participation

1. Were you interested in going to public meetings and rallies?

DGHC: a. very interested b. interested c. not interested

GTA: a. very interested b. interested c. not interested
2. Do you used to go in rallies and public meetings?

DGHC: Yes: a. Out of compulsion b. For time pass c. To express opinion

No: a. not interested b. Not enough time c. no use

GTA: Yes: a. Out of compulsion b. For time pass c. To express opinion

No: a. not interested b. Not enough time c. no use
3. What are the factors you look into while voting in elections?
 - Region
 - Caste
 - Political Party

- Religion
 - leadership
 - Qualities of candidate
4. What are the factors you look into while voting in DGHC and GTA elections?

DGHC:

GTA:

5. While voting whose opinion do you keep in mind?

- Parents
- Family
- Husband
- Party
- Leaders
- Friends
- Own conscience

6. While voting in DGHC and GTA whose opinion do you keep in mind?

DGHC:

GTA:

7. Have you ever thought of standing for the GTA elections?

- a. Interested
- b. Not Interested
- c. No Time
- d. Age bar

8. Do you hold any post of political influence?

9. If yes what difference have you experienced in your family, locality and organisation?

10. Have you availed any benefits from DGHC and GTA?

DGHC:

GTA:

Part IV: Political Party leaders

1. What is your opinion regarding participation of women in DGHC and GTA?
2. What do you think is the reason behind less participation of women in the DGHC and GTA executive bodies?
3. What difference have you felt with the participation of women in executive body?
4. What are the policies or resolutions made or passed by DGHC and GTA for women?