INTRODUCTION
The history of the world is full of men who rose to leadership by sheer force of self confidence, bravery and tenacity.

M.K.Gandhi

The study of political leadership is as varied and diverse as the study of politics. Since time immemorial men have asked and debated on the question as to who governs or should govern, what should be the basis of political authority in a community and why and how some individuals obtain and exercise exceptional influence over the making of public rules and policies when others do not.¹ Some of the ramifications of the concept of political leadership can be traced back to the classical Greek political thinkers. Plato's 'Republic' systematically analyses the social background and training required of the 'Philosopher Kings' and visualizes an ideal state in which this would become a reality. Plato's intellectual successor Aristotle continued the strain of thought left by his illustrious master though he emphasised upon the natural rather than acquired qualities of the rulers. In the middle ages, the Church fathers led by St. Augustine were more concerned with the heavenly state and the virtues required of the subject to enter it than with the background of the rulers in this world. In the modern period, the social contract writers also concerned themselves with the state but again their preoccupation was not with the political elites but with the origin of the state and the position of the ruler/rulers vis-a-vis the subjects or citizens.²

The subsequent writers posed two questions — first they asked who should rule? They were concerned with the kind of qualities individuals who were to be entrusted with the lives of the citizens of the state ought to have. Then
they asked how should they rule? What methods should they use which would best meet proper standards of justice??

With the works of sociologists like Pareto, Mosca, Michels the question posed were altered substantially. The new sociologists abandoned the ‘should’ and asked instead ‘who does rule’? and ‘how do leaders rule’? Mosca wrote the following passage which is perhaps the most frequently cited in the description of leadership —

"In all societies - from societies that are very meagrely developed and have barely attained the dawns of civilization - down to the most advanced and powerful societies - two classes of people appear — a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class always the less numerous performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that power brings whereas the second the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first."

The salient point is that man is a social being and a social group requires guidance. Guidance is to be given by someone to whose directions and dictations everyone submits. Such a person is known as a leader. In every society some leader or some combination of leaders rules. The particular form that the leadership group takes may vary but that someone rules is usually taken for granted. Empirical research on leadership has been primarily concerned with two major questions. First, how does a person get to be a leader? or what determinants are involved in attaining a leadership position? The second
question is “what personality traits, attributes or behaviour determine the leader's effectiveness. The question of how one attains a leadership position has been extensively investigated. The period preceding World War II and the early 1950s saw many studies concerned with identification of personality traits and attributes that would distinguish leaders from followers. These have been reviewed extensively by Stogdill (1948), Gibb (1954) and Mann (1959) as well as in a number of other texts. On the whole the research points to the conclusion that a man becomes a leader not only because of his personality attributes but also on the basis of various situational factors. In every society we find leaders who are generally men. Though political participation is the hallmark of a democratic set up, the picture of female political participation is quite dismal. Women it has been said are less likely than men to take part in political activities, they generally take their partisan choice from the male members of their families.

Still the idea that women can be political leader is not particularly distinctive or even radical. There are examples of powerful women leaders like Indira Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandaraike, Margaret Thatcher, Corazan Acquino, Gro Harlem Brundtland and a host of others. But not only in South Asia but all over the world only a miniscule portion of the female population enter into politics as representatives. Women are victims of discrimination in social, political and legal spheres and talking of their equal status with men is still a utopia. Under such circumstances only few women can make it to the top of the political ladder. In this context Indira Gandhi of India, Sirimavo Bandaraike and Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh are examples of important female leaders of South Asia with relatively long political tenure.
It is quite striking that in South Asia, including Muslim predominant Pakistan and Bangladesh, where discrimination against women is particularly severe, strong political leadership has been provided by women. A comparative study of these six women leaders is the subject matter of the present study. It proposes to analyse the social background, to point out major similarities and differences among these leaders who tried to make significant contribution in the field of politics which is generally regarded as a ‘male-dominated’ area. Through this comparative study it will be possible to find out the profile of the female-leaders, how they emerge, in what context they operate, and what they achieve.

LITERATURE SURVEY

Jean Blondel in his enquiry on the Political parties, Interest groups and Civil Servants in Britain found that higher social classes and status groups predominated among political elites and civil servants in that country (J. Blondel, 1963). In his another book, Political Leadership Towards a General Analysis, (London, 1987). Blondel is of the opinion that if leaders make an impact on their societies this must be due to their personal qualities. Attempts have also been made to examine the background of leaders over time and cross-nationally often in order to assess the role of factors such as social origin, education occupation and ideology in the selection of leaders.

Lewis J. Edinger in his edited book Political Leadership in Industrial Societies — Studies in Comparative Analysis (New York, 1967) is of the opinion that there is a general tendency to evaluate the fitness of candidates for public offices, judge their performance and compare them with those who aspire to displace them.
David L. Sills in his *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* Vol 9 is of the opinion that the twentieth century effected a change in the conception of leadership. First the democratic revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries depersonalized the concept of authority. Power prescribed and defined in constitutions and law was vested in the office not in the person. Second the traditional ‘hero’ disappeared in the face of new view of psychology. Leadership came to be viewed not as a set of fixed traits and attributes, biologically peculiar to some individuals, but as a role that satisfies mutual expectations of leaders and followers.

Robert Elgie in his book *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (Macmillan, 1995) views political leadership as the product of the interaction between the leaders and the leadership environment with which they are faced.

Glenn D. Paige in his *The Scientific Study of Political Leadership* (New York, The Free Press, 1977) is of the opinion that political leadership consists in the interaction of personality, role, organization, task, values and setting as expressed in the behaviour of salient individuals who contribute to variance in a political system and in four dimensions of human behaviour (power, affect, instrumentality and association).

Marshall R. Singer in his *The Emerging Elite A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylon* (Cambridge MIT Press, 1964) analyses the extent to which the different political systems are based on values and their reflections in political actions of the leaders.

Elizabeth A. Elwell and Leela G. Malik in their book *Leadership a New Perspective* (R & K Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974) attempt to describe
the prime elements that constitute the essence of leadership in terms of the relative spatial and temporal relationships that exist within and between them.

In his book *The Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* Fred E. Fiedler (McGraw Hill Book Co, U.S.A, 1967) deals with the theory of leadership effectiveness based mainly on an analysis of the data obtained in studies upto 1962. The theory presented in this book attempts to spell out the specific circumstances under which various leadership styles are most appropriate.

The book *Contemporary Issues in Leadership* edited by William E. Rosenbach and Robert L. Taylor (2nd Edition, Boulder West view, 1989) offers a range of approaches to the loosely defined topic of leadership. The editors try to impose some order by dividing the book into four parts — Understanding leadership, People and Personalities, Styles, Substance and Circumstance and Vision a focus on the future.

In his book *Strong Leadership — Thatcher, Reagan and an Eminent Person* (OUP, Melbourne, 1988) Graham Little is of the opinion that when leaders adopt a style of activity to extend welfare commitments of their governments it can be termed as strong leadership because they are prepared to challenge social and institutional norms in pursuit of their goals.

Studies on cross-national elite groups are few. In this regard some initiatives have been taken by H.D.Lasswell and Daniel Lerner in their edited book 'World Revolutionary Elites' (Cambridge MIT Press, 1965) and by Edinger in his edited book *Political Leadership in Industrialized Polities* (New York, 1967). Wolfenstein (The Revolutionary Personality, Princeton, 1971) deals with a rather untouched field of comparative single leader studies through his study of Lenin, Trotsky
and Gandhi. Paul R. Dettman's comparative study of six Third World political leaders (Nehru, Kenyatta, Nyerere, NKrumah, UNu and Sukarno) is based on the question of relationship between legitimacy of political leadership and societal structures of the third world countries. The study edited by R. Barry Farrell (Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Chicago, 1970) is devoted to the comparative analysis of communist elites. Another comparative study done by James D. Barber (The Presidential Character, Prentice Hall, 1972) deals with the U.S. Presidents. R.H. Dekmejian in his 'Patterns of Political Leadership — Egypt, Israel, Lebanon' (State Univ. of New York Press, New York, 1975) seeks to answer several basic questions regarding political leaders of these three countries - where do cabinet leaders come from in each of the three political systems, what leadership techniques do they use, what happens to them after they leave their leadership position?

In their edited book Women Leaders in American Politics, James Barber and Barbara Kellerman (Prentice Hall, NJ, 1986) describe how specific conditions provide tools for the political advancement of women. Barbara Kellerman in her edited book Political Leadership — A Source Book (Univ of Pittsburgh Press, 1986) directs attention to the role of socialization and recruitment in bringing forth leaders who can use their environments effectively.

Maurice Duverger's study of women's leadership roles in France, West Germany, Norway and Yugoslavia (The Political Role of Women, UNESCO, 1955) is concerned with the question why so few women hold elected public office. Jeanne Kirkpatrick's book Political Women (Basic Books, 1974) holds the view that women are socialized into the wife and mother role and that politics is incompatible with this role.
REFERENCES:


