Chapter VII

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF WOMEN IN STATE POLITICS
Theoretical Assumptions

Observations on political socialization, especially early socialization, has brought to light the fact that women's political identification develops early in life. Parents generally transmit their identities to children. Early identification tends to take the form of an effective attachment to a political symbol, with remarkable constancy. Although strongly held, identifications are not immutable and can be changed by a variety of personal and environmental stimuli. Here we propose to assess the relative impact of several agents of political socialization on the initial identifications and subsequent developments of political identity among the respondents.

Political socialization is usually defined as the learning process through which an individual acquires political values, attitudes, behavioural dispositions and political knowledge. In other words, political socialization is a process by which a person acquires his/her views of the political world, its processes, events and phenomena, actors and structures through the

process of learning or knowing. Viewed from another perspective, political socialization is the way in which one generation passes on political values and beliefs to succeeding generations. Through such process, societies ensure intergenerational continuity in political values and attitudes.²

Political socialization has popularly been defined as the interaction between the social system and an individual, whereby both predispositions for and skills relating to participation in the political sphere are internalised.³ The indicators chosen in this study favour the latest meaning of the term. The process of political socialization operates at both the individual and the community levels. In this study, we have sought to relate the implications of political socialization of women to the social system of which they are a part.

The lack of female participation among the political elites is usually ascribed to sex role typing and intense political activity is regarded inappropriate


for women. In view of the general discouragement manifest in the sphere of women’s participation in politics, male dominance is accepted primarily as a cultural phenomenon. The feminists emphasise the role of ‘socialisation’ the way that children assimilate sex-roles through a process of imitation, identification and internalization. So the family is looked upon as the crucial agent of socialization. Messages concerning the proper political activities of men and women are communicated indirectly in childhood when specific gender-role is formed. Familial activities in this process play an important role.

Attention as an attitude, concern as habit and involvement as a system are known as acquired virtues. Through gestures and precepts parents teach their children the nature and problem of social life.

Both leadership and membership are acquired qualities. A child develops political acumen through his exposure to politically active adults in the family. Studies of the legislators by Wahlke, et.al. confirm the same. Studies on women’s political socialization in


India are still rare. On the western model, I framed a questionnaire with suitable questions to identify the pattern of women's political socialisation. Traditionally many of the PW in our study had either parents or husbands who were active in their communities. Facts reveal that with such relatives, these women were exposed to the public sphere much earlier than those of "A. Even though a few of the IW (17 out of 100) had relatives none was exposed to politics.

The data (see Appendix No. 3) explain the political background of women respondents' families corresponding to their caste identity. It excludes women from non-political families. The data reveal the following patterns. First, a good number of PW (88.6 percent) and WA (54.3 percent) had relatives in politics as against a meagre 17 percent of IW. Women with political relatives were mainly confined to the upper castes. Only 4.5 percent of S.T. PW and 2.2 percent of WA had semblance of a political background. That the upper caste respondents outnumber others in their political background goes without saying.

Sources of Political Interest

The data (see Appendix No. 9) summarise the various political interests reported by the respondents. The data
is based on women involved in politics. Most respondents indicated more than one source of political interest. About 69.6 percent of the PW and 54.3 percent of WA indicated family as a major source of political interest. Classwise, the largest percentage of upper and upper-middle class respondents (84.1 percent of PW and 50 percent of WA) have attributed their early political interest to family. In contrast, all the lower-middle class respondents of both the categories indicate personal predisposition as a major source of political interest. The influence of leaders was admitted 'greater' by the upper and the upper middle class women in the category of WA (71.7 percent).

The data (see Appendix No.10) indicates the correlation between the caste-cum-regional background of the respondents and an individual's influence over them. Most of the up-coastal women, i.e. 30 PW and 13 WA, indicate family members as the major source of influence. An individual's influence outside the family is higher among respondents from the hill districts than their coastal counterparts. For example, 5 out of 7 hill district PW and 15 out of 20 WA indicated outsider's influence as their main inspiration to join politics. Individual effort as the source of political participation
is higher among the lower caste hill women compared to upper caste hill and coastal women. Individual will and determination thus prove to be very strong among the lower caste hill women. In an overall appraisal, family emerges as the major source of political interest for the majority of women respondents.

Age of Joining Politics

In other words, it can be identified as the time of respondents' political socialization. Table (Appendix No. 11) indicates the political socialization of the respondents against their caste-regional background. An examination of the data (see Appendix No. 11) indicates that the process of political socialization begins at different periods in the life-cycle of respondents who belong to different castes-cum-regional backgrounds. Caste is not significant during a woman's political socialization. Upper caste 34.2 percent of FW and 8.5 percent of WA stated that they were socialized after 26. They were all from the coastal area. The hill respondents of each category stated that they were socialized between 16 and 25. Some coastal women showed an early socialization (6.8 percent of FW and 23.9 percent of WA) before 15. Intense political activity in coastal Orissa explains
the earlier political socialization of some coastal respondents. Otherwise caste and region do not influence it. The data reveals that political socialization for a woman may begin unspecifically any time of her life. This orientation for political women occurs during adulthood. About 63.6 percent of PW and 28.3 percent of WA indicated political socialization after 20.

The data (see Appendix No.12) demonstrate the respondents' age of political initiation vis-a-vis their age at marriage. It has been observed that among the PW 97.2 percent (35 out of 36) who married in their 20's (16-25 years) joined politics only during their adulthood. Those who are not married (4.5 percent) joined politics rather early (during their school days). Of the 34.1 percent of PW who joined politics after 26, 9.1 percent had married before 15 and 25 percent in their early 20's (16-20 years). In our sample, only 22.8 percent of PW married after joining politics. The rest 63.7 percent (excluding 4.5 percent unmarried ones) joined politics after their marriage.

Of the WA 34.8 percent were married during their adolescence and joined politics subsequently. A total of WA (41.3 percent) married after joining politics. The unmarried women (10.9 percent) joined politics in their 20's. Thus, there is a positive correlation between
a woman's age of marriage and her age of joining politics. Besides, women with a favourable family atmosphere and a cooperative husband are more inclined to join politics; so the situational and structural factors play a significant role here. Thus, Lipset remarks: "The position of the married woman illustrates the problems of available time or dispensability as a determinant of political activity. The sheer demands on a housewife and mother mean that she has little opportunity or need to gain politically relevant experiences; women might thus be expected to have less concern with politics."  It follows that women probably would be as politically involved as men if they were freed from their domestic chores and allowed to secure meaningful participation on a regular basis. Scholars whose research and speculation support this kind of argument include Almond and Verba (1963), Campbell, et al. (1960) and Lane (1959).  

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Our study supports the fact that women join politics rather late in life, owing to domestic responsibilities. Hence, in most cases the respondents' age of marriage precedes their age of joining politics. The IW emerge nowhere from the picture since their age of marriage has nothing to do with their age of political initiation except justifying the concept "indifference" in politics. As it was indicated earlier, 17.0 percent had favourable political backgrounds. Even two of them had their husbands as Union Ministers at different times. Yet none of them was interested in politics. This shows that the background is not the sole factor to categorize women in the political domain. The age of marriage for the IW is as follows: 10 percent before and 42 percent during 20's, and 26 percent after 25. The rest 22 percent remained spinsters. Since all these are conscious, public-women, marriage does not interfere in their professional role. It has been observed that a considerable number had either their father or husband (or both) politically active (41 percent fathers and 41 percent husbands of PW and 20 percent fathers, 28 percent other relatives and 52 percent husbands of WA).
A home with a participant father/husband links its member to the "center" of the civic communication network in which information about public affairs is readily available and identification with the body politic easily formed. Milbrath and others observe: "Persons near the center of society are more likely to be in politics than persons near the periphery." 9

It is observed that individuals, otherwise not involved in politics, are initiated into a political career because of the influence of certain issues or individuals at a later stage. This generally occurs during adulthood. This process of political involvement is called "politicalization" or "political mobilization". Let us analyse the factors responsible for women's politicization. The data (see Appendix No.13) indicate that even if a majority were from political families, 36.4 percent of PW (other than upper caste hill respondents) and 41.3 percent of WA traced their political interest to corporate living in Ashrams. This is specially the case with 55.6 percent of upper caste respondents from coastal Orissa, from both the categories. It is mainly because during the heyday of

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9 Milbrath, op.cit., p.114.
the independence movement, there existed cotories of activist or radical groups like Alka Ashram and other organizations. They were indeed the training ground for young women fighting social issues. But such groups were limited to coastal cities of Orissa and no comparable institutions existed in the whole of western Orissa. Eventually, lower caste hill district women of both the categories indicated sources other than family, as the influences in their political participation. It is also possible that a relative in politics may not have any influence on the individual member of the family who is growing up in an authoritarian family system. Since we have no data on the type of family structure of the respondent, it is difficult to make any valid inference. But it would be appropriate to say that without proper initiative, participatory tendency, sense of involvement and commitment on the part of the individual, it is not possible to go for a political career.

Social Service

The data (see Appendix No.14) discusses the respondents' role in social and political service. Barring 10 percent of IV, the rest of the sample admitted their involvement in social service. 36.4 percent of
WA, 28.4 percent of PW and only 7 percent of IW were involved in student politics, upper caste coastal respondents (18.2 percent of PW, 28.3 percent of WA) providing the greatest number. This shows that the coastal women found better opportunity for civic work, participation in community service and student politics especially when they were young.

Over 50 percent PW and WA irrespective of caste or regional background indicated political participation as campaign workers, mobilizers, in the process of their political socialisation. With 90.9 percent of PW and 72.7 percent of WA contributing to political participation, we can safely conclude that party politics and student politics provided the opportunity for regular organizational activity. The IW were involved at a micro-level in social service as a hobby. Since the influence of leaders is accepted as a crucial factor in the process of political socialization, we will analyse the pattern of such influence on the political socialization of respondents against their caste or regional background. A large number (21 PW and 31 WA), as the data (see Appendix No.15 and 16) indicate, mentioned about national and provincial leaders visiting their town and influencing them through personal meetings. Only 3 PW and 6 WA indicated their
direct participation in politics through a leader.

The Gandhian movement also influenced a large percentage of respondents (irrespective of their regional background) who identified political movements as the source of their political interest. Largely the educated women who joined the political fray after independence looked upon the anti-government movements and student movements as their source of political interest.

**Personal Pre-disposition and Political Socialization**

The data (see Appendix No.17) reveal that 55 women in politics (47.7 percent PW and 73.9 percent WA) indicated personal pre-disposition as the basis of their initiation into politics. Except 6.8 percent PW and 10.9 percent WA none indicated power motivation as the source of political initiation. Again personal pre-disposition does not rank high among the upper caste coastal PW and WA as the source of political participation. In the western Orissa because of lack of political exposure during the freedom-struggle, women were not supported by their families to enter politics. Hence they relied on personal pre-disposition and voluntary effort to participate in politics. Family as a major source of
women's choice for a political career may explain the upper caste domination of Orissan politics and administration. However, it is possible that the more sophisticated coastal respondents and upper caste hill respondents from both PW and WA categories did not betray their power motivation. As a whole, a general commitment to social service received a great response from the PW (12 out of 21) and WA (22 out of 34) irrespective of caste, regional background.

However, coastal respondents outnumbered the hill respondents in both PW and WA categories in regard to a general commitment for social service as a source of their political participation. That the obligation for the depressed class is strong among hill PW (10 out of 10) and to some extent WA (4 out of 16) is not difficult to explain. It may be noted that the western Orissa consists of a large number of S.T.s. Hence the representatives from that area have an obligation to help the tribal population.

A general observation seems to go against the feminist outcry that political socialization is confined to early childhood. It is generally observed that it can

occur almost at any point, even in the case of political elites. But our comparative data on coastal and hill respondents indicate that a highly politicized environment is more conducive to earlier political socialization, and this cuts across the caste hierarchy. In fact, though caste is not a significant factor in political socialization, the respondents of upper and middle castes in coastal Orissa had secured earlier political socialization. Similar is the case in the hill districts. Thus caste has a significant correlation with the exposure of the respondents to a political environment. Besides, caste is important for the simple reason that family emerges as an important factor in the process of political socialization of the respondents. Second, political socialization of our respondents is greatly influenced by their relatives already in politics.

Third, familial influence is not the only factor helping women join politics. This has been ascertained by the fact that a large percentage of respondents received their earliest political stimulus from the national movement. In an earlier chapter, we have already referred to the role of national struggle for independence in creating interest and mobilizing women in politics. The charisma of individual leaders like Gandhi, Jayprakash
Narain, Vinoba Bhave, et al. have provided a major influence.

The respondents in our study are in general involved in social service and other voluntary activities. But the involvement of the PW and WA in student-politics, party activities and other political activities proves that unless there is a substantial degree of commitment to and involvement in political activities, mere social service may not be conducive to a political career. As per the data, social and political activities can be taken as an effective source of women's politicization. Lastly, a significant percentage of our respondents (excluding IW) had a personal predisposition for politics. This was higher in the case of respondents belonging to a region which has a relatively poor share in the power politics of the state. The IW are out of the picture, because, they lack political inclination. Apart from a favourable familial backdrop, the relation between the respondents' school-level participation, personality and politics is significant. Harrison Gough found that students who participated in extra-curricular activities were more self-disciplined and tolerant, self-assured and socially effective, more optimistic and goal-oriented.11

These are the traits believed to be characteristic of both men and women who participate in democratic politics.

The record of women in politics in comparison to a-political women in school extra-curricular activity and community activity suggests that by late adolescence the former two groups had already developed a sense of competence and self-confidence necessary for participation further and leadership. The experience of participation further developed their social skills and reinforced their sense of personal efficacy. They exhibited these capacities and predispositions at a period when many of their female contemporaries were withdrawing from community roles. At a time when most of the IV were preoccupied with personal achievements, the women in politics maintained their interest in public goals and continued their involvement in greater public activities. The implications of this development pattern are very important.

While growing up in the family, boys and girls undergo a similar socialization up to adolescence. Nevertheless, subtle distinctions are introduced between boys and girls in regard to their adult responsibilities
and choice of a career. The biological maturity at the same time emphasizes a girl's sexual identity. She is frequently confronted for the first time with the familiar expectations that she will withdraw from the public race and concentrate instead, on the achievements associated with sex-specific feminine role. The few who get proper environment and parental initiative start on a self-oriented professional achievement. So, it is natural that at this stage, the girl's withdrawl from the result-oriented society proceeds apace. To break through the barriers placed by society, with personality and achievement goals intact, women require a strong ego, a high level of personal integration, and powerful self-identification. This later on, serves as the basis of conflict-free participation in public life.

The observations reveal that the flair for leadership and philanthropy provide the background characteristics of the PW and the WA.

While a politicised environment can help explain positive attitudes towards politics, and a predisposition towards political participation, it is neither a sufficient nor necessary cause of such participation. Many politicians are the products of an a-political atmosphere,
while the ranks of non-activists include many from the intensely political milieu. At the most, one may say that persons with a political background belong to a pool of potential politicians, provided they meet other necessary criteria for political candidacy.

With favourable social experience and personality pattern, the women in politics in our study were determined to join politics, unlike the M. But these alone do not justify their candidature. There are many women who join civic organizations and voluntary associations. They are involved in various issues and events, and share the dominant values of the community. They accept the family-fold and entertain self-esteem and a sense of efficacy without any political ambition. To understand how and why these women aspire for political office, it will be necessary to identify and examine the circumstances intervening between their initial activities and final candidature. Now we would devote our study to an examination of the women seeking political position and power.

As mentioned earlier, "Politicalization is a process of drawing into political activity, individuals or
groups previously not interested in politics."\textsuperscript{12}

Informal activities such as discussion of politics or political matters is an important process of politicization, particularly for an Indian woman. Now this concept is accommodated in different questions. Certain indicators were selected to discern politicization of women. One such indicator is the membership of political parties of the respondents' family members. The party affiliation of the respondents against their family is summarized in Table-20 (see p.164 for the table).

The correlation between one's exposure to political stimuli in the childhood environment and political activity in adulthood is observed in Orissa.\textsuperscript{13}

Supplementing this observation, Table-20 shows a recurrence of party membership in the immediate family members of the respondents. Of the 25 WA with a political background, 20 percent of their fathers, 52 percent husbands and 23 percent relatives within the family had party affiliation. Of the PW, 41 percent fathers, 41


### Table 20

#### Political Activity of the Relatives

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Political Women N=59</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Women Activists N=25</th>
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<td>Father</td>
<td>Other Rel.</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Other Rel.</td>
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<td>Gandhismtra</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>(7.7)</td>
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<td>(10.3)</td>
<td>(17.9)</td>
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<td>Cong.(I)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>(7.7)</td>
<td>(12.8)</td>
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<td>Lok Dal</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>(41.0)</td>
<td>(18.0)</td>
<td>(41.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
<td>(20.0)</td>
<td>(23.0)</td>
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</table>

(Figures within brackets indicate percentage)
percent of husbands and 17.9 percent of close relatives were engaged in party politics. The women whose parents/ husbands were not party members still remembered how their own political interests had been kindled at home, either through their parents' siblings or discussion on political affairs by relatives. One of them recalled: "My parents were completely a-political, but I had an uncle who was my ideal. He influenced me greatly." For another, it was an elder brother who exposed her to politics. Yet another reported that politics was an ever-present element in her home, even through her father was a writer: "My sister was the Chief Minister of the State, and she and my brother were always discussing politics."

Barring a single WA, none of the respondents had her mother involved in party politics. However, some of the members whose mothers had not been politically active, stressed the latter's socio-political interests. Thus, one of the most active PW, who had grown up in a semi-urban community in western Orissa, described her mother this way: "Mother also was very interested in politics. She believed that women should participate in social affairs, have a word in decision-making, and
just not be a mere house-wife. Of course, at that time it was not possible for a woman with such attitudes to have much of an impact. Still she was a constant source of encouragement for my political ventures." From this, it can be assumed that the women's interest in politics had something definite to do with the female role models. Most of these women receive political stimuli continuously in their parents' homes as well as in their husbands' homes. The data (see Appendix No.13) indicate that 16 out of 44 PW who were married shared party membership with their husbands. It is of some interest to note that the three women whose parents had served high posts in Ganatantra Parishada Party office happened to marry political men. In the state, in the party organisation itself, as there is no bar to a husband and wife working together, a couple may be asked to serve jointly on committees or executive bodies. Thirteen out of 46 WA reported that their husbands were holding key posts in the party office.

The woman in politics is expected to be adult and responsible with high self-esteem in contrast to women's alleged dependence and immaturity. Self-esteem and political participation are compatible. Participation
in civic organizations provides women with an arena to
test and develop skills, as also to win approval and
confidence.

The data (Appendix No.10) demonstrates the
dominant position of the undivided Congress (and later
Cong.I) in relation to the respondents and their family
members. Of the PW, 29.5 percent fathers and 13.3 percent
husbands as against 22.8 percent respondents belonged to
Cong. (Undivided). 27.2 percent respondents affiliated to
Cong.I against 6.8 percent of their husbands and 4.5
percent other family members. Moreover 6.8 percent
respondents belonged to Cong.(U). Thus Congress altogether
had 56.8 percent membership of the total number of women
in politics.

As per the historical records it is not unnatural.
Since the freedom movement, the Congress has provided
for the constitution of women's wing (known as the "Mahila
wing"). It had done, a commendable job in taking women out
of their homes, helping them in organizing picketing,
before government offices and courts and liquor shops,
"prabhat feries" (morning freedom march), "boycott of
foreign goods" and sale of khadi.

After 1947, many freedom fighters, vis. Rama Devi,
Malati Chowdhury, Annapurna Mahasen, Sarala Devi and
others failed to adjust to the new type of Congress leadership which infused a new working method in the party operation and organization. Before 1947, the women in politics belonged to the upper and middle castes and educated upper and upper middle class families. But afterwards, with a few exceptions these women turned to social welfare and activities concerning women's issues. Some took to spiritual life. But the majority joined "Kasturba Nari Niketan", a centrally based voluntary organization based on Gandhi's ideology. When the new Congress was formed women belonging to caste Hindus were attracted and they occupied important positions in the "Mahila Congress" (F).

In honour of Gandhi's attitude to women, Congress, lately Cong.(I), has allotted special seats to women. In the Congress also, the focus has been on the upliftment of women. Provision for equal wages, new job opportunities, special privilege for the weaker sections (backward classes and tribes) bear testimony to the fact. That four Cong.(I) women from the backward tribes are represented in the State Assembly in 1980 (for the first time in the history of the state) provides further proof. Since Ganatantra Parishad (GP) merged in Janata, we find a positive correlation between the respondents'
affiliation to Janata as against their fathers'/husbands' to G.P., Swatantra and Janata. We have seven (15.9 percent) PW affiliated to the Janata Party against 6.8 percent of their fathers, 4.5 percent husbands and 2.3 percent other family members under the banner of Janata, G.P. and Swatantra.

Of the 44 PW, 27.2 percent against 13.6 percent husbands, 4.5 percent relatives were members of Cong.(I) and 6.8 percent had their fathers as original Congress members. Of the WA, 13 percent as against 4.3 percent of their fathers, 2.2 percent husbands and 6.5 percent other family members were members of undivided Congress. About 21.7 percent were Cong.(I) against 13 percent of their husbands and 4.3 percent other relatives; 28.5 percent were Communist Party members against 15.0 percent of their husbands and 8.6 percent fathers and other relatives.

Even though 37 percent of the activists reported that they had no party membership, they do contribute significantly to the political activities. They were also politicised through their family members and influenced by movements and leaders.

The Communist Party is popular among the WA because it has also a wing specially run by women. This
party is mainly urban-based. It has frequently organized marches (protest rallies) against price-rise, shortage of food and oil etc. It has highlighted women's problems and issues specially in urban areas. An overall analysis brings us the fact that no party has articulated the problems of women properly in their party literature and manifestoes. No party has cared to keep records of women's activities. It may be because of the indifferent attitude of the parties and their lack of concern for women's issues. About 37 percent of WA (devoted to social service) and 6.8 percent PW though politically involved, did not have affiliation to any party.

The respondents' party affiliation against their family in different parties records some important observations. Generally, the women have followed the party lines of their fathers/husbands/other family members. From this, we deduce that it is one of the most influential factors in the motivation behind women's politicization. An overall appraisal of the situation brings into light the relevance of women's socialization and politicization which strengthens the probability of a woman's recruitment to politics. The experiences prior to her recruitment, however, do not guarantee a political career; they only operate as "relevant".