

THE POLITICAL WOMAN IN INDIA : AN ASSESSMENT
OF HER STATUS AND ROLE

by

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PREFACE

Whatever problems one may wish to lay at the door of the twentieth century, the substantial emancipation of women that has taken place in these seventy-odd years is surely an example of significant human progress. Never in the history of civilization (unless prehistoric Greece was in fact matriarchal as has sometimes been argued) have women come so near to the real freedom that equality with men implies. This development is as revolutionary as anything this age has seen, and it is already extending very rapidly from the United States and Great Britain to a large part of the European countries and to many non-European countries such as India. By the end of the century it is likely that full equality between men and women will be the normal state of affairs over the whole world.

The right to vote is only a small part of this new freedom. In the past, women necessarily defined themselves by the relationships they established with men. There was surely some choice available to women in previous periods. They could domineering or submissive, efficient or burdensome. But their choices were very limited, and they were always made in terms of the masculine images in their lines.

In the eighteenth and more especially in the nineteenth centuries, there were enlightened people, men as well as women, who recognized that the greatly inferior position of women was unjust, and moreover, meant that society was being virtually deprived of the talents of half its members. Such views, however, represented only a small minority, and the prevailing opinion was that any form of participation in public life was inappropriate for a woman.

Despite considerable opposition, women began to organize themselves in order to fight against the disabilities imposed on them. Some of the first organizations to be established were for social welfare purposes, and these operated with particular success. About the middle

of the nineteenth century organisations sprang up in many countries, aimed at securing for women the right to vote, for their leaders believed that to achieve political rights would constitute a first step towards recognition of rights in other areas.

Progress was extremely slow, despite the efforts of exceptional women who worked indefatigably as pioneers, aided sometimes by men filled with a sense of justice and a belief in equality. It was only later, in the twentieth century, that the movement for political emancipation of women really gained momentum. After many setbacks and difficulties in the early stages, it has now spread throughout the world.

In 1900, women had the right to vote in all elections in only one country. By the end of the First World War, in 1918, twelve more countries had been added. When the Second World War came to an end and the United Nations came into being in 1945, the figure had risen to approximately 40 countries. Today, women may vote in all elections and are eligible for election on an equal basis with men in well over a hundred countries. The last few years have seen the emergence of many new nations, and it should be noted that the over-whelming majority of these have embodied in their constitutions or other legislation provisions according political rights to men and women on equal terms.

The United Nations is not the first international or inter-governmental body to deal with questions concerning the status of women, although it has played an important role, especially through its Commission on the status of women, which was established in 1946.

Much earlier than this, however, and long before the outbreak of the Second World War, many non-governmental organisations which had long existed as national associations joined forces and became established on an international basis. New organizations were also formed.

The first inter-governmental body to take action against discrimination on grounds of sex was the regional organization of American States. In 1923, at the Fifth International Conference of these States, it was agreed that future conferences should include the study of the means of abolishing constitutional and legal incapacities of women. In 1928, the Sixth International Conference established an Inter-American Commission of women to work for the promotion of women's rights. In 1948, as a result of this Commission's work, the Organization in American States, at its ninth Conference held in Bogota, Colombia, adopted the first international convention on political rights of women. Under the convention, which is entitled the "Convention on the granting of Political Rights to Women", State parties agreed that the "right to vote and to be elected to national office shall not be denied or abridged by reason of sex".

The Assembly of the League of Nations, in 1935, as a result of the initiative taken by the American Republics and of pressure from women's organizations; decided to consider the question of the status of women in its political and civil aspects. It set up an expert committee in 1937 to study the legal status of women, but the outbreak of the war in 1939 put an end to the activities of this group.

The Charter of the United Nations, adopted in San Francisco in June 1945, is the first international instrument to mention equal rights of men and women in specific terms. In the preamble, the charter proclaims the determination of the peoples of the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women" and "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all people". One of the purposes of the United Nations, as set out in Article 1, is "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an

economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". Under Articles 55 and 56, Member States pledge themselves to take joint and separate action, in cooperation with the United Nations to achieve such aims.

The faith thus expressed in the charter was reaffirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December, 1948, and proclaiming a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations". The Declaration States, in Article 2, that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". The rights and freedoms to which every man and every woman is entitled include both civil and political rights, and economic social and cultural rights.

Despite the gains woman have made in political rights, much remains to be done before the goals set by the charter and the universal Declaration of Human Rights are a reality. There are still some countries where women have no right to vote and are not eligible for election. There are others where restrictions on these rights are imposed on women but not on men. In the vast majority of countries, even where they now have these rights under the law, women do not participate fully in public life. To increase their participation, whether at the local, national or international level, is not only for the benefit of women themselves but also for the greater benefit of society as a whole.

Conditions and needs vary ~~from~~ greatly from country to country and the problems to be faced and obstacles to be overcome are widely

divergent. A number of women's international non-governmental organizations are concerned with the improvement of the status of women or with particular aspects of that subject. Many of these organizations have closely followed the work of the Commission on the status of women since its establishment, and have done much to assist it in promoting its aims. This commission has always given high priority to political rights for women since it has always believed that the responsible exercise of these rights is fundamental to the improvement of the status of women. As early as 1946, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending that "all Member States which have not already done so, adopt measures necessary to fulfill the purposes and aims of the United Nations charter by granting to women the same political rights as to men". Since that time, the commission has reviewed each year and continues to review, the political status of women under national laws and considers what progress has been made towards equality.

In these early years the commission also submitted comments and made suggestions, on matters of particular interest to women to the Commission on Human Rights, which was then being drafted. It may be noted that political rights are set forth in Article 21 of that instrument:

- "(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives".
- "(2) Everyone has the right of equal success to public service in his country".
- "(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

It was in 1949 that the Commission on the status of women began to study the possibility of drawing up an international convention as a further means of promoting equal political rights for men and women. The convention, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 20th December 1952, provides that women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men; that they shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies on equal terms with men; and that they shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions on equal terms with men. The convention has been in force for a number of years, and forty-three states have become parties to it.

Since 1959 the States Parties to the Convention have been invited periodically, to submit information on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the convention, and the commission has considered these reports periodically. In July, 1963, the Economic and Social Council, acting on a recommendation of the Commission, adopted a resolution inviting all States Members of the United Nations, whether or not they are Parties to the Convention to submit reports every two years for the consideration of the commission on what they have done to give effect to the principles stated in the convention. These reports are to contain information on the number of women who have been elected to the national Parliament, or appointed to high governmental, judicial or diplomatic posts, such as minister, head of department, ambassador, or member of delegation to sessions of the United Nations General Assembly or of corresponding organs of the specialized agencies.

Studies on the access of women to public services and functions, prepared some years ago by the United Nations Secretariat on the basis of information supplied by Governments, have also been examined in the Commission. The result was that in 1960, the Economic and Social

Council, on the recommendation of the Commission, adopted a resolution in which it recommended that Governments take the necessary steps to remove legal and other obstacles impeding the access of women to public services and functions.

CHAPTER - I

APPROACH TO THE STUDY

(1) Conceptual Clarification :

Before going into the particular aspect of which my dissertation deals with, it is essential to offer an operational definition of the terms "status" and "role" and consider also other allied and inter linked concepts. "Status" refers to a position in a social system or sub-system which is distinguishable from, and at the same time related to, other positions through its designated rights and obligations. In the purely sociological sense, status does not imply rank or hierarchy but denotes only position vis-a-vis others in terms of rights and obligations. But as each status position in a particular structure can be viewed in terms of superiority and inferiority, (that is, in terms of power, privileges, advantages, and disadvantages) the notion of status involves comparison and grading. In assessing status it is essential to adopt a broader perspective, and to comprehend that status denotes relative position of persons, groups, social strata and an order of indented social categories, and men and women acquire their identities through these.

Each status position is expressed in terms of a role - "Role" denotes a set of expectations and obligations associated with particular status positions within a social situation¹. The expectations and obligations entailed by a role are in terms of activities and qualities. Each individual occupies a number of distinct but related statuses within a society and therefore he/she performs a variety of roles. Further, around each particular status position centres a role-set.² A woman (or man), occupies many status positions at a given point of time and plays a number of roles, such as those in the kinship system,

family system and the wider social system. Her status in society is not determined by any one particular status/ position held by her but by her composite status which results from the keeping of various statuses.

There are a number of principles of status differentiation which operate simultaneously - a person's place in the ritual hierarchy, economic hierarchy, education, political participation and soon. Thus, for example, a woman who is a domestic servant may have a certain degree of autonomy in her own home, but she certainly has a low status in the wider social setting. Similarly, a housewife in a very high income group home may be enjoying a high status in the wider setting, but she may be an inferior partner in her own house. In assessing the status and role of women, we have to take into account various institutional settings.

As pointed out earlier, status is realized through roles. Thus, by analysing the roles played by women and the manner of their performance, we can assess the status of women in any group category or sub-system. But, in relation to this, we must also study the structure of rights and opportunities provided to them by the state and by social and cultural institutions. These do not necessarily reinforce one another.

(2) The Status of Women in India :

An examination of the various studies made of the status of women in the Indian context have shown that general concepts like equality, role differentiation, legal, social and political rights, dependency or independence are not applicable to all sections of women. Traditional India had regarded woman only as a member of the family or a group - as daughters, wives and mothers and not as an individual with an identity or right of her own. The radicalism of the

constitution and its deliberate departure from the inherited social system lay in its implicit assumption that every adult woman, whatever her social position or accomplishments, will function as a citizen and as an individual partner in the task of nation building. The constitution implies that motherhood, though an important function, can no longer be regarded as the only significant role of a woman. A gap between traditional social attitudes and institutions, and the new roles that women are expected to play in the political, social and economic spheres, creates problems and imposes constraints on woman's ability to perform such roles. It is important to study the nature of these constraints. These constraints, imposed by social attitudes and norms, possession or lack of necessary equipment, e.g. education, political awareness, etc. vary from one category of women to another.

In almost all societies, the question of the status of women has emerged as a fundamental crisis in human development. One point that strikes a sociologist at the very first instance is that in India, sex inequality cannot really be differentiated from the variety of social, economic and cultural inequalities. The inequalities inherent in our traditional social structure based on caste, community and class have a very decisive influence on the status of women in different spheres. Socially accepted roles and expected roles of women, norms governing their behaviour and of others towards them vary among different groups and regions. They are closely affected by the stage and methods of development and the position held by the group in the social hierarchy.

Then again, there are those processes like modernisation democratisation, development, urbanisation, industrialisation, etc.

which have all affected the status of women in differing degrees. Again, not all sections of women are affected by these processes in the same way. However, as Gandhi had once said, a change in the status of women is a good indication of the pattern and direction of social change. If the direction of change indicates that the roles played by women is in tune with constitutional directives, then the direction of change is a healthy one. But if the direction of change results in an accentuation of inequalities, to the disadvantage of women, then we are moving away from the spirit of the constitution. It is, therefore, imperative that we study the direction of these changes in order to assess the nature of their impact on the different sections of women.

Undoubtedly, the issue of social change in India is a complex one. Given the highly complex and heterogenous social situation in the country, it is not surprising that change takes many directions some of which even conflict with one another. In my dissertation, I have considered only those components of this change which have affected the status roles, rights and opportunities of women in the political sphere.

The period after independence witnessed the enactment of a number of laws that sought to apply the principles underlying the constitutional guarantees to the sphere of social life. Certain reforms in personal laws such as those governing marriage and inheritance tried to remove the disabilities that contributed to the low status of women in our society. At the same time the policies and programmes for economic and social development initiated by the Government, attempted at positive action to improve and widen opportunities for woman to participate in the social processes in a more effective manner.

✓ Apart from the steps taken by the Government, there have been organised or individual efforts to bring about changes in social

attitudes and norms of behaviour that were generated by the community. Most of them had started either as part of the Freedom Movement, or dated back to the earlier movement for social reform that developed in the 19th century. Leaders of public opinion and community organisation had sought to propagate measures for upliftment of women's status. The ideology that emerged from these various attempts governmental and social have helped to shape the goals and left an impact on the minds of many sections of our society, and have played a significant role in changing the status of women.

It is not enough to set goals for the future for achievement of any kind, but there must be social acceptance of such goals. This includes attitudes of men and women as well as the availability of institutionalised infrastructures that support the attainment of such goals. To examine these variables, it is necessary to discuss the influence of traditional, cultural and religious norms, as well as the impact of modern values such as human rights, social justice equality and participation. This in turn reveals the positive and negative sets of social factors which affected the success or failure of the policies and efforts part in by the Government and the community as a whole. These factors would include various institutional opportunities as well as disabilities that affect women's enjoyment and exercise of various legal and constitutional rights and their performance of the multiple roles that the goals of our society call for.

All studies which have dealt with the nature and influence of the variables mentioned above, have depended on various types of quantitative indicators provided by vital statistics of birth and mortality rates, sex ratio, rates of participation in economic and political life, literacy and education, provided certain broad

measures and trends. None of them could however be studied meaningfully without a qualitative appraisal and understanding of their limitations in a field of this kind, for instance, the concept of national and State averages normally used for most quantitative analysis becomes meaningless in the context of tremendous social economic inequalities and variations in our society. Secondly, there is a wide gap between stated social objectives and achievements, between the legal framework and empirical realities, between symbolism and actuality. On the one hand these statistics indicated rapid improvement in education, literacy, political participation. These trends, coupled with the success and the position achieved by a minority of women, could mislead us to think that the status of women in India was very high. However, detailed investigations have shown that while opportunities have widened immensely at certain levels of society and enabled women to forge ahead in areas which had been completely closed to them in earlier years, for the other levels of society this was not the case. The uneven rates of development between regions, communities and sections of our population often make analysis by quantitative methods baffling. It is, therefore, necessary to use other methods and techniques to assess these different levels of social reality.

(3) The Focus of the Study :

The sources of data availed of may be classified under these categories:-

- 1) Census Reports.
- 2) National Female surveys and records available with various organisations including government departments.
- 3) Reports of committees and commissions appointed by the Govt. from time to time.
- 4) Any literature and any studies based on literature, using published and unpublished sources, and pertaining to this work.

5) Some first hand material obtained through informal talks women who take an active interest and participate in the various dimensions of political activity.

Probably at no time since the era of women fighting for universal suffrage have the media and literature been so filled with material on the subject of women as in the past few years. Although very few in number, included in this trend are to be found articles, new reports and profiles of 'political women'. Such writings, whatever else they suggest, at least provide some evidence in support of the proposition that for a woman to adopt a formal political role is still for her to adopt a news worthy role, one unusual by the standards of her sex. In such articles, words like unfeminine may be implied but left unwritten, or perhaps more significantly, the charge of unfemininity may be specifically denied. There is nothing particularly novel in this publicity, since it approximates to the degree of publicity accorded to women who are first to attain positions previously occupied by men.

The 'headline value' of those women in the political elite illustrates the paradox underlying this study. Despite women's majority in the electorate, their rate of political participation is very low. No where in the political elite is reflected women's equal strength in the population. Although women have been granted the parliamentary vote on equal terms with men, the norm for women still seems to be non participation in political leadership. The presence of an outstanding woman in the Cabinet from time to time seems to underline rather invalidate this proposition.

Inevitably, wider issues are involved in a consideration of the political role of women, so that the framework includes some treatment (necessarily attenuated) of the way in which women relate to

politics generally, and the factors which influence this relationship. Further than this, in order to describe and evaluate women's political role, it is necessary to look at women's status and roles as a whole of which her political role is, or may not be a part. If woman's political role is a departure, a deviance, in one sense of that word, then it is essential to consider the norms, from which she departs, the factors which influence or impinge on women's role, and the image and models which that role may engender. This is by no means simple. It is a common place today that norms and values are in a state of transition and flux. A traditional pattern of male dominance and female subservice is becoming less applicable. But the traditional norms of behaviour for men and women have not been replaced by guide lines equally well defined and explicit. Rules of change are not the same in all sub-cultures and sections - the main support for the women's liberation movement comes, it must be remembered from sections of the middle and professional classes. Adapting reaction to modification in values is both uneven and belated, generating new tensions and strains. As an illustration of this, pattern generally, we may cite the 'captive wife' Syndrome or the appearance of 'suburban neurosis'.³ It must be stressed that any ~~exp~~ exploitation of the feminine role is for the purposes of the present study contextual only, the background and not the whole canvas.

Now an important question is - how is 'the political' to be defined? How is political activity to be distinguished from other human activity? For the purposes of this study, it seems sufficient to adopt a relatively simplistic approach namely in Eastons terminology that people may be said to be participating in political life when their activity relates in some way to the making and execution of policy for society. This is consonant with Easton's

broad and seminal definition of politics as the process of the authoritative allocation of values in the society. Under this rubric, then may be subsummed all kinds and all levels of activity, both voting, candidatures, party activism, pressure group membership and extra institutional informal activity of any kind aimed at influencing the policy makers. Thus it may be maintained that enfranchisement does not mark the base line of women's political activity since it can be shown that women were active politically or parapolitically before that.⁴

This work does not go into great detail regarding the role of women in politics in pre-independent India. The reasons for this are not only those of time and space and the fact that much material on this is readily available. The main reason is that this study concentrates on women in the political field when they are competing on the same terms as men, i.e. investigation of the assimilation, into political life, of women unhampered by legal disabilities. It is necessary to take note of the fact the political situations in pre-independent India and post-independent India cannot be compared. Therefore, the indices used to measure the role of women in the post-independent India cannot be used for the same purpose in pre-independent India.

As mentioned earlier, this work has tried to analyse the attitudes of women to the whole complex of factors operative in defining women's political role and their view of what women can contribute vis-a-vis men, that is, whether they set limits to women's competence in terms of what Maurice Duverger has termed 'feminine ideology'⁵ (there are, of course, exceptions to this).

In seeking to explain under-representation of a particular group in a particular situation - disincentives, discrimination,

anything construed as disadvantageous are usually cited. There are, however, countervailing forces which may mediate women's entry into politics rather than militate against it; these factors will also be considered here. Thus the overall strategy is that women in politics are considered from several different angles. Various aspects of the subject, various perspectives will be discussed, some factual, some descriptive, some basically explanatory and exploratory approaches. Corresponding to the various approaches are various kinds of evidence used, the various types of quantitative and descriptive data. By using such a composite of approaches and evidence, it is not intended to give the impression that any one factor is a discrete entity which stands independently of the others; rather it should be clear that all such factors operate in a complex interaction. While drawing on insights, generalisations and formulations from the fields of sociology, political science and history this dissertation does not attempt anything that might be termed a theoretical orientation.

Basically, it is necessary that these data are set both in the framework of the general situation of women's status in society and in the framework which the field of political sociology is developing i.e. in terms of the way people relate to politics, voting behaviour, the processes of political socialisation. Then again, for a long term study where an attempt is made to prove women's place in the political elite, the ideal would be a study of that elite on a larger scale, and in depth, with in which elite men women might, or less probably might not, form a sub-group. But for a such short study as this, there are good reasons for concentrating on women only. (Women in the political elite, it may be argued,

'deviate' from the usual role of women in society. Within the elite they seem to play a part now approximating that of men. Moreover, in certain respects, there are ways in which a factor may operate differentially for men and women in the political elite. To take an obvious example, marital status and number of children, in the family may be tabulated for a sample of men and women MPs. For a women member, care of husband and a young family could be a strain, a limitation on her career. For her male colleagues, a wife and children might enhance the image he is trying to project and his wife might play a valuable supplementary role in the constituency. In respect to the insecurity of a political career, the advantages to each sex might will be reserved. Marriage for the women MP could be an advantage in cushioning the effects of the sudden termination of a said occupation. Family responsibilities for the male MP who loses his seat might be an additional hazard.

It has to be admitted too, that confusion and ambiguities persist in much of our thinking on women's role. Most striking is the confusion between equality of the sexes and identity of the sexes. The more the homogeneity of women is stressed, in such expressions as the status of women, the less it is likely to be clear that differences exist within each sex grouping as between them. The phrase, 'status of women', while a convenient shorthand expression, ignores, or at least blurs, significant divisions such as class. A similar ambiguity arises from ignoring the differences between demanding equal rights for women (identifiable as a group because they lack these rights) and imputing a common and identifiable point of view to women once these rights have been acquired. In

other words, if it can be shown that women relate to politics in ways distinct from those of men, the question immediately arises whether the differences vary according to the social and economic situation of women, or whether they may be construed as modes of reaction characteristic of the sex itself.

While the intra-sex distinctions of class have been considered, it must be made plain that the material presented on women's reported motivation, attitudes, etc. cannot be assumed to be applicable to women only and not to men, that is, relevant to women qua women. Only, as has been indicated, within the context of a wider study covering both sexes is there the possibility that such relevance might reasonably be validated. Such a conclusion cannot be drawn from this material, the limitation is inevitable.

In a study of this kind, focussed on the relatively minor political role of women compared with that of men, there is an important question of emphasis. To see the study in perspective it has to be borne in mind that the majority of men is not politically activist.⁶ The type of material used, and the relatively small numbers involved, do not lend themselves to sophisticated statistical analysis.

CHAPTER - II

WOMEN AND POLITICS IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD.

Women in ancient India occupied a dignified place. They participated in the outdoor life as circumstances and situation demanded and there are/were hardly any prescribed positions exclusively earmarked for men.⁷ All the high avenues of learning were open to women. During this period we come across a reference to some women who excelled in learning and their hymns are included in the highly-prized Vedas. There were women who continued their studies throughout their life known as Brahmavandinis, and some of the outstanding women of that age were Lampamudra, Apata, Kadru, Ghosha, Paulomi and others. Moreover there were certain factors which tended to lower the status of women - (1) the absence of legal rights, (2) the custom of keeping female slaves in aristocratic Aryan family and (3) polygamy.

The Buddhists maintained the traditions of Brahminical religion and gave an honoured place to women in the social life of the country. Women were admitted to the order of Nuns by virtue of which they gained opportunities to learn and to Serve. They also participated in public life and won various distinctions.

The period from the invasion of India by Mohammed of Ghor to the establishment of British authority in Bengal in the second half of the (18) witnessed in General of the position of women in India. Over the whole of the Gangetic valley social conditions remained unsettled for nearly 300 years - in fact till the time of the Great Moghals. The breakdown of social institutions, which

is unavoidable during periods of continuous invasion, the upsetting of traditional political structures, the vast migrations of people and the economic depression which follows prolonged unsettlement - all these must have contributed to a general depression of social life, especially among women during the centuries of conquest. Rigorous seclusion of women became the rule, as a result of the imitation of the system of purdah which the Muslims enforced and of a sense of fear arising from the lack of general security. The facilities for education which the Buddhist nunneries had provided vanished with the total disappearance of convents and monasteries. No longer were 'parivarajikas', wandering nuns who had access equally to palaces and huts, a feature of Indian society.

With the (15) the situation underwent a change. The general revival of Hindu life which the period witnessed also led to a considerable improvement in the status of women.⁸

Conditions of South Indian were of course different. As society was much more settled and was not subjected to the pressure of continuous invasions, the position of women underwent no serious deterioration. Education was fairly widespread as the number of poetesses both in the regional languages and in Sanskrit clearly proves.

However, on account of the scarcity of any positive information, it is difficult to determine the rights the Turk-Mongol women enjoyed in politics. The only thing that can be said with some certainty is that among both the Mughals & the Turks, the women did enjoy political privileges. The position of widow was of great importance when a man died leaving his children still in infancy. The widow assumed all the rights of her husband, including even the leadership

the tribe, until such time as her children grew to manhood and married. There are instances enough to prove that the women were allowed to act as regents.

Among the Trimurides as well as the family of Chinghiz Khan women used to accompany their husbands to the war-fields. They not only looked after the comforts of the warriors but also took active part in the actual fights.

In India the Turks, who had fully assimilated political traditions of the Persians and had accepted the right of females to sovereignty, had raised a lady, Razia Begum, to the throne and thereby had taken a very progressive step. The example of Razia encouraged the ladies of royalty to take active part in politics. This practice continued through out the Turkish rule in India and even the Afghans seems to have allowed their ladies to have some say in political matters.

During the time of the Mughals many princesses and noble ladies played a notable part in political life. Time and space do not permit me to go into further details.

The impact of the British rule on India brought about changes that are more fundamental in the case of women than men. To men it brought a new conception of the world, of its material resources, ethical standards, and political possibilities, but to the women it brought slowly, but potently, a new conception of themselves. If men reassessed themselves as citizens in a new India, women revalued themselves as human beings in a new social order.

The last hundred years may rightly be called the age of women's awakening in this world. ⁹ Although in history we read of the independence of women in certain communities in ages past, such

independence was more true of the primitive communities or of communities which had been left out of the main stream of European civilization. For even in unassailable strongholds of democracy. Like Athens, women were merely possessions and obtained education under great difficulties. If Plato wrote that "as far as the state is concerned there is no difference between the natures of men and women", it was because of the unequal laws and customs then prevailing in Greece. This plea that woman ought to be admitted to all the duties and rights of man and his warning regarding the loss of the state as a result of their restricted sphere of activity still remain unheeded.

The most remarkable thing about the story of women's progress towards freedom and equality is the strange uniformity of its pattern. Whether in Africa, America, Asia or Europe, the prejudices that hamper the path of progress, the obstacles that women has to encounter and surmount seem almost identical. It is this which makes the struggle not a national one but a human one, thus leading kinship to their ideals, methods and achievements.

In India, the various socio- religious reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj gave added impetus to this awakening. All this activity was obviously not the result of literary education which was still very scarce and slow, but definitely a reflection of the mood of those times, the mighty awakening that was sweeping the country, infusing a ¹⁰ new breath into deadened old limbs and stirring lethargy into action.

The world was in a process of contradiction. Easier means of travel brought contact with foreigners, new ideas came in through papers, journals and books. This new impact enthused the women. Men and women of indomitable courage wrote the first letters on

India's new page. Women's progress was as much helped on by sympathetic men as by adventurous, spirited women.

Two of the earliest women's associations were the Arya Mahila Samaj (1882) and the Bombay branch of the National Indian Association (1890). Such groups helped to overcome the isolation of women and to break down the barriers of race, community and caste. Time shows that these early associations were the precursors of what later became the women's movement in India.¹¹ For, their members soon found that mere ameliorative work was not enough and if women were to take full advantage of educational opportunities, the customs of child - marriage, purdah and perpetual womanhood must be substantially moderated. They also realised vividly that it was the rightlessness of Indian women which gave rise to many of their sufferings and, therefore, it was essential to remould society so as to allow women to develop as individual human beings rather than as mere family appendages. Enlightened, men and women now talked of women's right.

At this opportune moments a new association was formed with the avowed object of striving for a new conception of women's position in society on a basis of equal rights. This was the women's Indian Association founded in Madras in 1917 under the leadership of Dr. Anne Besant, Mrs. Dorothy Jinerajadesa and Mrs. Margaret K. Cousins, assisted by a band of well educated and high spirited young women. The Women's Indian Association (W.I.A.) though functioning mainly in the South, became from its very inception a rallying point for women for action on an All India Plane. Thus began the Women's Movement in India.¹²

A distinctive feature of the women's movement in India has been its emphasis on equal, as distinguished from special, rights. In no sphere-political, economic, social or educational - has any responsible

Indian women's organisations demanded special rights for women as opposed to men. What it has consistently asked for is a free field and no favours.

In that sense the movement has never been assertively feminist. The militant suffragists of Edwardian days in Britain have no counterpart in our country, nor did the Indian women's boycott of liquor shops produce as it did in the U.S. a carry Nation who, aimed with a shining hatchet, gave a new meaning to the term 'demolition' in the bars and taverns of New York. The women's battle for equal rights has been a highly civilized affair - persuasive and persistent, insistent even, but never violent or aggressive. The "Indian-ness" of it all is quite extraordinary.

The W.I.A. began its first activities in the political field. The country-wide demand for self-governing institutions and the impending tour of the viceroy. Lord Chelmsford and the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Montagir, gave the W.I.A. its first big chance. A brilliantly drafted Memorandum was sent up, demanding, for the first time, votes for women on the same terms as men, the signatories including Mrs. Margaret Cousins, who described herself as Bachelor of Music (Madanapal) and Ramanbai M. Nilkantha, who signed herself B.A. (Ahmedabad).

An All India Women's Deputation waited upon Mr. Montagu at the time and demanded that the ~~word~~ word "The Indian people" in the memorandum should include the Indian Women also. The Deputation said, "Thus the voice of India approve of its women being considered responsible and acknowledged citizens, and we urgently claim that in drawing up of all provisions regarding representation, our sex shall not be made a dis-qualification for the exercise of the franchise or

for service in public life."¹³ Mrs. Herabai Tata, one of the leaders of the women's movement in those days referring to the necessity of clarifying the significance of the word "the people" observed thus: "The purport of all the rasoltue resolutions upto 1918 was that the word "people" or "persons" should be taken to refer to both men and women, instead of men alone, and women should not be put on a par with children, foreigners and lunatics in any scheme of reforms to be given to the country".¹⁴

I must stress here that this was not the first feminine incursion into contemporary politics. As the memorandum which the women's representatives submitted pointed out the platform of the Indian National Congress had been open since its inception in 1885 to women who spoke, voted and served as delegates at the annual meetings of the organisation. By a pleasant coincidence a woman Dr. Anne Besant, was to preside for the first time at the annual Congress Session of that year (i.e. 1918). Interestingly enough, she signaled the occasion by establishing a precedent which the Congress has scrupulously observed since then - that the President chosen for an annual session is President not merely for that meeting but for the whole year. In 1900 Swaran Kumari and J. Gangoli attended the congress session held in Calcutta as delegates from Bengal, the latter being the first woman to speak from the Congress platform.

Therefore, the women assured Mr. Montagu that the Congress would willingly pass an unanimous request for women's suffrage.

Such a resolution was in fact passed by the Calcutta session of the Congress presided over Mrs. Besant. It recorded its "opinion that the same tests be applied to women as to men in regard to the franchise and eligibility to all elective bodies concerned with local government and education".¹⁵

Unfortunately, these hopes were temporarily doomed to disappointment. The Southborough committee, which examined the question of franchise rejected the proposal for women's suffrage on the specious plea that the social disabilities under which the female sex laboured rendered the experiment premature. A strange piece of logic for, far from righting a wrong it invoked the assistance of the wrong to perpetuate another.

Disappointment was naturally widespread and, spear-headed by the women's Indian Association, the protest was vocal and voluminous. Behind the Association were ranged such diverse bodies as the Seva Sadan, the Mahila Seva Samaj, the Indian Women's University, the Women's Home Rule league branches and various congress provincial committees. Authority, however, remained adamant, contenting itself with passing the buck to the future provincial legislative councils, which were left to decide the question of women's franchise.

The battle was now conducted on the provincial plane. In March 1921, the Madras Legislative Council passed, by a decisive majority, a resolution calling for the registration of women on the electoral roll. Prominent among the women who helped to induce this result were Dr. Anne Besant, Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, Smt. T. Sadasiva Iyer, and Dhavanti Rama Rau.

Other provinces emulated this example, and by 1926 women enjoyed the franchise on the same terms as men in all provinces so far as elections to the provincial legislative councils were concerned. In April of the same year the Government of India went a step further; it granted women the right to sit in the legislative councils.

Madras, Bombay, the Punjab and the Central provinces were quick to implement this concession and the W.I.A. lost no time in

supporting the candidature of two women nominees in Madras, one of whom was to leave a strong impress on the women's movement. They were Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Mrs. Havnan Angelo.

The former made a spectacular derrit in the South Canara Constituency, securing 4,461 votes against 4,976 secured by her opponent. Although she was defeated by about 500 votes, her performance was legitimately construed by her women supporters as a moral triumph. It enabled the W.I.A. to press for the nomination of a woman to the legislative council, and the Madras Government in an imaginative gesture reciprocated by nominating Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi to this august body. Dr. Reddi was the first Indian woman to sit in an Indian Legislative, and also the first to be elected its Vice-President.

The bill in the political atmosphere in the late '20's was reflected in the activities of Indian women which were concentrated largely in the social and legislative fields. But there were rumbling beneath the surface which rated in wide spheres. Both the peasantry and proletariat were astir. The political fever was beginning to infect the country's youth and the appointment of the All British Simon Commission late in 1927 brought all communities and parties together in a solid Opposition front.

Meanwhile the Indian National Congress helped Indian women to be more a part of the political scene. One of the notable achievements of the Congress movement during its early phase was to draw increasing number of women into its fold. The number of women delegates attending the Congress Sessions reflects the trend quite clearly. Their numbers between 1918 and 1923 were as follows:-

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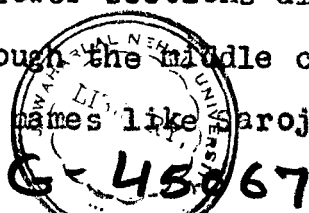
<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of women Delegates</u>	<u>Percentage of total delegates.</u>
1918	27	0.55
1919	74	0.90
1920	169	1.16
1921	144	3.00
1922	No information	No information
1923	60	3.61

The All India Congress Committee had no women members until 1920. The first woman member, from the Punjab, appeared in 1921. In 1922 their number rose to 12 and it was 70 in 1923.

It was impossible for the various women's organisations not to be affected by this floodtide of political enthusiasm, even if for the most part they refrained from active involvement. From 1928 the All India Women's Conference (launched by the W.I.A.) came positively on the scene. From a body dealing with social and educational matters, it began to interest itself also in general political matters without any alignment to a particular party - taking in women from various parties but itself taking strong nationalist stand and demanding equal rights for women in all spheres. There had been women's branches of the Home Rule league also, and an encouraging feature was the non-communal character of the entire women's movement, which at this stage was representative of almost every creed and community. Caste and class did not play a role in this Movement, as evidenced by its leading personalities.

However, we may add that prior to twenties atleast the women leaders were generally drawn from the middle of upper classes . With Gandhi's leadership women from the lower sections also were drawn into the struggle for Freedom, although the middle class influence still remained quite high. We have names like Sarojini Naidu,

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Margaret Cousins, Anne Besant, Begum Hasrat Mohani, Jaiji Jehangir Petit, Harabai Tata, Haunam Angelo, Sadasiva Iyer and host of others.

Gandhiji, appreciating this trend, had given the movement his full support. "I am uncompromising" he wrote, 'in the matter of women's right. In my opinion, she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on footing of perfect equality. Women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation".¹⁷ One of the characteristics of the technique of satyagraha¹⁸ is that the leader has literally to lead the campaign and be in the forefront of the fight. In fact, he is the first person to advance unlike in military warfare, where sometimes the higher the rank of the Commander the further away he is from the scene. This technique naturally enabled women to assume leadership.

The Mahatma, however, was initially averse to women taking an active part in the Salt Satyagraha, which signaled the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Nor did he welcome their participation in his historic march to Dandi. Feminine reaction to this ban was prompt and unequivocal, the Women's Indian Association protesting firmly against their exclusion. Margaret Cousins wrote thus"..... This division of sexes in a non-violent campaign seems to us unnatural and against all the awakened consciousness of modern womanhood. In these stirring critical days for India's destiny there should be no water-tight compartment of service. Women ask that no conferences, congresses or commissions dealing with the welfare of India should be held without the presence on them, of women. Similarly, women must ask that no marches, no imprisonments, no demonstrations organised for the welfare of India should prohibit women from a share in them".¹⁹

The women were as good as their word. Despite Gandhiji's rejoinder to their protest, wherein he advised them to restrict their satyagraha activities to the picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops, feminine eagerness and patriotism refused to recognize any bounds. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was arrested while directing a salt raid at Dharsana. Earlier, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi had resigned her membership of the Madras legislative Council, while Smt. Kamalabai Lakshman Rao of Trinevelly along with Smt. Hansa Mehta of Bombay resigned their office as honorary magistrates. To Smt. Rukmini Lakshmi pati of Madras fell the honour of being the first woman to be imprisoned in this campaign. But the roll of honour was long and distinguished including as it did the names of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Srimati Durgabai, Kamala Nehru, Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Krishna Huthee Sing and many others. "Indeed, reports give evidence of woman coming out in their thousands, and hundreds of them were arrested. How many, unfortunately, no precise records shows. But they played their full share - in processions, demonstrations, picketing and other gestures of organised defiance.

The Civil obedience movement of 1932 following Gandhiji's return from the second Round Table Conference had women again in the forefront of politics. Of the 80,000 individuals imprisoned in the first four months of the conflict, a goodly number of them running this time into thousands, were women. In order to deter widespread feminine participation, the Government seemed to take a perverse pleasure in making conditions of jail life for woman political prisoners unduly harsh. Girls in their mid-teens, were often sentenced two years' rigorous imprisonment for merely shouting slogans or gathering in assembly. The older women also came in for their share of tribulation. We have examples of Swaruprani (the mother of Jawaharlal Nehru) who was badly beaten in a lathi charges in Allahabad, and Gandhiji's wife, Kasturba.

Alongside these somewhat turbulent activities the women's movement had displayed consistent interest in the country's constitutional progress. When, around 1927, Dr. Anne Besant, with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, canvassed the idea of a "commonwealth of India Bill", the Women's Indian Association sent a representative to take part in the discussions and was instrumental in inserting the following clause in the Bill's declaration of rights and privileges; "The rights and duties of citizenship shall be without distinction of sex".

In November 1929, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin had announced Whitehall's decision to hold a Round Table Conference, and this inevitably released a spate of activity in which the W.I.A. participated. First in the field was the Madras Branch of the Association, which pressed, among other things, for adequate representation of women at the conference and on the various committees, commissions and inquiries associated with this body. It also asked for universal adult suffrage. Although the Association had suggested that Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi and Rameshwari Nehru should represent Indian Women at the conference, the Government of India nominated Begum Shah Nawaz and Radhabai Subbarey to the first session. Sarojini Naidu was nominated to the second session, which was attended by Gandhiji. Not all that Begum Shah Nawaz and Mrs. Subarayan did on behalf of the women of India was approved by the Association. These two ladies, in presenting a memorandum urging that more women should be brought on the electoral rolls so as to lessen the disparity between men and women voters, also urged that the wives and widows of property-holding male voters be granted votes. To this better suggestion the Association was implacably opposed.

Women, throughout, with their own rigorous efforts played a role of growing importance in politics. At every stage of the conference, the W.I.A. was active, and through the three all-India

organised women's associations based at Delhi, Madras and Bombay it worked consistently to see that its point of view was not ignored. In course of time the All India Women's Conference carried on much of the mass contact work among women so vigorously started by the W.I.A. Four women representatives appeared before the Franchise Committee headed by Lord Lothian. These elected representatives were Smt. Nallamuthu Ramamurthi from Madras, Smt. Manek Lal Premchand of the National Council of women from Bombay, Lakshmi Menon from Allahabad and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Lahore. These representatives jointly and individually pressed for adult franchise for men and women and opposed communal electorates, as also reservation of seats for women. "Without exception" noted the Lothian Committee, "the representatives of women's organisations and individual women witnessed demanded that the principle of equality between men and women should be the basis of the new Indian Constitution. The representatives of the All India Women's Conference insisted that this principle could only be applied in the franchise by the immediate adoption either of adult franchise or of a system of indirect election of all adults and urged this solution upon us".²⁰ Thus women sought a role in the political field on an equal footing with men, and not with special privileges.

At the suggestion of the Lothian Committee three women representatives of the all-India women's associations were invited to tender evidence before the Joint Elect Committee of the Round Table Conference. The three women representatives were Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi and Begum Hamid Ali, whose demands coincided with the earlier representations made to the Lothian Committee.

Unfortunately, these efforts produced little positive result. Rather did they register a retrogression from the franchise

recommendations made by the Simon Commission, which had recommended the ratio of women to men voters in the proportion of 1:2. The Lothian Committee brought this down to 1:4 and the white paper which emerged from the deliberations of the Joint parliamentary committee further decreased it to 1:7. In practice, as Margaret Cousins pointed out, this would work out at 1:15 in the provincial councils and at 1:20 or even less for the Federal Assembly. It may be noted in passing that the Government of India Act of 1935 enfranchised some 35 million voters, roughly 14% of the then total population, as against 8,744,000 under the Montagu - Chelmsford Reforms.

Only in the provinces was the Government of India Act implemented and that only as late as June 1937, when Congress Ministries were formed in Six provinces - Bombay, Madras the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa. Later the rule of the Congress was extended to Assam and the Frontier Province. After the 1936 elections two women were elected as Deputy Speakers; Smt. Anasuyabai Kale of the Central Provinces at Nagpur and Smt. Siphai Malani of the Sind Assembly. Smt. Rukmini Lakshmi pati became a Minister in the Madras Cabinet and later in 1937 in Sri Rajagopalachari's Cabinet there was Smt. Jyoti Venkatachalam. These Ministries were to remain in office until early in November 1939, when the congress withdrew from the administrative field in protest against the British Government's commitment of India to the war without any reference to Indian representatives.

Women took an active part in the elections both in the provinces and for the Central Legislative Assembly, which

continued in its old form. Vijaylakshmi Pandit had the distinction of being the first woman to serve a Minister in a provincial government. She was appointed Minister of Local Self-government and Public Health in the then U.P. congress Government. Earlier she had served on the Allahabad Municipal Board where she was elected Chairman of the Education Committee. Later she served as Vice-President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. From 1940 to 1942 she was President of the All India Women's Conference.

Women legislators simultaneously made their appearance in the Central Legislative Assembly, among the more notable being Renuka Ray, Radhabai Subbaroyan, who had earlier served on the Round Table Conference, and Ammu Swaminathan, a social worker from Madras.

With the outbreak of the war in September 1939 and the resignation of the congress provincial ministries, political interest shifted from the legislatures to the broader plane of national politics. What followed in India on the political scene is very recent history, but mention must be made of the prominent part played by many women in the days of the partition riots, when a number of them risked their lives. Some of the names which require special mention are those of Achamma Mathbai, Sucheta Kripalani, Mridula Sarabhai, Rameshwari Nehru, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Smt. Aruna Asaf Ali.

The period immediately preceding the division of India into the present states of India and Pakistan was marked by frenetic political activity which resulted, after long negotiations, in acceptance of partition, an Interim Government

and the setting up of the constituent Assembly in October, 1946. This body was elected by the existing legislatures to frame the constitution for Independent India. Many prominent women served on this important body among whom were Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray and Malati Chowdhury. Barely a year later, Independence came at midnight on August 14, 1947 with wild rejoicing.

CHAPTER - III

WOMEN AND POLITICS IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The Indian Constitution, which was adopted on November 26, 1949, gives equality of rights to all citizens.

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

Article 15. Sec. (ii) There shall be equality of opportunity for all its citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

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

Elections to the House of the people and to the Legislative Assembly of every state shall be on the basis of adult suffrage, that is to say, every person, who is a citizen of India and who is not less than 21 years of age, shall be entitled to register as a voter at any such election.

It has been argued that political equality is meaningless in a country where the mass of the population suffers from another dimension of inequality, namely the weight of traditional attitudes that regard them as physically, intellectually and socially inferior to men. It is, however, clear from Mahatma Gandhi's statement that the equal legal and political rights of women were only to be a starting point to enable the society to transform itself by ending all exploitation, a process in which women

would be prime movers. Thus it may be said that equality in political rights and status is a means for achieving equality of status and opportunities in general, and for social economic and political justice. It is, therefore, imperative that we should examine the political status of women in India, and its dynamic aspect the consequent role they play at various levels of political activity. I have examined this by using certain indices which would bring into sharp focus the aspect to be examined, these indices being -

1. Participation in the political process.
2. Political attitudes.
3. Impact of women in the political process.

(1) / Participation in Political Process :

I have first examined the role of women at the participation level this can be measured by the turn out of women voters and number of women candidates in each election. The readiness and willingness of the people to participate in the political process is a basic requirement for a democracy. In a democratic system participation in politics has to be viewed at from two levels - (1) acquisition and exercise of power - (2) exercise of the rights of a citizen - i.e. as voters and as candidates. The study of general elections at these two levels offers certain quantitative measures of participation of citizens both as voters and as candidates.

(a) Voting Behaviour : Many foreign observers had predicted chaos in India's first general elections in 1952. By western reckoning it was strictly impossible for an illiterate population in rural areas and large numbers of uneducated women on the electoral rolls to vote coherently. But the "strong caste and family bonds

(of the Indian electorate) were translated with the greatest of ease to loyalty to a leader (a head of the family prototype) and mobilisation of the clan to support the party candidate, fitted the old feudal pattern like a glove".²¹ Men and women got down to the serious task of exercising their vote and millions of women went to the polls.

Under adult franchise the total number of voters in India rose to nearly 172 million. Authoritative figures for men and women voters separately for 51-52 elections are not available. But if the proportion of women to men in the total population according to the census of 1951 (947:1000) is taken as valid in the case of the total electorate also, we get the figure of 83.6 million as the number of women voters on the electoral rolls. The actual number is, however, found to be less than this on account of (1) the disparity in the distribution of male and female population above the age of 21 so that the population of women to men voters is less than that in the population as a whole and (ii) defective enrolment of voters. Under (ii) above, one reason for the reduction in the number of women voters which was much published during process of the preparation of the electoral roll was the confusion on account of the recording of the names of men and women in north India merely as relations of men - voters. Hundreds of thousands of entries made as "Mrs. so and so" or "A mother of so & so" or "sister of so and so" where "so and so" would be the name of the male voter in the family were scored out from the role on this count. It appears that no objection was taken in the past to this method of listing women voters. In municipal elections, the method was in vogue for a long time in some places. The

exclusion of a large number of women from the electoral roll on this account, therefore, resulted in an agitation on the part of women social workers urging the restoration of names that were so struck out. But on a strictly legal view of the rules governing the preparation of the electoral roll the demand could not be met, At any rate, that was the verdict of the election commission. According to one estimate the number of women excluded from the electoral roll in this way was over 2,800,000. All that can be said about the actual number of women voters, therefore, is that it may be of the order of 80 million. However, the large voting strength of women was a significant feature of the general elections in India. Women became a force to be reckoned within the political life of the country. The over - all picture is given in Table I.

Percentage turn out of voters, India, 1957-71, Lok Sabha Elections

Year	Total voting Percentage.	Percentage turn-out of male voter	Percentage turn-out of women voter	Difference between percentage turnout of male & female voters.
1957	Not available	65.08	38.08	17.00
1962	54.76	62.05	46.63	15.42
1967	61.33	66.73	55.48	11.25
1971	55.35	61.00	49.15	11.85

It will be seen that the percentage turnout of men and women voters has been decreasing. Between 1957 and 1962 the percentage of women who exercised their franchise increased nearly by 5.83%, and between 1962 and 1967 by 9 % but in 1971 it decreased by 6.33%. This

decrease is, however, nearly equal to the fall in the total voting percentage in that year. Since the difference between men and women voters does not show any substantial increase, it may be inferred that there was no significant change in the trend, which is visible when we compare the figures of 1962 and 1971. From 1962 to 1971 while the total voters turn out increased by only 0.59% increase in the percentage of women voters was 2.52%. The findings of the Committee for the status of women in India indicated that States which do not accord a high status to women also reflect a low participation.

A practice widely noticed in the rural areas was that of both men and women going to the polling stations in groups. Members of such groups would invariably vote in the same way having agreed to support (in most cases at the behest of the leaders of the group) a particular behest candidate. The party which was able to get hold of the few leading individuals in the village for support was sure of making a rich harvest of voters at the poll.

In the urban areas, things are different, for a woman voter may be though not always, a unit by herself and is not merely a passive member of a larger group which acts as a whole. Even in the same family, the husband, wife and adult children may have different party loyalties. It is in such areas that house to house canvassing, distribution of leaflets, informal discussions etc. have their use. Women are known to have participated in this kind of propaganda equally with men in the urban areas. It cannot, however, be said that the women's vote even in the urban areas was an indication of their preference for particular candidates and parties on account of their solicitude for women's rights. Nor did it indicate a preference for women candidates over their male rivals.

Even in constituencies where there was a single women candidate opposed to a number of men it could not be shown that the women candidate opposed to a number of men it could not be shown that the women voted solidly for the candidate of their sex irrespective of her party affiliation.²²

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It has generally been found that there is a close relationship between literacy and political awareness. The states and union territories which have registered the maximum mobilisation of women voters generally have a high female literacy rate. Their political awareness is also relatively keen. However, it is not possible to establish a correlation between education or economic development and exercise of franchise by women. One important aspect of politics in India is that it is not possible to generalise about the inter-relationship between any single factor and political behaviour. Studies of women's participation in politics prepared for the committee on the status of women in India have shown that patterns of political behaviour from different regions shows different relationships influenced as they are by inter-related factors like the social status of women, their economic position, the cultural norms and the over all regional outlook towards women's participation in the wider society.

Though there is a widespread belief that there is a lower participation as far as voting is concerned amongst rural women, the rural urban difference seems to be narrowing down. Iqbal Narain has found in his study²³ that urbanisation per se does not have any influence on women's participation. In fact, it has been stated by urban women, particularly the middle classes, that domestic work is an impediment to their participation in politics. In

many villages, it has been found that women have become fully conscious of the power conferred upon them through universal franchise. In fact, they were emphatic about their resolution to vote thereafter for these candidates who would continue to take an interest in their welfare even after the election. This was true about a particular village in Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh. In the latter case it was the scheduled caste and Muslim women who were particularly vocal.²⁴

(b) Candidates :- The difference between the number of men and women candidates at the General Elections is very great, As far back as 1952 women campaigned their huge constituencies like their male counterparts. They travelled by car, jeep, train, camel, bullockcart or foot. Twenty three women were elected to the Lok Sabha, out of 489 seats. In the state legislature out of 3,641 elected, 98 were women. During this election, three women came into prominence as parliamentarians Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur was the first cabinet Minister of Health, the Deputy Minister was Mrs. Margatham Chandrasekhar, who today is one of the congress party Secretaries, Lakshmi Menon was at first a parliamentary secretary and later became Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of State for External Affairs.

The experience of the first General Elections showed that training in Parliamentary techniques was sorely needed and Indira Gandhi, who then led the women's Sections of the Indian National Congress initiated Legislators Seminars. She was aided by Lakshmi Menon and Sucheta Kripalani. These seminars were addressed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

✓✓ TABLE II - Gives details of women's performance in political contest all over the country in the five general elections. It shows that inspite of the problems faced by women who wish to take an active part in politics, they have maintained a fairly even position year after year.

TABLE II

Women elected to the Lok Sabha Rajya Sabha and State Legislatures and holding office as Minister, Deputy Minister or Ministers of State in the Centre and the State

General Election Year	Ministers in Central Govt.	Ministers in State Govt.	Elected to Lok Sabha	Elected & nominated to Rajya Sabha	Elected to State Legislature	All India total numbers elected.
1952	3	5	23	14	18	134
1957	3	12	27	8	196	246
1962	5	21	34	12	173	245
1967	5	10	31	20	134	200
1971	3	18	22	9	164	216

Source: Who's who" published by Rajya Sabha & Lok Sabha for all election years.

The Times of India Directory and year book including Who's Who, 1952, 1957, 1962 and 1968 and 1972.

In the 1952 elections, the women Ministers and Parliamentary Secretary have already been mentioned. In the 1957 elections, Jawaharlal Nehru brought Violet Alva as Deputy Home Minister into his Ministry, Lakshmi Menon and Tarakeshwari Sinha becoming Deputy Ministers of External Affairs and Economic Affairs respectively.

In the elections of 1962, many more women than before, 34, were elected to the Lok Sabha with 12 in the Rajya Sabha Dr. S. Ramachandran Mrs. Tarakaeshvari Sinha were Deputy Ministers of Education, Home and Finance respectively. The Ministers of State for this period were Mr. Lakshmi Menon (External Affairs) and Dr. Sushila Nayar(Health).

In 1967 Indra Gandhi had firmly established herself as Prime Minister and now swept the polls. She retained the portfolio of Minister of Atomic Energy and Planning and External Affairs. Amongst her colleagues were Dr. Phul Benu Guha, Minister of State for Social Welfare, Jahanara Jaipal Singh, Deputy Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Dr. Sarojini Mahishi, Minister without portfolio, and Nandini Satpathy, Deputy Minister, Information and Broadcasting.

By 1971, Nandini Satpathy had become Minister of State for Information and Sarojini Mahishi of Tourism, while Sushila Rohtagi became Deputy Minister of Finance, Smt. Satpathy has since become Chief Minister of her home state, Orissa.

(Over the five election periods only two women have held cabinet rank - Indira Gandhi and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (Appendix I) the former becoming the Prime Minister in 1966 - a position she has retained since. Though only a very few women were able to reach the highest level of power and authority, those who have done so were recognised for their sense of responsibility and ability to manage their affairs. About 16 of the women parliamentarians have had previous experience of holding political offices in the states, either in the pre-

Independence ministeries formed in 1937 or in the post-independence period. At the state level three women have held the office of govern - Sarojini Naidu was Governor of Uttar Pradesh till Feb. 20, 1949. Padmaja Naidu of Bengal for nine years and Vijay Lakshmi Pandit of Maharashtra for five years. There have been three chief Ministers, one speaker, one deputy speaker. Though only two women have held cabinet rank, women have held office in most of the states. Compared to their overall number in the Legislatures, the number holding offices has not been low. The statewise number of candidates for the Lok Sabha has been generally in accordance with the total number of seats allocated to the States. The maximum number was in U.P., except in 1971, when Bihar, the next biggest state in terms of Lok Sabha seats, took the lead by one candidate. The record of Madhya Pradesh is also high except in 1971, when it dropped. This indicates that there is no correlation between the general level of women's participation, (which is consistently low in U.P., M.P. and Bihar) and the selection of women candidates, which is mostly done by the parties. Punjab, where women's participation rate has outstripped that of men in the urban areas, has an extremely poor number of candidates, Kerala and Maharashtra have shown a gradual increase in the number of candidates over the years, and West Bengal has a sudden increase in number in 1971. Karnataka, though not a backward state in any sense, did not put up a single woman candidate in three of the general elections, and only one in the other two. Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland and most of the Union Territories never put up a single woman candidate. On the whole, one fact is clearly focussed - the stagnation or even decline in the number of women candidates in most states (Table III.)

TABLE - III

Statewise distribution of women contestants for Lok Sabha seats.

States & Union Territories	No. of women contestants			No. of women elected		
	1962	1967	1971	1962	1967	1971
Andhra Pradesh	7	4	7	4	3	2
Assam	3	1	3	2	N	1
Bihar	8	12	18	6	4	1
Gujarat .	5	1	1	2	1	N
Haryana	-	1	N	-	N	N
J. & K.	-	N	N	-	N	N
Kerala	1	3	4	N	1	1
Madhya Pradesh	11	11	8	7	5	3
T. Nadu	4	5	2	1	1	N
Maharashtra	2	4	5	1	1	N
Orissa	N	1	2	N	N	N
Punjab	N	3	1	N	2	N
Rajasthan	6	2	4	1	1	2
Uttar Pradesh	14	13	17	6	7	6
W. Bengal	2	3	9	2	2	1
Nagaland	-	N	N	-	N	N
Andaman	-	N	N	-	N	N
Chandigarh	-	N	N	-	N	N
Dadra etc.	-	N	N	-	N	N
Delhi	N	1	3	N	N	2
Goa, Daman etc.	-	1	1	-	N	N
Himachal Pradesh	-	N	N	-	N	N
Manipur	-	N	N	-	N	N
Laccadive etc.	-	N	N	-	N	N
Pondicherry	-	N	N	-	N	N
Tripura	N	N	N	N	N	N
Grand Total:-	65	66	86	33	28	21

Studies by various scholars²⁵ have shown that the factors that determine the number of women candidates from different regions are obviously not related to the level of poll participation, literacy or economic and social position of women in a region. On the other hand the States, where women's position is relatively low, have a record of higher number of candidates. It has been found that on the whole that the number of women seeking elections either for the Lok Sabha, or for the State Assemblies, has been in no way comparable to their proportion in the population. Apart from the election figures the little empirical work done so far in this field have shown that at the level of participation, women have improved their response to the political rights conferred by the constitution. The overall statistics indicates that women's participation, though improving, is still so small in comparison with men and their (women's) proportion in the population. There have been a substantial number of new women entrants, but there have also been a large number of drop-outs from active participation. When these are from families with long political traditions, they indicate a certain process of dis-enchantment.

The majority of the women candidates come from relatively well to do homes, some of the members are from old princely houses. Only one party has occasionally backed women candidates from scheduled castes or tribes and muslims. The present Lok Sabha has 22 women of whom 5 belong to the scheduled tribe. The Rajya Sabha has 17 women of whom 2 are muslims, 1 belongs to the scheduled caste, and 1 to the scheduled tribe. The majority of the women candidates are educated through their levels vary. About 70% - 80% of the women members of parliament are better educated.

(2) Political Attitudes :

Having examined the participation of women in the political process, this section looks at the attitudes towards women's political participation. However, it must be kept in mind that the indices used to assess political status and roles are largely heuristic. They usually overlap in describing the empirical situation. Attitudes have a bearing on participation and impact, while attitudes in turn depend to a great extent on impact and levels of participation. Attitudes play a major role in determining political behaviour, the level of awareness, commitment and involvement of women participating in politics, particularly their autonomy and independence in political action and behaviour. These are, in turn important measures for assessing their political status and the consequent role they play. It should be remembered that attitudes in turn depend to a large extent on impact and levels of participation.

Relative differences in the political attitudes of men and women have been studied by various scholars²⁶ and from the literature available certain broad trends can be distinguished. The degree and kinds of political awareness vary from region to region, class to class and from community to community. Attitudes are influenced greatly by the political culture of the area, the approach of the political parties to the women and the qualities of local leadership.

It has been proved by area studies that the hypothesis that political awareness varies with the levels of modernisation in a given area, with concomitant factors such as literacy rates, education and exposure to urbanisation and mass media is more apparent than real. Again there has been a tendency to study two factors literacy and education - as one, and examine their influence on political awareness

and participation. But there is a distinction between the influence of literacy and education. The former is an important determinant for both awareness and participation, but the latter does not command a similar influence. Education brings about political awareness (through newspapers articles etc), it does not necessarily bring about participation. Thus working women (including professionals), indicate a higher degree of awareness, but this is not reflected in their participation.

Many states studies have shown that urbanization does not bring about high political awareness or participation. There is a uniform finding from different regions regarding the complaint of urban middle class women that they find, their family responsibilities a handicap to political participation.²⁷

Many women appreciate the secrecy of the ballot as they are able to exercise considerable autonomy in using their right of franchise. Although their husbands still try to influence their judgement "they can't find out whom we have really voted for". In rural areas the influence of village elders plays an important role in determining political choice which also influences women's behaviour. However, it would be incorrect to describe it as an universal rule.

In spite of the hopeful change mentioned above, it is still evident that there is a difference, in the level of political awareness, information, and knowledge of the true implications of the right of franchise between men and women, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This has been attributed by most scholars to the lack of interest by political parties to improve the political knowledge of women. Some have blamed women's organisations and pressure groups. An example can be quoted here from a study of urban voters in Rajasthan. -"44.5% of the women did not have any

clear cut idea about their criterion²⁸ for voting. 19.5% considered only the personality of the candidates, 22.3% caste and family as a factor while only 8.3% and 5.5% considered the party and issues respectively". Another factor which needs to be pointed out in discussing attitudes, is that women are more concerned with problems which affect their daily lives. This conclusion is brought about not only by studies done, but also by the fact that during the last few years, women have organized protests against these particular issues - price rise, non-availability of essential commodities, hoarding or black marketing, adulteration, unemployment and poverty. Some studies done for the Committee on the Status of Women in India have found there are indications of a growing trend of disillusionment with the political process, amongst women. According to a study conducted in West Bengal about 25% of the respondents stated that having votes has not helped women and even men. About 8% of the stated that they would not vote on principle since it did not help in any way.²⁹ Another study done in Rajasthan in 1971 showed that 42% of the women interviewed, including housewives and working women supported revolution for social progress as opposed to the ritual of elections. The majority of respondents in this study felt that the problems of the country needing solution in order of priority were as follows: (1) unemployment and poverty (2) rising prices (3) corruption and (4) law and order. Things have changed for the better since the declaration of the emergency in the country and therefore, a study done now may go to show certain changes in the attitudes of women.

However, it may be mentioned that the points mentioned above regarding women's political attitudes are based mainly on results of studies on political attitudes and behaviour and discussion with

different types of women. Hence these point suffer from obvious limitations. Most of the studies are micro studies limited to particular regions. Nor are such studies available for all states.

It would be interesting to refer to some of the findings of the Committee for the Status of Women in India regarding attitudes towards women's political participation. The enquiries were done under 2 heads: (1) Are women at all active in associations, and organisations or in committees? The respondents were asked whether they were members of any organisations to which 21.06% answered in the affirmative (Table IV.1) only 12.01% said that they held any office in the organisation (Table IV.1A) one tenth of the respondents accepted that they never held office in any organisation (Table IV.1.B) Contrary to usual beliefs, the data indicated that in terms of organisational membership as well as holding office in them, a higher percentage of respondents in rural areas gave affirmative answers.

TABLE IV. I Percentage distribution of responses on membership of associations, organisations, etc.

QUESTION: Are you a member of any association, organisation, committees etc.?

RESPONSES : Percentage

Yes 21.06

No 63.13

No response 15.81

Total 100.00

TABLE IV.I.A. Percentage distribution of responses on holding any office in organisations.

Question	If yes, are you holding any office in the organisation?	
Responses		Percentage
Yes		12.7
No		9.03
No response/not applicable		78.90
	Total :-	100.00

TABLE IV. I.B. Percentage distribution of responses on holding office in organisation in the past.

Question :	Have you hold any office in any organization?	
<u>Responses</u>		<u>Percentage</u>
Yes		9.73
No		61.86
No response		28.41
	Total	100.00

2. Attitude to Political participation by women:

Voting in election is necessarily on individual decision. But the individual is always under pressure from diverse sources, and in most cases the freedom is illusory. 60.36% of the respondents disagreed with the view that "Women should vote according to wishes of the male members of family" and 55.13% did not agreed that women should not become members of political parties (Table IV.2) But it is significant that about 30% of the respondent agreed to both the suggestions about restricted activities of the women. The distribution of these respondents in terms of male and female respondents

(Table IV.2.A) indicated that disagreement to the views mentioned above is higher among the male respondents. A very high percentage of respondents also agreed (about 70%) with the views that women should contest elections and women should be effective office bearers in Panchayats, Municipality, Corporatives etc.

✓ TABLE IV.2. Percentage distribution of responses regarding opinion of womens participation in politics.

Question: We present to you a few statements about womens' participation in politics, Please tell us if you agree, partially agrees/disagree regarding each of them.

Statements	Disagree	Partially agree/ disagree	Agree	No opinion	No response
1. Women should vote according to wishes of male members of family	60.36	5.60	29.06	2.09	2.89
2. Women should not become members of political parties	55.13	7.09	30.73	4.00	3.05
3. Women should contest election	19.42	5.16	68.57	3.91	2.94
4. Women should be effective office bearers in Panchayats, Municipality, Cooperatives etc.	15.13	5.64	70.64	5.18	3.41

TABLE IV. 2.A. Percentage distribution of responses, regarding opinion on womens participation in politics by Male/Female.

Statements	Agree		Partially		Disagree	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1. Women should vote according to wishes of the male members of family	28.80	29.11	5.77	5.55	62.15	59.79
2. Women should not become members of political parties	29.72	31.11	6.77	7.19	58.09	54.10
3. Women should contest elections	70.21	68.03	5.77	4.95	18.60	19.68
4. Women should be effective office bearers in Panchayats Municipalities Cooperatives etc.	69.99	70.89	7.29	5.10	16.04	14.82
	No opinion					
	M	F				
1.	1.07	2.43				
2.	2.92	2.43				
3.	3.28	4.12				
4.	4.04	5.55				

(3) Impact of women on the political processes:

So far I have tried to study the role of women, by examining two indices - their participation in the political process, and political attitudes towards women's participation. What has their impact been on the political process? This is crucial measure of women's political status and an important indicator of her role in politics. Yet this is the most difficult to measure. Quantitative data is of little use because they may not indicate the actual reality

Note:- N = Nil; Cong = Congress; Swat = Swatantra;
BJS = Bharatiya Jana Sangh; CPM = Communist Party of India;
CPM = Communist Party (Marxist); PSP = Praja Socialist Party;
SSP = Samyvrta Socialist Party; Ind = Independent

Consulted: Fourth General Election - Statistical Analysis, Indian National Congress; India Annual Reference; Election Commission Publications 1962, 1967 and 1972.

A statewise comparison (Table III) of successful women candidates for the Lok Sabha shows that the number of successful women candidates has been greater in UP, Bihar, H.P and Andhra Pradesh. Of course, in these states there have been a larger number of contestants comparatively. Orissa, Haryana, Goa, Daman and Diu and Manipur are the states from which women contestants stood but were not elected. Karnataka has been most successful percentage wise (100%). It set up only one candidate in 1962 and 1971 and both were returned. Andhra, Bihar, UP, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were the only states which sent women to Lok Sabha in every election.

(Analysing the first general election Mrs. Lakshmi Menon has inferred that the number of women candidates was in inverse proportion to the percentage of literacy among them. This hypothesis is confirmed when tested against the figure of subsequent elections in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and UP. But Orissa, J&K and Rajasthan do not substantiate this hypothesis. On the other hand, Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu do not support the reverse of this view i.e. the number of women contestants does not decline relatively with a higher literacy rate. Therefore, literacy is not one of the facts that determine the number of women contestants or

their success. The reasons for these are many and these have been discussed at some length later. For the present, it may be mentioned that the backing of the party which sponsors them, the personality of the contestants, including their family background and their campaign strategy adopted play a very important role in determining the success or failure of women candidates.

Since 1952 a total number of 212 women members have served in Parliament 129 in the Lok Sabha and 83 in the Rajya Sabha. Jammu and Kashmir has not had a single women representative in either of the two houses. ³¹)

Women elites and their role in the political process.

So far, the account which has been given ~~has been in been~~ more in terms of percentage and proportions. Now the emphasis is on the subjective rather than the objective. It is intended there to study women elites perceptions of their careers, motivations, their evaluations of women's political role, and consequent impact they make on the political process. This kind of dimension has not been explored in depth in literature. There are some references in biographies and autobiographies, in news reports, interviews and profiles of women MPs. There is, undoubtedly a lacuna in literature, but this is not confined to women members. Relatively little has been done in the field of what is now termed 'ambition theory' ³¹

Despite the lack of comparative data for male MPs it still seems worthwhile to pursue the limited objective. The probing of perceptions of women members and elites and the impact they make on the political process. Justification for such a course lies in part in the potential use of this work as a pilot study for the further

wider study which is necessary, and in part, because as has been suggested earlier, to some extent at least, certain problems of men and women in the politics elite may differ in kind. However, this work has many limitations.

The work of the Member of Parliament clearly demands a certain level of ability and skills regardless of sex. The development of these qualities into the expertise and 'professionalism' of the Parliamentaria may come in the course of a career as elected representative and the 'Socialisation' of the MP would be an important piece of work in itself. This section begins with an examination of the qualities of Members which do a long way in their producing an impact on the political process.

High on the list of qualities and skills which are valuable is 'communication'. Other qualities listed have been women's conscientiousness, attention to detail bringing humanising qualities and common sense to their work, good health, stamina, energy, willingness to work hard, coverage, perseverance and resilience, toughness and the 'ability to take knocks.

Mrs. Purabi Mukherjee, General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1970 says, "What a man can do a woman can do even better, especially in politics."³² This implies that the impact a woman makes can be equal - if not better - than men.

Mrs. Maya Ray, Member of Parliament, when asked whether she feels there are certain natural restrictions to a woman capabilities (as MP) she promptly replied "Our Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, has proved that there is nothing beyond the reach of a woman".

"Mrs. Ray represents the new kind of politician in the country - young, sincere and immensely hard working, the type that does not depend upon rhetoric, sycophancy or a jail record to grab power." ³³

Mrs. Sathyvani Muttu, Tamil Nadu's Minister for Harijan Welfare, from her own experience feels that there is ample scope for women to rise to the top range of the ladder in public life, and to play an important role, provided they could devote with their time to politics. The basic equipment of enthusiasm for a cause, willingness to undergo hardship, readiness to sacrifice property and even home life and the ability to speak and carry others with one's own point of view, of course, is a sine qua non.

Mrs. Mrinal Gore, M.L.A., who has made the Bombay scene with her sincerity of purpose and boundless energy says, "Women should be there to clean up politics and to have a real democracy... Above all, one should have a will to serve, then only she is in a position to serve the society."

Dr. Sarojini Mahishi, the then Minister for Law, Justice and Company Affairs, expresses herself with lucidity and balance. "A true politician is a trustee of the people. Of course there is another type who wields political influence to further self interest, groupism or communalism.

"A woman's scope or success - like a man's essentially depends on her own ability. The right set of circumstances and opportunities act as mere bulwarks."

Mrs. Jahanara Jaipal Singh, M.P. feels that there are certain factors which inhibit a woman's scope in politics.

" A lack of purpose, and the honesty to express it, will invariably diminish her scope. It is more important to be liked and appreciated for what one is, even by a few people. Adulation on a mass scale is difficult to sustain or maintain."

"Many women enter politics with false ideas of glory and fanfare; for such women, scope in this career is as short-lived as their illusions. It is only merit and hard work which ensures success."

"And since politics involves the glory of publicity a woman must be tough enough to withstand criticism." Integrity is the corner-stone of political achievement.... the basic ingredient is a genuine interest in people and their problems."

✓Mrs. Sarojini Pulla Reddy, M.L.A. Andhra Pradesh, feels that "in politics, women can face different people of varied nature and views, which affords ample scope for women to study their reactions and, therefore, gives an opportunity for them to apply the requisite legislative measures to assist the people. Politics is a wide spectrum of service to mankind if properly taken up and applied. If they are interested in serving their country, politics is the proper channel to divert their energies for constructive work."

Most women MPs have expressed job satisfaction. Two main components may be isolated for this. In part there is the human element, helping people, the enjoyment of being in demand, meeting interesting people. In part the satisfaction appears to derive from the feeling of belonging to a high status decision making body, expressed as 'you feel proud to be here.' Another

part of the satisfaction appears to be related to being the occupant of a power-wielding position, being in a position to give effective help, affecting the drafting of legislation, making a department rectify a grievance.

The roots of human action are extensively explored by psychologists.

For example Atkinson³⁴ writes, while not by any means exhausting the list of the springs of human action, hunger, achievement affiliations, power, sex, fear and aggression represents as comprehensive a list of the kinds of motivations studied by the same method as can be found anywhere in psychological literature.

Affiliation (used here in the sense of the opposite of rejection and loneliness), and achievement have been shown to be relevant to the satisfaction felt by these women elected representatives. The power factor is also present, it may be argued particularly if the definition and hypothesis of Veroff³⁵ are applied to this material. Veroff's definition of the power motive which is meant to include more^{than} dominance is relevant here. The power motive will be considered^{as} that disposition directing behaviour towards satisfactions contingent upon the control of the means of influencing other person(s). In the phenomenal sphere of the power - motivated individual he considers himself the 'gatekeeper' to certain decision making of others.' Veroff's hypothesis seems to be amply supported by what women political elites have said regarding the enjoyment they derive from their work.³⁶ Power motivation is positively related to the intensify of interests in the job satisfaction, of being boss and being leader. These job satisfactions can be interpreted as positions in which the potentiality for controlling the means of influence is high.³⁹ It would seem then that of the human motivational forces

which Atkinson listed, achievement, affiliation, power are all satisfied in the role of elected representative.

38

LaSswell has postulated a general hypothesis that one of the main traits of the 'political personality' is the desire for power, the need to obtain defiance and respect providing 'compensation' to the individualist. 'Power' he says, is accentuated in personalities under certain conditions of motivation, skill and opportunity . While the material available for this work cannot be used as evidence supporting this hypothesis, it may be said hypothetically, that it does appear to be the case that the kind of power and power motivation to which LaSswell refers is one component of that satisfaction reported by many MPs and MLAs.

39

Emmeshed with the satisfactions experienced from their political role, is the absence of major dissatisfaction. When MPs are asked what they found the least satisfying respect of their work, most replies reported only the minor irritations. Mrs. Jayapradha, Andhra Pradesh Minister, replies, "A women faces problems in all walks of life. ~~But as a Minister my only problem in all walks of life.~~ But as a Minister my only problem is securing the necessary sanctions from the concerned department. I do not deal with the portfolio of finance, otherwise all the other departments I am concerned with, are directly under me".

40

Inherent in the satisfaction experience from the work and position of the MP is an avert degree of self-confidence, and self-satisfaction. This seems not to be associated with any one party. Conclusions to this type of explanatory investigation are unlikely to be satisfactory, except in so far as they point to further areas of research that need to be attempted. The last

chapter of this work contains some indications of these areas.

Investigation of the activist political role of women is, of necessity, a study of only a minute fraction of the mass of female population. Restricting the study to women MPs and MLAs means that the investigation is limited to those women acceptable to the electorate; their final member is further modified by a complex of such factors as electoral swing, vagaries of the party machine and luck. Such a limitation means also focussing on the established, on those who have acquired, or are in the process of acquiring, the identity and expertise of what is sometimes regarded as proto-profession. The MP has survived two eliminating contests, that of the selection process and that of election: the prospective candidate or party worker has passed the first test only. To the extent of accepting nomination and facing a selection Committee, prospective candidates are, in a sense selfselected group. Though there may be exceptions, this particular group has, in effect, identified with, and accepted a 'potential' role involving a degree of political activity far greater than that accepted by the vast majority of women.

One of the common characteristics of the women leaders in the political process during the period immediately after independence was their experience of participation in the freedom movement. Women members of the Constituent Assembly which also functioned as the Central Legislature Council in the first five years after independence were mostly veterans of the freedom struggle. Most of them worked in the movement for women's welfare and development. They were the spokesmen for the women's cause in the Legislative Body and played ^{an} important role in mobilising public opinion in support of the social Legislations that changed the legal status of women within the first few years

after Independence. Some of them also played an important part by shaping the policies and programmes that were taken up by the Government with regard to women's development.

While most of the women leaders who had attained a national stature during the freedom struggle were, to be found in the circles of the Central Government or Legislatures, in the States a new generation of women entered the political process. Earlier, to be selected as a candidate in any one of the Legislatures meant possessing the important qualification of being an active social worker. Now the importance of this qualification has waned. Political conflicts these days, particularly at the State level seldom reflect social differences. The issues are primarily economic which are used by various political parties to seek power in the State Government. The women who have been involved in this process mostly come from the economic and political elite of the State and their entry into the political process, particularly representation depends more on their support within the party rather than on the electorate. With the requisite qualification laid down by the Constitution, from standing in elections, in practice the situation is otherwise. Party endorsement is, in effect, the *quasi sine qua non* of entry to Parliament. It would, therefore, seem that the paucity of women MPs is not attributable to the hostility of the electorate, but to the suspicions, reservations and prejudice of the selectorate. The electoral campaigns of candidates are conducted by party workers among whom women form a minority. Only some women candidates have attained their position through active political and organisational work among the masses.

Women candidates and legislators have rightly seen their roles as representatives of the people. Both in Parliament

and in State Legislatures they have been more concerned with problems of a general nature. In the earlier years, although women participated in general discussions, their championship of women's causes cut across party lines and brought about concerted articulation. In recent years, however, women legislators have not shown much concern or interest in problems that affect women especially. During the discussion on equal pay for equal work for women in the Rajya Sabha, not even one third of the women members attended the discussion and only a few spoke. In the earlier years women played a major role in the debates that took place in the Legislative bodies regarding women's problems. In later years neither was much attention given to these problems, nor were women members very articulate about those problems, or other problems.

The reason for this lack of concern among the political elite to the problems of women is the absence of an active women's movement. Mrs. Jahanara Jaipal Singh, M.P. deplors the lack of unity amongst women MPs. "I have always stressed that women MPs by virtue of their being elected representatives of other women, should pay greater attention to social problems affecting all women. These would include rising prices, better educational facilities and child welfare. If we women MPs decided to jointly tackle some of these socio-economic anomalies, I think we would be doing the nation a great service."

While the number of political organisations seeking to mobilise women is now much larger than in the earlier period, their identification with different political parties prevents most of them from arousing women's consciousness for the solution of

problems which are specific to women, a number of women who have entered the power structure have reached it mainly through certain ascriptive channels. This, coupled with their small numbers in the legislatures as well as decision-making bodies within the parties explains their inhibitions and failure to voice the problems of women in these institutions. The reasons for this gap have to be sought by examining the various political parties vis-a-vis - women in the nature of campaigns to mobilise women, and by studying the functioning of various pressure groups.

(b) Political parties and Women:

Looking at the manifestos of the parties one can conclude that practically all the parties are of the opinion that women are second class citizens of India, to whom special privilege should be granted to bring them at par with men, and that men and women should be treated as equals.

The Indian National Congress :- It is party which has consistently sponsored the largest number of women candidates and has the distinction of having the largest number of successful women candidates in its ranks. However, women's position in the party hierarchy is not impressive. This is significant in view of the undisputed leadership of the party by a woman. The Congress Working Committee which is the highest body in the party contains 3 women one of a total of 21, and 2 out of 4 general secretaries are women. There is considerable evidence that the States would continue to exclude women from the various Committees of the party at different levels. Had it not been for the pressure exerted by the working Committee. Even now, their representation is poor. For example, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee did not have a women member till 1972. The State Executive Committee

had 2 women members in 1959 and none from then till 1970. The Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee has only 19 women out of a total membership of 442 while its State Executive Committee has only 2 women out of a total of 54. The new Constitution of the party provides that 50 per cent of nominated members in all Committees (who constitute 15%) will be women.

In 1957 the party had decided that out of the total number of candidates it was sponsoring for any election, 15% would be women. This has been repeatedly retreated since then but to no effect, for the women contestants sponsored by the Congress has remained much below their target.

The Congress Mahila Front has been active in mobilising women in support of the party. In recent years it has voiced the demand of women workers within the party, who feel that they do not have enough opportunities to develop or demonstrate their organising ability. In some States it is becoming critical of the neglect of women's demands by the official leadership and have pointed out that there is a growing resentment amongst women political workers who are not being given a chance to be included in the decision making bodies.

The Bhartiya Jan Sangh : The Central Executive of the Bhartiya Jan Sangh contains 5 women members one of whom is the Vice-President. The All India Council has 83 women members. The party stands for advancement of women and is keen to take special steps to remove social and educational disabilities, to enable them to discharge their responsibilities to the family, society and nation without any fundamental change in the traditional established principles of social organisation. They emphasize

the need to increase the consciousness and political participation of women without which the constitutional guarantees would remain unimplemented. They believe in the spread of civic and political rights and duties. It is their view that legislation cannot improve the status of women, when society, including women themselves continued to foster a sense of male superiority at all stages. Governmental and non-governmental efforts must combine to develop not 'independence' but individuality of women so that they can co-operate in family, social and normal life.

The Communist Party of India :- The Communist Party of India believes that in the capitalist system complete equality of women is not possible. Only a socialist system can liberate women fully by ending all types of exploitation. Women have a role to play in bringing about the social revolution which cannot be achieved if they remain in a backward condition. According to its election manifesto, the party stands for equality of women in every sphere of national life. It promises to achieve removal of all disabilities to secure women's equality with men in inheritance of property, marriage and divorce laws, entrance to educational institutions, professions and services.

Out of the total membership of 2½ lakhs of the party, women are estimated to form about 5%. Four women are members of the National Council which contains a total of 110 members. The State Units of the party, however, shows variance in the pattern of women's representation.

The party believes that the fundamental rights of equality and protection of women guaranteed by the Constitution have not been achieved in reality because of the social situation. Some special amenities and incentives have to be provided to enable

women to enjoy these rights, since rights without opportunities are meaningless.

Communist Party of India (M) : The party believes that genuine equality between the sexes is not possible in a capitalist order and that it can only be realised in the process of a socialist transformation of society. The party declares itself as opposed to any kind of discrimination against women. It is critical of the poor progress in the field of women's welfare since independence and demands greater facilities for women's education, removal of social disabilities, equal rights in matters of marriage, admission to professions and other services and equal pay for equal work. This party also holds that the nation cannot progress if its women remain in their present condition of illiteracy, limited opportunities for development and as victim of old customs and prejudices.

Women constitute about 1% of the party's membership. The Central Committee has one woman out of a total membership of 31.

Indian National Congress (Organisation):- This party is also pledged to uphold and implement the constitutional guarantees and directives principles of State Policy that have a bearing on women's status. Out of a total membership of 28 in the Working Committee two are women, one of them is the General Secretary.

The party believes that the reason for decline in the representation of women in the legislative bodies lay in the slackening of the momentum of women's mobilisation achieved during the freedom struggle. Political conflicts these days are only on economic issues and parties had not succeeded in drawing out women even though unemployment was worse among them. The Development programmes for women in rural areas had no definite objective and had not been successful.

While women had developed an interest in voting, their political interest was still undeveloped the main reason for this being their economic backwardness. Interest in social welfare work had declined among political workers and the few who are still willing to continue such work suffered from lack of direction. The general decline in political interest of women was visible in the lack of applications for nominations and in participations in various organisational activities of the party. As a result, the 20% quota reserved by the party for women could not be filled in the last elections. There was considerable competition in obtaining nominations at different levels which deterred most women. The other 2 difficulties which prevented women from political work was their lack of economic resources and difficulties in leaving their families.

Socialist Party : - This party believes that women still suffer under a variety of social inequalities and demands special opportunities for women to enable them to enjoy their constitutional rights. The party believes that there is ignorance and indifference of women regarding the rights guaranteed under the constitution though they had developed considerable enthusiasm in casting their votes. In order to rescue women from their ignorance, backwardness and unemployment a determined effort needs to be made by Government social workers and social institutions to educate both men and women to release them from the bondage of outmoded traditions and superstitions.

(c) Campaigns to Mobilise Women :- It has been observed during all election that political parties used women both as instruments of campaigns and objects (women's welfare) set forth for achievement.

The hand-bills, posters and public meetings emphasise the specific promises for women in the party's manifestoes. Some local problems are also used in the propaganda. In larger cities all the parties try to engage a number of active women workers for campaigning among women.

However, women in smaller towns or rural women generally do not get similar attention from parties which often content themselves by approaching the heads of families or village elders. During the 1971 elections villagers complained about the campaign methods of all parties. In their opinion only the prominent persons in the village were approached, and the rest of the villagers were ignored especially the women. The women felt that matters should be explained to them by party workers either by organising public meetings or by going from door to door. Studies on the efficacy of mass media generally agree that inter-personal contact and public meetings are more effective with women than other mass media.

Another point which rural women have criticised is the use of paid canvessors by political parties in the absence of an adequate number of women party workers. This experiment has not yielded happy results as villagers are opposed to women coming in from outside and canvassing when they are not politically committed workers.⁴¹

Since it has been found that women, more than men, attend religious functions parties make use of religious festivals and organise functions to approach women.

It is clear from the experience of all the general elections that though the women constitute nearly 50% of the

electorate, they are not aware of their strength nor has this source been adequately tapped by any political party. Organised women have not bargained with political parties for their support with the exception of Jammu - where the Stri Sabha members put forward a demand for the reservation of 6 seats as the price of support from its members. Political parties and candidates do not adequately mobilise women's support for they do not appreciate it as a source of power. On the other hand, they by-pass women by not approaching and explaining things to them. They are treated as appendages of men, for they believe that it is enough to convince the male active heads of families whose wishes are sure to prevail upon the women too.

The most important of non-political organisations are those which focus their activities exclusively on the welfare and liberation of women and are run by women themselves. These are the All Indian Women's Conference, National Council of Women in India. Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, National Federation of Indian Women. Special mention must be made of a new movement - ~~fight~~ Stri Shakti Jagaran - which seeks to mobilise women to fight for a just place for women in society using Gandhian ideals. This movement was launched by the Mahila Sarvodaya Sammelan in 1973 and believes that the status of women can be raised by women alone. It appeals to all women to abandon purdah untouchability, dowry and ostentatious expenditure on marriages, discrimination between boys and girls etc.

In recent years, trade unions have involved women in substantial numbers. Trade unions are powerful agencies for political mobilisation in India, since most trade unions are

associated with some political party. Though women leaders in the trade union movement have played a major role in bringing about changes in the labour laws to provide protection for women both inside and outside the legislature, they have not done much by way of mobilising women to assert their constitutional and legal rights. One of the studies done for the committee on the status of women in India found that participation in trade union activities had no direct relationship with women's political awareness. Whenever these organisations have acted in union to defend the rights of women their influence as pressure groups has been quite effective, in bringing about the enactment of social laws.

CHAPTER - IV

FACTORS RELEVANT TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS : A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Having charted in varying degrees of detail the level of women's participation in the political sector, it now remains to adduce some of the factors which seem to be relevant to that participation. In this chapter, then, the changing feminine role is considered from the point of view of its possible relevance to the ways in which women relate to politics. Factors which have a bearing on her voting behaviour, and on her as a candidate or as member of the political elite have also been considered. Some of the factors may be seen as mediating women's entry into the political elite, some as militating against that entry.

1. The Feminine Role.

To consider women's political role in isolation from women's role generally would be a pointless exercise. Attitudes to the status of women, changes in women's role and the images and stereotypes generated by such attitudes and changes all impinge on the issue of how women relate to politics. Yet so much has been written on women latterly as to render detailed statistics and discussion repetitive and redundant. It is, therefore, proposed rather to focus on such trends and general indicators as may be suggested are of significance for our main concern of women's political activism.

Central to any discussion of women's position and role in society at large are factors relative to the area which Persons⁴² has termed the root functions of women, or, in the terminology of Banks,⁴³ reproductive determinism. The whole complex of commitment

to family and home is implicit in women's being the child-bearing sex, though over the centuries various attempts, both philosophical and experimental have been made to free women from the shackles of her biological environment. Such attempts have ranged from Plato's scheme for producing women Guardians, trained in exactly the same way as men, and from the duty of caring for children, through the interesting Hutterite communities⁴⁴ now to be seen in America, to the experiments of the various forms of Kibbutz.⁴⁵ Perhaps also should be added to the list the ways in which a country like Russia provides a supportive net work of creches, extended school hours and communal provision of meals in order to leave women free for productive work. In India, too, more and more creches are being provided in order to enable mothers to work outside the home. It is note worthy that mobile creches have been provided by in some places in India (e.g. in Delhi, mobile creches have been provided by the Municipal Corporation) for the benefit of working class labour women with small children.

In the pre-industrial period, kinship was emphasised as a fundamental social institution in the area of family life. At the same time, economic activity was home-centred. With industrial society came the break up of the intertwined familial and economic role of women, and economic activity became increasingly extra-familial. In industrial society there was an increasing emphasis on the nuclear rather than the extended kin-group or the joint family, and on a sharp sex-role differentiation between men and women. This increasing isolation of the nuclear family has been interpreted as an adoptive response to the importance of increased mobility in industrialisation, and the increased

differentiation of interests and involvement of members of a kin group. If the nuclear family is a persistent pattern, then it could be argued that women's role as involving a primary, overriding, commitment to child-bearing, child-rearing and home must persist also.

Until it is physically possible for a woman to take on commitments apart from her family for most of her adult life, formal political emancipation and legal equality of the sexes may, for some strata, mean little.

Women's role cannot be divorced from the context of the family, though both her place in the family and the position of the family in India has changed and is changing over the past hundred or so years. Leaving aside regional and sub-cultural variations, there is now the gradual (legal) erosion of the man's dictatorial powers over wife and children, the emergence of 'economic woman' and the gradual diffusion through the \forall classes of household technology. The demographic changes have been paralleled in virtually the same time span by the family's shedding of some of its former responsibilities, and their assumption by the State in terms of concessional and welfare provisions. A great deal of time-consuming effort has been removed from child-rearing, and the welfare state has removed some of the worst anxieties from parents. Parsons sees the evolution of the family as essentially involving differentiation and specialisation of functions rather than decline, such that the family's basic functions become primary socialisation of children and stabilisation of adult personalities.⁴⁶

C. Wright Mills has pointed out, 'the Facts of biology themselves take on the values that we give them..... and woman is an historical creation.'⁴⁷ Women may have thus far acquired the right to

a level of technical equality, their status remains equivocal. It is not without significance, it may be added, that in many different societies one of the hallmarks of this technical equality, namely the franchise, has been achieved in the fluid conditions and psychological climate of war or its aftermath, or of a post-revolutionary period. However, universal adult franchise was granted to independent India without women ever having to fight for it.

The approach we have exemplified in Mills' terminology is one which is shared basically by such diverse writers as Margaret Mead in her seminal works⁴⁸ of Eva Figs in patriarchal Attitudes, written in 1970. David Rissman's comments are in a somewhat similar vein". I think that I would ideally like to see in our society in that sex become an ascribed rather than an achieved status. That one is simply born a girl or a boy and that's it. And no worry about an activity's de-feminizing or emasculating".⁴⁹ In other words, there has been, over time, an increasing questioning of acceptance of genetic differences as the sole determinants of sex-roles. More and more, sex roles are being seen as learned behaviours, as assigned roles acquired by social conditioning. In one sense, this may be mean as a reflection of the continuing nature-nurture of debate, when the currently fashionable stress on the nurture (cultural) side of dichotomy seems relatively unchallenged. An interesting exception to this is Lionel Tiger's contention that there is a genetic basis for male dominance in that male bonding is, he maintains, a biological pattern, and what he terms 'society's spinal column'.⁵⁰

Generally it seems true that developments towards equality of the sexes have been paralleled by the increasing tendency to minimise the implications of the physical differences of sex. Yet changing conventions and the affects of socialisation cannot override completely the fact of a man's higher metabolic rate resulting in more concentrated use of energy, differences in physique, differences in age of physical maturity, etc.⁵¹ Precisely how far any emotional or temperamental differences between the sexes are determined by physiological considerations, or dictated by socialisation patterns remains open to debate.

However much the feminine role has changed and is changing, one constant remains. The feminine and masculine roles are interdependent and inextricably linked, so that women's role cannot be seen in isolation. However amorphous women's role may appear at any period, it is always defined by the complementary male role. Conflicting expectations of sex roles lead to stress and dissonance. The process of change in this context, then, may be seen as the functioning of the articulated roles: change may generate resistance, which in turn is followed by adaptive response. At points where the two roles do not exactly fit, friction is likely to be seen in, for example, the fight for women's suffrage in pre-independent India. Understanding the discrepancies between the legal enactments of civic equality and the actual customs and norms of society, means considering vestigial sex roles, notably from the era when men was the family's sole agent in the political and occupational spheres.

It may not be going too far to relate David Riesman's scheme⁵² to the current situation of a move towards the erosion of sex role difference. On this basis, it might be argued that the

the diminution of such differences is linked to an 'other-directed' society, a society in which 'contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual - either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media". In urban India, particularly in metropolitan cities such as Delhi and Bombay, there are a number of examples with which to illustrate the blurring of sex role differences, examples which might include both women as cricketers, hockey players, wrestler pilots, and the reduction of apparent sex differences in the androgynous life complete with unisex clothing. Mirra Komapousky has emphasised competing frameworks for the feminine role, insights which Kammeyer⁵³ has developed. Applying the same to the Indian situation, it may be suggested that two alternatives, contradictory and exclusive are suggested as facing girls of the so-called elite colleges of large cities. One is the 'feminine' or 'traditional' the other which stereotype which partly obliterates the differences between the sexes in that it demands of women of much the same virtues, behaviour and attitudes as are demanded of their male contemporaries.

In attempting to bring together, through in eclectic fashion, what may be of relevance ultimately to a consideration of women's political role, there is another factor, or rather a cultural dimension to be added, in Chombart de Lauwe's formulation,⁵⁴ that of the 'images of women in society'. Image is both perception and representation, and is the result of a complex elaboration made up from elements borrowed from perception, memories, and imagination, plus the addition of affective elements. Models in this sense are on a higher level of generality, and there is a complex interaction between normative models directing the

elaboration of images, and the behaviour prompted by the images. More simply, images and models, according to Chombart de Lauwe, are important as they become the engines or the brakes in the transformation of family structures, relations between the sexes, and in the professions, etc. Images then, guide both behaviour and attitudes. They generate myths, which themselves will transform the genesis of new myths.

(2) Factors Relevant to Voting behaviour:

Any attempt at assessing women's political role must include a consideration of whether women as a sex differ from men in respect of voting behaviour and if so in what way and reasons. Though the problem may be simply stated it is not amenable to a simple solution.

Some of the factors influencing women's voting behaviour have been discussed at some points, of this work. These cannot be assumed to be applicable to women only and not to men only within the context of a wider study covering both sexes is there the possibility that such relevance might reasonably be validated. Some other factors regarding their non-voting behaviour are discussed here. There are relevant to the consideration as to whether women as a sex differ from men as far as voting behaviour is concerned. The phenomenon of women's tendency to abstain from exercising the vote is comparatively easy to explain at some levels, but any hypotheses advanced can only be tentative. More difficult is any attempt to rank explanatory factors in order of significance. In this section some indication of explanatory approaches is provided. The larger issues of the relevances of political socialisation are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this chapter.

One cluster of reasons relates to women as the home-making and childbearing sex, with problems of caring for small children, caring for sick relatives preventing some women reaching the polling booth. Such reasons are increasingly less persuasive. Another cluster of factors is concerned with women's proved longer life expectancy. Old age may bring illness, disability, limited mobility, all of which may help account for a certain proportion of abstentions. The proportion may well rise with an ageing population. Lipset⁵⁵ offers the cross-pressure hypothesis to explain the tendency to abstention from voting in women of the working class. In India, the same could be applied to abstention of women of the industrial working class.⁵⁶ The cross-pressures he cites are the push from the left from their class position and the values their husbands bring home from the factory and from the right, the fact, that women are the carriers of the dominant cultural and states values. Whenever with concern with status means largely concern with the values and practices of the social class above one's own, a class which is likely to have values which are different from one's own.⁵⁷

A further concept which links some of the factors already mentioned is that of status inconsistency (or status incongruence, dissonance as it is variously termed). It will be used here in its simplest form, as referring to a lack of congruence between an individual status or stratification indices such as income, education and occupation. Essentially the relevance of this concept here lies in the fields of individual psychology and motivation. The individuals whose ranking on various status indices is not congruent, are subjected to pressures and reacts to these psychological pressures. These reactions have been found to be very varied. Relationships have been discerned between

status inconsistency and such diverse phenomena as liberation,⁵⁸ attempts to change the social order, and political extremism.

Women, it may be suggested, are on the whole more likely than men to be status inconsistent, though this is subject to the multiplicity of qualifications with which such sweeping generalisations have to be hedged. Women's educational qualifications may not jibe with the occupations they pursue. For example, whereas a boy with 50% marks in aggregate may go via a technical apprenticeship to the managerial level, a woman with similar qualification may become his clerical assistant or secretary. Then women's ~~which~~ occupational status may not be consonant with the social status and income they derive from their husbands. The dissonance generated on such grounds, may, it is hypothesised, indirectly influence a woman towards retreat from making a voting decision. In the absence of completed empirical research such an explanatory approach, though highly persuasive, ~~rema~~ remains only speculative.

A further factor, in the women's non-voting syndrome, is that of political efficacy. This concept may be defined as 'the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change.⁵⁹ There is a duality here: the individual's image that he holds of himself, and the image which he holds of the political system of the society in which he lives.

That women tend to have a lower sense of political efficacy than men is well established.⁶⁰ Another aspect of duality arises

here. Research has shown that the more highly educated are likely to feel more politically competent than the less educated; the higher income groups more than the lower paid groups, the higher occupational and status groups more than lower occupational and status groupings. On these individual criteria women score less than men, on the whole.⁶¹

Further, the general economic conditions of a particular area, may be such that the energies of women are fully consumed by the work they are expected to do, both inside and outside the home. In many agricultural communities, for example, it is often the women who provide the agricultural labour,⁶² in addition to maintaining their homes. Their work may be so heavy that they have neither the time nor the energy to develop an interest in community affairs. Still less are they able to follow the affairs of the nation.

The non-voting proclivity of women is reflected in research findings of women's lower interest and information on political topics.⁶³ Generally, women tend not to see the sphere of politics as part of their role; cultural mores are persistent and influential. It is, then, in the field of political socialisation that may be found the roots of those explanations which stress association between withdrawal from voting and ideas of women's role in society.⁶⁴ This point has been taken up in more detail later.

(3) Factors relating to women's role as a member of the political elite:

In spite of equality of opportunity, there is a reluctance among women to enter legislatures. The proportion of women to men is much less. The Asian Relations Organisation tries to

probe into the causes for this disparity. They were according to them (1) lack of political ambition (2) lack of economic freedom (3) dislocation of domestic life consequent to absence from home (4) lack of adjustment to techniques of party politics (5) interference with other welfare activities (6) lack of experience.

Women as the Child-bearing Sex

(The complex of factors associated with women's commitment to the family and the home as a result of the child-bearing function ranked fairly high on the list of reasons which women political activists suggested as accounting for the lesser political participation of women. There were, however, some indications that the primacy accorded to this factor as an absolute deterrent to political activism was being gradually eroded over time. While the data do not admit of statistical validation of this generalisation, impressionistically, at least, perceptions appear to be changing in a subtle way. The movement appears to be from the assertion as of fact, of child-bearing as a handicap to women's political activism, to women's being considered by others to be so handicapped by this identification. Yet the biological factor is likely to remain significant, despite the demographic revolution which has abbreviated the child-bearing-rearing segment of a mother's life cycle, and despite the effects of what may be called the domestic technological revolution in food preparation, and labour-saving domestic equipment which have been diffused through many sections.

That the majority of women MPs has been married need not seriously detract from the argument that the pulls of family life are important in drawing women away from political life. Instead, it emphasises that those women who do aspire to political leadership

are the exceptional, whose political ambitions and determination outweigh the considerable difficulties and sacrifices involved. It is also significant that women of the age group associated with maximum child-bearing i.e. the under thirties, have rarely been MPs. On the whole, though, women have tended to enter politics somewhat later than men. The later entry may, in addition reflect to some degree at least the difficulty which a woman may experience in becoming well-known and in achieving selection for a seat with possibility of success. Late entry into the political arena is often regarded as a disadvantage in attaining office.)

(The question of women's family commitments means that it is perhaps wrong to consider women's participation in local level political activity with that ^{of} a national level. For a woman to become a ^{MLA} ~~councillor~~ makes demands on her time, which may vary with the size of the local authority. Demands may be made on her abilities, on her stamina, but prolonged periods of separation from home and family is not demanded. At ^{the} national level, politics is increasingly becoming a full-time occupation. To become a Member of Parliament, with its requirements of partial residence in Delhi, involves real separation from home and family for a woman member living in the states, and consequent extra financial demands, for domestic help and perhaps full-time care for the children. This is a sacrifice which many women may be unwilling to make.) There is also the principle involved in the distinction between paying an adequate substitute to bring up her children, and being willing to delegate this responsibility.

Political Socialisation

(Throughout this study, in seeking to explore the variations in male and female response to the political, and possible explanatory

factors relevant to such variation, the notion of political socialisation has recurred. In considering women's lower rate of participation in the political elite, an obvious area to consider is the process by which the individual is inducted into the political culture, the way in which the individual is trained for his political role within the framework of the norms and values of the society in which he lives. This, in essence, is one of the many ways of defining the process

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of political socialisation. It must be stressed here that the section on political socialisation which follows is a very attenuated discussion of complex phenomena, limited to what is directly relevant to the theme of this study, and based essentially on the (partial) view of Socialisation as training for a role.)

That there are continuities between childhood experience and attitudes and adults' attitudes and behaviour is clear, and therein lies the necessity to look at the indicators and prefigurations. The relationships are complex. In considering the material presented here, it has to be stressed that the association between childhood learning and adult behaviour is not a simple one of cause and effect. Nor is political socialisation to be interpreted as a determinant or predictor of future behaviour. There are many variables mediating political behaviour, and while political socialisation tends to be more usually linked to the pre-adult years, the process is an on-going one throughout the life experience of the individual. And it is in adult life that many of the norms, values, and attitudes towards the political acquired in childhood are either reinforced or fade with the lapse of time. It must be stressed also that socialisation patterns to the male and female role generally may be equally significant as socialisation vis-a-vis strictly political objects. An early identification of the male with the dominating, ascendant role, and the female

with the more passive, submissive role may have implications which impinge on the political sector.

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These two themes are very similar to what Almond has termed latent (or analogous) political socialisation, which includes personality development and the acquisition of general cultural values. The second of Almond's categories covers the explicit transmission of information, values and feelings relating to the inputs and outputs of the political system. The dimensions of this question, then, include whether the motivation in either teaching or learning is deliberate and intended, ~~and whether the teaching or learning is deliberate and intended,~~ and whether ~~they are the teaching or learning is~~ of direct, explicit relevance to the political, or is only indirectly relevant to political objects.

Generally, the existence of a differential between boys and girls in politicisation seems to be stressed, though the degree of difference reported in literature varies. Hyman ⁶⁷, has reported that girls show less interest in political matters than boys and that girls have much the lower level of political information or knowledge. It has been shown that at a cognitive level there are important differences between boys and girls though age and type of school modified the differences.

While it is easy to quote research-based sex differences in political orientation, it is more difficult to attempt to explain them. One mode of explanation has in relating orientations to the agencies of political socialisation. Previously scholars had emphasised the centrality of the family. ⁶⁹ In more recent work, the family is attributed an important but not central role. ⁷⁰

As the family has been displaced from centrality in the political socialisation process, so the function of the School/College/University has become increasingly stressed. At least three elements may be isolated: inculcation of political knowledge and the influence of attitudes and opinion through formal 'political' instruction; the function of the peer group; and the general climate and quality of school or college life. Unfortunately, at the present stage of knowledge, data on sex differences are minimal. This is more so regarding the Indian situation. Therefore, only a short and necessarily crude outline can be attempted. Data which may be applicable to India has been used.

The teaching of civics and political education has been sometimes suggested as a direct means of increasing women's political participation.

The influence of peer groups and school climate have been considered analytically distinct in some work, and studied in association by others. The process is further complicated, since the influence of the peer group and school climate may be strengthened or modified by family socialisation in addition to personality development. Peer groups may have a sub-culture of their own, but they also teach the adult culture of which they are a part, reinforce the norms and social patterns of that society.

Easton and Dennis suggest that something happens between child-hood and later adulthood that makes females become disenchanted with their earlier expected role in political life that they once shared with boys.⁷¹ It may be, it is suggested, that when, in succeeding years it is gradually revealed to maturing girls that men's judgements do in fact

command dominant attention and respect in the political sphere, a slow creeping disillusionment results. They conclude that though women may rank somewhat lower on a political efficacy scale than men this does not justify the conclusion that women are any less supportive of the efficacy norm than men.⁷²

Again, Campbell provides a conclusion on more or less similar lines.⁷³ He maintains that moralistic values about citizens participation in democratic government have been bred in women as in men; what has been less adequately transmitted to the woman is a sense of some personal competence vis-a-vis the political world. In other words, for girls there may be a self-perpetuating cycle, and girls appear to acquire quite early the belief that political activity is generally more suitable to the male rather than the female role.

(If political socialisation is concerned with the emergence of those attitudes, norms and capacities necessary for active involvement in the political process,) then it could be argued that we should look at the political socialisation of women as an example of the imperfect application, or at least incomplete application of that process, as compared to men; (within this context of a differential in political socialisation between the sexes, the concept of the 'politicised family' becomes more important), and it may be suggested, counteracts the problems generated by 'incomplete' political socialisation.

The 'Political Family'

(The term 'politicised family' has been interpreted by Marvick and Nixon as describing families in which the tradition of leadership and public service is handed on at the local level of political participation in the same way that the great political

families have tended to produce national leaders from generation to generation.⁷⁴ In this study the term 'politicised family' must be understood as including both the national and the local levels. More usually the notion of families in which the tradition of leadership and civic responsibility was nurtured and sustained has largely been applied to those families prominent in national politics, e.g. The Nehru Family.)

The idea of the politicised family includes various elements. First, there is the way in which the child is shown the example of political activism, is shown that activity at whatever level it is involved, is accepted, acceptable, usual. Then the level of information which the child acquires is important, political subjects are discussed and the child lives in an atmosphere of politics. This exposure to the political, this learning and conditioning process, it may be suggested, is then a very important and sophisticated form of political socialisation, so that the child is inducted into an activist sub-culture. This may be of particular importance for the production of women political activists.)

Guttsman sees the tradition of political service as acting not only as a spur towards success, but also as a lever in the process. In an attempt to reach the first rung on the political ladder, the tyro is often helped by the elder members of his family who are active in politics, and perhaps more subtly, by the veneration in which an ancestor may have been held. At a lower level, help is given by the family in terms of connections and contacts with the relevant sectors of political life. Another major component may be isolated in the functioning of the politicised family. This is environmental and socialising, so that in an atmosphere of family involvement in political life, and amongst political activists, the individual may

emerge well-informed, with an expectation of activism as normal, and a highly-developed sense of political efficacy.⁷⁵

The advantages that the politicised family confers on its members clearly apply to both sexes, but it is suggested, here, apply differentially in the importance which they may hold for each sex. For women, the backing of such a family may help to counteract some of the factors which have been suggested as militating against women's participation in the higher echelons of political life. Women in political life may suffer from a lack of the network of casual connections which a man may build up through his business activities, which a woman rarely has. A man may be judged by his success in business enterprises as a convenient yardstick of assessment; a woman is less often in such a position. To some extent this is a handicap which can be offset by belonging to a family already well known, and as it were 'prejudged'. A woman is often more readily acceptable to the electorate if she bears a name known for public service, and as it were inherits good will and publicity. She has almost ready-made references and testimonials. Finally, it may be suggested, the 'educative and socialising agency of the politicised family help to counteract women's lower sense of political efficacy.

CHAPTER - V

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

An attempt has been made to explore the possible factors which go to make up some kind of composite (and complex) answer to the questions, (what is the political status of women in India? what is the role she plays?) (The factors which have helped to determine women's political status in society have been indicated and something has been said of women's position in the educational and occupational sectors. The relevance of these positions to the ways in which women relate to politics has been suggested. But such stark outlines are insufficient of themselves to add much illumination to an assessment and understanding of women's political role. In this chapter, therefore, after enumerating some of the conclusions that we come to, a consideration is made of some of the factors which may be construed as relating to women's political role - as a voter, and as an elected representative. Some of the factors may be seen as mediating women's entry into the political elite, some as militating against that entry.

Women's participation in the political process has shown a steady increase, both in elections and in their readiness to express their views on issues directly concerning their day to day life. But their ability to produce an impact on the political process has been negligible because of the inadequate attention paid to their political education and mobilisations by both political parties and women's organisations. The structures of the parties make them male dominated and in spite of outstanding exception, most party-men are not free from the general prejudices and attitudes of the society. They have tended to see the women voters and

citizens as appendages of the males and have depended on the heads of families to provide block-votes and support for their parties and candidates.

Indicators of participation, attitudes and impact come up with the same results - the resolution in social and political status of women for which constitutional equality was to be only the instrument, still remains a very distant objective. While there is no doubt that the position of some groups of women have changed for the better by ^{the} opening to them positions of power and dignity, the large masses of women continue to lack spokesmen who understand their special problems and be committed to their removal, in the representative bodies of the state.

Although the constitution has proclaimed the right to political equality, it has not enabled women to play their roles as partners and constituents in the political process. Instead, these rights have helped to build an illusion of equality and power which is frequently used as an argument to resist special protective and acceleratory measures to enable women to achieve their just and equal position in society. It is generally said that the greatest indicator of the status of women in this country is the fact that it has been ruled by a woman for the last 10 years. But this is not an indicator of the real status of women in this country. In the case of Mrs. Gandhi, there is the important inference of the politicised family. The paradox of the Indian situation is that the achievement of Mrs. Gandhi has to be seen against a background of a very low rate of participation by women in politics.

The situation is ^{all} the more interesting since a woman holds the Supreme power-wielding situation in a society in which the

majority of women is not socially or economically on an equality^{footing} with men, and where purdah still persists though to a limited and rapidly decreasing extent. The ambivalence and ambiguity of the situation seems impossible to explain adequately. Speculatively, and tentatively, personal abilities, intellect, the elusive element of 'personality' seem important, so important as to ever-ride some of the other considerations. Secondly, with uneven development in a continent in a post-colonial situation it may be possible for a certain elitist, highly educated sub-group (at the top of the political^{level}) to accept an able successful woman in a top power position. This acceptance may then be mediated from the elite downwards to the masses, in a way which does not, somehow, violate cultural norms.

Though at the public level there are a number of women who recognise and advocate the desirability of giving equal opportunities to women in economic and political spheres, the norms and attitudes regarding a women's role in society remains traditional. In this sense the new rights prove to be only concessional. Thus it is clear that despite certain legal and even institutional changes, the final legitimation for a successful reorganization of society lies in a revolution in norms and attitudes.

(2) The Direction of Future Research.

At the various points in this study, reference has been made to the necessity for further systematic investigation in specific areas. It would be easy to draw up a list of the areas where the political sociologist is on uncertain ground, where indicators, possibilities, subjective appraisals are more plentiful than empirically-based data and generalisation.

Most of these areas are associated with two major dimensions which may be seen as delimiting the investigation of women's participation in the political elite. The first dimension is that of women's role in society at large; the second dimension consists of the study of the role and the motivation of the political activist. Together these two dimensions may be regarded as the axes determining the observations on the graph of women's political activity.

In this study something has been said in summary about the forces which have been involved in shaping the role of women since the nineteenth century. But despite the current salience of women's studies, at present, the remaining task is massive, and the research continuing rather than definitive. Without embarking on an exhaustive list, areas demanding investigation include the attitudes of both sexes to women in the higher echelons of the occupational structure, in so far as this may be relevant to, or parallel^{to} the attitudes to women in the decision-making areas of the political section. Also to be included is the voluntary activity universe. That there is an association between social activism and political activism has been realised for a long time. It has been established that those who are active in voluntary associations tend to be participant in politics. The relevance of this relationship may be of particular importance for women. Research investigations may also be^{made} into the informal networks among the members of the political associations and groups. We can thereby understand better the processes of political recruitment, sponsoring of candidates, etc.

In the educational sector more must be learned of parental attitudes to the education of boys and girls, and the differences of

aspirations between them. In terms of the content of curricula and the choice of available subjects, there is much to be investigated. Within such a framework, the content of subject sometimes considered as comprising political education may usefully fall.

Bridging the area between the social role and the political activist dimensions, political socialisation is a major field which demands investigation empirically on a mass scale. Only then could it be established whether the incomplete, imperfect socialisation of women which seems so persuasive an approach can be empirically validated.

It is clear that while the present study has paid some (limited) attention to women's role in society generally, and more to the women political activists' characteristics, reported motivations, etc. there has been no confrontation in depth of some of the questions underlying political activism as such. What are the elements in political life, in the local or national sphere that attract or repel? Much more needs to be known empirically of the key issues of motivations and job satisfaction. How do the satisfactions of voluntary work, for example, differ in demands and rewards? Within the context of a holistic study, the motivations of all MLAs, all MPs, ~~the motivations of MLAs and MPs~~ may be seen in true perspective. Only then would it be possible to establish whether the sex difference operates as one variable among many such as age, class, level of education. Only then would it be possible to determine whether or not women emerge as a distinctive sub-group in the political arena.

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