Chapter-I

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The inquiry attempts to study the "Political Awareness and Political Participation of Women" in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

The research topic chosen is relevant and also important, especially in the context of the growing demand for women's empowerment in politics and against the backdrop of the weakening of constitutional democracy in India in recent years.

Women are being increasingly viewed as an important segment of our political society like the one in which we live, as they are getting increasingly proactive regardless of their household duties and other constraints. Therefore, a study of women's participation in politics in a transitional period like ours is called for. The political behaviour of women can be studied through certain basic concepts, namely, politicisation, political participation and political socialization. Politicisation is a process of drawing into political activity or other sort of participation in formal activities such as discussion of politics or of political matters. This is an important process of politicization, particularly for an Indian woman. Political participation can be understood as voluntary rather than coerced activities of persons in political affairs such as voting, membership and activities connected with political groups, political parties and political
bodies during local or State Assembly poll campaigns. Political socialization is a process by which a person acquires his or her view of the political world, its processes, events and phenomena, actors and structures - through the process of learning. Political socialization processes operate at both the individual and the community levels. Politicization and participation of women in a country will necessarily depend on the overall political situation.

In India, there are certain factors in the situation which favours politicization and participation of women in political life. According to the available materials, the position and status of women in Hindu society was better in the vedic period. Women played a significant role in social and political life. Women enjoyed freedom in religious matters. Widow remarriages existed in the society. Girls were given education. Even during the period of Samhitas and Upanishads, women enjoyed freedom. Girls attended public meetings. Gradually, the situation changed. They began to feel that politics and education would not suit them. But in the Epic period women played a dominant role. Women went to the battle field along with their husbands and fought heroically with their enemies. The reformist religious sects such as Buddhism, Jainism and Saivism gave a greater freedom to women in all spheres of life. In later days, the situation changed radically. Owing perhaps to foreign invasion, child marriages came into existence. Widow- marriages were not permitted. Purdah custom came into existence among Muslims.
During the British period, women did not enjoy much freedom in education, employment and in other matters. Sati Sahagamanam and child marriages existed. Widow remarriages were not allowed. Efforts to abolish social evils were made by reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Daynanda Saraswathi, Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu etc. Later in the Gandhian era, women were encouraged by Gandhiji. Many of them participated in the freedom struggle. Gandhiji’s emphasis on the socio-economic and political participation of women contributed much to their uplift. The Government of India Act of 1935 gave women more political rights. Franchise was also given to them. Radhabai Subbarayam was the first Indian woman to be a member of the Council of States in 1938, and Smt. Renuka Roy was the first woman to sit in the Central Legislative Assembly.

Since Independence, the Constitution of India has guaranteed to all citizens the right to equality of status. It also provided opportunities for education, employment and welfare of women. Women secured reservations in the constitution. So women’s position and status has improved in social and political life. Women’s mental capacity is in no way inferior to that of men. So she has the right to participate in all the activities along with man. At present, we have women Ministers, we have women who have made a mark as Parliamentarians, Members of Legislative Assemblies, Doctors, Lawyers,
actresses, teachers and social workers. India ranks second amongst the nations of the world as regards the political influence and position secured by women.

The Thesis is an attempt to focus attention on the political awareness and participation of women in Guntur district. Political participation is necessary for women so that they can formulate policies and programmes which are useful for them in society. The thesis aims, therefore, at presenting the existential realities of Guntur district. It also attempts to draw the attention of Indian women to the facts recorded here.

Though the study of women in politics is of recent origin, it has acquired greater importance in a democratic society like ours. Man and woman are inseparable. Both of them are needed for the existence of the society. Naturally man is superior to woman in physical strength and work output. But it does not mean that man is superior to woman in every aspect. Man and woman have equal power. Since ancient times, man has been swayed by superiority complex over his strength. Now changes are taking place. A new woman is emerging on the Indian scene. Women's social, economic and political awareness is growing to reshape India's social, economic and political structure.

India is called 'Bharatmata' and also 'Mother India'. It shows that woman is given importance in India. At present women are in a good position. Mrs. Gandhi ruled the country as Prime Minister and she was acknowledged as a
capable leader at the International level. Women's leadership can be seen at the
district and State level also. The success of democracy depends on women's
awareness and participation in different areas of human activity including
legislative bodies. One can gauge the participation of women in politics by their
voting strength and the representation in the Parliament, in the State Legislative
Assemblies and in the decision-making bodies at the local level.

In a vast country like India, with differences in geographic, economic and
social conditions one would expect a great deal of variation from region to
region, State to State and district to district. To get a clear picture of the
participation of women in the whole of India several studies will be required at
different levels (and different regional levels). So this study is mainly to inquire
into the nature and extent of the political participation of women of the Guntur
district in Andhra Pradesh.

Political participation is generally considered to be symbolic of the
extensiveness to which democratic ideals are applied. It includes a dimension
which, in fact, lies outside the scope of constitutional activity. In this respect,
mass protests have become a conventional – if not legal – form of participation
and, needless to say, have engendered mixed reactions from specialists in public
affairs, the administration and the public at large. The new era dawned for
women from the Gandhian period. Women were encouraged by Mahatma
Gandhi to participate in politics. Women participated actively in the freedom
struggle and they sacrificed their life for the country. They showed heroism in the freedom struggle. Throughout the Indian history, however, there has been social and political consciousness to encourage the liberalization of attitudes to the status and position of woman. In recent years, the social status, political status and the opinions of women are fast changing because of higher education and opportunities for employment in occupations of higher prestige. Women are now influencing the decision-makings in a democratic country.

Politics is not the most important factor. Politics is needed for the exercise of freedom in the country. Since Independence political awareness has been growing among women. The constitution provides the rights for woman. Through education, men and women are aware of the importance of knowing what is happening in the country. Everyday, news reporters are playing an important role in collecting information to publish in the newspapers to satisfy the needs of women and public with enough political information people can influence decision-making. The citizen's right to vote is an indication of political participation in a democratic country. Discussion with friends, relatives and neighbours about political matters is another indicator of political participation. Attending public meetings is also an indicator of political participation.

By the growth of democratic politics, caste has emerged as an important instrument in the business of vote collection. Caste consciousness is essentially an in-group feeling and, though the rigidity of expression in rituals, dress and
behaviour as well as the religious fervour supporting it are on the wane, the consciousness of a large majority of our people is still determined by their caste. However, democracy stands for equality. The constitution has given equal rights to every citizen in a democratic country. The democratic equality is meant to secure equality in citizenship for all citizens. Men and women and all the castes are equal before democracy. But special rights have been given to the scheduled castes and Tribes, Backward Classes and also women reservations. The right to equality of status and opportunity in education, public employment and participation in political life were guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution. Articles 14, 15 and 16 ensure “equality before the law”. The urge for equality and liberty has been the motive force of many revolutions. Women, literates or illiterate, are today working with men in every field, organised and unorganised sectors and in the entire occupations. Today, as never before in history, women’s organizations, associations and clubs make clear that no nation can afford to neglect women whatever may be their traditional attitudes and customs.

Free elections are a reality in India. They secure for the electors both the freedom of choice from among competing candidates who stand for differing programmes and policies, and the secrecy of the ballot. The fourteen general elections that Independent India has so far had, almost at regular intervals since 1952, have demonstrated that inspite of their poverty and widespread illiteracy and difficulties in communication, the people in general have been able to
exercise robust common sense in electing candidates of their choice and thus
exercise their supreme authority in setting up a democratic, responsible
Government. India has been well known for the high percentage of voter
participation in all the elections. Even in the last general elections, the voters
participation is high especially in Andhra Pradesh. The Television and the
newspapers are a powerful vehicles of communication in India; especially in
Guntur district.

New Ways of Looking at the Issue

Women's participation in politics is without doubt an important step
towards social equality, economic development and national and International
peace. But opinions differ regarding the nature of participation and the
indicators used to measure it. Owing to the lack of a gender-sensitive non-
discriminatory approach, the relevance of this issue is often obfuscated by the
absence of formal barriers to women's participation and this tends to make us
overlook certain social realities. If rights are not utilised, and if the process of
development continues to adversely affect women, then, as Kasturi and
Mazumdar point out, it is necessary to look for hidden barriers to women's
political participation.

In India, as elsewhere, an important thrust of feminist social science has
been to make women visible and audible in history and society, and to highlight
their contribution to society. This endeavour is at least partially in response to
what is characterised as a historical patriarchal conspiracy designed to exclude women's contribution to civilisation and society from due recognition. Just as society's legitimacy myths, written historical records and the production of authoritative self-knowledge, have all been controlled by the male, politics has traditionally been viewed as a male-domain. Not many analysts have undertaken intensive studies bearing upon women's role in politics. Specially of women from the lower classes, and fewer still have looked deep into the issues related to women's participatory potential and the empirical reality. As a result, not much informative analysis is available about women in politics especially from earlier periods. This does not prove the fundamental inability of women to be political rather, it only catalogues the kind of prejudice and deprivation with which women are confronted.

Influence of Social Hierarchy

Women's political participation has been studied is the treatment of women as a uniform, homogenous group rather than as differentiated by caste, class, religion and political agenda. Moreover, even within this homogenous group, attention has been focussed on a number of upper-class women who have played important roles in the national movement, excluding reference to the role that women have played in peasants and workers struggles. It is important to recognise that different classes are marked by variegated interests and that these are reflected in the difference in demands. Women have to be recognised as a
category within each class, with many common, and many different problems and objectives.

Position of Women

As mentioned earlier, in the more standard analyses of women's political participation, the indication of the utilisation of political rights has been assumed to be voting behaviour candidacy, and holding of public offices. These indicators, though not the only ones relevant to the inquiry, express some important changes in the nature of women's political participation in recent years.

Generally in India, registration and participation of women as voters are higher than those of men. In the recent past, records show that there has been an increase in the percentage of women who vote, and such participation is also contingent on the mobilisation efforts made by political parties and the general awareness among the community of the importance of women exercising their franchise. Again, a note of caution is required, lest it be assumed that political participation always indicates political awareness on the part of the women voter. Usually, however, countries that do hold regular elections show an improved recognition of women as a political constituency and parties and candidates tend to adopt pro-women stances and appeal specifically to women's votes, especially at the time of elections. This becomes very evident when we look at consecutive elections in the Indian context.
As of now, all political parties have women's wings controlled by women. They work as a pressure group in the party, and usually consist of two groups. The first consists of women who aspire to participate in the higher political hierarchy and join the women's cells within their parties as a first step for entry into the political realm. The other category of women are those already successfully established in the political hierarchy and assigned executive status in these cells to give credibility to the women's wing, to make the base of the party amongst women sound and lasting. At present, national and regional parties are unanimous about projecting a liberal and progressive image for the obvious reason of impressing a vital social segment. However, women's organisations have been given power and have virtually a say in decision-making and important policy matters. These organisations have brought women together and provided a common platform to strive for the betterment of fellow women as well as an opportunity for training for political status and they have also become breeding grounds of rivalry and jealous competition amongst women aspiring for power.

At the mid-point of the United Nation decade for women 'Equality', development and peace, Indians are now in a position to see that the world's conference for the International year of women in Mexico, 1975 stimulated a world-wide movement which has steadily United Nation decade for women - to improve the overall status of women by eliminating inequalities between men.
and women in education, employment, nutrition and health and participation in economic and political decision-making, and to integrate them at every level in the process of national planning for development.

Among the various types of women heads of households in developing countries, widowhood remains the structural position to which the greatest institutional support is accorded. An understanding of the cultured settings in a country is important before one decides to make studies on the evolution of women's status. As a result of the cultural patterns existing in country women may or may not undertake particular types of income generating activities. The level of education of women is an important indicator for the understanding of the present and future status of women in a country. However, the fact that women are restricted either by choice or social customs to particular streams of education is not clearly brought out by census data. The International women's year in 1975 in many ways marked an important turning point in the study of women in India and other Asian countries.

Women have not always and everywhere been excluded from religious rites and relegated to an inferior status. The status of women in early agricultural societies was relatively high. It is being increasingly realised that an important step in improving the position of all women in India is to break the

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vicious circle of poverty and high fertility. Though educational and occupational opportunities are providing women with new roles outside the home, their social position in the family, remains largely unchanged, for some women because the system of arranged marriage reasserts the authority of caste norms and the obligation of conformity to the traditional image of woman as wife-mother with low ritual status. It seems most unlikely that the requirement of dowry will be discontinued with the education and employment of women. The problem of dowry is ruled in the system of arranged marriage and, while it may provide the bride with security and facilitate upward social mobility, it also encourages a view of woman as a commodity with a market price that varies according to her education and complexion and the boy's occupation.

Women are actively participating in the planning and implementation of various national programmes at all levels. However, this number has not become large enough to have made the notion of our economically independent women socially accepted. Thus, though for some women, the choice to be economically independent is open social pressures tell otherwise. Thousands of women have been trained in civil defence services, Health, Education, Agriculture and animal husbandry all in organizing various social welfare services. Their practical knowledge of vital needs of the community are of immeasurable value and material assistance in the success of developmental schemes. They are now finding fresh outlets for their abilities. "Enlightened
woman is the Torch Bearer of the Nation*; seems to be their motto. Social workers under respective state social welfare Boards have undertaken multi-purpose programmes in the stupendous task of women's upliftment. Singularity devoted to the service of village community sex, these selfish less social workers hold an important place in the field of social service and are thus strengthening our social organizations. To say that women have not played their dominating role in national reconstruction during the last decades would be compromising with the truth. Our man-dominated society has yet to recognize this reality. women's participation in our socio-economic development has been an integral part of India's normal life and activity.2

In a traditional society, it is only through women workers that the problems of rural women can be solved. In some of the states where certain agricultural activities are carried out by women, education to the male members of the family does not result in acceptance of the improved practices. Involvement of the local women by women workers is essential. Thus, it is necessary to have a net work of women workers in order to have an impact of new farm and home technology on the lines of millions of people living in rural areas. There are many formal and informal groups existing at the village level. The Panchayat, Mahila Mandal, Charcha-Mandal and youth clubs are some of the groups involving women in their activities. A study conducted by Gupta

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(1974) to find out administrative and social role perception of women panchayat members revealed that even though the women were co-opted or elected to the panchayats, they were not playing enough role effectively. Some of them were only puppets in the hands of the Sarpanches. Still, there is a need for awakening the women and making them understand and appreciate their role in national development and reconstruction:

Another organisation involving women is the Mahila Mandal. Several government and voluntary agencies are working through Mahila Mandals for the rural women and children. However, these clubs have not been very successful in mobilising the local people and the panchayats. Extension workers fail to elicit the desirable response from members of the so called Mahila Mandals that exist merely on paper. The active clubs are more of "Bhajan Groups" than clubs where educational activities are carried out. Some of the reasons why Mahila Mandals have not been successful are:-

1. Involvement in the household activities specially during harvest season leaves women very little time to participate in outdoor activities;

2. Location of the building for activities of the Mahila Mandals is not suitable to the women, so women are reluctant to leave the neighbourhood and go to a far-off place for the meeting.

3. Activities undertaken or demonstrated are not of interest to all the women since it is a mixed group.

4. Lack of proper communication skill to handle the groups by the extension worker.
5. Membership fee charged in some Mahila Mandals discourages women from joining the club.

6. Dominance of one caste in the Mandal deters other caste members from joining.³

**Women's participation in National Development**

The women in India today suffer from deprivations as they continue to suffer from illiteracy, bad health, poverty and subjugations at various levels and there is a lack of participation in the political life at the various levels of our nation's life. This picture prevails everywhere in the world, excepting in a very few socialistic countries.⁴

Fortunately, India has had a long tradition of women's independence permitting them to freely work in the field of social, economic, political and religious performances. With an object to raise the women's status and position in the society the great sons of India initiated several social, political, economic and religious movements various social and political organizations by their movements at various levels promoted the cause of the women's emancipation in Indian constitution and have attempted to restore the position and status of women in our society. Women in India who have made their work in various fields of activities have acquired eminence side by side with the men.

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In India, in the rural areas, they still continue to suffer from various deprivations, probably due to the fact that women have not sincerely, actively and emotionally worked to raise the position and status of women in the rural tribal and Basti areas. Time has come to give serious attention to the uplift of the women in these areas. A concerted effort has to be made to bring them within the folds of:

1) Panchayat and Municipal activities
2) Developmental activities
3) Organizational activities
4) Educational, social and religious activities
5) Economic activities

To achieve the above objectives the existing women's voluntary organization and semi-official organizations have to be initiated the cultural State Governments have to evolve social Legislation and administrative machinery to make them effective. Government efforts of the individuals and voluntary organizations have to play an important role. For this, the educated men and women have to assume a dynamic role in this changing era. A separate Ministry for women and social welfare was the Prime Minister's gift to women. Even the Chief Minister's gift to women. The election Manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party & Telugu Desam Party has a section on women which states that the party will fight the reprehensible practice of dowry and attendant social evils.
initiate a big programme to improve the educational status of women and improve the economic opportunities for them.

Vajpayee has tried to give women important political positions. It is ironic that while there was no woman cabinet minister other than herself in Indira Gandhi's tenure, one of the first things Rajiv Gandhi did was to give cabinet rank to Mohsina Kidwai, Union Minister for Health and Social Welfare. Margaret Alva, formerly the convenor of the Mahila congress which Rajiv Gandhi started in 1983 while he was General Secretary of the All India Congress(I) Committee, is the minister of state for parliamentary affairs. Ram Dulari Sinha is minister of state for home affairs, and Chandra Sekhar heads the ministry for women's affairs. By selecting Nazma Heptullah to be the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Bibi Amarjit Kaur as the Joint Secretary in the All India Congress Committee and retaining Rajendra Kumari Bajpai as General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, Rajiv Gandhi has shown a determination to involve men in party affairs as well as in the difficult task of nation building. Why Women? This is a question one could well ask? There are now 66 women in Parliament, 42 of them in the Lok Sabha and 24 in the Rajya Sabha. The congress had fielded 38 women in the last Lok Sabha elections and 36 of them won. While there are more women in Parliament there are likely to be more women in the Legislative Assemblies.
The most important step taken by the Government is creating a Welfare Ministry exclusively for women. But it is only the results which will fulfill them or shatter hopes. Women have a very important role to play not only in the IPS, but also at the police station level where ordinary, uneducated rural women come to report. The presence of a woman in a police station is important so that the female complainant can pour out her grievances to the reporting officer. Having women duty officers in metropolitan cities, would go a long way in encouraging women to report their plight without hesitation.

The speed will be much faster as can be seen by the initial steps taken by the Prime Minister, but the cause will have to be the women themselves. The Government has never discouraged women from coming into the limelight but Vajpayee has a unique opportunity before him to help the cause of women. One important factor is that he is a man: Indira Gandhi as a woman did something for women and it may have seemed charismatic. As a man, Rajiv Gandhi has a plus factor. If he does something for women he is only fulfilling his duties as Prime Minister, and will be seen as a large hearted man who wants to do something for the oppressed sex. Women obviously believe that it is time for them to enter politics. Undoubtedly, a large number of women presently sit in the Assemblies throughout the country. Social problems have generally been neglected in the Legislative Assemblies and it seems that women have generally not been keen or persistent exponents of women's causes, but with the influx of women in politics
a large number of their social workers. Parliament might concern itself with basic and human problems. The bill on dowry for instance took a long time to be passed and even then the amendments to it were not good enough for most of the women's groups; similarly, bills on social legislation have gathered more dust than interest in Parliament. The women in the eighth Lok Sabha are educated and articulate, many of them with long years of social work behind them. Most of them, unlike the older generation of women, are not professional politicians. There are actresses, doctors, social workers, teachers and academics although it must be said that many of them entered politics on the Bahu-beti-Biwi (daughter-in-law, daughter, wife) bandwagon. For instance, the Bahus of Lakpati Tripathi and Uma Sankar Dixit: Chandra Tripathi and Sheela Dixit respectively; the wives of the Chief Ministers of Orissa and Bihar: Jayanthi Patnaik and Manorama Singh, Kishori Sinha is the wife of Bihar leader Satyendra Narayana Suha and many others.

The public life of Sonia Gandhi had begun. Sonia Gandhi has mother's duty. Now with Indira Gandhi, no longer there, she is the one to be concerned with the larger Nehru family. When the Jawaharlal Nehru award for International understanding had to be given, it was Sonia Gandhi who made frantic phone calls to trace the various members of the Nehru family and invite them for the function. While India had a woman at the helm for 16 years, women Ministers had rarely been given cabinet rank, Mohsina Kidwai in Rajiv
Gandhi's cabinet is the third woman in India to have been made a cabinet minister. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur in the fifties and Indira Gandhi in the sixties were the other two. Ironically enough, a woman Prime Minister did not have any woman minister other than herself.

However, in recent years political participation has become a term of interest especially in India, United States and in many European countries where we find extensive studies in the field while this subject is relatively unexplored field in the east. The concept of participation includes political activities such as campaign activities during an election, discussing politics, influencing others, distributing party pamphlets, attending political meetings and making monetary contributions. Political participation may be defined as all the behaviour through which people directly express their political opinions. Political participation is made up of these major dimensions; (1) conventional political participation which includes activities such as talking about politics, joining a political party, taking active part in campaign and being a candidate for public.

Election time is a time for a redefinition of the self and society. It is an exercise in the mobilization of sentiment. Political participation, generally, considered to be symbolic of the extensiveness to which democratic ideals are applied, also includes a dimension which in fact, lies outside the scope of constitutional activity. In this respect mass protests have become a conventional - if not legal - form of participation, and needless to say, have engendered mixed
reactions from specialists in public affairs, the administration and the public at large. Political expression and issues appear to be coming closer to the felt anxieties of the people.

International data on female work participation rate also show that the highest participation rate is found in the least developed countries, the rates decline with increase in income and begin to rise again after a certain level of per capita income; but even in the most developed countries they never reach the levels of the underdeveloped countries. While the training and education programme for women should be career oriented, women should be trained for those careers where they can combine their two roles of home maker and worker. The woman who helps her husband to build up his career develops the country. There are opportunities now for the joint participation of men and women in preparing local level action plans which can help to sensitize each other on gender-related priorities and problems. Starting with the S.N.D.T. University in Mumbai, founded by Maharishi Karve, there are now five women Universities which out do autonomous women's studies centres. There are many excellent non-governmental centres.

Women's organisations increased in number with the increase in political parties. Some of them adopted a policy of collaboration with the Government accepting its assistance to provide the much needed social services to women and handicapped sections of society. Such organisations tended to reject
organised political action and agitational methods of pressing women's demands before the government and the public. Other groups became increasingly associated with political parties and adopted agitation. Confrontation and political action as methods for redressing grievances and getting public attention. Despite the participation of women in both types of movement they neglected to raise women's issues and quite often were led, or guided, by men. As a result, even in the labour movement when the demand for labour legislation for women workers was raised, they did not fight for the rights of women at all levels. This lapse has been acknowledged by more progressive parties and trade union leaders in later years. Amongst the politically affiliated organisations, the All India Women's Conference represents the trend of non-confrontation while the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), which was formed in 1954, represents the more agitational approach despite occasional lapses into a 'welfare orientation' body. Initially, the All India Women's Conference was also fairly militant it fought to get the Hindu code Bill passed despite stiff opposition in the early years of independence - but in the post-1952 period, it adopted what Mazumdar calls a 'deputationist' approach and social work and involvement with development work became its major preoccupation and it concerned itself with issues of health, education, child care and family planning.

Increasing participation of women was evident both in the formal electoral process and in the popular protests against the deteriorating condition
of Indian society (the movement against the Emergency as well as the price rise demonstrations). Although ideologically fragmented into many groups, increasingly there was a tendency among organisations to unite on issues (Muslim Women's Bill, anti-sati demonstrations). They were united in their efforts to make the wider polity understand that the question of women's equality was a sexual and not a social one. There was also a growing awareness even among the anti-political organisations (e.g. YWCA) of the need for direct political action and concrete political positions on social and political issues.

Despite these developments, the current situation is marked by a decline in the sex ratio, high mortality rates, low levels of literacy and employment for women.

It is noticed that most women who have come into politics have done so with the active support of their families and if the families are powerful enough women are able to sustain their position in the political arena. Family backing protects woman from harassment from male colleagues. Because of their family status, men are forced to tolerate certain women and accommodate their views, which implies that without these advantages, women would not be taken seriously. The women also felt that family support enabled them to enter politics. The family can free women from domestic responsibility and help them in their political work when required. If members of the family are politically
influential it makes the process of getting tickets and fighting elections much easier.

The cards of tradition, religion and caste are all stacked in favour of men, whereas, lack of legitimacy, the burden of alternative prescribed commitments and the lack of advantage of wealth are on the side of women. In the light of the experiences of these women, it becomes evident that reservation is crucial for their effective participation in politics. The question is not of power alone but also of the need to legitimise women's presence in the public sphere. That is why visibility becomes so important. Women in significant numbers would make a difference - they would speak out and, what is more important, be heard on issues related to their sex. They may be able to change laws in their favour and present a legitimate female perspective. Women in India today are agitating at the doors of Parliament, demanding reservation for 33 per cent of the seats. The issue at stake here is more complex than it may seem. It is not only a question of a few more or fewer women in the corridors of Parliament and legislatures but also a response to the fact that a large section of society has historically been denied its legitimate share in the exercise of political power. Power that ultimately determines its destiny. In this demand for reservation, women are also raising their voice against a system which has consistently denied them space by harnessing the forces of tradition in order to marginalise and trivialise their role. After all, what is democracy if 50 per cent of the population have little or no say in it? To ignore such demands is to fail to understand and come to
terms with the forces of history. Reservation of seats for women in Panchayats has shown that it has tremendous implications, not merely in terms of the number of women entering the public arena and holding public office, but also in terms of the social, economic and political impact that these reservations have had for the total system. It is for these reasons that women are increasingly demanding political roles for themselves. They recognise that constitutional guarantees do not ensure effective participation and that these cannot ensure political equality. Hence, the need to gain entry into political institutions and in the functioning of the state, and to share control over the power the state exercises. This alone would lead to a situation where women are able to reverse the existing situation which has consistently been against their interests, and bring about the necessary changes in policy and the social structure so as to ensure a more equitable and humane order.

Men have been hostile to the idea of an increasing number of women coming into politics and of sharing power with them and it was well known that despite the electoral commitment of all parties on the issue of 33 per cent reservation for women in Assemblies and Parliament this Bill would not be adopted easily. Yet, the subversive and virulent opposition to the Reservation Bill has come as a thunderbolt. It is interesting to see in what kind of political environment women are making this demand. The debate on reservation in the press shows how different sections have responded to the issue. As Mrinal
Pande points out, one can clearly see the hostility of some sections through the responses of the media and certain politicians. Despite the lip-service paid to the issue of women's participation the attitudes of most people in the game have not charged and there is a clear contradiction between what they profess and what they actually believe and have been practising. Pande shows how the media either ignores or is openly hostile to women's attempts to focus on the demand for reservation.

Women have been fighting for the cause for women's political participation for decades now. It is a well known fact that men do not want to share power with women. The criterion in giving a ticket is always; 'will she win, does she have funds, will she assert herself'? Do all men who fight elections win? And how many of them make it on their own without a godfather? When the 73rd Amendment gave reservation for women at the local level, there were over ten lakh women who were elected as Panchayat members all over the country. Why can't that formula be replicated at the national level too? Women support reservation as in the present situation there is no choice. But this has to be looked at not as the solution but as a step forward. Once women come out in the open they should be able to fight equally. It is clear that 33 per cent reservation for women does not mean that the rest are reserved for men. It should be made clear that 33 per cent is the minimum that should be given to women and it should in no way set a limit. It is essential in order to implement
development politics and to cope with problems like the feminisation of poverty. With 33 per cent reservation politicians will have to take women's perspectives into consideration, but along with this there should be an attempt at political education, training programmes and orientation workshops so that women can fulfil their political responsibilities in a better fashion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies on political participation of women in India and for that matter in Asia, are only of recent origin. A brief review of some of the available literature on this subject is done here.

1) In the "Indian Womanhood Today" - Margaret E. Cousins (Allahabad, 1941) says - In 1900 A.D., the general condition of Indian womanhood may be said to have been at its lowest ebb. By 1940 A.D., the tide of social, educational and political honour for women had risen so high that India now has eighty women members in the legislatures of its combined provinces and states, and thus ranks third amongst the nations of the world as regards the political influence and position secured by its women.

He says the entry of Mrs. Annie Besant into Indian Politics in 1914 galvanised new and increased national consciousness in both men and women. Today women's political position gives India the second place in the world for the number of women in the legislatures of the countries - the United States of
America being first, with one hundred and forty eight in its State Legislatures and its senate. He further says India is a paradox, in the whole and in all its parts.

2) In the “Indian Women” – Devaki Jain (Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1975) - says that Early marriage for girls, so common in Indian society, has at least some connection with Traditional Hindu values and norms. Early marriage and early motherhood, apart from having important demographic consciousness, also hinder the full participation of women in certain important fields of social and cultural life. There are significant differences between the different religious groups in the age at marriage for domestic roles. It appears that social legislation has not had a very significant effect in raising the age at marriage giving as a good example of the divergence between law and custom, which is so common in all human societies. But when the Mughals came to India in the 16th century, the situation improved to some extent: Though the situation did not change completely.

3) In the India’s Educated Women” : Options and constraints - Rhoda Lois Blumberg and Leela Dwaraki - (Hindustan Publishing Corporation [India], Delhi-1980) - says women whose economic status left them, no choice but to work were still faced with the dual burden of employment and household duties. The educated Indian women, in contact with a broader culture than that
of her home, learns about new role potentialities. The educated women that are studied vary in their willingness to verbalize feelings of conflict. A few whose notions of women’s rights and roles differ from those of their elders are prepared to rebel openly and they may find little discrepancy between their new roles and their loyalties to old ones, while others who languish privately continue to accede outwardly to the wishes of their elders, as Indian women have usually done.

Once education has been given to women as a right; their access to it may be achieved unevenly; level by educational level. Sentiments are still held by many people. The more conservatives fear that too much education will “spoil” a girl. The position of women has varied throughout India’s vast history. Women were considered to be dependent on men for life; first their fathers, then husbands, then sons. Since Independence, elevating the position of women has become a major national goal and well known leaders provided ideological support to counter traditional prejudices.

4) In the “On Women” – compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (Arobindo Society, Pondicherry, India, 1978) – it is said no law can liberate women unless they free themselves. Men too likewise, cannot, inspite of all their habits of domination, cease to be slaves unless they are freed from all their inner slavery. Political consciousness is not high in Indian women except
among those who are in high positions. Women keep themselves busy with other interests and when they are employed, it is understandable that their interests get divided between work and domestic duties. However, if they are considered, according to socio-economic status, the women of the higher strata show political interest. Better education, greater social consciousness and awareness about political events draw their attention to politics. Author further says politics is a full time business.

5) In the “Political Women” – Melville Culeose, Crown Helm [London - Rowman of Littlefield, New Jersey - Crown Helm Ltd., London, 1974] - says, “Now women occupy very few places at the top level and even the percentage in the membership in the Trade Union is low”. The factors are - The trade Union has not given recognition to women’s participation in the struggle for a better deal and has not shown concern on issues concerning women in an effective manner. There is an element of fear in women that they would be victimised or retrenched. Women’s dual role at home and in society. The Trade Union should encourage women workers by giving them higher level representation. A woman’s wing headed by women should be constituted in all central Trade Unions and they should have a say at all levels of decision-making. He finds that the paradox of the Indian situation is that the achievement of Mrs. Gandhi has to be seen against the background of a very low rate of participation by women in politics.
6) In the "Status of Women in India" - A synopsis of the Report of the National Committee on the status of Women (1971-74) - [The Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, 1978] - says the political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value given by society to this role of women.

The two major forces which acted as catalysts in the achievements of political equality of women were the National Movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The steady increase of women voters at each election shows that the response of women to the political rights conferred on them by the constitution is improving and keeping other things equal, development of literacy and mass communication may help to draw an even larger number of women into the political mainstream.

The influence of husbands on women exercising their right of franchise seems to be on the decline. While literacy seems to have a direct influence on both awareness and participation, the relationship between education and awareness does not always extend to participation. Political awareness of women also does not differ significantly between urban and rural areas. Women's organisations and pressure groups have also failed to provide political education to women.
7) In the "Woman - Her Problems and Achievements" - (Editorial Board) - Dr. Sarojini Sintri, Dr. C.R. Yara - Vintelimlalti, Dr. S.L. Santha Kumari (1977) - say women had, from as early as 1885, held an equal place with men in the Indian National Congress, and they naturally wished to have a say in the shaping of their nation's destiny. They further say - In 1900, the general condition of Indian womanhood was perhaps at its lowest. The tide turned and by 1940, the position and political honour of women had risen so high that "India ranked third amongst the nations of the world as regards the political influence and position secured by its women. They further say the reformers like, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, Kandukuri Veeresalingam Panthulu raised their voice to abolish such evil practices as child marriages, polygamy, the absence of women's education. The social reform movement which began in the 19th c. emphasized improvement of women's status through education, provision of property rights to Hindu widows. As the reformers were certainly concerned with the oppressed condition of woman they were interested in improving their lot through legislation and arousing of social consciousness.

8) In the "Women - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" - M.K. Raizada - says - Women's status has always been bedevilled by paradoxes. Even unto the day, a Hindu married woman must look to her husband for her salutation, as enjoyed by the priest who weds her. She is only too sensitive to physical, emotional and spiritual advances and averse to pressurisation and known for her strong
loyalties. But once her limits are defiled or patience tried beyond endurance, she develops a resilience and vengeance or range to a point, that is difficult to contend. He further says, by and large, in her relationship with the world, she remains a pathetic figure. Male chauvanism has refused her the basic rights in most lands. It requires a great re-awakening of the men, a building of public opinion and conscience, a bid to fight it anywhere and everywhere. Thus the cause of the inequality between women and men is directly linked with a complex historical process. They also derive from political, economic, social and cultural factors. The improvement of the status of women requires action at the national, local and family levels.

9) In the "Women of the World" - Urmila Phadevir and Inidra Malani (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1978) - say the status of women in the Indian context cannot be defined adequately. General concepts like equality, role differentiation, legal, social and political rights, dependence or independence are not applicable to all sections of our population. They further say the term 'status' refers to the position of woman as an individual in the social structure defined by her designated rights and obligations. Each status, position is explained in term of a role, or the pattern of behaviour expected of the occupant of a status, role is thus the dynamic aspect of status.
The study of diverse roles of the women in the society includes that of a mother, wife and a career woman. The unique personality of Indian woman, a combination of old-world identity and modern progress, is due, to a great extent, to the fact that they are associated with a very ancient world. Women shared a responsible position with men and helped in spinning and clay-modelling and other simple arts and crafts. Domestic work was of a standard that was surprisingly high for so early a period, and women played an important role in evolving a definite culture and tradition.

10) In the "Women and Politics" - Wicky Randall (1982) - says upto to 1960s, at least, and the resurgence of feminism, political science had very little to say about women. One obvious reason for this neglect is that the profession of political science was, and it still is, overwhelmingly male dominated, whether the criterion is members, positions in the hierarchy or output. He further says neglect of women is obviously more a failure of those political scientists who did not refer to women at all. Since the late 1960's, much has been done to rectify the sexist bias of political science not least because of the growth of studies by female political scientists, influenced by reviving feminism. But there is still a tendency to compartmentalise discussion of women in politics. He says the political importance of voting is in dispute. Voting is sometimes understood, as the first step in a succession of increasingly demanding political acts, but it may be more realistic to view it as logically distinct.
He further says women participate in politics, informally and indirectly through menfolk, particularly in societies where politics is relatively uninstitutionalised. A second form of indirect political participation is taking part in Women's Associations. He further says women are politically more conservative than men. And women are more democratic than men.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

As mentioned above, there were studies on women but there were few studies on women and politics. Further, no study was undertaken on Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh. Hence, a modest attempt is made to study political awareness and political participation of women in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

The thesis tries to focus attention on the political awareness and participation of women in Guntur district. Political participation is necessary for women so that they can formulate policies and programmes which are useful for them in society. The new Indian woman wants to retain her intrinsic love for the home, the children and the family and continue with this; her interest is to play a vital role in the socio-economic structure of modern India. This thesis aims, therefore, at presenting facts in reality in Guntur district and also attempts to draw the attention of the women in general in Indian society today. The scope of the work as its title suggests excludes a discussion about the political awareness and participation of women. The purpose of this study, however, is sufficient to
adopt a relatively simplistic approach that people may be said to be participating in political life when their activity relates in some way to the making and execution of policy for society. Women may be participants in all kinds and at levels of activity, both voting, candidatures, party activism, presence group membership and extra-institutional informed activity of any kind aimed at influencing the policy-makers. The study on women in politics is of a recent origin and now it has greater importance. A new woman is emerging on the Indian scene. Women's social, economic and political awareness is growing to reshape India's social, economic and political structure. Political participation of women in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh is an interesting subject of analytical study due to some factors. Mainly Education had brought a new self-consciousness and individuality in women. Mass Media is playing a greater role in political participation of women.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the data collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was elicited through a structured questionnaire which was canvassed among the sample respondents. The secondary data was collected from the available literature on the subject, the present study is mainly aimed at political awareness and political participation of women (1989-1999) in Guntur district.
Sample Design

Questionnaire method was used to collect the data. The information orally elicited by the respondents was recorded in the field. The informants were further given free choice to express their views about political awareness and political participation without due regard to the questions. Almost all the informants have shown keen interest in the present work and cooperated by providing relevant information. Furthermore, they enlightened the writer by elucidating their suggestions in tackling the burning problems of the women.

A Questionnaire was prepared to find out the participation of women in politics. 200 women were selected at simple random sampling. It is an analytical study. For a successful completion of the present thesis, the writer also consulted the requisite published and unpublished literature on this topic papers of seminars, conferences, discussion with friends, colleagues, own experience and unsystematic observation and review of literature.

In Guntur District there are 19 constituencies; 57 Mandalas. The total number of villages in Guntur district is 1,745. This study is based on the analysis of data collected by a survey organized by the author in 10 villages out of a total number of 1,745 villages in Guntur district. These ten villages were selected using simple random sampling methods and from these villages 200 women were selected, once again by random sampling method and were interviewed.
These 200 selected were women voters. In the chosen 10 villages, the total number of women voters is 6,540.

After choosing these 10 villages we have arranged these villages according to the alphabetical order. These 10 villages are as follows:

(1) Atmakur, (2) Bandarupalli, (3) Bothapadu, (4) Thadiboinavaripalem, (5) Gannavaram, (6) Itikampadu, (7) Kondubhatlavaripalem, (8) Mallapalli, (9) Pedaturakapalem, (10) Tummalapalem. The details about these villages are shown in Table 1.1.

We have taken 20 women from each village using simple random sampling. The details are given in Appendix-II. The details about women voters are given in Table 1.3.

Thus, 200 respondents were selected for analytical study. Care is taken to select the respondents from different castes. Different age groups, different occupations, different literacy backgrounds and different income levels.

A Questionnaire was used to collect the data and the information so collected was coded and processed making use of a computer. Copy of the questionnaire is given in Appendix-II. Hope that the results of this Thesis may attract some of the scholars working in this field; and also it may throw a flood of light on some of the dark corners of women's problems.
Table 1.1

DETAILS ABOUT THE VILLAGES SELECTED FOR STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Atmakur</td>
<td>1444</td>
<td>6139</td>
<td>3114</td>
<td>3025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bandarupalle</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>3260</td>
<td>1643</td>
<td>1617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bonthapadu</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>4444</td>
<td>2245</td>
<td>2199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thadiboinavaripalem</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gannavaram</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Itikampadu</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kondubhatlavarpalem</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>1019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mallapalli</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pedaturakapalem</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tuammalapalem</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2

WOMEN'S STATUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females per 1,000 males</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female workers per 1,000 male</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary rates in percentage:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crossing the sacred line - (Women's Search for Political Power) - By Abhilasha Kumari, Sobina Kidwai- 1998, p.30.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>Women Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Atmakur</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bandarupalle</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bothapadu</td>
<td>1,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Thadiboinavariapalem</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Gannavaram</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Itikampadu</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Kondubhatlavaripalem</td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mallapalli</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Pedaturakapalem</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Tummalapalem</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,540</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Official Records.
Technique: The writer asked the questions and got the information from the respondents. The information orally elicited by the respondents was recorded in the field.

Questionnaire: A Questionnaire was prepared to find out the participation of women in politics. The major questions on the political participation of women which this study attempts to answer are their voting behaviour, i.e. what type of women vote? What type of women obtain from vote? When do voters decide their voting choice? For whom are they voting? To which party are they voting? What are the reasons? How does the voter perceive various problems, issues and the political system as a whole? Who participate in politics? Where do they participate? How do they participate? What is the extent of their participation etc.? And their membership in any party, Associations, clubs and Trade Unions, their participation in politics, that is, whether they are participation out of personal interest or through the influence of other and the extent of the awareness of women in politics. It is also interesting to note that education, income, age, marital status, political information and party identification affect women’s political participation.

PLAN OF THE STUDY

The I Chapter introduces the subject. In this chapter mainly the importance of the study, objectives of the study, Methodology, Sampling methods and Collection of data and brief reviews some of the available literature
on the subject. In Chapter-II, Women in Andhra Pradesh detailing political and socio-economic condition of Women in Andhra Pradesh. In Chapter-III status of women in Guntur district with particular focus on the socio-economic condition of women in Guntur district by using census and other published data. Chapter-IV, An analysis of Field survey. Relationship between socio-demographic variables pertinent to women’s status and their political awareness and participation studied in these tabulations. Based on statistical analysis findings are discussed. This chapter is the heart of the thesis. The profile of women in Guntur district is also discussed. The last chapter summarises the major findings of the study and conclusions with a few suggestions are given.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Political Science and feminism have a lot to learn from each other. Feminists can learn from political science the importance for women, of public politics and the State, and the ways in which women and feminists can more effectively influence policy-making.5

The major objective of this study is to inquire into the nature and extent of the political participation of women in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. In a vast country like India, with differences in graphic, economic and social conditions one would expect a great deal of variation from region to region, state to state and district to district. To get a clear picture of the participation of the

women in Guntur district. The study also tries to determine the bases of political participation. It will be interesting to know whether education, income, exposure to mass media, age, sex have any bearing on one's level of political participation. This study also attempts to find how political information, party identification affect political participation of women.

In recent years, political participation of women has become a topic of interest especially in India; USA; European countries where we find extensive studies in the field. This subject has recently attracted the attention of researchers in India and now there is a greater awareness of the need to concentrate on this significant area. Only recently studies on political participation of women have been undertaken in India and now the subject has assumed greater importance.

As they are women, one would expect their participation in politics to be very low, but as the study reported in the following pages would reveal, their level or participation is considerably high. There are a number of functions of political participation of women. The primary function of participation is to help ensure that the interests of the rulers do not prevail over those of women. The second function of participation is that women come to recognize their interests until they actually come to express them in political processes.
Yet another function of political participation of women is that it can make women feel that the laws and decisions of a system are their own and can encourage citizens to obey and support even acts which they initially opposed. Participation also helps women discover and develop their capacities. In other words, it is the promotion of self-realisation. There are different forms of participation in politics. There is participation in electoral politics which includes voting, taking part in party campaign activities, contribution of money to parties of candidates, displaying campaign buttons, or stickers, trying to persuade others to note in a certain way. There are other forms of participation. In the past decade or so, the most prominent form of citizen participation had been demonstrations against particular injustices and particular policies. Discussion is yet another form of political participation. Democracy stands for equality. It is essential to state the limitations of this work. The source materials have been collected from the Libraries in Madras, Guntur, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Tirupathi.

The thesis is confined to an analysis of the participatory trends and the approach is mainly inter-disciplinary. The thesis aims, therefore, at presenting facts, not arguments, history, not theory as a help towards basing the action of the present an experience rather than sentiment.

This inquiry attempts to study the political awareness and political participation of women of Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh, in the political
process. It is very essential to know about political participation of women in Guntur district. A number of studies have been made in different parts of the country by scholars working not only in educational institutions but also by those of other bodies. With this end in view the present study was undertaken on political awareness and political participation of women in Guntur district on whom no previous study has been conducted.

The quality of democracy can be judged by the extent of citizen participation, especially by women in the three decades in the post-independent spheres - social, economic and cultural. One can notice a parallel progressive trend in the political sphere and the reports of the Election Commission of India on the General Elections in 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1971 drew our attention to the increasing turn out of voters in the elections. Women participate not only in elections but also in other political activities such as discussion of political matters, influencing political decisions etc., besides being interested in politics.

Before independence, in India, political power had been confined to the Rajahs, foreign rulers and to a small section of people with a high socio-economic status. Women had absolutely no political power nor did they have any say in political matters and in the Government of the country, but now of course, the position of women is different. They are no longer kept outside politics and in fact have come to be reckoned with as a force in politics. Their position has changed gradually after independence and particularly after the new
constitution came into force. Politics is very much open to women as it is to the other sections of the country and one's social, economic, educational, cultural or religious position has little to do with her right to political power. In other words, political power is no longer restricted to certain groups on the basis of individual's status. Women have equal political rights because democracy has conferred on every citizen equality and equality means; one man one vote, one vote one value. This right to participate has completely changed the position of women in politics.

The importance of the district maybe attributed to its historic role. In the present context, this district attains added importance because of the fact that: (1) Education Achievement, (2) Caste; it is located close to the city of Hyderabad the State capital. The district has many schools, colleges, Nagarjuna University, Hospitals and Factories. Guntur district is a business area; politics is playing a greater role in the district. Because women empowerment also was given maximum thrust, as the Chief Minister understands very well the role of the women as social catalysts in the overall development of the country. The State, which has a record number of DWCRA groups with over 57 lakh membership, has been in the forefront of empowering women through the self-help groups route. Welfare for women and children under integrated child development scheme, Financial support to pregnant women, provision of insurance cover to poor women, literacy, programme for women, widow pensions and other things.
By implementing innovative programmes like "Malle Badikipodam", "Akshara Sankranti", "Chaduvula Panduga" - there is a steep increase in literacy of 17% from 44.09% in 1991 to 61.11% in 2001. These are all the reasons for choosing the villages in the Guntur district for analytical study.

Men and women are inseparable. Both of them are needed for the existence of the society. Naturally man is strong and brave. Women is delicate and does not have physical strength as man. But it does not mean that man is superior to woman. Man and woman are having the same brain. From the ancient period, man is having superior mentality for which he is having strength. So, the circumstances made woman inferior to man. Now changes are taking place. A new woman is emerging on the Indian scene. Women’s social, economic and political awareness is growing to reshape India’s social, economic and political structure. Even in the early ages, there were women who fought heroically in the battle fields along with their husbands. And some of the countries were ruled by women. India is called ‘Bharatmatha’. As a mother, wife, sister, sister-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, aunty and grand-mother woman is playing a diversified and a significant role in the family and in society.

The district derived its name from Guntur, its headquarters town.

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