CHAPTER I: Political Participation

1.1. Introduction:

Political participation is one of the most important and indispensable elements of a democratic polity. Without political participation, governments will become autocratic and the rights and liberties of an individual within the state cannot be protected. It is also through political participation that people express their will and the government functions. A society in which a substantial part of the population is denied any participation whatsoever is likely to be highly explosive. It is because of this reason that even in modern non-democratic political systems the idea of political participation seems to be well nurtured. A modern fascist or a modern dictator, notwithstanding whatever power he is free to exercise, will certainly not try to follow a go-it-alone policy; instead, he will invariably try to cloak his arbitrary decisions with the veil of a mass approval secured through some form of political participation by the people. When one looks at the history of the world, it is evident that violent revolutions took place when political participation is limited. American Revolution, French Revolution, Russian Revolution are some of the glaring examples. Nowadays, political participation is extended to all the citizens in most of the countries. However, some countries allowed political participation in a limited way. Countries following a Communist ideology belong to this category because the people there do not have the freedom to political associations of their choice.

Political participation enables the citizens to be an efficient partner in the running of the government. It helps them to understand the working of the government and enables them to see whether the government is working in a

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1 Mukhopadhyay, Amal Kumar. “Political Sociology”, K.K Bagchi & Company, Calcutta. 1977, p. 120.
2 Ibid.
transparent manner or not. It is through this channel that the citizens can judge the performance of every government that rule the nation. A country that does not permit such kind of activity is very close to dictatorship or is totalitarian. According to J.J Rousseau, “participation increased the value of his freedom to the individual by enabling him to be (and remain) his own master. Secondly, the participatory process ensures that although no man, or group, is master of another, all are equally dependent on each other and equally subject to the law that is made possible through participation .......... individuals will conscientiously accept a law arrived at through a participatory decision-making process. Thirdly, it increases the feeling among individual citizens that they ‘belong’ in their community”. Thus, political participation is a very necessary element of a democratic or popular system of government.

I.2. Meaning:

According to H. Mc Closky, “Participation is the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to the ruled”.

According to Richard Johnson, “Political participation may be described as any voluntary act to influence elections or public policy. It may be simple as casting a ballot or it may mean running for office; it may be intended to influence the broad outlines of policy, or it may be very specific e.g. seeking benefits for an individual”. J.J Rousseau in his “The Social Contract” says “... participation is very much more than a protective adjunct to a set of institutional arrangements; it also has a psychological effect on the participants, ensuring that there is a continuing interrelationship between the working of institutions and psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals interacting within them”. Participation for J.J Rousseau again is

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6 Pateman, op.cit., p.22.
“participation in the making of decisions and second, that it is, as in theories of representative government, a way of protecting private interests and ensuring good government”. Nie and Verba’s definition includes in the orbit of political participation “those legal activities by private citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take”. Huntington and Nelson’s definition refers to political participation “simply as activity by private citizens designed to influence governmental decision making”. According to the notional definition of political participation, a strike designed to influence the management of a private company to increase wages is not political participation because it is not designed to affect governmental decision making. Only when a strike is designed to influence the government, say for example to increase the ceilings on wages, it is political participation. D.R Mathews and J.W Prothro defined political participation as “all behaviour through which people directly express their political opinions”.

In developing countries like India, political participation is not confined to a relatively limited set of acts such as exercise of franchise, campaigning or participation through very formal institutions but it certainly has a wider context which refers to “any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended in influencing the choice of the public policies, or the administration of public affairs or the choice of the political leaders”.

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7 Ibid., pp.26-27.
10 Ibid., p.5.
I.3. Nature of political participation:

Political participation by the people at large cannot take place in all the political set-ups. Participation as such depends on the type of political system that a state adopts. Firstly, in a totalitarian or a monolithic system like Germany and Italy during the reign of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini respectively, people had no political life. Participation is allowed to only a few people belonging to the Nazi Party or the Fascist Party. During that time, the citizens enjoyed neither civil liberty nor political liberty. The government established the hegemony of a single party commanding unconditional obedience from the people. Political parties which stood on its way were suppressed and no pressure groups were allowed to exist. The right to criticism was suppressed, the criticism against the government was not tolerated, and the people hardly had any opportunity to change the government. In short, the whole state apparatus was used to advance the interest of those who were in power. In this way, there was no participation by the citizens in the state apparatus. Secondly, when carefully examined, political participation is also absent in communist states like China and the erstwhile Soviet Union where the political system doesn’t allow its citizens free political activities as it is in other democratic countries. In such a political system, participation is allowed in a very limited way by allowing it to the people only if they go in line with the communist ideology. However, when compared with the totalitarian states, one can say that there is a certain degree of political participation by the people in these countries. In China, the Chinese Communists permits a number of minor parties, which are described as ‘democratic’ organisations and which in turn, are their fellow travellers. Limited political rights and freedoms are given to the people of China. These include the right to vote and to seek election. In China, an interesting right is provided in Art 41 of the 1982 Constitution which gives to citizens the right “to criticise and make suggestions to any state organ

or functionary.”¹⁴ No one says the Constitution, “may suppress such complaints, charges and exposures, or retaliate against the citizens”¹⁵ However, not all the rights given to the citizens are as free as one may enjoy in countries that have adopted liberal democratic system, because no citizen can exercise these rights against the communist ideology. Soviet-era politics was authoritarian and predictable. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union dominated the political process, and elections were merely ritualistic, with voters not having a choice between freely competing political parties. Political reforms in the 1980s and 1990s brought greater freedom, but it also spawned the formation of hundreds of political organizations and parties.¹⁶ Therefore, one may conclude that political participation in the Communist countries is very limited. It is not the participation in the true sense of the term.

After analysing and comparing with the totalitarian and communist states, it is clear that political participation, which is made possible by the political and civil rights on the part of the people, exists only in liberal democratic countries. In Liberal countries like India, Britain, USA, etc. people enjoy many civil and political rights and they got more opportunities to involve in some or the other ways, which can be identified as political participation. In such states, there are more than one political party competing for political power and there are periodic elections based on universal franchise. Pressure groups are able to influence governmental decisions and associations such as trade unions and other voluntary organisations are not subject to close governmental control. The political system protects the civil liberties such as freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, etc. There are no restrictions on mass media. All these rights are enshrined in the constitution. In this way, people participate in different kinds of political activities. Thus, one

¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.
may conclude that liberal democratic systems are more conducive to meaningful political participation.

**I.4. Scope and Activities of political participation:**

From the point of view of forms of participation, there has been a gradual extension of the scope of the term "political participation". The earlier concept was quite narrow, with studies usually referring to citizen's participation in the electoral process through voting, campaigning and other partisan activities such as discussing politics, convincing another person to vote in a particular way, distributing party literature, attending political meetings, contributing money to campaigns and so on.\(^\text{17}\) The concept was later broadened to include activities in the period between elections also, when citizens try to influence government decisions.\(^\text{18}\) By now the concept of political participation has widened enough to include a variety of ways in which citizens participate in relation to varied issues.\(^\text{19}\)

According to J.L Woodword and F. Robert, Political participation involves, “(i) Voting at the polls, (ii) Supporting possible pressure groups by being a member of them, (iii) Personally communicating directly by legislators, (iv) Participating in political party activity and thus acquiring a claim on legislators, and (v) Engaging in habitual dissemination of political opinions through word-of-mouth communications to other citizens”.\(^\text{20}\) On the basis of the degree or extent of participation, political activities have been arranged hierarchically by Rush and Althoff in the following manner: \(^\text{21}\)

i) Holding political or administrative office;

ii) Seeking political or administrative office;


\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.


iii) Active membership in a political organisation;
iv) Passive membership in a political organisation;
v) Active membership of a quasi-political organisation (interest or pressure group);
vi) Passive membership of a quasi-political organisation;
vii) Participation in public meetings, demonstrations and so on;
viii) Participation in informal political discussion;
ix) General interest in politics;
x) Voting; and
xi) Apathy.

According to Lestar Milbrath, the activities included in political participation maybe divided into – gladiatorial activities, transitional activities, and spectator activities. These activities may be elaborated as follows:

*Gladiatorial activities:*

Gladiators represent that small number of party activists, whose active association with political parties keep them engaged in a series of direct party activities like holding party offices, fighting the elections as party candidates, raising party funds, attending party meetings and joining the party campaigns.

*Transitional activities:*

Transitional activities include attending party meetings as party supporters or party sympathisers or just as neutral but attentive listeners, making contributions to the party funds and coming in contact with public officials or party personnel.

*Spectator activities:*

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23 Kumar & Mukhopadhyay, op.cit., p.121.
24 Ibid.
These activities include voting, influencing others to vote in a particular way, making and joining a political discussion, exposing oneself to political stimuli and wearing a button or showing a sticker.²⁵

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, revolutionary peasant movement represent an important form of political participation.²⁶ During the past few years, peasant movements in Latin America have acquired clearly political overtones. The new forms of agrarian revolt are either reformist, like the Aprista parties of some Latin American Countries, or revolutionary as the guerrilla struggles waged by the peasants in Columbia, Peru, Bolivia or Brazil.²⁷ A guerrilla struggle by the Cuban peasants put Fidel Castro in power who transformed Cuba into a socialist society.²⁸ Peasant armies and guerrillas have played a decisive political role in the establishment of socialist governments in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.²⁹

1.5. Types of political participation:

Lestar Milbrath classified political participation into two types: active and passive. This classification is based upon time, energy and means utilisation.³⁰ This distinction, actually, is a necessary outcome of the most common fact that political participation in every society has a cost that involves time, energy and resources. Not all people are equally able or even willing to bear these costs and hence all are not direct and active participants in every society.³¹

Another analysis of political participation is based on its purpose. From the point of view of purpose, political participation is of two types -

²⁵ Ibid.
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Ibid.
²⁹ Ibid.
³¹ Kumar & Mukhopadhyay, op.cit., p.122.
instrumental and expressive.\textsuperscript{32} In instrumental, political participation aims at achieving definite purposes such as victory in the elections by the political party, enactment of a bill by the Legislature or increasing the field of influence of the particular leader. On the other hand, expressive political participation does not have definite purposes. It only aims at the satisfaction or the release of the feeling, e.g. voters who just vote for the satisfaction or the use of their voting rights.\textsuperscript{33}

1.6. Determinants of political participation:

Some of the common factors that determine political participations are as follows:

1.6.i. Psychological factors:

The Psychological factors which determined political participation are as follows:

\textit{Loneliness}:

According to R.E Lane, "common political beliefs lay the ground work for sharing equivalent emotions of anger, sympathy and distress; common interests improve the opportunities for small talk; common activities create bonds of friendship. Politics may offer to the lonely man new opportunities for associations with others – the excuse maybe politics, the need maybe fear of isolation".\textsuperscript{34} Thus, some people participate in politics due to loneliness. Usually, some people like the political leaders and workers are used to being surrounded by the people all the time. Without it, they find life very lonely and frustrating. Hence, in some cases, the psychological needs compel a political leader to be politically active until his death.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Sharma & Sharma, op.cit.
Unconscious conflicts and tensions:

Political participation subdues tensions and conflicts. Political participation may subdue these tensions in two ways. Either it may arrest these tensions by distracting the individual from the sphere of his inner conflict or it may provide some effective channels for expressing this conflict and thereby help the individual in easing out his inner tensions.\(^\text{36}\) Hence, in some cases, political participation makes a person free from personal, emotional and mental conflicts. Robert Lane notes how Andrew Bonar Law, the one time Prime Minister of Great Britain, plunged into more active political participation – which eventually made him the leader of the Conservative party and also the Prime Minister of the country – as a means of distracting himself from the great pain he had been suffering from by the death of his wife in 1909.\(^\text{37}\)

Urge to power:

Man always seeks power because he feels happiness in being powerful. Since the power of the state can be exercised by capturing the political power, he participates in politics to capture the power. A person, who acquires political power, also achieves social regards and prestige.\(^\text{38}\) He also has a sense of pride. Thus, some participate in politics for the achievement of power.

1.6.ii. Social factors:

The important social factors that determine political participation are as follows:

Education and Occupation:

Education gives a person greater information and expands the horizon of his interests.\(^\text{39}\) The higher is the education, the greater are one’s sense of civic duty, political competence, interest and responsibility and also self-confidence

\(^{36}\) Kumar & Mukhopadhyay, op.cit.
\(^{37}\) Lane, op.cit., p.118.
\(^{38}\) Sharma & Sharma, op.cit.
\(^{39}\) Kumar & Mukhopadhyay, op.cit., p.126.
and articulateness. However, apart from education, other variables too are at work. The complex and technical jobs the members of the higher occupations deal with naturally increase their intellectual development and make them more articulate. In other words, their occupational skill makes them well armed with a good amount of political skill. Thus, the professional people, teachers, and public servants everywhere are found to have voting rates among the highest in the country. On the other hand, the manual or clerical workers who usually have to work long regular hours and who have less security in their work cannot be expected to have a high political participation.

Income:

Higher income which brings greater prosperity, more leisure, less anxiety and wider opportunities naturally makes people more active in politics. Thus, the higher income groups are found to vote proportionately more frequently than those with lesser income. However, this does not mean that a rise in income has a uniformly proportionate effect on political participation. In this regard, Campbell, Gurin and Miller have shown, on the basis of their study of the voting pattern of American income groups, that any given rate of increase in income from one level to another is likely to bring a smaller rate of increase in turn-out as one descends the income scale. Although income, at the individual level, is an important correlate of political participation it may not necessarily be so at the national level. "Cross-cultural and cross-state data do not at all support the view that national or state wealth and electoral

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p.127.
42 Ibid., p.128.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
participation are related in the same way as individual wealth and participation in the United States and throughout the world.\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{Social status:}

Political participation, says Robert E. Lane, is a function of age, sex, education and status.\textsuperscript{47} While dealing specifically with one mode of participation, that is, the petitioning of government officials in person, Lane comments that this mode is related to the possession of social skills, the desire to be close to ‘greatness’, some knowledge (awareness) of political life and also class status.\textsuperscript{48} He elaborates that it is related to class status in the following ways: 1) Those of a lower socio-economic status are more likely to contact only local officials, while those of a higher socio-economic status may contact both local and national officials. 2) Those of a lower socio-economic status require greater organisation and effort for an audience with an official, or to secure an equivalent effect upon that official, than those of higher status. 3) Contacting national officials on foreign policy matters is a positively accelerated function of wealth and social position.\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{Sex and Age:}

Extensive data from various countries like the United States of America, Great Britain, Italy, France, Germany, Mexico, Sweden, Norway and Japan confirm that men participate more than women who are found to be more conservative, less liable to heterodoxy, less well-informed about political issues and public figures, less attentive to the diverse point of views and, therefore, have less interest in politics.\textsuperscript{50} Sometimes, women’s major preoccupation with home and family may account for their low level of political participation.

Regarding age, the studies in USA, G.Britian and in other developed countries show that in comparison to children, young man, and old person, the

\textsuperscript{46} Lane, op.cit., p.329.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p.94.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p.67.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p.73.
\textsuperscript{50} Kumar & Mukhopadhyay, op.cit.
middle aged males and females have higher rate of political participation.\textsuperscript{51} Lack of stability and security in the early age and also the relative inability to confront with a sustained zeal the various conflict situations naturally make the young rather evasive of participation.\textsuperscript{52} Similarly, the sense of political efficacy starts dropping sharply at around the age of fifty five when a person normally approaches retirement that, making an end of his active life, saps his self-confidence and thereby affects the rate of his participation.\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{Residence:}

The longer a person resides in a given community the greater are the chances of his political participation. A newcomer is not normally allowed to hold a public or a party office; he can have them only after he has lived for sometime in an area or in a country and thus has given the evidence of a settled residence.\textsuperscript{54} Similarly, the city dweller with their higher educational level and, therefore, with their greater understanding of the political issues, their lesser physical cost of participation, their increase exposure to mass media...... are likely to make politics a more significant aspect of their lives than those living in rural areas. Hence urbanites will participate more than the rural folk.\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{Religion:}

According to Lipset “In Germany, where the Christian Democratic Party attempts to be the spokesman of Catholicism and Protestantism, whether Catholics or Protestants attend Church affects their political participation considerably”.\textsuperscript{56} In India also, whenever efforts for legislation is made for members of a particular religion, there is more political participation of the follower of that particular religion.

\textbf{1.6.iii. Political Factors:}

The political factors that determine political participation are as follows:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{51} Lane, op.cit.
\item\textsuperscript{52} Kumar & Mukhopadhyay, op.cit.
\item\textsuperscript{53} ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{54} ibid.,p.130.
\item\textsuperscript{55} ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{56} Lipset, S.M “Political Man”, Arnold Heimunann, New Delhi, 1973. p.196.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Attitudes of the government:

In a country where competition for power is open and the rules of voting simple, more people participate in the politics. If the government encourage voters to vote, they vote in large number and vice-versa.

Political Parties:

Political parties also play an important role in political participation. Inter-party competition in the states affects political participation. When there is more vigorous competition between the parties, there is greater the interest of the citizens in election and larger the voter turnout. Lester Milbrath reasons that when parties and candidates compete vigorously, they make news and gave a large play via the mass media. Thus the setting of competitive politics tends to have a greater amount of political stimuli available in the environment than does a setting with weak competition. People also tend to follow a close election with more interest. Furthermore, in a close contest they are more likely to perceive that their votes count and thus they are more likely to cast them. An additional factor is that when parties are fighting in a close contest, their workers tend to spend more time and energy in campaigning and getting out the vote.

Election:

If the election is conducted properly following the proper norms of democracy, people will enthusiastically participate. Free and fair election encourages the people to join politics in a greater number. However, if the election is not free and fair, people will have no desire to participate and not only that, they will feel alienated from the state and there will be less political participation. At the time of election, the issues raised by the political parties also affect political participation. If the issue is of national importance, more people will participate and vice-versa.

I.7. Political participation of women:

When one analyse the political participation of women in different parts of the world one can see that before their participation in the electoral politics of their own country took place, women were actively involved in two major struggles. Firstly, participation in movement for political equality and enfranchisement which took place mostly in the Western and European countries; and secondly, participation in the independence movement that took place mostly in the colonial world of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The success of their involvement in these two movements heralded their participation in the electoral politics of their country. As such the political participation of women around the globe is studied under three headings: 1) Women and Movement for Political Rights, 2) Women and Independence Movement and 3) Women and Electoral Politics.

1.7.i. Women and Movement for Political Rights:

From time immemorial, women were excluded from political rights. They were excluded from voting in ancient Greece and Republican Rome, as well as in the few democratic countries that had emerged in Europe by the end of the 18th century.59 When franchise was widened in the United Kingdom in 1832, women continued to be denied of all voting rights.60 The question of women's voting rights finally became an issue in the 19th century, and the struggle was particularly intense in Great Britain and the United States; but these countries were not the first to grant women the right to vote, at least not on a national basis.

France was the first country to take up fight for voting rights by the women. Before the fight for franchise begins, during the French Revolution of 1789, women were already in the forefront. During the French Revolution, when Bastille, an old castle used as a prison was stormed in on the 14 July

60 Ibid.
1789 and the revolution was accomplished, it was the women who led.\textsuperscript{61} In 1789 Parisian women of the lower classes convinced women of all classes to march to Versailles and seize the King.\textsuperscript{62} They proceeded to Versailles, and forced the King and the Assembly to return to Paris. Yet, though women actively involved themselves in the Revolution, enfranchisement for the women did not come with the Revolution. To achieve franchise rights French women had to struggle hard and long. France was one of the last in Europe to enfranchise women, even though the demand for women's rights was first voiced by Olympe de Gouge during French Revolution.\textsuperscript{63} Franch suffragists, throughout the early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century faced opposition from politicians, many of whom were Socialists who feared women would support Catholicism and Right-wing political conservatism.\textsuperscript{64} Suffrage to women was extended in France by the 5 October 1944 Ordinance of the French Provisional Government.\textsuperscript{65} Subsequently, the first election with female participation was the Municipal elections which were held on 29 April 1945 and the Parliamentary elections of 21 October 1945. Muslim women in French Algeria had to wait till 1958.\textsuperscript{66}

In Great Britain woman suffrage was first advocated by Wollstonecrafts in her book \textit{A Vindication of the Rights of Woman} (1792).\textsuperscript{67} However, Chartist movement of 1840s was the first movement for women enfranchisement. The demand for woman suffrage was increasingly taken up by prominent liberal intellectuals in England from 1850s onward, notably by John Staurt Mill and his wife, Harriet.\textsuperscript{68} The first woman suffrage committee was formed in Manchester in 1865, and in 1867 Mill presented to Parliament this society's

\textsuperscript{63} “Teaching Women’s Rights from Past to Present”, \textit{Women’s Suffrage: A world wide Movement}. \url{http://www.womeninworldhistory.com} . Access 07/05/09
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} “Women Suffrage”, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
petition, which demanded voting rights for women and contained about 1,550 signatures. Yet, the Reform Bill of 1867 contained no provision for woman suffrage. Meanwhile woman suffrage societies were formed in most of the major cities of Britain, and during the 1870s these organizations submitted to Parliament petitions demanding franchise rights for women and containing a total of almost three million signatures.

The succeeding years saw the defeat of every major suffrage bill brought before Parliament. This was chiefly because neither of the leading politicians of the day, William Gladstone nor Benjamin Disraeli, cared to affront Queen Victoria's implacable opposition to the women's movement. In 1869, however, Parliament did grant women taxpayers the right to vote in municipal elections, and in the ensuing decades women became eligible to sit on county and city councils. Otherwise, the right to vote in Parliamentary elections was still denied to women, despite the considerable support that existed in Parliament for legislation to that effect. In 1897 the various suffragist societies united and formed one "National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies" (NUWSS) thereby, bringing a greater degree of coherence and organization to women suffrage movement. The NUWSS hold public meetings, wrote letters to politicians and published various texts. In 1907, the NUWSS organised its first large procession. This march became to be known as the "Mud March" as over 3000 women trudged through the cold and rutty streets of London from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall to advocate for women's suffrage. Out of frustration at the lack of governmental action, a segment of the woman suffragettes became militant. Ultimately, in 1903, a number of members of the NUWSS broke away and, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, formed the 'Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her group started using

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69 "Women Suffrage", op.cit.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
“militant tactics” and they adopted the policy of hackling cabinet ministers and disturbing meeting.\(^{74}\) In 1905, at a meeting where Sir Edward Grey, a member of the newly elected Liberal Government was speaking, two members of the WSPU constantly shouted out, “Will the Liberal Government give votes to women?”\(^{75}\) When they refused to stop, they were arrested and charged for assault. When they refused to pay their fine they were sent to prison. More arrests followed each demonstration and the strength of the society grew and the WSPU became more and more violent. This included an attempt in 1908 to storm the House of Commons and the arson of David Lloyd George’s country home.\(^{76}\) In 1909 Lady Constance Lytton was imprisoned, but immediately released when her identity was discovered. In 1910, she disguised herself as a working class seamstress called Jane Warton and endured inhuman treatment which included force feeding.\(^{77}\) In 1913, Emily Davidson, a suffragette, interfered with a horse owned by King George V during the running of the Epsom Derby and was trampled and died four days later.\(^{78}\) Meanwhile, public support for the woman suffrage movement grew in volume, and public demonstrations, exhibitions, and processions were organized in support of women's right to vote. When World War I began, the woman suffrage organizations shifted their energies to aiding the war effort, and their effectiveness did much to win the public wholeheartedly to the cause of woman suffrage. The need for the enfranchisement of women was finally recognized by most members of Parliament from all three major parties, and as a result the Representation of the People Act was passed by the House of Commons in June 1917 and by the House of Lords in February 1918.\(^{79}\) Thus, after much effort and struggle by them, in 1918 the government of Lloyd George finally granted voting rights to women. Nevertheless, it was limited only to the

\(^{74}\) Verma, op.cit., p.7.
\(^{75}\) Women’s Suffrage, op.cit.
\(^{76}\) Ibid.
\(^{77}\) Ibid.
\(^{78}\) Ibid.
\(^{79}\) Verma, op.cit.
householders and the wife of the householders who have reached the age of 30 years and women voted for the first time in 1918.\textsuperscript{80} Later on, in 2 July 1928, the Conservative Government brought forward a new bill. With that a complete political equality was granted to all the women, and the women's suffrage movement in Britain ended on a note of success in 1928.

In America, the movement for woman suffrage started in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century during the agitation against slavery. Women such as Lucretia Coffin Mott showed a keen interest in the antislavery movement and proved to be admirable public speakers. When Elizabeth Candy Stanton joined the antislavery forces, she and Mott agreed that the rights of women, as well as those of slaves, needed redress. Elizabeh Candy Stanton and Lucretia Coffin Mott, together with other women, namely Martha C. Wright, and Mary Ann Clintoek issued a call for a convention concerning the rights of women. That convention met in Seneca Falls, New York on 19–20 July 1848.\textsuperscript{81} The convention adopted a "Declaration of Principles" which stated "we hold these truths to be self evident; that all men and women are created equal..."\textsuperscript{82} It was followed in 1850 by the first national convention of the women's movement, held in Worcester, Massachusetts, by Lucy Stone and a group of prominent Eastern suffragists. Another convention, held in Syracuse, New York, in 1852, was the occasion of the first joint venture between Stanton and the dynamic suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony. Together these two figures led the American suffragist movement for the next 50 years.\textsuperscript{83}

Another two most influential leaders of the women's right movement in America in the second half of the nineteenth century were Elizabeh Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. However, the united struggle for women's voting rights broke into two factions following the civil war. When the

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
Territory of Wyoming granted women the right to vote in all elections in 1869, it soon became apparent that an amendment of the federal Constitution would be a preferable plan. Led by Anthony and Stanton, those who believed that they should seek an amendment to the US constitution formed the “National Women Suffrage Association” (NWSA) in May 1869 which held a convention every year for 50 years after its founding.\textsuperscript{84} Later on in the same year the “American Women Suffrage Association” (AWSA) was formed by those who favour giving pressure to state legislatures to amend state constitution.\textsuperscript{85} The leaders of this group were Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe. Considered as the more conservative organization, the AWSA supported the Republican Party, sought simple enfranchisement, and counted the abolitionists among its ranks. Its members also believed in the need for organizing the movement on the state and local levels. To that end, they drafted a constitution that called for a focus on achieving the vote for women. Concentrating on organizing in the state and local levels, the AWSA encouraged auxiliary state societies to be formed and provided an effective grassroots system for the dissemination of information about the woman suffrage movement. After more than two decades of independent operation, the AWSA merged with the more radical National Women Suffrage Association to form the “National American Women Suffrage Association” (NAWSA) in 1890 and worked together for almost 30 years.\textsuperscript{86} They exerted their influence through the press, platforms, circulars, petitions, lobbying in the legislature, etc. Some women suffragist like Lucy Burns even tried to employ aggressive and militant methods never before employed in United States. When Wyoming entered the Union in 1890, it became the first state whose constitution accorded women the right to vote.\textsuperscript{87} Subsequently, vigorous campaigns were conducted to persuade state legislatures to support amendments to state constitutions conferring full

\textsuperscript{84} Schenken, op. cit., p. 646.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
suffrage to women in state affairs. Efforts were also made to give women the right to vote in presidential elections and, in some states, the right to vote in municipal and local elections. In the next 25 years various individual states yielded to the movement's demands and enfranchised their women. By 1918 women acquired equal suffrage with men in 15 states. However, at the Federal level universal adult franchise was established only after the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.88

Of the currently existing independent countries, New Zealand was the first self-governing country in the world to grant women the right to vote in the 1893.89 Though it was the first country to give women the right to vote, women got this right not easily but after a hard struggle. In New Zealand, the campaign for enfranchisement began in the year 1869 when a woman with a name Mary Muller published an appeal for the rights of women, including the right to vote under the pseudonym Femmina, because her husband did not approve of feminist views.90 The issue of enfranchisement for women was raised in New Zealand with greater force in 1878. The New Zealand women worked together with the "Women’s Christian Temperance Union" (WCTU) of America who have its branches in New Zealand by that time.91 Later, the first petition on women’s right to vote was signed by 10,000 women over 21 years of age and was presented to Parliament in August 1891.92 This petition was popularly known as "Women’s Suffrage Petition".93 The petition was the largest of its kind in New Zealand and other western countries. It is comprised of 546 sheets of paper, all glued together to form one continuous roll 274 metres long.94 In 1892, the Women’s Franchise League was formed and it also joined the struggle for enfranchisement. Moari women also joined the struggle and finally

88 Ibid.
90 Verma, op.cit.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., p.27.
93 "Teaching Women’s Rights from Past to Present", op.cit.
94 Ibid.
a bill providing for women's suffrage was passed by the House of Representatives on 11 September 1893. In this way, women finally got the right to vote, but unfortunately women did not get the right to contest the Parliament elections along with it. The struggle for that continued until 1919.

In India also even though it was not intense, women had their own struggle for their voting rights. In 1919, the Montague-Chelmsford suggested increasing the representation of Indians in the Legislative Councils and widening the electorates. However, it did not mention about the women. So there was a sharp reaction from women about this neglect. As a result, a Special Committee, organized by Margaret Cousins consisting of Sorojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Herabai Tata and Mithan Tata went to England to give evidence before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India, in support for the extension of franchise rights to Indian women. There they were able to enlist the support of many British activists, and as result, the Joint Select Committee recommended that sex disqualification should be removed. And the lead in granting voting rights to women was provided first by the Madras Legislature in 1920. Bombay came next when it granted voting right to women in 1921. From then on, one after another, the Provincial Legislatures passed resolutions for granting enfranchisement to women. By 1929, all the Legislative Councils extended the franchise to women on the same basis as to men. As soon as the voting right was given to women, they fought for obtaining the right to sit in the Legislative Councils in order to secure complete political equality between men and women. Soon they succeeded and along with this, the Indian women began to participate in the electoral politics of the country.

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95 Ibid.
97 Ibid.Pp.93-97
98 Ibid.P.101
Thus, in this way, at one point of time, the political participation of women in western, European and in some other countries during the 19th century mostly revolved around the struggle for equal political rights or enfranchisement. The following table shows the granting of suffrage after a hard struggle to women in some select countries.

**Table no. 1.**

**Granting of suffrage to women in some selected countries.**

*Year listed is the first year women were allowed to participate (by voting) in elections and not the year when women were granted universal suffrage without restrictions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Phase 1892-1922</th>
<th>Second Phase 1923-1949</th>
<th>Third Phase 1950-1971</th>
<th>Fourth Phase 1972 onward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand 1829</td>
<td>Ecuador 1929</td>
<td>Pakistan 1950</td>
<td>Bangladesh 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia 1902</td>
<td>South Africa 1930*</td>
<td>Ethiopia 1955</td>
<td>Jordon 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway 1913</td>
<td>India 1935</td>
<td>Cambodia 1955</td>
<td>Mozambique 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark 1915</td>
<td>Philippine 1937</td>
<td>Nicaragua 1955</td>
<td>Marshal Island 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 1917</td>
<td>Cuba 1940</td>
<td>Mauritius 1956</td>
<td>Palau 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union 1917</td>
<td>Quebec 1940</td>
<td>Malaysia 1957</td>
<td>Liechtenstein 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland 1918</td>
<td>Japan 1945</td>
<td>Nigeria 1958</td>
<td>Samoa 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia 1918</td>
<td>France 1944</td>
<td>Upper Volta 1960</td>
<td>South Africa 1994**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria 1918</td>
<td>Indonesia 1945</td>
<td>Rwanda 1961</td>
<td>Oman 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England 1918</td>
<td>Hungary 1945</td>
<td>Sudan 1964</td>
<td>UAE 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden 1919</td>
<td>Costa Rica 1949</td>
<td>Somalia 1970</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States 1920</td>
<td>China 1949</td>
<td>Switzerland 1971</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Timeline of International women suffrage.*


*Suffrage was granted only to white women.

**Suffrage was granted to Black women.
1.7.ii. Women and Independence Movement:

In the colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America, women’s political participation was recorded in the twin fight for Independence and for enfranchisement.

In Latin America, Ecuador was the first country to grant suffrage to women in 1929. Even before this right was granted, women were in the forefront at the time of independence movement from Spain. In the War of Independence (1802-1822), hundreds of women came out and fought. Women also joined the army and fought battles in 1875.99

Colombian women were also in the forefront of revolts against oppressive ruler in the country and for the country’s independence during the period from 1810 to 1822. However, after the 1819 Revolution, women were excluded from political participation. Women were still excluded from political enfranchisement after independence which came in 1824. So in 1930, a first platform for women’s voice was organised by Georgiana Fletcher.100 Another two women, Rosa Maria Aguitira and Iide Carriazo presented the Colombian Congress with a petition for suffrage signed by 500 women. Another woman, Dr. Zea Hernandez fought for suffrage in 1946 and she was imprisoned.101 Suffrage was finally granted to women in 1954. Notably, 75 percent of registered women voted for the first time in 1957.102

In the continent of Africa, in which most of the countries were under the colonial rule, women took an active role in the fight for independence. Women of Kenya enjoyed respect in their communities before the country became a

99 Ibid.
100 Verma, op.cit.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
colony in the hands of the Portuguese, then in the hand of the German, and finally under the British rule. In fact, women's violent opposition to the British rule began as early as between 1911-1914 when Me Katilite, a 70-year-old Giriama woman, organised her people against the British. In this way, women became active participants in the independence struggle. Suffrage, for the women of this country came together with independence.

In Nigeria, women's participation was not a new phenomenon. Women fought against the British when the British established judicial systems where the arbitration courts of women were made powerless and only male power structure was recognised. This led to women's war of 1929 because of the dissipation of women's function. Women again revolted against the British rule in 1959 because of their discriminatory policy. In 1960, Nigeria gained independence, but the Federal Constitution denied the right to vote and the right to be elected to the House of the Assembly to women of Northern Nigeria. For this discrimination, there was another movement by the women. The protest continued until 1977 when women of Nigeria got the universal enfranchisement.

In the continent of Asia also, the women's participation in politics was not a new phenomenon. The women of Asia, particularly in Non-Islamic countries, actively participated in all the political activities. In China, during the Taiping rebellion in 1851, women fought for equal rights for which they formed women's army. Again, during the Boxer rebellion of 1899-1901, women set up military associations. Women school teachers also became activists during the 1911 Republican Revolution. Not only did they smuggle
arms and planted mines, but they also fought at the front. After the abdication of the Qing Court, these women militants took over the fight for women’s rights including the suffrage. Tang Junyang founded the Chinese Suffrage Society in Beijing in 1911.\textsuperscript{108} She led women to the first meeting of the National Assembly constituted under the 1911 Constitution and became violent when the vote was refused. In 1923, when the new President Yuan Shikai came, he crushed the women’s activities and Tang Junyang was arrested. After the World War I, women came forward again in the Nationalist May 4 Movement in 1919. At last, in 1921, Hunan became the first province to grant suffrage to women.\textsuperscript{109} However, the National Congress of Sun Yatsen during its deliberations on making a permanent constitution for the country failed to invite women and denied the right to vote to them. This led to demonstrations, which were brutally suppressed. During the war against Japan, women were again in the forefront. During the third civil war after Second World War, women again demanded the right to vote. Here women down to the grass root level were involved in the battle for enfranchisement. In one village women who were denied the right to vote for the village head refused to recognize the elected head and decided not to sleep with their husband till the right was given.\textsuperscript{110} They succeeded soon enough. In China, suffrage at last was granted to all the women on October 1, 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was founded and when Chiang Kaishek retreated to Taiwan.\textsuperscript{111}

Thus in this way, the political participation of women in Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the later part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century was confined to their participation in the struggle for change in the government or for the independence of their own countries. The struggle for suffrage in these countries was not intense like in western and European countries. Suffrages for

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
the women in these countries came together with the independence of their countries.

1.7.iii. Women and Electoral Politics:

As soon as women received the right to vote in their own country, they started participating in the various political activities of their own country. Britain, which was known for the most intense struggle for women enfranchisement, was able to produce one of the strongest women Prime Ministers - Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, British Conservative Party politician and Prime Minister (1979–90). She became the Europe's first woman Prime Minister. She also became the only British Prime Minister in the 20th century to win three consecutive terms. At the time of her resignation, Britain's longest continuously serving Prime Minister since 1827, she accelerated the evolution of the British economy from statism to liberalism and became the most renowned British political leader since Winston Churchill.

In America also, though there have been no woman President so far, the American women have been serving in various public offices. Mention may be made of women like Catherine East, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, etc. In 1963 Catherine East became executive secretary of the first Presidential Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, and she held senior staff positions with successive Advisory Commissions until 1977. "National Organisation for Women" (NOW) founder Betty Friedan called East "the midwife of the contemporary women's movement" for catalyzing her and others to spearhead the drive to eliminate sexism in society. In the following

113 Ibid.
decades East, who because of her work in the Labour Department had access to official data about women in the workplace, not only helped disprove the claims of those who opposed feminist legislation but also helped reconcile differences between women labour activists and feminists. For several years she coordinated study on women's issues at George Washington University and subsequently (1983–86) was legislative director of the “National Women Political Caucus”, both in Washington, D.C.¹¹⁵

Another woman, Gloria Steinem also played an important role in the early politics of America. She founded the “National Women Political Caucus” (NWPC) in July 1971 with Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisholm.¹¹⁶ The work of this organisation included identifying, recruiting, training, endorsing, and supporting women seeking public office. The organization endeavoured to improve the status of women by amplifying the voice of women in government. Throughout the late 1970s and the '80s, Steinem gave much of her time to political organizations and became an articulate advocate for the women's liberation movement. She participated in the founding of the Coalition of Labour Women Union, Voters for Choice, and Women Against Pornography, etc.¹¹⁷

At present there are some women who head the government in their own country and they are being shown in the following table:

¹¹⁵ Ibid.
¹¹⁷ Ibid.
# Table no.2.

**Women Heads of the Government.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Position Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Clarke</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa Diogo</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary McAleese</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micheline Calmy-Rey</td>
<td>Swiss Confederation</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Bachelet</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratibha Patil</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarja Halonen</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yulia Tymoshenko</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinaida Greceanji</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus in this way, the women in different parts of the world have come to the highest post and rule the country even though they were denied the voting rights in the beginning.
I.8. Political Participation of women in India:

Political participation of women in India is studied under two heads in this work. They were 1) during the pre-independence period and 2) during the post-Independence period. In the pre-independence period, women's political participation was mainly confined to the struggle for national independence. However, they also had their own share of struggle for enfranchisement which has already been mentioned. In the post-Independence period, they began to participate in every act of political activities, and participated in various elections conducted at different levels - local, state and national levels.

1.8.i. Political participation of women in pre-Independence Period:

During the British rule in India, the political participation of the Indian women was mainly confined to that of their participation in the freedom struggle. It can be noted that their participation in the national movement dates back as early as in 1883, when a number of women wrote to the Viceroy in support of the Ilbert Bill that would allow Indian judges to try cases involving Europeans. With that, women began to participate in every activities of political movement for independence. In 1889, four years after the Indian National Congress (INC) was founded, ten women attended its annual meeting.\(^{118}\) Later on, in 1890, Swarnakumari Ghosal, a woman novelist, and Kadambini Ganguly, the first woman in the British Empire to receive a B.A degree and one of the India's first female medical doctors, attended as delegates.\(^{119}\)

In 1905, during the British partition of the Province of Bengal, women joined men in protesting the division by boycotting foreign goods and buying only swadeshi goods, that is, goods produced in the province of Bengal. In this regard, Nirad Chaudhari recalled how his parents decided to put away the children's foreign made clothes and buy Indian made outfits. Later on in 1909, his mother took a sudden and violent dislike to a glass water pitcher that

\(^{118}\) Forbe, op. cit., p.122.  
^{119} Ibid.
survived the Swadeshi movement and ordered one of her sons to smash it.\textsuperscript{120} Mrs Annie Besant, an Irish lady born in England, who worked in the Theosophical Society in Madras and also the President of the Society in 1907, was one of the ladies who encouraged the Indian women to come out and join the national movement. She was the first President of the Women’s India Association (WIA). She started the Home Rule Movement in India and under its auspices established organisations throughout the country and distributed vast quantities of propagandist literature.\textsuperscript{121}

However, during the freedom struggle, the greatest participation of women was recorded in Gandhiji’s movement. In his first non-cooperation movement in the year 1920, women from different parts of the country joined the processions and propagated the use of khadi and charkha. In Bengal speaking to a group of women in August; Urmila Devi, the widowed sister of the Bengali Congress leader C.R.Das, urged women to be ready to leave their homes to serve the country. By November, 1,000 Bombay women were demonstrating against the Prince of Wales visit to India.\textsuperscript{122} Women like Basanti Devi accompanied her husband Deshbandhu Chittarranjan Das in his tour of Bengal and even asked women to boycott foreign goods.\textsuperscript{123} She also presided over the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chittagong in April 1922. In the same year Kasturbai Gandhi presided over a Gujarat Conference and appealed to women to take up spinning and wear khadi.\textsuperscript{124} At the All Indian Ladies Conference in Ahmedabad, 6,000 women listened to Bi Amma, the mother of Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali, leaders of the All India Khilafat Committee.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
Bi Amma urged women to enlist as Congress volunteers and, if their men folk were arrested, to join the picket lines and keep “the flag flying”.  

However, the participation of women in the first non-co operation movement were limited to those whose husbands, fathers, sons or brothers had already joined the struggle and were in the jail. It was in the civil disobedience movement or the salt Satyagraha movement of 1930 that one saw a far greater participation of women. In this movement, Mahatma in fact nominated the famous Poetess Mrs Sorojini Naidu to lead the raid on Dharasana Salt Works after he and Abbas Tyadji were arrested. She steadfastly kept her faith with him and raided the Dharasana Salt works and with this, salt Satyagraha spread in other parts of India. In Bombay, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Sorojini Naidu’s sister-in-law, and Avantikabai Gökhal were among the first women to defy the government monopoly of salt manufacturing and thus break the salt law. In April 1930, thousands of women strode down to the sea like proud warriors but instead of weapons, they bore pitchers of clay, brass, and copper; instead of uniforms, the simple sari of India. In another incident in Bombay, when the police raided the Bombay Congress House where salt pans had been prepared, they found their way blocked by Mrs Perin Captain, Mrs Jamnabehn, Ratanabehn and five other women volunteers. Soon Sewa Dal camps were opened in all parts of India to train women in the techniques of Satyagraha and in other political works. In the East, in Calcutta a Ladies’ Picketing Board was formed, and various women’s organisations such as the Nari Satyagraha Committee, Rashtriya Mahila Sangh, Nikhil Jayati Nari, etc. broke the salt

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126 Kaul, op.cit., p.65.
127 Ibid., p.67.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., pp.67-68.
law, and sent batches of women for picketing and courting arrest. Lord Irwin’s address to the Central Assembly on July 1930 was marked by picketing on the first day by a specially chosen group of twenty-seven women volunteers drawn from Lahore, Shimla and Ambala. Assembled outside the Central Assembly Hall, they waved little black flags on his arrival and chanted in unison “Irwin, go back”, and they went away singing national songs. Meanwhile, back in Lahore, Lado Rani Zutshi’s daughter, Manmohini Sehgal, the president of the student union, organised a series of student strikes and picketing at college gates and was ultimately arrested with some of her companions. However, it was in Gujarat, the home state of Mahatma Gandhi, where women’s participation was the largest and perhaps the most impressive. Special teams were started in the Sabarmati Ashram to train women Satyagrahis. Some like Gangabehn Vidya who had been a widow at the tender age of sixteen led a procession of 1200 women in Borsad on 21 January 1931. The procession was later lathi charged, and Gangabehn was severely beaten but she did not give up the tri-colour that she was holding and she was put to prison. In this way more than 80,000 people were arrested during the Salt Satyagraha and more than 17,000 of these were women. Writing from Naini jail, Pandit Nehru said: “I had a special feeling of satisfaction because of the activities of my mother, wife, and sisters, as well as many girl cousins and friends; and though I was separated from them and was in prison, we grew near to each other”. The role of Nehru women in the freedom movement was legendary. Not only Vijaya Laskmi and Krishna, but also the ailing Kamala Nehru was in the frontlines of leadership in Allahabad, organising processions, addressing meetings and picketing foreign clothes shops and liquor shops.

130 Ibid., pp.69-70.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid., p.71.
133 Ibid.
134 Varma, op.cit.
Apart from the women who participated in Gandhiji’s movement, there were also some women who could not accept the Gandhiji’s philosophy of non-violence. So they joined the violent revolutionaries. Prominent among them were women like Madam Bikaji Cama who organised the dispatch of revolutionary literature and arms of India from Paris. Santi Das and Sunita, schoolgirls from Commilla shot death Stevens, the District Magistrate of Commilla on December 14, 1931. They had presented him with a petition to allow a swimming competition and when he went to sign it, they both pulled revolvers from beneath their shawls and fired directly into his body.\(^{135}\) In February of the next year, another woman, Bina Das attempted assassination of Stanley Jackson the Governor of Bengal at the Calcutta University Convocation ceremonies. She was sentenced for seven years imprisonment. In Delhi, seventeen years old Roop Vati Jain was in charge of the bomb factory under Chandra Shekhar Azad. Aruna Asaf Ali, another “tigress of nationalism” went underground and organised countrywide resistance to colonial rule. Another woman, Usha Mehta played a stellar role with her daring underground broadcasts by operating an underground radio station. She broadcast the “congress news” in every evening precisely at 7:30 Pm. from August to November 13, 1942 till she and her colleagues were arrested and put to prison.\(^{136}\)

In this way, the Indian women resorted to both non-violent and revolutionary techniques, and participated in the freedom struggle till India got her independence on 15 August 1948. Thus the political participation of the women in India during this period was more or less confined to the political activity for national independence.


\(^{136}\) Kaul, op.cit.
1.8.ii. Political participation of women in Post-Independence period:

After India got Independence in the year 1948, the political participation of women took a new shape and now they participate mainly in the electoral politics of the country. The Constitution of the country granted equality to women by way of political rights. Against this backdrop, a number of women got entry into the corridor of Legislature through election, and few through nomination. However, it can be noted that apart from their involvement in the freedom struggle, there were some women who already were in the politics of the state when they were given voting rights for the first time in the year 1920.\textsuperscript{137} As such, in the elections for Legislative Councils, two women contested in the Madras Assembly. In 1926, Dr. Mathu Laskmi Reddy became the first women to be elected the Deputy-President of the Madras Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{138} In 1932 elections in the Provinces, many women contested and many of them were elected. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the first woman to serve in a cabinet in United Province.\textsuperscript{139} The Indian women not only were elected in the Legislative Councils, but they also become members of the Constituent Assembly to draft a Constitution for independent India. It had among its members, veteran women leaders like Sarojini Naidu, G Durgabai, Renuka Ray, and Hansa Mehta.\textsuperscript{140} Besides, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur was also a member of the Constituent Assembly’s Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights.\textsuperscript{141} After independence and under the new Constitution which was adopted in the year 1950, women of India began to enjoy socio-political rights similar with that of men. With this, they began to participate in every elections held at different levels.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p.28
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p.29
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p.30
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
The number of women who have occupied seats in Lok Sabha since the first general election held in the year 1951 is shown in the following table:

Table no. 3.
Number of women who contested and won Lok Sabha Elections
(1951-2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of seats</th>
<th>No. Of Contestants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1518</td>
<td>1473</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>2369</td>
<td>2302</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>2784</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>2439</td>
<td>2369</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>4620</td>
<td>4478</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>5574</td>
<td>5406</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>6160</td>
<td>5962</td>
<td>502</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>8699</td>
<td>8374</td>
<td>492</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>13952</td>
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<td>504</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>500</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>4648</td>
<td>4364</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>5435</td>
<td>5080</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.
The above table shows the number of women who contested and got elected in the Lok Sabha since the first general Lok Sabha Elections held in the year 1951. Comparing to the participation of women during the freedom struggle with that of their participation as candidates at the time of elections, their participation in the latter has been marginal. However, even though their representation was marginal, yet in India there was never an election where women were missing totally. In fact in India, one sees a number of women politicians who have created a niche in the politics of the country. Some of them have been Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Ms. Mayawati, Ms. Mamata Bannerjee, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, Ms. Jayalalitha, Mrs. Vasudhara Raje, Mrs. Shiela Dixit, Ms. Uma Bharati, etc.

I.9. Political participation of women in Manipur:

Political participation of women in Manipur can be studied under the following headings: 1) pre-British period, 2) British period (1891-1947), 3) post-independence to pre-Statehood (1947-1972) and 4) post statehood (1972 onward) period.

I.9.i. The pre-British period:

In ancient times before the British arrived, Manipur was a princely state ruled by a king. Since the state had a monarchical form of government, the common women had no place for direct participation in the political affairs and administration of the state. The only participation by the common women was the discussion they had about the social and political matters among themselves in their free time. Sometimes, they reported to the King about the injustices done by the officials of the King and they demanded the King to dispense justice. In this way, the participation by the women at this time was very much insignificant. However, in the olden days, there was a separate women’s court known as Patcha where all women related cases were taken up and settled.142

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In 33 A.D. the chief Queen named Laisana (Maharani) was a member of the Council of Ministers and she headed the women’s court called *Pacha*.143

In the hills of Manipur, each tribal village was looked after or governed by the village chief. Women did not have much political role in such an administrative set-up. They didn’t have a place in the village administration or in the village council. In the valley of Manipur, though the common women didn’t have any political role, the political role and status of women belonging to the royal family was quite considerable. Apart from queen Laisana, other women who took active political role were women like Maharani Linthoingambini who played a very significant role in the absence of her husband King Ningthou Khomba in 1443.144 It can be noted that the Maharaja went out for an expedition in a far off place and taking advantage of this, the Alka tribe tried to invade Manipur. They came with arms and weapons to attack. The queen after learning of this dressed up like a Maharaja and received the advancing tribe. After seeing her, the advancing tribe got disheartened and submitted to the authority of the Maharani thinking that she was the King. At night, they were given meals with intoxicants on the advice of the Maharani and they were easily captured.145 Among the Manipuri princesses also, mention may be made of Kuranga Nayani, the daughter of Gourshyam who was married to the King of Assam. After the death of her husband, she adopted a political strategy to protect her younger brother-in-law Lakmikant. In 1769, she killed the leader of Maomaria Revolt, Borbarauh and made her brother-in-law Lakmikant, the ruler of Assam.146 She was successful in her political manoeuvres and Lakmikant finally became the King of Assam. Another courageous Manipuri Princess was Shija Tampha. She was the daughter of King Bheigyachandra who got married to the king of Tripura, and was

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144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
popularly known there as Jandhabi Devi. After the death of her husband, she ruled Tripura as the political head during the period from 1783-1785. She won the title of Rajmala for her able administrative qualities. In this way, during the pre-British period, a number of Manipur women belonging to the royal family took an active political role in the state.

1.9.ii. The British period, (1891-1947):

During the British rule the common women of Manipur emerged as a strong political force. They fought against the British by coming together as a group. In fact, there were two landmark struggles put up by the women in Manipur. They were the First Nupi Lal in 1904 and the Second Nupi Lal in 1939. In the first Nupi Lal, women as a collective force, was able to fight against the order of the British Superintendent asking the men folk of Imphal to go to Kabaw Valley to bring teak wood, bamboo, etc. to rebuild the burnt house of the Assistant Superintendent. The agitation was a successful one.

About the Second Nupi Lal, the immediate causes were economic in nature. Yet, later on, it went on to give new impetus for wider socio-religious and political reforms inside the state. In this Second Nupi Lal or Women’s War, the demand for the introduction of democratic form of government in Manipur appeared for the first time in the later part of it. In short, we can say that during the British period, the women of Manipur began to assert their political rights and they gave a political direction to the people of Manipur.

In 1931, another woman called Rani Gaidiliu, from the Tamenglong District of Manipur emerged as a prominent freedom fighter and fought against the British government. She was also the leader of the socio-political and religious movement of the Zeliangrong tribe of Manipur. Because of her anti-British movement, the Government captured her after a military operation.

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147 Ibid.
lasting nearly one year and she was subsequently tried and sentenced to transportation for life.\footnote{150}

1.9.iii. Post-independence to pre-statehood (1947-1972):

Just after the independence of India and before Manipur got merged into the Dominion of India, the Maharaja of Manipur in response to the demand for the introduction of democratic government in Manipur adopted the Manipur State Constitution, 1947. The Act provided for a Legislative Assembly comprising 53 members to be elected on the basis of the principle of universal adult franchise. Accordingly, the election of the members of the state assembly was held in 1948. The women of Manipur residing both in the valley and in the hill areas participated in the election by casting their votes.

When Manipur got merged into the Dominion of India, the popular legislative assembly as well as the council of ministers which she had under the provisions of her 1947 Constitution Act was abolished. Later, when she became a Part C state within the Indian Union, she was not allowed to have an elected legislative assembly, and a government responsible to it. Against this backdrop, the statehood movement was initiated and women again participated in the movement throughout its various stages. The Manipuri Mahila Sanmelani organised a meeting on 20 July 1952 and passed a resolution demanding a legislative assembly and a fully responsible government for Manipur. The women of Manipur also formed a "Women’s Assembly Demand Committee (W.A.D.C.)" and April 21, 1960 was observed as "Women’s Assembly Demand Day". A big rally was also organised by thousands of women on that day at Imphal and they submitted a memorandum to the Chief Commissioner demanding legislative assembly. Later on, an "All Manipur Statehood Demand Committee, (AMSDC)" was formed on 31 March 1968.\footnote{151}

The committee organised a mass rally on 8 June 1968 at Imphal. Thousands of


\footnote{151} Ibid.
women also joined in the demonstrations, meetings, dharnas, etc. organised by the Committee during the period from October 1968 till the beginning of 1969. Again, on 26 April 1970, the "All Parties Statehood Demand Co-ordinating Body, (APSDCB)" was formed by six political parties in Manipur and hundreds of women participated in the civil disobedience movement started by the body from 17 August 1970.\textsuperscript{152}

In spite of the statehood movement, Lok Sabha, Territorial Council and Territorial Assembly elections were held in Manipur. Women participated in these elections and also fought for statehood at the same time. Thus, when the first Parliamentary and the Electoral College elections were held in the year 1951, apart from participating as voters, women also participated as candidates. Smt. Iswari Devi, wife of Late Bodhchandra Singh contested in the Parliamentary election from the Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency, but she failed to win the election. M.K. Binodini Devi, another Manipuri woman, contested from Khurai Constituency for the Electoral College and she won the elections by defeating three rival candidates.

In the 1957 Territorial Council elections, Smt. Sabi Devi who played a very active role in the Second Nupi Lal of 1939 contested from Wangkhei Kongba constituency but she was defeated. However, women gained a seat in the Territorial Council from 1957 to 1963 and in the Legislative Assembly from 1963 to 1969 by means of nomination, and not by means of an open election. In this way, the women of Manipur participated actively both in political movements and also in state and parliamentary elections.

1.9.iv. Post Statehood period (1972 onward):

After granting statehood with a legislative assembly of 60 members in 1972, the participation of women in the elections also increased. In the 1972 State Assembly Elections, R.K. Mukhara Devi from Keishamthong constituency and Lhingianing Gangte from Henglep constituency contested.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
However, they were defeated. The number of women candidates contesting increased further in 1980 Assembly elections. There were seven candidates in both the valley and hill constituencies. They were T. Kholly from Saikot Constituency, Athing Lhinjaning also from Saikot Constituency, A. Bimola Devi from Heingang Constituency, R.K Mukhara Devi from Keishamthong Constituency, Kh. Bilashani Devi from Bishnupur Constituency, A. Puinyabati Devi from Thangmeibang Constituency and W. Joymati Devi from Sagolband Constituency.\(^{153}\) Though the number of women candidates increased, none of them could get themselves elected. It was only in the year 1990 that a woman candidate, Mrs. Hangmila Shaiza, wife of the former Chief Minister Yangmaso Shaiza from Ukhrul Constituency, was elected for the first time in Manipur since the attainment of Statehood in the year 1972. In the same term, in the by-election held in Oinam Constituency after the death of the then sitting M.L.A, K. Bira Singh, his wife K. Apabi was elected. In the 1995 Assembly Election, the number of women candidates rose to eleven and none was elected. In the 2000 Assembly Election, there were ten but only one was elected. Mrs Leima Devi was elected and she became the first women Cabinet Minister of the State in the year 2002 since Independence. In 2007 Assembly Election, 12 female candidates contested but none got elected.

In the Parliamentary elections also, women contested the Lok Sabha elections from time to time. However, so far Kim Gangte has been the only women elected to the Lok Sabha from the State. She was elected from the Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency of Manipur in 1998. Regarding the local self-governing bodies, after the implementation of 73\(^{rd}\) and 74\(^{th}\) Constitutional Amendment, women in the valley has now started playing an important role in the grass root governing body.

In addition to their participation in the electoral politics of the state, women of Manipur during the second half of the last century initiated a very

important social movement in the form of *Nisha Bandh*. The term *Nisha* means intoxication or an intoxicant whereas *Bandh* means to stop or stall or prohibit.\footnote{Singh, Dr. S. Mangi. "Women and Popular Movements in the valley of Manipur (1950-1980), in *The Insight*, Vol.1, No.1, Jan-June, Center for Manipur Studies, Manipur University, 2996, p.54.} Though this movement was not a political movement in nature, it was one of the popular social movements where one could see active the participation of women. The focus of this movement was mainly on two things - (1) stopping the preparation of liquor and (2) catching hold of those who consume it and punishing them.\footnote{Ibid.} However, the beginning of the 1980s witnessed the decline of the *Nisha Bandh* movement and the movement got displaced by another more powerful, active and urgent movement for the protection of human rights of the people in the form of *Meira Paibi* movement. The origin of this movement lies in many factors. The late 1970s saw the re-emergence of insurgent organisations in the valley of Manipur. This was followed by the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. Under this Act, many innocent youths suffered and some of them were also killed.\footnote{Devi, Prof. Ksh. Bimola, “Women in Social Movements in Manipur” in Karna, M.N, (eds.), *Social Movement in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1998, p.77.} As a result the womenfolk in the valley started to guard their sons/husbands from the harassment of the police and paramilitary forces by holding torch in their hands throughout the night. These women was came to be known as *Meira Paibis*.\footnote{Ibid.} *Meira* means a torch and *Paibi* means the holder (women) of the torch.\footnote{Ibid., p.81.} Every locality has their own unit of *Meira Paibis* and whenever any problem affecting the people of the locality arises, these women will come out and be on guard to protect the people. They are very much active at present.

In addition to this, in Manipur, one saw a new movement developing after the Indo-Naga ceasefire started in the year 1997. In this movement the women of Manipur were divided into two groups – 1) the women in the valley...
of Manipur and 2) the Naga women in the hill areas of Manipur. The Nagas wanted a unified political unit for them whereas the people in the valley of Manipur, especially the Meiteis and the other non-Naga groups, wanted to protect the territorial integrity of Manipur. As a result, a mass movement for the protection of the territorial integrity and unity of its peoples emerged. It was mainly spearheaded by the “All Manipur United Clubs’ Organisation, (AMUCO)”. The greatest participation by the masses including women in this movement was in the “Great June 18 Uprising” which took place in the year 2001. It took place in the aftermath of the Central Government’s pronouncement on 14 June 2001 of the extension of ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) without territorial limits. The news evoked a widespread opposition from various voluntary and social organisations and people at large, specially the Meiteis settling in the valley of Manipur. As a result, 83 different social and voluntary organisations under the leadership of AMUCO called for a 66 hour general strike from the midnight of June 15 till 6 pm of June 18, in protest against the Centre’s decision. The general strike was called in spite of indefinite prohibitory orders under Section 144 Cr PC issued in three districts viz., Imphal West, Imphal East and Churachandpur District from the late evening of 14 June as a precautionary measure following the announcement of the extension of ceasefire. On the third and last day of the general strike, that is, on 18 June, hundreds of thousands of protestors including women and children from various parts of the state joined the protest. The angry protestors burnt down the historic Manipur Legislative Assembly building, official residence of Speaker, Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (I) office, Manipur People’s Party office, and Manipur State Congress Party office, etc. In this incident, 14 persons were killed and scores

160 Ibid.
including women were wounded in the CRPF firing.\textsuperscript{161} On the other hand, the Nagas insisted on a unified political unit for the Nagas. As such, many Nagas including Tangkhul women in Ukhrul District organised a peace rally and expressed their full support to the extension of ceasefire without territorial limits and also urged the Central Government to bring peaceful and amicable solution to the vexed Naga issue. In this way, the nature of the political participation by the women of Manipur took a new dimension in the wake of Naga issue and extension of cease-fire in Manipur, thereby dividing the women of Manipur. Yet, though they were divided in this movement, they come together in other movements, especially in the movement and agitation for the removal of Armed Forces Special Power Acts (1957) or AFSPA from the state of Manipur. For instance, the agitation against the AFSPA in the form of fast unto death launched by a lone woman, Irom Sharmila Chanu in the year 2001 in the aftermath of Malom Massacre, was supported by various civil organisations in the hills of the state including the Tangkhul women’s organisations.

**I.10. Conclusion:**

Though Political participation is considered as one of the most important elements of democracy, it was denied to women for many years. Women in different parts of the world had to struggle hard for getting this right. Once they started enjoying this crucial political right, their participation in the different political activities of their respective countries got facilitated to a far greater extent. Not only they participated in elections but their involvement in various other socio-political problems affecting the society also got increased.

It may also be noted there has been a significant difference in the struggle for political rights by women in the west and women in countries of Asia and Africa which were under foreign rule. While the former started their struggle mainly in the form of demand for their right to vote, the latter’s was

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
mainly in the form of their involvement in movements for national independence.

Regarding the Indian women, though there were some women who were concerned with women's suffrage, their efforts did not so much result in an intense movement. Their involvement in political activities was mainly in the national movement for independence, particularly under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. After independence, the women of India have come to enjoy political rights and liberties at par with their male counterparts under the provisions of the Constitution. This has given tremendous impetus to women's political participation not only in terms of their participation in electoral politics but also in terms of their involvement in the social, economic and political affairs of the country.

About the women of Manipur, they have always been playing a very significant role in the socio-economic life of the society. Politically also, history of the state is replete with instances of women playing a significant role in the political affairs of the state. During the British period, they not only launched agitations against the British successfully but also participated in the socio-political reform movements inside the state during the 1930s and the middle of the 1940s. With the adoption of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, they enjoyed all the political rights and liberties which men did and there was no bar on their participation in elections for the state legislative assembly, either as voters or candidates.

With the merger of Manipur into India, the people of Manipur suffered a setback so far as their political rights and liberties were concerned because they were denied for a considerable period of time the right to have a legislative assembly comprising their own elected representatives and a government responsible to it. As such, though they participated in all the Lok Sabha and the Territorial Council and Territorial Assembly elections, they at the same time had to struggle for long for the basic political right, i.e. the right to self
government. The grant of statehood has fulfilled their demand for the right to self government, and has facilitated their participation in electoral politics of the state in a more significant and meaningful manner. However, their involvement in the social-political issues concerning the overall interests of the state and its people continues.