CHAPTER VII

PROBABILISTIC ORIENTATION AND FLEXIBILITY OF CHOICE

In this Chapter the concept the probabilistic orientation as propounded by Narayanan (1983) is elucidated. The concept emphasizes a generalized expectancy construing a system of orientation among individuals. The findings of a few studies that have attempted to relate probabilistic orientation to a set of psychological variables suggest that probabilistic orientation may have heuristic value for formulating hypotheses in the present study. The studies on probabilistic orientation are reviewed and presented in the following pages. The research questions and the hypotheses linking probabilistic orientation to the possible differences among Housewives, Career Women and Women Entrepreneurs are stated in this chapter.

Probabilistic Orientation has been conceived as an individual style wherein the person has a disposition to regard every event in a system perspective (Narayanan, 1977; 1979; 1983a, b, c & 1984). Under probabilistic orientation the individual assumes that Nature acts as a system and every event in it is governed by stochastic principles. It is contended that probabilistic orientation
accounts for individual differences in attitude and perception, and can be regarded as a variable of personality. Probabilistic orientation is characterized by the balanced perception of choice and bondage of an individual. The Orientation presumes that there is no one to one correspondence between an apparent contingency and an outcome. Any outcome in an event is mediated and moderated by the predetermined system characteristics that govern the event. The predetermined harmony (Spinoza, 1977) conceived to be existing in the universe is taken as a postulate in the Probabilistic orientation. The Probabilistic Orientation emphasizes the randomness of individual events. The scope of an individuals' freedom in life is synonymous with the probability of success in drawing certain ball from an urn containing balls of several characteristics when the balls are drawn one by one without replacement. As could be clearly seen the probability of success under the condition specified changes from trial to trial, and the probability of success gets altered consistently due to the previous outcome in a chained manner.

Probabilistic Orientation is distinct from fatalistic orientation. Fatalistic orientation emphasizes deterministic model of the world whereas probabilistic orientation conceives a probabilistic model of the World. Under
fatalistic orientation, effort has no role to play in determining any outcome. Under probabilistic orientation effort brings subtle changes in the ordering of the system within the constraints imposed by the system characteristics. Fatalistic orientation suggests that every event and outcome is predetermined. Probabilistic Orientation conceives the relation between event and outcome as preordained.

Systematic relationship between Probabilistic Orientation and a host of personality variables has been found in a number of investigation. Probabilistic Orientation is found to be significantly related to intelligence, creativity, extroversion and neurotism among girls and not among boys (Natarajan, 1983) not related to aspiration height and related negatively to goal discrepancy and achievement discrepancy in level of aspiration (Narayanan, 1983); is significantly related to the perceived support of innovation and mental health, and negatively related to innovative personality in the case of females and not in the case of males (Jayaraj, 1984); related to death anxiety among elders and not among adults (Narayanan, 1984); significantly related to 'variety', 'Practical mindedness', 'Orderliness' and negatively related to goal orientation and 'deciveness' (Narayanan, 1984); not correlated to any of the traits measured by MMPI except in the case of L-score – the correlation indicates probabilistic orientation to be
related to lower level of need for approval (Narayanan, 1985).

A study relating probabilistic orientation and IE locus of control reports that probabilistic orientation is significantly related to 'internal', 'chance' and 'powerful others' in the case of girls, but not in the case of boys (Narayanan, et al., 1984).

In another study the relationship between Probabilistic Orientation and Holland dimensions of personality has been investigated. The results reveal, as in the case of earlier studies, the relationship between the variables to vary from one sex to another. In the case of boys Probabilistic Orientation is found to be significantly correlated with realistic, investigative artistic, social and enterprising dimensions. And in the case of girls the probabilistic orientation is found to be negatively related to investigative and conventional dimensions (Narayanan & Govindarasu, 1986).

In a study entrepreneurs have been compared with managers on Probabilistic Orientation, Holland Personality dimensions and androgyny among other variables. All the Ss in this study were males. The results reveal entrepreneurs to have significantly higher probabilistic orientation, higher enterprising and androgynous orientation when compare to managers (Balakrishnan, 1985).

**Research Questions and Hypotheses:**

1) Will there be significant difference between housewives and Career Women on probabilistic orientation.

2) Will there be significant difference between housewives and Women Entrepreneurs on probabilistic orientation.
Probabilistic Orientation is claimed to be a characteristic of Indian culture (Narayanan, 1979). It describes an Orientation of Individuals with regard to perception of contingencies in a system perspective. The review of literature presented in this section suggests that probabilistic orientation is correlated with I-E locus of control variables in the case of girls. The generalized expectancy of probabilistic orientation may provide a flexibility in thinking and perception among women. The more an individual considers an outcome has linked to the sequential probabilistic nature of the universe, the more freedom she might have in her thinking and perception. This cognitive facility might contribute to autonomy and independence in other words a sort of individual liberation and less dependency on the immediate environment in deciding her choices. Hence, the following hypotheses.

3.0.1. The Housewives will score lower than the Career women on the POQ.

3.0.2. The Housewives will score lower than the Women Entrepreneurs on the POQ.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The work on Probabilistic Orientation reported in the literature is reviewed in this chapter. The various studies reporting meaningful relationship between Probabilistic Orientation and a host of psychological variables suggests that Probabilistic Orientation may be regarded as an expectancy variable which has heuristic value for the present study. Probabilistic Orientation orients an individual to a system perspective. When an individual perceives outcomes of events in their background of system characteristics, he or she develops greater flexibility in behaviour. The flexibility in behaviour provides scope for independence and autonomy on the part of the individual. Under probabilistic orientation a person is less dependent on the immediate environment. A probabilistically oriented individual is likely to feel free to make choices. It is plausible that probabilistic orientation may remain to be one of the sources of differences between Housewives and Career women, and Women Entrepreneurs. The research questions and hypotheses relating Probabilistic Orientation to the differences between Housewives and Career women, and Women Entrepreneurs are logically derived and stated in this chapter.