CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
Pundit Nehru had once said, “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.” No development is perfect until it is wholesome and involves equally men and women. The last one hundred years may rightly be called as the age of women’s awakening in the world and securing participation of women in the institutions of democracy and governance. It has now become an important item in the Global agenda. The 21st century is known as the ‘Era of Women Development’. But the story of the woman as revealed in the reports of WHO, UNICEF, World Bank and National Family Health Survey is quite depressing, shocking and sordid. Women turn up as the single largest group of culturally marginalized, ideologically edged-out, economically deficient and politically deprived section in the society. This inequality is the product of a social system, which has been responsible for promoting inferiority, discrimination and degradation. Bogged down by male dominance, male aggressiveness and factors of uncertainty, many women are not able to play a decisive role in the affairs of the community. Sushila Patni writes, “To identify women as the inferior segment is to deny them the vital participatory opportunity as well as inhibit the integrated evolution and development of society in totality.”

Women in the ancient scriptures of India had been depicted as Shakti, Lakshmi and Vidya. She is the architect of the whole society as well as the destiny of humanity. In the history of political philosophy, the great Greek philosopher Socrates had remarked that perfect justice can be achieved only through suppression of the distinction between sexes in all important matters and the admission of women on equal footing in all the activities of the society. His disciple, Plato also advocated the equality of sexes including their equal participation in political life. The dawn of Industrial Revolution was responsible for the growth of two social movements in the name of democracy and equality and the other for socialism. In the 19th century, J. S. Mill’s famous book, Subjection of women and Mary Willstone Craft’s strong defence of women’s rights in Vindication of the Rights of Women produced an environment to have a look into the
rights of this neglected section of the society. Under the influence of these writings, the advocates of the women rights gave a thrust to a sort of movement on the issues of women. They raised the slogan that democracy falls short when women of whatever colour or ethnic group cannot exercise vote or cannot elect representative of their choice. The parity of women is necessary not merely on grounds of social justice, but as a basic condition for social, economic and political development of the nation.

The anthropologists and the sociologists throughout the ages have recorded sexual asymmetry as a universal phenomenon of human life. Their studies have confirmed the existence of male domination and variation in women subordination in all contemporary societies. The pity is that in spite of advancement in civilization the male mind-set yet in this century refuses to figure out women as an essential part of the human community. The impracticality of taking up socio-economic development and societal transformation in isolation without the involvement of women is still not realized fully by the dominant section of the society. A woman in India, as in many other countries is fighting at every stage of her life for rights that is silenced by family norms, values, properties, emotional ties etc. The struggle to lift this shade of inequality is certainly the most difficult challenge of our time.

Women are undoubtedly the hub center of the family. But in gender ideology, 'a woman's place is the home' is continuing since time immemorial for which only few of them have left the protected life of home and ventured into the political world. The presence of women is not felt much in the structured decision-making or institutional setting and even those who are present, only small proportion of them are enjoying vital positions of power. Throughout the ages men as a group have controlled the instruments of power and continued to believe that political activity is a masculine prerogative. Maurice Duverger comments that the old theory of female incapacity had been replaced by a "functional theory" about the division of attitudes, which he firmly believed to be reflected in the division of labour. In its modernized form, this kind of functional theory recognizes the right of women to work outside the home and to participate in civic and public affairs, yet emphasizes their special concern with 'home policy matters' i.e. motherhood and its problems, education and the family. He considers that the reason for the political activity of women is being channeled into these areas rather than into
political parties, trade unions and the life. Evelin Hust says that in industrial countries, the participation of women in political activity is restricted due to their involvement in familial affair and traditional recruiting patterns of the political parties whereas in some of the so-called developing countries they are further handicapped under patriarchal norms, conservative tradition, low literacy rate and the prevalence of social norms that restricts their mobility in public space.

However with the growth of the Women's Movement, the expanding debate on 'maintaining women in Development' and the growing recognition of the government to integrate women into National Plans and processes, a new consciousness had emerged on women's participation in political process. It forced the nations of the world to seriously concentrate on the problems of women and to integrate them into the national mainstream as gender gap is to be blamed for dividing the world into two unequal humanities.

WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL SCENARIO

Women in many countries had to wage long and grim struggle to acquire their right to vote. As of today, 118 countries of the world have granted voting right to women in political life. In Latin American and Caribbean countries the access of women to the political system is limited by the conditions of poverty and low educational attainment whereas the prospect is still bleak in some Arab countries like Kuwait and U.A.E. Although, right from the Mexico Conference of 1975, there has been a global awareness and realization that political participation is not confined merely to the exercise of voting rights, yet women are seen as major voters rather than policy formulators or decision makers. They have not been able to create a position for themselves in policy formulating and decision-making. The absence of a large majority of women from political decision-making has a negative impact on the entire process of democratization. Apparently universal franchise is inadequate to overcome structural constraints that affect the presence of women in political offices. Many of them avoid facing grueling campaigns, aggressive media and the exposure of their private lives. Giving power to women is visualized by vested interests as a shift in the power balance and their deprivation of prestige and benefits.
Table No. I - 1 shows, the analysis by Inter parliamentary union of 2004, which discloses the marginalized presence of female leadership and representation as a common phenomenon in almost all countries, despite a nation's level of economic development and universal awareness on the political rights of women. As of September 2005, the global average for women in parliament stands at 16.3% and only the Nordic countries had reached the goal of 40% in parliamentary seats.

Table No. I-1

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, REGIONAL BREAK DOWN UNITS %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>16.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>34 %</td>
<td>39 %</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe-OSCE (Member countries including Nordic)</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>18.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe excluding (Nordic countries)</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>05 %</td>
<td>16.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>15.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>09 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>16.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>05 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>13.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Representation of women in different nations in South Asia can be seen from Table-I - 2 in the following page.
Table – I - 2
SHOWING REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>21.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>08.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>02.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>04.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>05.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>09.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>06.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: The Inter Parliamentary Union – 2004)

Holtzman and Williams describe how the access of women to political office in America is hindered most seriously by the stereotyped belief that women cannot hold a difficult type of job. They often encounter myths about the inability of women to travel, take criticism, work with male members or work as manager. Susan Mezey in her research suggested that the problem of women office holders shoot from their own inadequacies, emotionalism and weakness, demand for extra privileges and interest trivialities. The study Gender gap and American election analyzes the changing women’s vote in 1980’s and 1990’s and showed the startling facts that in spite of affluence, opportunity for education or healthcare, women in U.S.A. are as much behind the scene as in any developing country. Barbara Nelsen and Najma Choudhury emphasize that the ubiquity of the secondary political status of the women demonstrates how politics is intertwined with other aspects of society. Each sphere of society creates new elements of gender inequality and its own opportunities for resistance, innovation and transformation.

Different International Conferences have emphasized the fact that women have right to participate in decision-making for reasons of equality, democracy and legitimacy. The U.N Charter enshrines that the organization to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. The Preamble of the Charter declares the ‘equal rights of men and
women'. The U.N. Commission on the Status of Women was set up in 1946 as a permanent body of the Economic and Social Council. Actually, the U. N's declaration of 1975 as the 'International Women's year' and 1980 as the 'Year for Development of women' were the turning points after which the nations of the world became conscious of integrating them in the social, economic and political activities. The Jakarta declaration has clearly noted that the involvement of the women in the political field and decision-making roles is an important device for empowerment as well as monitoring standards of political performance. The World Conference on Metropolitan Governance noted at its meeting in Tokyo in 1993 that governance includes the vision we have and the strategic decisions one takes up. It cannot be divided simply into political or technical dimensions. It requires decision-making from bottom to top involving all concerned people at every level. Thus social equity and political legitimacy supplement the administrative efficiency of the governance.

The momentum generated by the International Conferences in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's along with the growing influence of women's group and the feminist movement helped women to be accepted as the part of the political setting. Seriousness started all over the world for enhancing the status of women and increasing their political participation to provide both a foundation and signal of social change. Kathleen Newland comments, "as a global trend, rising numbers of women in politics will indicate that human beings are making progress towards a more humane world; not because women are necessarily more humane than men, but because any society that categorically excludes half its members from the process by which it rules itself will be ruled in a way that is less than fully humane."

WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS OF INDIA

A glance into the past rich heritage of Indian culture tells us a glorious position occupied by women during the Vedic period where they were coequal partners with men in all aspects. A steady degradation in their position started mostly during the Mughal rule and the consequent political and social confusion in the 18th century. A number of social and religious movements in the middle of the 19th century reforming Hinduism and the Indian society gave a fresh breathe to women's life and identity in this country. While
these reform movements provided the fertile ground for the emancipation of women, the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi marked the climax, when he sowed the seeds of encouragement for the participation of women in the political movement. Under his inspiration, women stepping outside their private sphere started participating in the freedom movement and forming different women's organizations. In 1918, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had endorsed franchise for women. In the first election in 1926, less than 1% of women of the total population were enfranchised. In 1929, Gandhi had declared, "women must have right to vote and equal legal status with men. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point when women begin to effect the political deliberations of the nation”.

The Constitution of India is generally looked upon as the manifesto of social revolution. In order to translate the egalitarian goals as perceived by Gandhiji into reality, it was recognized that constitutional provisions for women will provide a vista in the building of new nation and vice versa. Thus social, economic and political rights were granted to women on equal footing with men under various constitutional provisions. The Preamble encompasses the principle of equality and social justice. The Articles like 14, 15, 16 and 19 under Fundamental Rights speak about equality of all sex and prohibition of discrimination on various grounds. In Articles 15(3), 16(4) positive discrimination in the form of reservations for women, children and backward classes are provided. While, Article 21 guarantees right to life and liberty trafficking of women and forced labour are prohibited under Article 23.

The various provisions of Directive principles of State Policies under Article 39(a), 39(d), 39(e), and Article 42 requires on the part of the state to give protection to the women. Article 39(a) requires the state to direct its policy towards securing for their citizen, men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Article 39(d) directs the state to secure equal pay for equal work for men and women. Article 42 is to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. The Article 51 (A) mandates that the state shall renounce practices that are derogatory to the dignity and the status of women. Under Article 325 and 326 women were given the right to vote and stand in the elections. After the 73rd and 74th Amendment Act, Articles like 243(D) and 243(T) provides for the reservation of women in the
Panchayat Raj institutions and Municipalities. In all the five year plans emphasis has been made to raise the socio-economic status of women in our country.

In post independence, the development in the sphere of education, rapid urbanization, media exposure and communication has facilitated increasing the level of political consciousness of women to some extent for which they have succeeded in gaining certain recognition in the political aspect. But the scenario on the mounting participation of women in various decision-making bodies has not changed dramatically. Women of the new generation, particularly in the era of globalization, are facing greater challenges where they have to reconcile their traditional roles with the modern values of global culture. It is a paradox that our country was ruled under powerful prime minister for a sufficient long period of time and some women from the upper classes head political parties and command large followings, yet there is a great pause between constitutional guarantee and the actual representation of women.

The 2001 census report of India shows unequal sex ratio between male and female such as 933 female out of 1000 males, maternal mortality as the second highest in the world and more than 40% of women as illiterate comprising the world's largest number of unlettered women. The baseline report on the status of women in India comments that they are the victims of triple discrimination of caste, class and gender which has the effect of limiting their potential for solidarity thereby hindering efforts made towards developing a common political agenda.10

Women are not treated as a political entity in their own right. On the other hand, political parties and other power groups have treated them as a means to further their own interest and gains. The organizational culture, values and beliefs of the political parties in our country are male oriented. By 1974, the committee on status of women in India produced a commissioned report titled 'Towards Equality' which evaluated and acknowledged the continuing plight of the Indian women. The political participation of women was declared to be a patchy one as a result of differing ideologies and issue-based protests. Only token numbers of women were participating in formal politics, many of which were from higher class and caste back grounds.11 Omvedt Gail, 1993, Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India, New York, M.E.Sharpe Inc.
No doubt the recent Cong I party is headed by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi; still then the main reasons for the absence of substantial number of women in the national parties are gender based socialization, failure to demonstrate to the socioeconomic model favoured by the parties, weak networks for women within the parties and their unequal responsibility in household work. Many other considerations like inner party factionalism, personality issues, reluctance of the political parties to distribute party tickets, lack of resources for funding, the attitude of the voters towards female candidates and subtle sexist propaganda against them, all of which blocks the aspirations of women candidates. Again, poor access to knowledge and low self esteem in seeking and using that knowledge have continued to restrain women’s potential to rise above these limitations. Niroj Sinha says that the problem of women in politics in this country can be located at different levels- history, tradition, patriarchal political structures, the stereo typed role and the way democracy works in this country\textsuperscript{12}. Representation of women in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are shown in Table-I - 3.

Table – I - 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHOWING REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN PARLIAMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOK SABHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As power is the prominent feature of the term empowerment, the equal participation and interaction of both men and women in all aspects of public life was visualized as the compensatory aspects of empowerment. The true empowerment alone will guarantee that the identity of women does not get throttled. The stated goals of empowerment should provide women the power to change the rules of the game and negotiating the gender relations.\textsuperscript{13} Their political activism then will become central for
social transformation. The UN initiatives, which include the UN decade for women, conferences held at Mexico-1975, Nairobi 1985 and Beijing 1995 and the CEDAW had a substantive impact on the status of women in India. The organizations of women debating the National Perspective plan for women (1988) made a strong case for elected representation of women especially of poorer sections, SC and ST women to ensure their opportunity in participating in the grassroots level of organizations. The notion of women’s quota was invigorated as a way to eliminate the unseen barrier that denies their access to politics. Devaki Jain comments, it was the pressure of national law combined with the political imperative of winning elections that changed political parties perception of the limited capacity of women for public office. The 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendment to the constitution reserving 33% seats for women at village level and urban level were a response to the changing debate and various movements of the women.

These two amendments are a landmark initiative to act as an induced mechanism in further reinforcing the constitutional provisions and helping a marginalized group to prove their potential. It appeared as if the reservation policy created a unique window of opportunity for women and backward sections to publicly make their voices heard and contribute towards the political process. Anne Phillips believe that quota in politics is imperative because of three reasons, 1stly, the need for symbolic recognition of disadvantaged groups, 2ndly the need for a more vigorous advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged groups and lastly due to the importance of policy of transformation in opening up a fuller range of policy options. To some quotas are undemocratic and discriminatory because it gives someone from a certain gender/ethnic background, an advantage. Others look it as a way of empowerment or compensation for the structural barriers that make fair competition fail. Some critics of quota argue that it would confine the beneficiaries of quotas to some kind of women ghetto, allowing them to deal only with traditionally ‘soft areas’ like health or education. Madhu Kishwar had criticized the proposed system of rotation of reserved constituency on ground that it will act as a major obstacle to the establishment of a nurturing relationship between elected women implying that women candidate always have to oppose other women candidates, thus discouraging the possibility of developing female solidarity.
Still then, the reason for implementing reservation at the local level in India is viewed as a good training ground for women to reach higher level of elected or appointed office in government. From a gender perspective, the local self-government is conceived as the closest and most accessible level of government to women. It is a major path for people's voice and power. The participation in local government is easier for women as the eligibility criteria for nomination in election is less stern in comparison to the state and the national level. They have to bother relatively less with the costs of mounting election campaigns. Again the competitions are reasonably low. Local politics can be more interesting for women as they are the people who may be having deep acquaintance with the community well. They will be the major users of service in the community like water, electricity, waste disposal, health clinics and other related matters.

So, immediately after the announcement of reservation policy in India, millions of women entered into local level institutions without any preparation with the hope that power in a democracy rightfully belongs equally to all the people. A study of women councillors in the first term of office after the reservation system that was installed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh which found that one third of women were standing for husbands or sons. They acted as an agent on behalf of their male relations and exercised power in their interests. Representation needs to be accompanied by capacity building was not taken seriously during the first election at local level during such period.

From 1990's constant attention was given to the participatory approach in urban management, with the focus on gender needs. At the International level in 1994, the organization for Economic cooperation and development brought together delegations for the first time from 27 countries to examine themes like 'Women in the City', Housing services and the Urban Environment. The importance of women in decision-making for development in urban areas was enhanced at that Round table conference. It categorically insisted on women's right to represent and participate fully in all sphere of activity in cities, and especially as elected officials to involve them in urban planning and urban development. The conference allowed the participants to share experiences and practices to compare national policies designed to strengthen the participation of women in municipal Development.
The emphasis on ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ in sustainable development gained further recognition during the Habitat II conference or City Summit at Istanbul in 1996. It was attended by 500 mayors and the Habitat agenda ratified by the participants laid the foundation for ending gender bias, ensuring equal opportunities and empowering women through the 4 P’s: Parity, Power, Participation and Partnership. The UN Development Assistance Task Force was established to establish women’s capacities, corrections, gender imbalances and promoting wider participation of women in economic and political decision-making process. In 1998, the International Union of Local Authorities meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe passed its worldwide declaration on women in Local government calling on Local authorities to echo the gender equality commitment made by their respective governments. It was declared that the local government with its inherent responsibility for the provisions of basic services and infrastructures having a direct impact on the lives of households forms the closest and most acceptable level of representative governance for women. A review meeting was done in 2001 at New York to examine the progress towards gender equality as declared in Istanbul +5. From Feb 28-March 11, 2005 the U.N commission on the status of women conducted the ten years review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +10). It was decided to have 5th U. N World Conference of Women during 2007 to 2010.

In 2004, women accounted for only 4.6 % of Mayors in 34 countries and 15 % of women councillors in 52 countries that was surveyed. The country like Sweden is a rare exception where women make up to 42 % of women councillors and it is due to the implementation of national laws of quota only. At the other extreme, in Australia, women had achieved a high level of representation without quota ranging their percent from 27 % to 43 %. There the government was committed to the merit principle and providing supports to create an environment that enable women to compete on merit.

In our country, Municipal administration is considered as one of the important urban structure of government. Today, the process of modernization, globalization and rapid urbanization has introduced specific elements of change in the urban sector. The women in the urban society are better placed due to better infra structural development, wider educational and occupational opportunities and the consequent attainment of monetary viability leading to economic self-sufficiency. It was realized that involving
women in urban governance is not a question of social justice but is a matter of efficiency as well. JoBeall in his research paper has pointed that if women were not involved in urban decision-making bodies, the quality of services would deteriorate, as they alone possess special capacity to deal with urban issues\(^\text{18}\). The ward committees in Municipal Councils are potential vehicles for women to set the agenda of the development work that they will undertake in their communities.

The researcher has concentrated on political participation of women at urban level, as insufficient work has been done in this respect in India, only a few comprehensive research studies were conducted between 1995-2000 on the first group of women elected to the Municipal Councils. They exposed that almost all the elected women councillors were new comers without much political education or any clear-cut idea about their responsibilities. The 74\(^\text{th}\) Amendment is more than a decade old now and Municipal elections have taken place for second or third time in some states. It is therefore time to make a dispassionate study and assess how the reservation policy for women is working at the urban level.

The symbolic recognition of women through enhanced political representation is a positive effect of the quota that recognizes women as a group. But power is not something that simply people will bestow to anybody, it has to be negotiated, bargained and sometimes wrested from the powerful. The general perception today is that mere opportunity is not enough. The symbolic representation of women is no guarantee of a qualitatively better representation of the interests of women. Affirmative action is necessary but not a sufficient condition to overcome the rigid social and cultural barriers which women face and disallows their participation in the public sphere\(^\text{19}\).

In general there is a consensus in India, that in spite of quotas and other institutional arrangements, the results of genuine participation of women and their visibility in leadership roles are insignificant except increasing their raw numbers. The participation of women at the political level in our country is multi dimensional and deeply woven into the fabric of Indian societies. They are aware of the benefits of politics but cannot devote fully or negotiate independent space for themselves. When women will become part of the political process they will be able to play a significant role in restructuring these institutions and upholding the rights of women. Women themselves
have to be the most powerful agent to play their active role in overcoming all the barriers. The remarks made by Mrs. Terjani Vakil, is very apt in this regard. On her address to the girl students of Banasthali Vidyapeeth of Rajasthan, she had said “Keep a space for you as a person. Think about what you are, what you want to be, what interests you, what pleases you and do that. Remember you are an individual, a human being and not just some one’s wife, mother or daughter”.

To solve the problem, the issue of gender in urban governance in contemporary society requires caring practical difficulties of gender roles including health care, childcare and personal safety and concentrating on strategic interests like education, awareness, skill, mobilization and political participation. It requires considerable acceleration and strong momentum for action. In other words, an in depth analysis and a concerted approach is the need of the hour in bringing certain reforms in political and institutional arrangements and changing the mind set of both men and women in our country.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

The participation of women in politics is no doubt an important step of moving towards social equality, but there exist differences of opinion relating to the nature of participation and indicators used to evaluate their performance and role. It is time now to seriously concentrate on realities that women in urban local governance encounter while performing their role beneath the political structure. The growing urbanization with a rapid transformation in the living conditions of women in towns and cities is the main reason to undertake the research work on the political participation of women at urban level as little investigations are made in this aspect.

Despite the initial problems, the quota system encouraged participation and this initial encouragement is realized as a necessity, considering the traditional confinement of women in household chores. The question of gender is very sensitive and at any level of politics in India there is hesitation among power holders to implement it fully. The proposed study intends to probe into certain significant questions like where does women’s political participation fit into the challenging situations and number of factors that inhibit it. How the Municipal Councils can serve the cause of women and
development and how to increase the effectiveness of their role? What types of women are entering into these institutions and whether they belong to the mediated or political efficacious category?

To study all these aspects, the structure and functions of Municipal Councils along with the literature review of different theories of political participation in general and participation of women in particular was made. It is known that political participations of an individual vary with the socio cultural climate of a country and the socioeconomic condition of women is linked very much with role perceptions. So, an attempt has been made to examine the pattern of political socialization and political culture in terms of the socioeconomic and political background of women councillors of Sundargrah district Municipal Councils. There are certain other factors to be taken into consideration while explaining the nature of participation in the Municipal affairs. To get relevant information on it, the motivation of women councillors representing the wards, their exposure to the political process, participation at various stages of implementation of policies and any constraints that have relegated them to the secondary position within the political structures are taken into account.

Since 1990's the representation of women in the local and urban level has increased in Orissa. Mandatory reservation has given a space and shape in a dramatic fashion to the representation of women by bringing them to the very centre stage of politico economic decision-making. There is however some concern about achievements, quality of performance and challenges. The campaign for good governance according to today's world gives attention to seven inter-related norms like sustainability, decentralization, equity, efficiency, transparency, accountability, civic engagement and citizenship. Each of them is no doubt applicable to both the sexes, but there are specific gender problems that need to be highlighted.

For conducting the research work, the researcher has chosen the state like Orissa, which is one of the backward states of India. It is a paradox that social structure in the age of science and modernization is here not supportive to the issues of women. In some families, a girl child is viewed as a liability and preference is for a boy. This attitude in general is reflected in the gender-based discrimination of the lives of women. While a boy is sent to school, a girl child stays at home for domestic responsibilities. Female
foeticide, nutritional deficiency, school dropouts, dowry violence and torture, deprivation of economic resources such as income, land, houses and cultural norms restricting mobility persist in this state. All these have impaired confidence of the women for generations and political equality is still hard to pin down here. The political participation of women candidates in the electoral battle is not much encouraging despite the fact that it was the first eastern states to elect a lady chief minister twice in 1970’s. The general prevalent notions that women are not interested in politics or they do not have the capacities to shoulder the political responsibilities shroud the political climate of this state. But due to the progressive attitude of the then chief minister Mr. Biju Patnaik, it was the first state to implement 33% reservation of seats for women at rural and urban level.

With this political environment of the society of Orissa, the Sundargarh district is taken as a sample study that has four Municipal Councils with some amount of variation in culture, tradition, economy or status of women. Some area of this district is advanced industrially, while some have rural setting in certain aspects. Similar variations were found in terms of infrastructural facilities like schools, roads transport etc. Again, it is a scheduled area having more tribal population and a reserved constituency for SCs and STs. Another reason for my selection is also to study women from backward classes in this district. In a tribal society women in general are more mobile, come from an egalitarian culture and have strong support networks behind them. Thus the weaker sections of society such as SCs, STs who never could think of contesting elections against upper class elites are now sharing political power in the local government institutions.

With all this background the researcher undertook the research work. Thus, the objectives are,

• To understand the local self-government at the urban level, the decentralization of power and the participation of women as the councillors or vice chair person and chair person,
• To examine whether the policy of reservation has provided adequate opportunity for women to participate fully in the urban level of politics or are they mere surrogates of males,
• The extent of devolution of power and the participation of women in developmental works and programs,
• Gender related obstacles encountered by women while undertaking developmental works and programs,
• Needs, levels of awareness and training as well as initiatives taken by government and non-government organization in these areas.

HYPOTHESES:
The following hypotheses are formulated for the research work.

• Level of education is directly proportional to different modes of political participation of women.
• Political participation of women is affected by age and marriage.
• The socioeconomic status contributes towards their visibility in political activities.
• Women coming from political families show more interest and greater political consciousness than others.
• Activity of the Women Councillor has been profound influence by the husband in case she is married.
• The Municipal Council had proceedings with gender playing some role in discussions and decisions rather than political parties.
• Municipal staff respected and complied to the Women Councillors on their requisition.
• The reservation policy at urban level realises participation of women in decision-making process.
• Women Councillors have a tendency to foster environment friendly and humanitarian outlook in their touch.
• The Women Councillors were not accepted well by their male counterparts.
• Gender driven superiority by Male Councillors paralysed the efforts of Women Councillors.
• There has been improvement in the status of women inside the family as well as in the locality.
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.

METHOD OF STUDY

For the present study, an empirical analysis has been made on the basis of available data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Though the study does not intend a strict statistical compilation of data, nevertheless a scientific approach and method of research is followed. Political participation for this study has been defined to mean and include participation of women councillors in terms of the presence/absence of a critical mass, their participation in electoral process as candidates, and representatives of their wards and quality of their participation and involvement in effective decision-making. Election for Municipal Councils took place in 2003 in Sundargarh district and the role of female councillors after this election was taken as a sample study. The first phase of research work was spent on collecting secondary data relating to the subject of study from various sources like Government reports, reports on the status of women, journals, books, literature review on local government that are utilized to supplement the data collected. Other secondary sources like census 2001, latest gazette on Sundargarh district, and the profile of four Municipal Councils from executive officers are collected to authenticate the data.

Data from primary sources are collected through survey research where the techniques of questionnaire and interview schedules are used. A comprehensive questionnaire was structured in English. It was divided into three parts. The first part covers the socio-economic profile, the second part is related to their electoral participation and experiences and the third aspect focused on their participation in various aspects of municipal administration and the constraints faced by women in course of their operation. Care was taken to see that they correctly understand each question and answer them and in some cases where the language of the appropriate questionnaire was not
understood, suitable translation into local Oriya language was done. Those who were illiterate they are allowed to take the help of colleagues and family members.

Besides these, the micro level analysis of women councillors is based on personal interviews and telephonic discussions with both male and female councillors to make the data feasible. Direct interview of the respondents have supplemented an empirical dimension to behavioral approach in such a study. The Municipal Councils are visited regularly to gather opinions from various sources about performance of women. Specifically the opinions of male members and officials relating to the introduction of quota system and functioning of women are collected to get a balanced opinion.

The major field work was carried periodically to get an insight regarding their entry into politics, brief career history, socioeconomic background, major achievements, obstacles, role conflicts and awareness profiles were collected. The researcher in order to elicit opinion had interviewed female councillors four times and recorded their experiences. Besides these, informal contacts were established to discuss the relevant problems freely and they were found to be informative and useful.

SAMPLE COVERAGE

The study has been confined to four Municipal Councils of Sundargarh district such as Rourkela, Sundargarh itself, Rajgangpur and Biramitrapur. In total 28 female councillors who are functioning presently in all these Municipal Councils were given questionnaire to fill up In order to have a comparative assessment of status and functioning of women, the socioeconomic background of 20 respondents belonging to previous tenure and their difficulties and suggestions were also noted. Apart from the Municipal Councillors, a number of men and women citizens from each ward of all 4 municipalities were interviewed as regards to their participation in municipal politics and administration.

DATA ANALYSIS

After collection of data, an elaborate codebook was maintained to compile the answers and have mathematical and statistical analysis. The data were tabulated and analyzed. In case of multiple answers type the respondents were allowed to give more
than answer and in that case their percentages did not tally with 100% when they were added. The findings have not been tested with the test of statistical significance, but only the net percentage and total percentage of each Municipal Council were deducted and compared.

The research study was divided into six chapters. An introduction on status and position of women in the political sphere both nationally and internationally is given in Chapter I along with the objective and methodology. In Chapter II, the various activities and the concepts of political participation in general and women in particular are analyzed with the help of literature review of various authors and research papers of different scholars. The detailed history of Municipal Administration in India and Orissa, and their powers and functions with special reference to provisions of 74th amendment has been made in Chapter III. The Chapter IV focuses on compilation and analysis of various data relating to the socioeconomic background, electoral participation and participation in Municipal Councils by the female respondents. The detailed analysis of all the tables including the observations is noted in Chapter V. Certain suggestions and the concluding statements are given in Chapter VI to facilitate the participation of women in municipal administration in future.

REFERENCES:
3. Evelin Hust, Political Representation and Empowerment; Women in the institutions of Local Self-governments in Orissa, Aug-2002, Heidelberg working paper in South Asian And Comparative Politics, University of Heidelberg, p-1
10. National Institute of Advanced Studies, Gender Unit, A baseline Report on Women and Political Participation in India prepared by NIAS et a, 2000 and Coordinated by IWRAW
12. Niroj Sinha, *Women in Indian Politics*, 2000, Gyan publishing House, New Delhi, year-
17. Madhu Kishwar, Manushi, 2000
20. Mrs. Terjani Vakil, Former Chairman and Managing Director, Export and Import bank of India, All India University News, April 13, 1990, p.12