CHAPTER - V

OBSERVATION

AND

SUGGESTION
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Nearly, more than a decade has passed, since the implementation of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act under which the Local self-government, which is otherwise known as the people's forum at urban level, was reformed to act as school of capacity building for citizens and nurturing democracy. The reservation of seats for women under this provision is definitely an important milestone in both constitutional and political history of India. Surprisingly, Orissa, an economically backward State of India was first to implement 33% reservation of seats for women both at the levels of rural and urban governments. But the symbolic representation of women has not guaranteed qualitatively better representation of women's interests and that is the reason for which the influence of women councillors at urban level has remained at the fringes.

The present study is a minor but maiden endeavor in its field research study to explore various aspects, including the socio-economic profile of the women representatives, their motivation and role to enter as the representative of the ward, awareness and knowledge, participation, performance, efficiency and changing perceptions after their new entitlement and constraints as well. The question arises, whether the formal changes brought by the institutional interventions of reservations have adequately addressed women's marginality substantively or have only led to their numerically expanded presence? Has the numerical representation has transformed the work culture of the Municipal Council removing male dominance? Are women beginning to break their silence to challenge patriarchal ideology? And lastly, whether this new presence and experience have impact and empowering effect on women?

The study had given attention towards the experience of women concerning their new political assignment, the process of change, the earlier transitional phase for women's political presence, support of families, communities, officials and male colleagues, the problems they come across in the socio political environment within which they have to function. The conceptualization of power and gender equality necessitates understanding its multidimensional nature; the complex ways, in which an individual compromises, adjusts and manages his/ her own affairs. Involving women in
the political process through formal and informal methods are not goals in themselves. They are only means and a policy to touch the structure of politics.

Orissa as a state in India has a typical pattern of culture, polity and economy, which is in the transitional stage of traditionalism and modernization. A profile of 28 women representatives in Municipal Councils of Sundargarh district of Orissa were verified in chap-IV along with their nature of participation in both electoral process and council affairs to explain the rising patterns of leadership among them. The socioeconomic profile had touched their educational level, age, economic status, parental education, and marital status. The participation in electoral process deals with their process of nomination, campaigning, affiliation to political party, etc. A detailed analysis on their involvement in Municipal Council was done through analyzing their participation in meetings, active involvement in meetings, role in planning, budgeting, poverty alleviation programme, attitude of male colleagues towards them, and steps taken by them to overcome all those challenges. In order to assess the questions, the field study was done. Many members were prepared to report only on condition of anonymity and some were even bold enough to substantiate the information.

Women's political participation in Orissa is affected by the absence of adequate accessibility to infra-structural facilities and support services for facilitating it. As the political participation of women depends on the social and cultural climate of a particular region and the prevalent norms and values, the context that defines women's participation in Sundargarh district is the established nature of patriarchal structure. In spite of industrialization and modernization, the traditional value structure in urban social and political environment of Sundargarh district has been found to be neutralized or nullified only to some extent. However, gradually the scenario is changing and transforming towards better prospects.

ADVANTAGES OF A WOMEN COUNCILLOR

The following advantages were noticed when women were elected as councillors in Municipal Councils.

- It is ideal for women to be elected as a councillor. At home she is a perfect home minister and takes care of all problems. According to women councillors, the
political position has now provided them the opportunity to extend their private managerial skills from within the home into the public sphere.

- It has begun to break women's silence in public spaces and their presence can be a role model for other women changing the balance of culture in a given setting.
- Women have specific expertise, namely an alternative vision for city life and their experience can represent an added value for men.
- Being a woman, it is easier for them to discuss issues with women for instance about their need for toilets, supply of drinking water and like that. These are the problems on which men hear but do not work. But as women feel the importance of the problem, they can talk freely with them. Women in this case study are effortlessly aware of women's most essential needs whether of drinking water facilities or measures for waste disposal.
- Several women councillors were proud to mention achievements, mobilization of women to obtain benefit from a particular self-employment scheme, establishment of schools, and maternity home in the wards or solving a family dispute.
- There is a shift in the status, identity, and prestige of women. Because of their new recognition of position, women councillors are now consulted for getting any help and assistance in their wards. Sometimes destitute women approach them even at late night to solve their problems. They highlight the fact that dealing with women's problem is not their main function, but it is an additional responsibility to their general load of work as councillor. However they were proud to convey the kind of respect and prestige the ward people give to them as the closest associate of the community.
- The participation of women in Municipal Council affairs now proves to the society that they are better managers, good organizers and sincere honest workers and society will be definitely benefited with their presence.
- Women have grown to be bold, interacting skillfully and analyzing the situations and responding to the issues with maturity.
- It has made the males and the political system to accept women's leadership and their entry into the male arena.
Thus, there has been positive improvement in self-image of women after being elected as councillors.

**ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF WOMEN COUNCILLORS IN SUNDARGARH DISTRICT**

In Orissa, women are neither an undifferentiated entity nor constitute a homogeneous group. There are differences, which are rooted in existing social framework, caste and class structure, status or the geographic and situational differentiations. But the only fundamental philosophy which binds women together in one universal bond of community, is the prevailing difference based on gender. There are gender differences in ownership, authority and decision-making, which are reflected in the discrimination, suppression and repression of women. The data analysis of the sample reveals the following observations:

**EDUCATION.**

Even after 57 years of independence it is saddening to note that some women even now have not received any formal education. The educational qualifications of women councillors showed that 3.6 % members were illiterate, 7.7 % and 6.3 % were with lower and upper primary qualifications or were only functional literates and all of them belonged to the weaker sections of the society. 30.4 % of the women representatives had higher secondary qualification, 19.4 % were intermediates, 25.3% were graduates and only one member at Rourkela had done Post graduation. Compared to the other three cities, Biramitrapur, which had been comparatively backward, had 50% women councillors with Graduate qualification. The lower educational level had been definitely a major handicap, which was revealed in low level of confidence among women members.

The educational level was found to be a strong factor in enabling the women members to understand official proceedings, different governmental schemes, presenting proposals and plans and even in taking decisions independently. The educated councillors having higher qualifications were conversant about rights and duties, their subjugated conditions in the society, the functions and sources of income of the municipality and their responsibilities in performing their role. The councillors, Miss Binodini Das and
Smt Dezy Pradhan of Rourkela and Swapna Chhura of Biramitrapur acknowledged that because of their higher educational qualification, they could understand things easily, communicate freely with members and take decisions independently. Those with lower educational level were observed to be very docile, shy, passive, introvert and for many decisions relating to official matter were dependent on their family members, male colleagues and officials of the Municipal Council. Few respondents at Rajgangpur were unable to read, write or speak properly even in local language. At Rajgangpur, the Chairman, who was a woman found to be gentle but less articulate. She expressed that her problem was due to poor vocabulary in English. Thus to be 'illiterate' or only functional literate and being 'women' in themselves had double effect in lessening their participation in the policy making process.

The hypothesis, 'Level of education is directly proportional to different modes of political participation of women' holds good in this study.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF FAMILY MEMBERS

When the educational level of the respondents parents or husbands were analysed, it was not much encouraging in Sundargarh district of Orissa. In fact illiterate parents were seen in all the four Municipal Councils. The educational level of family members definitely had made an impact on the socialization process, manner and behaviour of them. The educational level of the husbands of the respondents seemed to be a factor in influencing the thought, social aspiration and performance of the family members especially wives. It is interesting to note that wife's educational status is related either to her parents or husbands' education.

MARTIAL STATUS AND FAMILY

Nearly 81.8 % of the respondents were married women. The visibility of unmarried women is less due to our societal culture restricting the mobility of younger women. In Orissa more social taboos are connected to the free interaction between male and female. Their involvement is negatively misunderstood at times as being 'promiscuous or unwomanly' which may later on cause major social / martial problem. There were questions around her moral standing. But at the same time in spite of
conservative society, at Biramitrapur and Rourkela, unmarried councillors were seen mixing, sitting or moving with male colleagues without hesitation. It showed a change in culture under the impact of modernization.

The family life has both negative and positive repercussions. Power, which is always seen as a part of the political world has central meaning even in the family life. "The power exists within the family as genus structures". Traditionally, men are known as decision makers in the homes and they exercise power to dictate the wife's actions. The married women were not independent but have to seek permission of their in-laws or husbands on various aspects. Again, the unequal division of responsibility for household work, bringing up children and at the same time giving importance to professional life had presented either a "time shortfall" or heavy "mental strain" on women. A woman representative had to meet the expectations and obligations corresponding to her various roles within the family, whether nuclear or joint. Some women reported that professional issues were important but their family had to come first. Thus, women's often heavy work loads whether paid or unpaid was a barrier to their ability to discharge wholeheartedly her political role. Occasionally they faced conflict with husband, in-laws or children and during that time keeping up "womanhood" and coping with political and institutional norms become hazardous. Most of the respondents conveyed that in initial period, they faced lot of trouble but gradually the support of the in-laws/husbands had helped them to concentrate on the work of their wards without bothering the domestic obligations. The approval and encouragement of the husband is a green signal for them to decide their line of involvement.

Positively speaking, a supportive and cooperative family is an asset for women during their campaigning, obtaining information, supervising the work, accompanying them, providing monetary resources or consulting them in case of necessity. It is understood, that women councillors' whose household culture was congenial and where husbands took pride in their career, they were doing better. In other words, women members receiving reinforcements from their family members or opposite sex seemed to have actively indulged in municipal affairs. It was thus presumed that women could venture to take full responsibilities of urban office if they would have fewer family responsibilities.
AGE

Age, may be regarded as an important factor in seeking employment, capacity to hold positions, and acquiring skills that are governed mostly by it. But it was seen that majority of the women councillors belonged to younger group and their percentages was 28.6 %. Only 3.7 % of the samples were in age group of 51-55. The myth that middle-aged person participates maximum was not noticed at Sundargarh district. The continuation of younger groups was definitely found to be a welcoming change in the composition of political structure. It was presumed that these younger minds would help in introducing fresh and modern-day to day ideas. Owing to cosmopolitan culture, women were no doubt broad-minded at Rourkela but young age had placed restriction on their mobility and the decision-making capacity. They were inexperienced as well. In contrast, the respect, prestige, and experience of middle-aged women councillors were more than younger group. Since they were free from familial responsibilities at that stage, they could relate themselves in a better way and guide other members.

OCCUPATION OF WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES AND HUSBANDS/PARENTS

Among the respondents, 58.4 % were housewives followed by 35.7 % as social activists. Only in industrial belt like Rourkela and Rajgangpur, very negligible women members were in professional service. The occupation of the family member showed that 32.5 % were in business, 23.4 % were salaried employees in industries, 18.6 % were in agriculture, 13.9 % were labourers and 12.5 % were in governmental services. The occupational status of the women representatives and the family members as showed in the table revealed to be of moderate type.

The hypothesis, ‘Political participation of women is affected by age and marriage’ is found to be true.

ECONOMIC STATUS

Women are mostly concentrated in the informal sector of economy where much of their works had remained invisible, unpaid, unrecognized and devalued. The baseline reports on ‘Women and Political Participation in India’ 1998 showed that 82% land ownership goes to men, 12 % to female and 6 % jointly. In Orissa, the dependency of
women is prevalent still today and men have greater prerogative, access and control over economic resources. As money and politics are intertwined, the financial condition is definitely a major asset for elected women representatives to incur expenditures and to meet the electoral expenses and demands of the community.

The study showed that 39.5% of members belonged to the middle class income group and their percentage was highest at Rourkela. Lower middle class was seen at Biramitrapur and Sundargarh Municipal Council. Most of the women councillors were either housewives or social workers. As they had no any independent sources of income they were dependent on family or other organizations for sponsoring their economic resources. It was realized that a Councillor, must have some sort of honorarium to spare simply for their transportation, ward maintenance or entertaining people. One could easily gather from the data that economically better sections of the society had a dominating voice in the local political and administrative system.

The analysis of socioeconomic profile of the women members in the sample study of the researcher illustrated the visibility of an upward movement of women in their political career. At the same time, the setbacks were seen originating from their social background, educational qualification, income, age, marriage etc due to which their natural traits had remained as a stumbling block in political passage. The limited advancement in the political career of women in these urban bodies of the Sundargarh district could be related to the prevailing traditional society, familial obligations, cultural bias and lack of adequate supportive institutions for their functioning. These were the reason for which instead of directly competing with men, they had preferred to contest from quota seats.

The hypothesis. 'The socioeconomic status contributes towards their visibility in political activities' is found to partially correct as all the respondent women councillors have been good participants though the economically strong ones have effective voice.

ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN COUNCILLORS IN SUNDARGARH DISTRICT: NATURE AND OBJECTIVE

Traditionally, politics as a profession is prejudiced towards men. Throughout the ages the dominance of men in politics has made it male profession and women are
marginalized in any society, partly out of choice and partly by the structural barriers. Elections are after all a medium for self-government and democracy but majority of men sees women as a threat to their position, and electoral expediency requires women participants to compromise in order to survive in the man's world of politics as men after all conduct elections. Even western democracies, which were models for developing countries, had kept women out of political power for a long time.

The analysis of electoral participation showed that all women members were new entrants without any previous political experience except taking part in voting. It was interesting to note that percentage of voluntary participants was more in comparison to mobilized participation i.e. 51.2 % as against 48.9%. The net percentage of voluntary participation was highest at Rourkela Municipal Council and lowest in Sundargarh. It had confirmed increase in awareness, political consciousness and maturity in outlook of women enjoying their political rights in the Municipal Councils. Again the mobilized participation was more at Sundargarh in comparison to other three Municipal Councils. While 40.6% of them had replied of joining in urban bodies with an altruistic motive of serving community, 50.7 % had been mobilized to participate at the instance of their family members who were previously councillors or were related to political party. Only 8.7% had started their career with the motive of moving towards higher political ladder and the psychological satisfaction of urge for power was totally absent.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

Many of the participants believed that the nomination and recruitment of women in political parties were often restricted. The leadership within this structure is taken over by men. In Indian society, the backing and connections with men in power or "god fathers" is required more for woman besides her popularity to survive in male bastion. Personal loyalty, nepotism and influence count in the process of selection. Hence, family members having political background or working for political party helps a lot for the candidature. The data analysis showed that nearly 43.1% of women councillors' family members had some political background. This background of politicized family and political lineage had helped those women councillors to have a smooth entry in politics. Hence, these members had entered the political field not because of the recognition of
their talent or previous track record but primarily because they were surrogates for the men who could not themselves contest due to the reservation of seats. The evidence of tokenism and surrogate representation were very much present in all Municipal Councils. Though women coming from political families were substitutes, one should appreciate that those families are in fact encouraging womenfolk for such a career. Three or four representatives in the course of discussion had mentioned of some interest in politics before the introduction of the quota policy. However, there is a possibility that those surrogate representatives will gradually form their own independent political profile.

The hypothesis, 'omen coming from political families show more interest and greater political consciousness than others' is found to be correct. Respondents from a family with political background have keen interest and involvement in the affairs of the municipal system.

In the discussion, 91.9% supported party based reservation and all of them were affiliated to political party like Cong I, B.J.P or B.J.D and one member each at Rourkela and Biramitrapur were elected through JMM and CPI (M). The party support and the family support had helped them to win in the election.

During the process of election, most of the women representatives found 'door to door' campaigning very effective and only 45.6% had the opportunity of addressing public over mike. It was surprising that their percentage was highest in the backward place like Biramitrapur in comparison to the other three Municipal Councils. It showed the confidence of these younger groups having Graduate qualification.

During election most of the women councillors had encountered problems of various types. Nearly 56.9% expressed difficulty during election in the absence of any political backing, 35% suffered due to lack of funding for continuation of election campaigning, 18.7% were threatened by political party, faced character assassinations and 17.2% did not get any support from family members. Again nearly 22.7% of them really faced difficulty while addressing public as they were not articulate enough, diffident type and had lesser exposure in the public sphere. However 100% of them supported the reservation issue and more than half of the women members had readily agreed to contest in the next election if they would be nominated again. Their percentage was highest at Rajgangpur and Rourkela, which proved that those members were
benefited through the reservation policy. It had broken the myth of the passivity and
disinterestedness of women in politics. It was evident that gradually women were
changing their perceptions and were aware of the benefits of political participation.

Again what the researcher observed was that though women members insisted on
service oriented attitude as the motive to contest in the election, their unconscious urge
for power could not be ruled out. What had been gathered was that, all of them were very
much aware about the power and prestige, which their post provides. Normally, the urge
for continuation develops when the political motivation of women finds reinforcement
and support from the situation. Thus, active involvement in politics is possible only in
those persons who have high achievement motive and social approval. It was evident that
due to the existence of that personal competence among some representatives, they had
expressed their desire for contesting again.

It proved that some women were now visible in public sphere though they were
encountering multiple challenges in political advancement. Some had exposure and
opportunities to stimulate their aspirations for political office and others in the process
had been identified, and groomed. What ever may be the challenges some women were
able to push through the male dominated political arena.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN COUNCILLORS OF SUNDARGARH DISTRICT IN
MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

It should be kept in mind that merely introducing the reservation policy for
women to increase their representation in the local bodies is not a sufficient condition to
develop the socioeconomic and political status of them. But the extent and nature of their
actual participation mainly in the decision-making processes on certain policy matters
and the kind of role they play in the meetings and degree of their involvement in the
implementation of decisions would be more decisive factors in this aspect. The
commitment and involvement of women particularly their independence and autonomy in
administration are considered as important measures of political action. It is generally
held that political awareness varies with the levels of modernization in a given area, with
related factors like literacy rates, education, exposure to urbanization and mass media.
Hence the study attempted to examine the nature and magnitude of their association in
different activities of Municipal Council.
The membership of various committees showed that except few, women were mostly heading 'softer' committees like health and education. The committee meetings were not held regularly. It is important point to be noted that no committee was formed even till now at Rajgangpur. The participation in political decision-making is a prerequisite for empowerment of women. But effective participation requires awareness, knowledge on various aspects especially on legal and financial aspect and technical and managerial skills, without which women will remain at the periphery.

AWARENESS AND ITS SOURCE

The data analysis showed awareness of women councillors on various aspects like their candidature through reservation of seats, powers and functions, Municipal Act, resources, planning, budgeting and various schemes for implementation. The comparative analysis proves the existence of highest awareness among them firstly at Rourkela, secondly at Rajgangpur, thirdly at Sundargarh and lowest at Biramitrapur. Nearly 73.7% of women members were aware of reservation provisions on the basis of which they are elected. Gradually, they were able to know powers and functions of the Municipal Council and their responsibilities. 38.9% were able to understand some aspects of the Municipal Act after 74th constitutional Amendment Act. Half of the respondents were aware of the resources of Municipal Council and various Governmental schemes on development and poverty alleviation programs. But their knowledge on planning, budgeting, allocations and expenditure incurred was found to be very poor. The reasons are:

- low level of education to understand the technicalities involved in urban governance,
- lack of motivation due to time deficit and other preoccupations
- low self esteem under excessive dominance inside the family,
- poor command over English language,
- No prior experience for dealing with multi dimensional urban issues,
- lack of cooperation from officials/ male members,
As most of them were housewife, their source of knowledge originated primarily through family, male colleagues and government officials and secondarily through other sources like political parties, neighbours, friends, newspapers and television. Family as a source of information was highest at Rourkela. The male colleagues at Rajgangpur were a source of information for women as all of them are under the same political party and maximum cooperation among the members was seen. What had emerged from the research was a clear sign that there were gaps between the efforts of government to involve women and the capacity or willingness of many to involve them. Thus the effective participation could not be legislated. It involves the creation of a political, social and cultural environment in which women acquire the awareness, information base and confidence to articulate their concern and an environment that is receptive to such articulations.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

All the members had known that at least one meeting should be held every month in Municipal Council and 78.5 % of the respondents were regular attendants to the meetings and 21.5 % were attending sometimes. But mere attendance is not sufficient to prove their competence. So, the researcher attending the meeting and taking opinion of both male and female members assessed percentage of members playing active role. It was found that 33.1% of members were active during discussions, questioning male members, raising issues, and offering independent opinions and they see that the decision is implemented. Only 40.3 % had participated at times while 26.2 % had rarely presented their opinions. It proved that active participation of women members in meetings were not significant. But all of them at some point of time had taken part in discussion. In total 51.3 % of women councillors had conceded their difficulties in the meetings due to various reasons.

The less educated one with lower socioeconomic status suffer from associated problems such as their shyness to speak out in meetings. They tried to conceal their ignorance and were dependent either on family member or male colleagues. There were certain evidences of husbands supervising the work of women councillors except at Biramitrapur. Those members participation in the meetings were token and only on few occasions they had interacted or talked with the officials when required. A deep
investigation into their passivity exposed number of reasons for their distance in politics like ignorance, lack of awareness and information, lower educational background, dictatorial attitude of chairman, snobbish attitude of male colleagues, low self esteem and lack of motivation, fear of being underestimated, and kinship and affinity factor. Female councillors who were brought up under typical traditional patriarchal outlook seemed to be deficient in confidence to fight against such discriminatory attitude of male colleagues.

The hypothesis that ‘activity of the Women Councillor has been profound influence by the husband in case she is married’ is found to be true in most of the municipalities of Sundargarh district with exception of Biramitrapur.

At Sundargarh, three women councillors belonging to congress (I) party had alleged that due to their affiliation to opposition party of the government, they were not given any importance. In such a circumstance they had lost interest and are unable to face the pressure of public. Some members of Rajgangpur had been so dependent on their family members that they had not bothered to involve themselves actively in the meeting. The same situation was prevailing at Biramitrapur also. It was found that most of the active participants in the meetings of the Municipal Councils were those who had education up to higher secondary or beyond, belonged to income brackets of more than Rs. 60,000 per year, were of the middle class or socioeconomically higher placed, had patronage of influential political parties or leaders, associated with different organizations, had the ability to move around on their own and importantly had political awareness. Those representatives alone had the capacity and deep mental psyche to overcome the challenges to make their voice heard effectively in political aspect.

COOPERATION BY MALE COLLEAGUES AND OFFICIALS

To the query of the women councillors regarding receiving cooperation from the male colleagues or officials, 44.3% had given positive view, 24.2% gave neutral opinion while 19.3% openly complained the non cooperative attitude of chairman, male colleagues and officials on various matter relating to allocation of work, funds or implementation of their plans and proposals and 12.3% agreed of getting cooperation some times only. The teamwork amongst the members was highest at Rajgangpur and lowest at Sundargarh. The vice versa of not getting assistance of male members were
highest both at Sundargarh and Rourkela Municipal Councils and rest of them denied any such situations. Women councillors of Rourkela and Sundargarh even had expressed how the lower grade staff of their councils was using abusive languages against them in a drunken state in daytime if they were asked to do cleaning work. As they were not accountable before councillors, they ignored their requests.

The hypothesis that municipal staff respected and complied to the Women Councillors on their requisition is found to be incorrect. The lack of support in this regard from municipal officials and fourth-class employee was affecting their quality of performance. The specific reason for non-cooperation explained as: lack of unity among male and female representatives and official staff members 19.5%; Party feeling 21.4%; male attitude 24.4% and corruption 14.2%

It was seen that lack of unity amongst male and female members were highest at Rourkela and there was open division between both the sexes as well as amongst women councillors at other places. The discrimination on party basis was highest at Sundargarh. Many of the social scientists consider that women are less corrupt than men as they have high ethical and moral values. These characteristics of women will create a clean atmosphere when they are involved in administration. In many informal discussions when the issue of corruption was touched, some female councillors of Rourkela and Sundargarh conveyed that this issue had been raised number of times in their respective Municipal Councils. One lady councillor complained that starting from the top to bottom there were personal factors playing important role. At Rajgangpur the previous chairperson, a woman was removed on grounds of corruption through no confidence motion. Excess of expenditure in election is a basis of political parties and is a factor in all individuals, though few are taken into action.

The hypothesis that the Municipal Council had proceedings with gender playing some role in discussions and decisions rather than political parties is incorrect. There is no unity among women councillor on gender basis.
PARTICIPATION IN PLANS, IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSALS AND AWARENESS IN UTILISATION OF RESOURCES

Most of the members in all Municipal Councils were regular in visiting sites and supervising the work. Nearly 50% of them had taken initiative in plans and proposals and tried to implement it. But their knowledge in utilization of funds or financial aspect was not encouraging. Only 26.8% had full awareness, 44.8% of them were moderately aware and 28.4% had marginal knowledge. This awareness in general was highest at Rourkela and then at Sundargarh Municipal Council. It is known, that there is a close link between awareness and role performance. Awareness is understood as the degree to which an individual realizes the facts, crucial for his or her functioning as an active and effective citizen. It includes not only knowledge but also a sense of alertness and a spirit for action. Increased awareness helps in setting new patterns of leadership and successful performance in political structures and lack of it thwart progress. From the answer of the respondents it was gathered that the lack of awareness and information on the procedure and methodology to be adopted for applying in favour of different schemes from different funding, less knowledge in financial aspect of administration and lack of mobility were found to be the primary factor in restricting the participation of women members in approaching for and initiating efforts to get the allotment of work done. The level of educational attainment among women members had influenced positively their nature of participation and the performance at different stages of implementation of development programs.

On the whole, the actual fact had clarified number of factors that had blocked the implementation of projects. They were party politics, groupism, political affiliation, financial constraints, administrative obstruction like red tapism, corruption, inaccessibility to chairman or Executive officer, social causes like social pressures and overburden and excessive involvement in the household related activities. Misuse of funds in certain cases was raised by one of the member at Rourkela. A sizable numbers of the members complained of the scarcity of funds. They proposed that unlike MLA and MP Lad the councillors must have some independent sources of income. Because of lack of any financial incentive, members were forced to be corrupt. But their visit to sites and wards to supervise and monitor the work progress were regular. The feeling that they
were the closest representatives of the people in their locality was observed. The women councillors unanimously opined the need of regular training and constant flow of information on matters pertaining to the development schemes, maintenance of income and expenditure accounts, and generating funds to the Municipal Councils on behalf of governmental and non governmental organizations.

The hypothesis that ‘he reservation policy at urban level realises participation of women in decision-making process’ holds good in the instance of municipal institutions of Sundargarh district.

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS OF WARDS

What emerged from the discussions were that mostly the women members were used to tackling problems in their wards like, economic issues and unemployment, water scarcity, public toilet, drainage, waste disposal, street light, slum development, illiteracy, family dispute under influence of alcohol etc. They were proud of mentioning their achievements in SJSRY scheme focusing on slum development, establishment of maternity homes, getting pension for widows or solving water problems. Sometimes people approached them at midnight for solving their problem and during that time they were unable to move out alone for two reasons Firstly, Physical danger and secondly, Their reputation would be at risk as respectable women by conventions are not supposed to move at late night.

The hypothesis that ‘Women Councillors have a tendency to foster environment friendly and humanitarian outlook in their touch’ is found to be correct.

IMPORTANCE OF MALE MEMBERS IN THE COUNCIL

It has been gathered from the data analysis that the public and private dichotomy was accepted by some of the women respondents as a natural part of life. They had admitted biological differences between two sexes by which men could do better outward activities. Nearly 55.8 % of the respondents believed that more importance is given to male members inside the council, 31.9 % denied it and 12.2 % gave neutral answer. This type of allegation came from Rourkela and Sundargarh Municipal Council. They agreed that men had better awareness and information in comparison to women due to their frequent exposure to the outside world, organizing ability, experience, and proximity with
political leaders, manipulative power, dominating attitude and no restriction on mobility, It is a democratic principle that politics is everyone’s business and segregation of women from the positions of power to the periphery naturally would deprive the society of their invaluable contribution in policy making. The study had proved that the society of the Sundargarh district had not succeeded in changing the required socialization process or institutions to enable women councillors to generate an impact on their multiple roles they were expected to play both in public and private sphere.

The hypothesis that ‘the Women Councillors were not accepted well by their male counterparts’ is incorrect.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND THE EFFORTS OF WOMEN COUNCILLORS

Nearly one third of representatives or 33.3% had admitted openly of gender discrimination, 42.7% gave neutral answer and 44.3% had denied of it. The gender discrimination was highest at Rourkela and lowest at Rajgangpur. On gender discrimination and corruption issue only 27.3% of women representatives had made efforts frequently inside the meetings, 23.4% sometimes, and 25% had never made any such effort. From the election, representation and participation of women in the political process of the Municipal Councils at Sundargarh district, one could visualize appearance of leadership among some women councillors. What came forward from the research was that while some women were satisfied, some had high level of awareness, some expressed frustration and some were able to overcome all the challenges to their satisfaction. Despite changes in their socioeconomic status, majority of them were sucked into the path of male dominance and patriarchal control. Due to their reactions against the prevalence of corruption, inefficiency and discrimination in political circles on one hand and feelings of ineffectiveness in solving these problems on the other, there were indications of a growing trend of disillusionment among some women councillors at Rourkela and Sundargarh Municipal Councils.

Besides these, another impression was gathered that the traditional background and outlook of their families had set limitations upon the performance for which they were lacking the opportunities to participate openly and independently of their choice in several matters including giving opinions in household matters inside their family. The dominance of male family members was highly visualized in their role in different
activities of Municipal Council including tender fixing for the allotment of work, sanctioning of funds, or the discussions taken in the meetings at Rourkela and Rajgangpur. The naming of beneficiaries for the allotment of work and deployment of various development programs on the basis of affinity between the chairperson and members had been experienced as the main topic for growing disputes and causing problems among the participants. The contractors were a big problem at Rourkela and monitoring them becomes difficult and politically sensitive. Many plans that were prepared by women in Municipal Councils with great effort were sabotaged even at the final stage on flimsy grounds. In many cases with illiteracy and lower level of education, husband did the work and she had been kept as a dummy.

It was conveyed by some women representatives that even those women who contribute to the political process in an appropriate way, either had become victims of statements concerning their in capabilities or were criticized as aggressive women. Again if they would follow the ideal of the dutiful wife they were criticized as ineffective.

The overall situation is that women members still perceive their role as loyal, modest, submissive and capacity to adjust. These typically defined standards governing feminine behaviour had predominated in the attitude of women. Psychologists define a masculine personality as one having autonomy, dominance, aggression and adventurousness. Actually the structure of authority and submission within the family is considered as natural and accepted by women to have healthy family relationship. The same psychology is seen, being reflected in their dealings with the male members and officials. Hence, majority of them had confessed of maintaining a low profile. Except Rourkela and Sundargarh Municipal Council no significant resistance by women councillors were dictated. Most of them preferred not to challenge them and contrived to make their male colleagues generally believe that they were not encroaching upon their power base.

The hypothesis that ‘Gender driven superiority by Male Councillors paralysed the efforts of Women Councillors’ is not totally incorrect. There are some instances of such activity though in general there is a movement for a gender free environment.
CHANGES IN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND EMPOWERMENT

A large number of women representatives had acknowledged a significant improvement in their status inside the family and community or in cultural and ceremonial occasions. However, the pattern of availing respect and honour from public was due to the kind of reputation they so far had achieved in their efforts of bringing certain welfare and socioeconomic development activities and of their wards. At Rourkela 63.6% had reported an improvement in their status followed by 57.1% at Rajgangpur and 50% each at Sundargarh and Biramitrapur. Some members proudly narrated their greater freedom in mobility after being elected, the way their opinion were given importance and how for minor problem even women of their wards were requesting for their help. However, no significant changes in performing the routine work relating to household affairs like looking after the children, old family members, cooking etc. had taken place, though they were relieved from those duties sometimes when they had to attend meetings.

Only at Sundargarh Municipal Council, female members had strongly voiced deterioration in their status because of their inability to perform any visible developmental work. They condemned the discriminatory attitude of the Chairman who belonged to the ruling party. Their lack of motivation from the part of households to involve them in different activities, lack of awareness and the partial attitude of the chairman were directly limiting the possibilities of bringing improvement in their status. Only 36.5% of women members reported of no change in their status.

From the improvement in the status of women members, the confidence level of women councillors was analysed. Some of the women members were now attending cultural functions regularly and mixing with the public and addressing public after being elected but their percentage was marginal i.e. 30.8%. It was maximum at Rourkela and Sundargarh. Virtually 60.7% expressed that they did not get such an opportunity and others had avoided because of their deficiency in the art of communication. In a modernized and well-developed urban area like Rourkela, the women representatives were even not confident enough to address the public. Only those members who had the opportunity of organizing various types of camps, attending cultural function or
addressing people on national occasions they alone conveyed of addressing public confidently and widening their contact.

Reservation policy for women in urban bodies had served as a catalyst for women to step out of their homes on a mass scale and enter the public domain. But at the same time they had the same opinion that awareness, self-confidence and experience were the important quality necessary for augmenting the political participation of women.

The hypothesis that ‘there has been improvement in the status of women inside the family as well as in the locality’ is found to be correct.

OPINION ON RESERVATION POLICY

From the data analysis, it was noticed that the respondents unanimously had supported the provisions of reservation policy for women and in all these Municipal Councils they had come to power simply on the strength of that ‘reserved’ seats by taking advantage of the opportunity. The women members replied that quota system had definitely opened doors for socially disadvantaged and marginalized sections to reach to the winning positions of formal political authority, which otherwise they would not have achieved. Their presence in elected bodies had a sobering effect sometimes in tolerating conflicting points of view. Since the introduction of the reservation policy, no doubt space was created for women’s leadership to politically alert women but negatively speaking in some cases they were used as ‘proxy’ candidates by the male members.

Among the male members, some of them supported the reservation policy and praised women for their qualities like honesty, sincerity, hard working and discipline. Their opinion was that woman as mother manages her family sincerely and like that they will manage a ward. But this dangerous stereotype argument was a fundamental reason for which only women had often been excluded from vital positions in politics.

However some male members did not fully agree with the above view, as they believe that women lack capacity, expertise, and self-reliance to perform their political role. They named them as ‘Yes Women’ both inside the family and in public who never had taken any initiative themselves and were depending on others always. The presence of such women councillors was nominal only when they were not taking valuable leadership roles.
The hypothesis, 'The reservation policy has enhanced participation by women and has increased their awareness, skill and knowledge on various legal aspects of administration and their responsibilities through regular training and periodical assessment of their work will enhance the role effectiveness of women councillors and this leads to a brilliant future in politics' is found to be befitting.

OBSERVED CHANGES RELATING TO POSITIVE GROWTH IN WOMEN

- There was improvement in status of respondents to some extent.
- Earlier women lacked vision but now they were critical of the system.
- Some change in the perception of the people was visible for which they were encouraging women much more than 10 yrs ago
- Women had acquired the confidence to move alone and mix with male members and public freely.
- Women representatives were respected for their official position which was observed in all the Municipal Councils
- They were now able to take independent decisions in some aspects of the family.
- They could visualize and differentiate between men and women’s perceptions on urban issues like for e.g. men give more importance in granting license or permission and paying lip service to development works, while women are concerned about health, cleanliness or development issues.
- Some of them were interacting skillfully and analysing the situation with maturity.
- Some of them were even courageous enough to challenge corruption, demanding transparency.
- Women councillors tended to be more democratic, open to change, less confrontational in character and prefer team approach working through a hierarchical structure.
SUGGESTIONS GIVEN BY WOMEN MEMBERS FOR IMPROVING THEIR PERFORMANCE

- Increasing reservation up to 50%
- Reservation for at least two continuous terms
- Minimum Higher Secondary Educational Level
- Election free from biased attitude of political parties, money and muscle power
- Economic independence
- Training for awareness raising, capacity building
- Establishment of office in their wards with the presence of all accessories
- More transparency in financial matter and display of all estimates, expenditure and various schemes either in the notice board or in a black board
- Cooperation of family, community, officials, colleagues and political parties.
- Providing some fund like MP/MLA LAD
- Increasing the resources of Municipal Council

OBSERVED CONSTRAINTS: WOMEN SPEAK OUT ABOUT URBAN LEVEL DIFFICULTIES

- Cultural taboos
- Lack of self esteem and confidence
- Lack of exposure, awareness and information
- Illiteracy and lower educational level
- Restricted physical mobility
- Economic insecurity
- Patriarchal control and conservative tradition
- Family burden and role conflict
- Lack of support mechanisms
- Lack of resistance
• Inability to articulate properly
• Misguidance and non cooperation of officials and male colleagues
• Political party conflict and interference
• Gender discrimination
• Derogatory remarks made by male members due to their lack of capacity
• Character assassination
• Criminalisation of politics
• Lack of training and previous experience
• Limited resources of urban bodies

The state like Orissa has undergone changes from the last decades under the impact of globalization and absence of single largest party forming unstable coalition government. It was noticed that in Municipal Councils of Sundargarh district, women were given seats, but they were not enlightened adequately. Apart from their own handicaps—stemming from mental psychology, there had been manifest discrimination under social, economic, political and institutional barriers. What the researcher carefully observed was the typical psychological fear possessed by some men that women were intruders to their terrain of politics, which functionally belongs to them. For this they were trying to exert dominance over them that may be conscious or subconscious one. All these are reflected in the under confidence of women in forming and expressing opinions in the proceedings of the local councils and their performance was hampered by it definitely.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

Psychological problems are no longer in the law but in the “heads”. They are compounded some factors inherent in a society. Each individual's movement is strictly guided by his own psyche and the amount of psychological push i.e. encouragement each one obtains from the society. Once elected, the psychological functioning runs fitting to the institution.
AETIOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS OF WOMEN

- Lack of confidence, low self esteem, motivation and sense of inadequacy that make women reluctant to involve in public life.
- Persistent inferiority complex of lacking skills necessary for upward mobility, and women’s negative self image of restricted vision,
- It is not only the society’s perceptions on men but women do not believe in themselves and on their capacity to be politically active.
- Internalizations of generations of gender bias
- Fear of incompetence
- Lack of fighting spirit
- Fear of conflict with family members

SOCIOECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

- Ideological barrier/ socio cultural prejudices
- Patriarchal social system
- Marriage
- Weak identity of women
- Domestic and family responsibilities
- Restriction on mobility
- Low level of education
- Lack of knowledge and information
- Poor communicative skills and knowledge in English
- Male dominance inside the family and society
- Absence of economic independence
- High cost of seeking and holding office

POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

- Process of recruitment and absence of women friendly criteria in selection by political parties
• Lack of knowledge on electoral process
• Funding for campaigning
• Criminalization of politics
• Character assassinations
• Relatives of politicians are promoted and supported to emerge in politics
• Interference by political parties in the allocation of work or fund
• Party conflict

STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

• Lack of training and orientation program
• No prior experience in dealing with multi dimensional urban development issues
• Less cooperation by male colleagues and officials
• Male dominance, and gender discrimination within Municipal Council
• Lack of unity and party feeling
• Not consulting women members before any policy decision, ignorance of agenda
• Less communicative skill
• Transportation problem
• Lack of accountability of class IV employees
• No appreciation of their work, biased attitude and under estimation by male colleagues
• Poor local information management system
• Inability to mobilize financial resources
• Puppet or dummy position by family members
• Absence of adequate infra structural facilities and support services
• Lack of solidarity among women members

Actually the quota system was introduced with twin motive such as to let more women advance politically in a short time and 2ndly to encourage young women to develop interest and become prospective politicians in future. As all the women in the Municipal Councils of the Sundargarh district were newcomers, it is necessary to equip them with adequate information, support and facilities to fit into the political arena. The
key areas for meaningful participation of women in governance can be divided into a) Municipal structure and power b) Education and training skills c) Support services of women and d) Capacity building.

The study reveals change, empowerment and leadership by some women members despite insurmountable barriers that they had been facing and which would continue also in a traditional modernizing place like Sundargarh district. The power balance is still tilted heavily in favour of men and much needs to be done to make feminization of politics into a realizable dream. Data on their perceptions, recognition, enhanced status, confidence levels, and increased political aspirations were the sign of rising leadership qualities. The transformation potential of their role in questioning, raising issues, and asserting inside the family and in the Municipal Council were indicators of the acquired confidence and capacities of female representatives. At the same time to face all types of challenges, several affirmative initiatives are required to be taken.

EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND INFORMATION

The level of education was found playing a crucial role in the decision-making capacity of women, instilling confidence and clarity of purpose and understanding the technicalities involved in various aspects of administration. Most of the women representatives emphasized the fact that their participation could be better if they had functional education, training and command over English and local language.

- From the very school level, the importance of both men and women in decision-making process has to be emphasized.
- An intense drive for eradication of illiteracy at rural and urban level and imposition of minimum higher secondary level as qualification for women and men alike.
- Effort should be made to provide legal, political education and computer training for their access to information.

As there is a close link between awareness and role performance, awareness constitutes the fundamental basis of political involvement, participatory democracy and egalitarian opportunities. Zoe Oxal defines women's empowerment as a process in which
women gain awareness, individually and collectively, of the manner in which power relations impact upon their lives, and win confidence in themselves and the strength to challenge gender inequalities.

What is more important is not giving power to women but giving the means to call for a different distribution of power. So before entrusting women councillors with the work of urban administration, it is essential to introduce innovative schemes for the development of their human potential. Their awareness has to be harnessed in line with the desired aims and objectives of the municipal administration. Awareness includes knowledge, a sense of alertness and spirit for social action through which they will exert their strength and power.

AWARENESS GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION

Knowledge is prerequisite to successful political engagement that is pursuing and defending one's interest in politics. That knowledge is essential from the day a candidate is nominated. She has to be acquainted with the procedure of filing nomination paper, campaigning, and the issues to be campaigned. Once she is elected, she needs information relating to various fields of administration for improving her level of professionalism.

- It is possible by organizing training program at regular intervals by the state machinery or by NGOs.
- Women councillors are to be enlightened with their rights and duties, provisions of the constitution, democratic process and values, working of democratic institutions, etc.
- Mock councils, informal group discussions, sharing of experiences, opinion exchange forum and success stories would help in awareness generation.
- Each Municipal Council should maintain a notice board giving detailed information of annual budget, expenditure and schemes implemented in order to maintain transparency.
• All the developmental programs and policies of the government and proceedings of the meetings should be circulated in local language to understand them easily.
• A nationwide information campaign that will highlight the importance of representation and participation of women in decision-making as human right.
• In spite of differences in their ideology and operational modes, women's organizations would create awareness and make them independent and self-reliant. They have to mobilize public opinion with a view to create a positive political environment.

TRAINNING

To handle the newly acquired role effectively, frequent trainings and continuous exposure of the women councillors is of utmost important. The training has to be given to both male and female to modify cultural and sociological norms that affect gender perceptions. The standing committee report of 14th Lok Sabha (2004-05) had pointed lack of enthusiasm among states for seeking financial assistance from union government for training women councillors and Orissa also came under that category.

• The professional training is to be given to deal with complex urban problems in a holistic manner.
• The legal training will give them information on laws governing their power and authority, municipal structure and other officials.
• There should be theme based training program on Municipal Acts, mobilization of resources, drafting a proposal, poverty alleviation schemes, urban service delivery system, functioning of ward committees and meetings.
• The training methodology should be on a practical basis and interactive one.
• Training has to be given on budgeting and financial management as the knowledge of women in this aspect is poor.
• Refresher courses should be held at regular intervals to communicate them any changing policies of the government, to follow up and supervise the work undertaken by them.
• The orientation and training program should focus on electoral laws, the art of
public speaking, campaigning strategies and fund raising techniques.

• Training to improve the art of communication, impart confidence in public
speaking and in dealing with the media,

• Training should be regular; short structured and should be given in a phased
manner.

• The reading material and the subject of training program should be simple so that
even a member with lower educational background will grasp the subject.

• The training should be conducted at close proximity to the residence of the
representatives so that they will participate without bothering about children and
household chores

• While attending the training programs or camps, the traveling allowance and D.A
has to be given.

• The introduction of shared training program for both men and women to
encourage them in sharing their successes, failures and novelties introduced.

• State level seminar to be conducted where women members should be made
aware of the various programs for their benefit. The National and State
commission for women should interact frequently with the elected women
representatives and monitor their performance.

DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

If women do not wish to be puppets in the hands of men, then the acquisition of
skills and ability is necessary to function successfully. Thus following skills are to be
developed through training, sharing experiences, exchange of opinions and visiting other
Municipal Councils.

• Skills for articulation, negotiation, alliance building, lobbying, assertiveness
and allocation of resources,

• Skills to be developed for campaigning, conflict resolution, representation of
their issues and dealing with media,

• Managerial skills for monitoring and supervising the work of their wards and
maintaining public relations,
• Nurturing women to develop decision-making skills by political parties and local self-government institutions

CAPACITY BUILDING MEASURES

This is essential to remove the inferiority complex of women and create a strong will and resistance power. Capacity building measures should focus on participation in governance and social issues and recognizing their own potentialities. “Empowerment is a psychological support process that acknowledges women’s capacities, assessing and reposing faith in them and guiding them through a journey of discovery. In short, it is a process of rebirth and establishment of their identity.” It should be done through developing skills, awareness, training, building up the identity of women and bringing reforms in administrative structure to change the subjugating male attitude. The voluntary organizations may establish a resource centre to facilitate a constant flow of information to the women representatives for their knowledge and capacity building. Besides these, their works should be encouraged through government, counseling centres and media.

EMULATING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INTERNATIONAL MODELS IN ORISSA

The Government of Norway recently had undertaken a pilot project in cooperation with Municipalities to improve the integration of women in municipal affairs by involving them in urban planning and design. From the outset additional activities were organized to provide them information about urban planning, promotion of women’s participation in municipal consultation, training on how to make an urban plan and guides were also published for their consultation including “A Cook Book for Grassroots Planning” The project produced changes in enhancing participation of women councillors.

In 2000, the city of Gothenburg in conjunction with the Swedish association of local authorities gave a gender-training program for its Municipal staff known as 3E methods.

• It stands for equality and parity in representation.
• Equality in allocation and the development of resources
• Analysis of the norms and values behind policies and efficient delivery of Municipal services.

In Brazil, Municipal budgeting forums have become important forums for raising women's issues— in which nearly 50% of women are represented. A recent study of women's representation in participation in 190 countries found that those governments, which have considered the provision of welfare as an "affirmative duty of the state," they have elected some 5% more women to national legislatures than countries without these policies holding all the other factors constant. In Thailand, a Gender watch group was created to monitor new developments affecting the status of women. The group has four organizations linking to the organizations at urban and local level. Their main aim is to generate awareness on women related issues and to promote their participation in the decision-making process.

In Sweden, women's Federation within individual political parties plays an important role in promoting their political life and about half of women who are involved in grassroots level of politics are the active members of a women's federation or have passed through the party's federation. The Swedish experience suggests that expanding childcare facilities and parental support can make considerable progress. Besides these, training is given to women to enable them to formulate their arguments, dealing with male hostility or heckling and use of media effectively. Women councillors also support each other in the meetings if they are target of ridicule by male. Similar strategies is adopted by Denmark to improve the confidence in public speaking, encouraging women to participate and giving training how to combat male hostile attitude of male members. In Britain, Urban Councils has set up women's committees which includes councillors together with the representatives from women's associations and groups and they have played an important role in attracting more and more women into formal political activity and in establishing supportive networks at local level to increase their participation in urban councils.

CONTACT STUDIES

Facilitating networking among elected representatives is a critical strategy to build their capacity and promote leadership qualities. The exchange visits, meetings and
training programs should be organized for both the sexes of various Municipal Councils at different places to share their experiences and innovative ideas. The mentoring relationship can be established between an experienced councillor and the new councillors to share their expertise. A local network, which is easily accessible to women councillors, appears to be an ideal starting point for developing mentoring relationship. It will provide a great source of strength and will help in strengthening the relationship between women groups.

GENDER SENSITIZATION PROGRAMS

A more embryonic entry to power concerning the affairs of the urban government is impossible without efforts to get men and women to change gender identities. Hence, there is an urgent need for gender sensitization among the officials and men interacting with women members to change their attitude of underestimating the capacities of women. They should guide them and cooperate with them to develop an efficient administration. If the activities of women politicians who have confronted corruption, discrimination or criminalization of politics will be highlighted, then it will act as a source of motivation for others to develop their capabilities. Again a comprehensive and meaningful training program has to be introduced to change the patriarchal attitude and orientations of both the sexes.

EXPOSURE TO MASS MEDIA

In the age of media, the women councillors need to use the media for positive image building. The mass media can play a major role in building up public opinion on the issues of political participation of women. Exposure to mass media through reading newspaper or watching television will help in gaining knowledge. The mass media through documentaries or interviews will motivate the women and will highlight on women’s issues and contributions on urban governance. In Orissa, the newspapers or journals have their ‘woman columns” which focus on the problems of women and how they are struggling to overcome them instead of highlighting on the achievements of women. This negative reporting has to be avoided as far as possible. The media should be women friendly to focus on affirmative action for women and sensitive gender issues.
REFORMS IN INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

Women should acquire political maturity to have a share in the decision-making process and shoulder greater burden. Municipal government can encourage the participation of women in number of ways:

- Making easier for women members to attend various meetings, proper announcement of the date of meetings and the chairman should allow them to give their independent views.
- The meeting time and locations should be accessible for women and they should be provided with transport facilities to attend the meetings.
- The childcare unit should be provided in the ward so that they can attend meetings.
- The structure and functions of Municipal Council should be women friendly by bringing cultural change of change in attitude by both men and women and procedural change for better assimilation of women.
- Women experts in the field of city planning, waste management, environment protection, pollution control and other related matters should establish an organization to help the representative in case of any technical problems.
- Local information management system has to be established.
- It should be made mandatory for all Municipal Councils to have working committee and these committees must be responsible and active for the purpose for which they are constituted.
- There should be adequate representations of elected women councillors in all these committees and they should be helped to take up key position in these committees. Certain committees may be constituted to initiate and supervise programs for women’s welfare and development.
- Municipal authorities should ensure that clear and accessible information is available.
- All the elected women members suggested for enhancing reservation quota from 33 % to 50 %, as inclusion of more women will strengthen women as a political force.
• As all of them are new comers to urban bodies and the 5year term seems to be inadequate. The first few years take time to understand things and the community and by the time they acquire experience, their term comes to an end. So, minimum two terms should be allowed as an affirmative action.

• The Municipal Councils should be given freedom to select, remove and transfer its own staff as sometimes the administrative officer appointed by the government are loyal to the state more. The cleanliness work of the wards should be entrusted in the hands of private organisation, as the sweepers are not accountable before them.

• Awareness has to be created by organizing regular seminars, workshops and conferences and they should be published and distributed among the women representatives to further develop their potentialities.

• There should be more transparency in allotment of works, development schemes and budget.

• An evaluation of work system to be introduced in order to make them more accountable. Documentation of positive initiatives and case studies of women councillors might be used to build a positive image and a public acknowledgement of the role of women in urban governance.

• The proxy syndrome has to be eliminated by insisting the presence of women representatives in all the proceedings of urban administration.

• Creation and implementation of more women related welfare schemes and development programs would attract more women to be involved in urban affairs.

• The No Confidence Motion should not be passed before two years against the women elected representatives. There should be some mechanism to ensure the security of their positions and to prevent the misuse of this provision by male members to throw them out if they see her as a threat to his power and position.

• The councillor must be provided with office, salary and staff with all the necessary accessories. It will help women members to monitor the work and meet public regularly.
• The need for increasing the remuneration was voiced unanimously by all the members especially by women members who were economically not independent. The honorarium received by them barely covers traveling costs, let alone other expenses such as telephone, meeting expenses etc thus putting heavy strain on the women’s personal resources.

• It is ironic that while cities contain the most prosperous enterprise and consumers, the Municipal authorities have such a shortage of fund for meeting their responsibilities. The state must devolve minimum 40% of finances from central government to local governments to enhance economic autonomy as a statutory provision and not as a grant. The councillors should be given Area development funds to undertake development projects,

REFORMS IN POLITICAL STRUCTURE

• There is a general consensus that political parties are neglecting the task of sufficiently motivating and politically educating women in Orissa. So the affiliation to the political party should be made legal as parties are the key “gate keepers” to women's political participation and representation.

• The increasing expenditure in the election is another major deterrent for women. They are emphatic that families are not willing to finance them, though they will do it for men. Hence, a certain amount of election expenditure and campaigning fund has to be fixed legally by the election commission to be spent by the political party during election.

• Workshops should be held in advance of elections to provide information about electoral laws, filing of nomination, political structures, and procedures.

• Nepotism and patronage should be avoided and merit as a principle should be the consideration.

• Special care should be taken by the district administration and electoral machinery to look after the safety, security of women candidates and avoidance of violence, money and muscle power. Politics should be clean aiming at accountability.
• The base of the political parties has to be expanded where women should be given 33% of reservation inside the political parties to serve as catchments for women. They should be encouraged to witness and participate in various political activities like meetings, campaigns, rallies, or demonstrations.

• Women organizations, pressure groups or those in the political party should help women at the grass level to develop leadership qualities. A women’s caucus, which networks with the women’s group of similar interest is to be organized to support and mobilize vote for women candidates.

• Community women may be involved in ward discussions.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Emerging from strong patriarchal roots in Sundargarh district and based on blurry cultural practices, the biases and discrimination against women in familial and social life had affected the exercise of political choices and functional autonomy of the women councillors. All the constraints mentioned in the research came to highlight the way women councillors had been handicapped in their functioning and meeting the expectations of the people of their ward. Sometimes “women unfriendly” aspect of local government culture suggests the need of having some support service facilities from society, family, political parties, government officials, male colleagues, bureaucracy and the women organizations.

• In respect of the active participation of women in the political process, the society in general and family in particular has a major role for the empowerment of women. The recognition by society of women’s equality and partnership in the process of decision-making instead of underestimating their capabilities’ will help in changing the patriarchal culture that has reduced women to inferior one. The family is an institution that cuts across caste, class, religion or regions. It is the family, which allocates power, resources or authority in a biased manner that is not favourable for women. The family is thus perceived as a key institution in today’s world in constructing women’s reality and mediating her rights. The
financial support through family or other resources will be a major asset to pursue their political career.

- The support of family in relieving their burden of domestic work by sharing will be a great help.
- Social welfare measures like offering generous provisions for childcare and other family support makes women's gender roles less of an obstacle to participate in public life.
- Women need support of powerful individuals, groups and networks to widen their power base.
- Political parties should create congenial atmosphere for their participation and functioning after being elected.
- The support must come from bureaucracy where they should be allowed to redress grievances or make complaints against erring officials.
- Today the support of women's organizations is necessary to build political consciousness, strengthening women’s identity and creating leadership qualities.
- The contribution of the women councillors should be acknowledged by the Municipal officials to act as a source of inspiration for others.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The NGOs working at the local level should address on social problems of women like girl child infanticide, violence against women, illiteracy, dowry, assault etc. They should encourage the formation of support groups to empower women socially and economically and provide a platform for sharing problems and providing solutions. They should take up the responsibility of introducing and developing shared training for both men and women that will help in transforming the unequal relation in a society dominated by “macho models”. The local Mahila Samitis should take up women related issues.

Whatever may be the findings, in the ultimate analysis one should agree that though changes are trivial in the status of women councillors of Sundargarh district, any small rise bringing positive changes are definitely gigantic steps. The women in the public life require a protecting guard of popular hold from all sides and considerable
good will for accomplishing their responsibilities significantly. The reservation policy is not the solution to rely on attitudinal, social and structural blockade which women face in their entry into politics. “Not only change within the existing political structure is required, but also within women’s own perception of sensitive issues that directly concern their lives.” In other words, through organization, teamwork, sharing of experiences, accessing resources and building capacities through political or non-political organizations, and through genuine recognition and appreciation of women councillors work, they can begin their independent and modest ventures.

The novel measures introduced in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, and Karnataka in order to expand the base of participation may be adopted as a model for women’s entry arena into the political sphere of the process of democratic decentralization. They should be provided with enough participatory opportunities and exposure to liberate them from the forced and artificial restraining frames to emerge as more confident, articulate, progressive and prominent leaders.

Sufficient care has to be taken to remove the prejudices and improve the positive self-images of women. If female has to grow, then educating those women sufficiently in all aspects is a necessary precondition before their entry into the political world. The social empowerment must precede the political empowerment to develop an increased sense of self-reliance. It will help them to be relieved from household responsibilities to some extent and will make it easier for them to act outside patriarchal laws for their effective functioning.

Efforts to maintain women in politics whether at grass level or national level must be an uninterrupted process irrespective of reservations. In order to overcome the short comings of the welfare approach, Amartya Sen had proposed to look women as the agents of change rather than as passive beneficiaries. He had proposed for creation of material and social environment that should contribute towards their participation bringing gender equity.

Thus a comprehensive approach based on capacity building, welfare and human rights of women can remove the existing gap and would improve the self efficacy of women. All the members in the councils should recognize that women are essential part of the political system and the voices of women will lead to a developed and equitable
society and the strengthening of democracy. The women’s group working at local level should adopt a common policy, and a common vision to create gender specific development paradigm in all the areas of policy-making, planning and structures. Once the political participation of women would reach parity, the traditional male centered politics characterized by authority, domination, violence and sometimes corruption would succumb to politics that is characterized by unity, cooperation, caring, sacrifice and honesty.

In the ultimate analysis, if women continue to find themselves ignored, neglected and deprived, then part of the answer for efficacious regeneration lies in their own potential to systematize and aggregate their cause. Women councillors as such have to take the initiative and set free themselves from several constraints they docilely suffer today. To realize the dream, they should be prepared to undertake a long journey of struggle, which is plagued with barriers. Women have to discover their own identity which is neither male nor female but only humane. There is a clear need of a gender specific development model in all the areas of policy making and planning so that the need of women could be met and their participation would be ensured. This necessitates a holistic approach based on political worth, welfare and an all round transformation in the consciousness of both men and women as well as in the socio cultural norms for eliminating existing gap in and resulting in gender equity in the political arena.