CHAPTER - I

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The theme of political consciousness and ensuing participation of urban women has raised a major dilemma. It is the fundamental right of every citizen to contribute to the decision making process, based on the assumption that each member has adequate means and conditions to achieve the full realization of personality as a social entity. Despite the rapid growth of formal and informal political activity the role of women in the formal political structures remains virtually unchanged. This has resulted in a serious debate on the concepts and indicators of political participation.

It is necessary to attempt a definition of political participation which is broader than the one covering women’s participation, only in the electoral and administrative process. It includes the gamut of voluntary activities, with a bearing on the political processes, including voting, support of political groups, communication with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities.

Conception of politics is generally categorized into two. One, it is an area where self competing individuals with a desire to control offices, remain in power. The other concept has a moralistic tinge as
it views politics as means for coming to grips with the issues and concerns of civic society; it also embraces the notion that politics is a matter of concern for every citizen, not just those who are professionally committed to participate in the political affairs of the community.¹

The term ‘participation’ is very often used to cover all forms of action by which citizens take part in the process of administration.²

Thus participation comprises every form of citizen intervention in administrative action. In our view, however participation can only be described as such in the real sense of the term, when the person who participates, is fully conscious of the responsibility he assumes, doing so. In a democratic society, participation gives the ordinary citizen a means of voicing his opinion and of showing by his behaviour and action that he is able to take on responsibilities. It gives the ordinary citizen a chance to show his willingness to carry out constructive public work and to demonstrate his good citizenship, by other means than periodically exercising his right to vote.³

³ Ibid, p.47
Participation involves a factor of determination on the part of the person participating. "Participation means self motion".  

According to some writers, however, participation should be understood in a narrower sense. It would consist in a convergent action, in which the citizen takes part in the accomplishment of administrative services without however belonging to the governing or managing organs. It would then be situated at a more advanced stage of convergence than consultation, since the citizen does not confine himself to expressing an opinion, on a possible or actual administrative measure but directly participates in its accomplishment.  

The term development envisages the importance of participation and thus participation and its level had been tried to put into a definitional framework. The riddle as to which comes first, participation or development is unsolved and the relationship is a complex one, as like development participation, has economic, social, and political dimensions. It is such a versatile phenomenon, that what constitutes participation at one level, may not be so at another as such macro and micro dynamics are not the same. L. Milbrath feels “every person participates passively in the political system in which he lives – there is no such thing as not behaving”.

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5 Mumtaz Soysal, Op. Cit., p.40
As regards the dimensions of participation it seems most instructive to think in three terms:

1) what kind of participation in under consideration?
2) who is participating?
3) how is participation occurring?

According to Sidney Verba political participation, refers to "acts by those formally empowered, to make decisions – the acts being intended to influence the behaviour of those who have decisional powers. Thus in a conventional analysis it means voting, attending party meeting, contesting party elections, raising party funds and communicating directly with legislators. Thus in a limited sense it refers to those activities designed to influence decision making carried on within the political system. In this context women are left in the periphery of the political process and political participation remains elusive for most of them in spite of their voting and capturing a few positions of power. To define 'political' participation is a very complicated problem and to decide what actually constitute political participation is no simple a matter because it is the product of various factors. Some people devote their full time and energy in politics, others choose to remain deeply interested, as passive spectators. For some, politics is a matter of continuous and responsible action, for others, political activity is episodic or emerges only in the time of crisis. Thus political participation ranges from the most passive and sporadic to the most active and consistent. According to Rush and Althoff 'political participation, consists of voting membership or activity connected with political groups, such
as movement, parties pressure groups office holding in political institutions, informal activities such as political discussions, or attendance at political meetings, political persuasion of authorities or members of the political public.\textsuperscript{6}

Citizens participation not only generates faith in the infrastructure, of institutional set up, but also influences the decision making process. It can be said that active participation, involvement of organizations, such as political parties and miscellaneous pressure group gives the democratic political system deep roots in a developing society.\textsuperscript{7}

There is an accepted nexus in the scholarly sense, between awareness and participation. An understanding of the political system serves as a prerequisite for political involvement. But knowledge of the political events alone does not lead to involvement. It is the person's subjective political competence that leads to effective participation. A sense of political efficacy is an important aspect of a person's political personality. People with low levels of efficacy can not effectively engage themselves in politics. Studies in gender and efficacy, reveal, that women have low level of efficacy as compared to men. Women, who believe in the traditional role of women, and invest their psychic and physical energy in domestic work, are most

\textsuperscript{6}Naqvi Syed Qurban Ali, \textit{Social Change and Political Participation}, Commonwealth publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p.14

\textsuperscript{7}C.P. Bhambri, \textit{The Urban Voter(Municipal Elections in Rajasthan – An Empirical Study)}, National, Delhi, 1973, p.72
likely to be faced with middle age depression and crisis in self confidence. Sydney and Verba state men are more likely than women, to feel that they can cope with the complexities of politics and believe that their participation creates weight in the political process. This idea has become the conventional wisdom, on women and politics.

Political efficacy is dependent on external factors like education, participation, political knowledge, and understanding. In the case of women certain other factors like motherhood, marriage, privatization, domestic work compose on additional set of deterrent in the development of the political self. These factors reinforced by stereotyped role socialization, create a sense of underestimation of their capability in the public sphere (political sphere). The understanding of politics depends upon resources, like education information and involvement. These resources help men to be more capable and develop their political self. But as far as women are concerned it depends on their acceptance of the ideology of privatization. Those who adhere to the privatization value, confine themselves to the domestic sphere. Very few housewives, engage in social activity. This is attributed to lack of interest, efficacy, and awareness. The latter creates trust for the government in power. The more the trust, the more will be the supportive political activity.

In the past three decades a quiet revolution has been occurring in the social science assessment, of women. Previously women’s social roles behavioural styles and psychological view points were either assumed to be undifferentiated from those of men, were
ignored or were considered to be of secondary importance and not worthy of serious research. Spurred by the feminist movement of the 1960's, research on women's activities and interests, has increasingly become recognized as a legitimate field of scientific inquiry.

Primarily due to the scholarship of women we now have an expanding data base from which to formulate and test theories and hypothesis, concerning the particular ways in which women operate in a societal community and group context.

Research on women has covered a diversity of topics, the productive activities of women and their role in the work force; the contribution of women to major societal and cultural institutions such as the political structure, religious activities and artistic expression; the attitudinal and motivational qualities that typify the personality make up of women; and women's roles in the family including the socialization of children to mention some major areas of enquiry.

A general summary of the findings of numerous studies in this field shows the number of women, who actively realize with increasing importance, of their participation in representative and legislative structure, and their role in development. Women are specially active and gaining more and more representation in local self government bodies. The number of women in the judiciary, and particularly, among high officiates and in the political structures and public services in small and inadequate, but nevertheless growing.
One of the initial conclusions which emerges from the
literature on women, is that their social status is universally secondary
to that of men, and that societal role constraints, and expectations
have had a negative impact on women's ability to achieve, to exert
mastery, to be involved in instrumental activities. This assessment is
based on the fact that in most societies, women's productive roles are
centred around domestic activities like child care. Further women
frequently are restricted, in varying degrees, from participating in
many of the non-domestic or public activities of the society. These
circumstances led to the development of a number of hypotheses
concerning the distinction between the female domestic or private
domain of social action, and the male public domain, to an emphasis
on differences in life options, available to women and men and to the
conclusion that sexual inequality is universally prevalent.

Despite the general negative assessment of women's ability to
exert influence and control over their own lives and those of others,
most studies which have documented the specific strategies used by
women, to operate within the constraints of societal norms and roles,
have concluded that women do have important areas of decision
making and control and are totally not subjugated by men. The
consistent finding that women do have personal autonomy and
influence, despite apparent societal restrictions, has tended to bring
into question, the strength of gender asymmetry as a final statement
about the universal situation of women.\(^8\)

\(^8\) Liesa Stamm & Carol D. Ryff, (Eds.) *Social Power and Influence of Women,*
Four major themes of power emerge (1) Women’s power is multifaceted (2) it is exerted through a variety of situational contexts. (3) It is diachronic in nature, changing both historically and within an individual’s life span (4) Much of women’s power operates outside of formal societal defined authority structures.9

To understand political behaviour and participation, it is necessary to study role orientations. Role orientations are the kind of behaviour which the political activists expect and exhibit in the performance of their participatory political roles. Their expectations result from the normative and actual functioning of government and political institutions. Researchers on participatory behaviour have classified these role orientations into (1) Inventive (2) Representative and structural.10 Political activists believing in inventor role think that the government is a machinery to achieve public good. The reason of their involvement, in political activity, is to solve problems in the field of public welfare and education and construction etc.

The second orientation, the ‘representative role’ which is more or less akin to the role of an inventor, but is narrow in the sense, that political activists confine their problem solving roles to the constituencies which they represent.

9 Ibid, p.3
The third role orientation is structural. Political activists, having such orientations try to influence and assume leadership and develop influence not just on a specific policy outcome, of a specific committee, but on the organization and operation of the whole legislature.

Political participation can be considered to include an involvement in any form of organized activity that affects or seeks to affect power relationships. Political participation leads to ‘political empowerment which is crucial to women’s achievement of equality for without real clout, at the decision making level, social and economic empowerment quickly become dead ends.\textsuperscript{11}

With advent of the Muslims, Indian history changed; so also the status of women. It was not so much the political as the social side which underwent a deep change. The Hindu society began to withdraw in its own shell, and in such circumstances, the woman became the worst sufferer. Her freedom was circumscribed and with it her knowledge of her own rights in relationship to the state.\textsuperscript{12}

Rush and Althoff have presented a political participation scale where they have divided political activity, into ten hierarchically placed levels. The participation of women in these levels can not be

\textsuperscript{11} R.Kumari & S. Khrutzezerna, “Political Empowerment of Women in India”, in Ranjana Kumari (Ed) Women in Decision Making, Vikash, 1992, p.124
understood or analysed in isolation from the total socio economic problems, as all problems are interlinked and influence each other. The physical characteristics of women are at par with that of men. Though psychological developments and environmental constraints seem to be responsible for the acceptance of such low profile, no chromosomal deficit in gene is evident. The value priorities or intense dispositions, deep rooted in nature, which dominate a women’s life, lead her to choose one course of action that is suitable for her, to perceive events and participate as is convenient to her, in the circumstance, she is in. Therefore personal values and infrastructure of society is a prime determinant of involvement is society.

It appears that the operation of larger politics, economic forces generate a political culture that women find difficult to get in. Women through the constitution have been allowed to enter politics but there is a vast difference between allowing and integrating. Tolerance is not an active principle, it is a passive one. It places a premium in the elimination of tangible barriers, but makes no commitment to a positive value of inclusion and membership Political liberation of women, therefore would mean, that women would be seen not as deviant nor as welcome strangers. In short women’s real active political participation will necessitate changes, both in values, and in the social structure. Several factors have handicapped and prevented women’s integration into the process of development. First, lack of well defined policy, (indicating areas where they require special assistance and protection,) leaves them without access to knowledge skills and employment; second, prejudices against women’s
efficiency, productivity, capacity for skill and suitability, debar them from employment in many areas and result in wage discrimination. A survey conducted by U.N. shows that women’s role in the economic and social development, in many countries is still severely limited.13

Malladi Subamma asserts, that the vicious serpent of man ordained culture has struck the women with its fangs. The poisonous serpents of tradition, custom, pseudo holiness, have been hissing at her all through her life. The woman, has become a prisoner of the very society intended and evolved for the welfare of human kind. She is bound hand and foot by prescriptions and prohibitions.14

The politics of patriarchy lies in the fact that the family, caste, religion, and the dominant value system are surcharged with the spirit of male superiority. Women are suppressed and exploited by men.15

Data on global basis indicate an enormous disparity between women's formal political equality, and their actual participation in the decision making process. Having understood this problem, and recognized it as an important barrier to social and economic progress, developing countries have been adopting and tying to implement

14 Malladi Subamma, Women : Tradition and Culture, Sterling Publications, New Delhi, 1985, pp-4,103
policies and measures which would mitigate and remove it. Many of these efforts and measures have been promoted through the implementation of UN instruments, such as convention on equal political rights of women, convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discriminations Against Women.

Enhancing and reshaping women’s role in the development process is going to require much greater understanding of the obstacles internal or external and the support base. In the framework of the objective of participation this work is a modest attempt to highlight the dynamics of development and participation, as also to present an overview of barriers both tangible and intangible.

**Review of Literature**

Research undertaking has resulted in a number of publications on the problem of political participation.

Vicky Randall in *Women and Politics*\(^1\text{6}\) has made an in-depth study of the extent of women’s participation in grass root politics, less conventional politics, emphasizing on adhoc political participation, as also an analytical dissection of women’s political attitudes, their moralistic bias, conservatism as also their personalization of politics. Determinants of political behaviour, is studied in the backdrop of childhood socialization, to provide a logical basis to political attitudes.

\(^{16}\text{Vicky Randall, Women and Politics, Macmillan Press limited, 1982.}\)
In *Women in Indian Politics* edited by Niroj Sinha\(^\text{17}\) the editor has emphasized, conventional aspect of politics, as also the social mindset which retards participation. The concept of participation has also been analytically dissected. Chandrakala Padia in the same book has dealt effectively with the role of women as voters in India. The impact of women on electoral politics constitutes a major strand of her work.

Samuel J. Eldersveld\(^\text{18}\) and Basiruddin Ahmed in their seminal work *Citizens and Politics* have harped on the operationalization of Involvement Behaviour, Construing a pattern of hierarchy in political behaviour. The Indian citizens engagement with the political process, forms the essence of their writings.

Raj Mohini Sethi\(^\text{19}\) in *Modernization of Working Women in Developing Societies* has co-related levels of modernity with education, establishing variable relationship of attitudes.


S.N. Sharma and Neena Sharma and Kushal Sharma in *Participation and Development* have focused on the concept and dimensions of participation, participatory development, participation through voluntary action, as also the imperatives of participation.

Syed Qurban Ali Naqvi in *Social Change and Political Participation* has discussed at length the various levels of participation as also the interpretations of participation.

Dowse and Hughes in their book *Political Sociology* have discussed the concept of political socialization vis a vis the social psychology of politics. They associate socialization with role training in society and assume that socialization begins early. However they opine that blind assumptions about political behaviour and psychological characteristics, need to be treated with caution.

Almond and Verba in their work *The Civic Culture* have examined the various aspects of the civil society, and have concluded that political culture is created simultaneously under the operation of

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forces under the political system. Thus the members of the political system generally imbibe the values and cultures of the existing political environment.

Denzin\textsuperscript{24}(1977) in his study \textit{Childhood Socialization} has analysed the most influential agent of political socialization, that is the family. He states that the family sets the entire socializing process in motion and retains an impact on the child for a long period.

Roopa Vohra, Arun K. Sen\textsuperscript{25} in their book status \textit{Education and Problems of Indian Women} have studied the status of Women from a historical perspective and have presented the varying roles of women from the Vedic age till after independence. The graphic rise and fall in the status of women from the Vedic period to the advent of Muslim rule and British colonialism has been interestingly highlighted.

Sachidananda Ramesh P. Sinha\textsuperscript{26} in "\textit{Women's Right}" \textit{Myth and Reality} have, been vocal in the historical development of the status of women. The theme "status of women has been dealt very


skillfully. Emphasis has been laid on the role of women in the struggle for Indian Independence.

B. Kuppuswamy\textsuperscript{27} in \textit{Social Change in India} has further illuminated the changes of the status of women with particular examples from history, women who with their dedication and perseverance, have left an indelible imprint on social milieu.

Snehalata Panda\textsuperscript{28} in \textit{Determinants of Political Participation and women and public Activity} has focused her study on the women of Orissa in particular and compartmentalized awareness and participation, in separate compartments. She has pinpointed the variables underlying political behaviour, as also the socialization, role orientation and psychological involvement of women in politics.

Neera Desai\textsuperscript{29} and Maithreyi Krishnaraj in \textit{Women and Society in India} have highlighted the position of the contemporary Indian Women in the backdrop of the Indian constitution, and the pertaining economic policy, seeking to elevate the status of the modern Indian women.

\textsuperscript{27} B. Kuppuswamy, Revised by B.V.Kumar, \textit{Social Change in India}, Vani Education Books, A Division of Vikash Publishing Private Limited, 1986.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} Snehalata Panda, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 1990.\textsuperscript{29}

Apart from these books we have taken resources to few magazines and newspapers which have carried prolific writings on women, their political role orientation and performance.

Scope of Study:

The present study in the context of awareness and participation deals with the theme of urban political participation. The study is focused on the women of Cuttack city whose responses to the political system is quantitatively assessed. We have particularly taken up Cuttack as the area of our micro research and study, because being a city, more than one thousand years old, its social culture pervades into its political profile. Conservative in its backdrop, yet vibrant in its cultural ethos, Cuttack city projects an irregular graph, within which high level of literacy in conspicuous spikes, is flanked by consistent low level of literacy. Though urban in profile, and presentation, some facts of the social milieu presents a rural face. An in-depth analysis would depict that the distribution patterns in economy, and politics, are irregular and haphazard. Poverty and opulence exist side by side also literacy and illiteracy. The social environment unlike any other urbanized area envelops the profile of Cuttack city. The traditions and customs of the city as also its undying culture, social and ethnic, impinges upon the behaviour of the participants and effects role performance. Being the oldest city of Orissa we have taken this city as a sample, so as to analyse the causes that affect the behaviour of women in urban Orissa as also the determinants that hinder their active participation. The reasons to focus the city of Cuttack for our study are.
1) Cuttack is a thousand years old with established political beliefs and values.
2) Cuttack city has projected many women into the political scenario in the past as also in the present.
3) Cuttack is a city such in cultural heritage. There is emphasis on tradition and custom. Therefore it displays an unbelievably disparate profile of both, the urban and the rural.

Objective of Study:

Most of the cross national research findings have pointed at the fact that there is under representation and participation of women in politics. The purpose of the study is to analyse the socio-political factors which impinge upon women's participation in politics. The objectives are;

1) To make an in-depth study of the socio economic and political background of women in Cuttack City.
2) To examine the pattern of socialization in childhood and youth which determine their political behaviour.
3) To assess the extent of awareness and ensuring participation.
4) To pinpoint the retarding factors for free political involvement.
5) To work out a viable alternative and formulate a plan for better participation.
Hypothesis

We have formulated the following principal hypothesis to guide us in our study and course of our research work.

“Urban women are fully aware of the polity and the political process and they mostly participate in the political system”.

In order to test the aforesaid hypothesis we have also drawn the following subsidiary hypotheses.

i) Education increase awareness of urban women.

ii) Education does not increase participation of urban women.

iii) There is a high degree of awareness and low degree of participation of urban women.

iv) Working women participate in politics to a greater extent.

v) Political behaviour in urban women is often influenced by certain individuals or familial attitude.

vi) Political participation is less in urban younger women than older women.

vii) Lack of mobility affects political participation.

Sample and Coverage:

The study has been confined to Cuttack city which is focus of analysis and in all, three hundred women have been selected as our sample respondents. This is a random sample of women of Cuttack city by dividing it into four zones namely, north, south, east and west.
As per the population ratio the slum and the non slum population has been taken in our sample. Adequate care and precaution has been taken to classify women into definite categories so as to enable the scholar to verify the hypotheses.

**Respondent Structure:**

The respondent structure is presented in Tables and Diagram showing the composition of the women respondents in terms of their age, education, employment, income, as also their family type. Profession, degree of education as also income of the husband, if any, has been tabulated. As social and economic and cultural factors influence human behavioural patterns, we have taken the aforesaid variables for the purpose of our study.

**Techniques of Data Collection:**

In order to collect the data, we personally met every sample respondent, filled up the questionnaire with answers given by the respondent. With every respondent we had to give at least half an hour for the questionnaire, though mostly questions were close ended questions. So no questionnaire was destroyed as incomplete. Before finalizing the schedule we had made a pilot study and elicited the responses.
Data Analysis:

The data was processed through cross tabulation. They have been used frequently to observe possible significant relations among independent variables like age, education, employment state, political influence and dependent variables like awareness and public participation. When the data were collected, an elaborate book was prepared and the data were posted in the coded sheet. Then the data were tabulated and analysed. We have computed the percentage of answer in different category, since mostly questions were close ended questions and have arrived at a definite conclusion. We have not tested the findings with the test of statistical significance, nor we have found out correlation coefficient; we have only deduced the percentage distribution, in interpreting the findings.

SUMMARY

The theme of political consciousness and participation of women has raised a major dilemma because despite growth of formal and informal structures the role of women in the political sphere has not moved on with the same acceleration. There is a nexus between awareness and participation. Though awareness facilitates participation yet knowledge of political events does not lead to participation. It is the person's subjective political competence that
leads to effective participation. This political efficacy is dependent on factors like education, political knowledge, understanding as also continuous participation. Societal constraints has inhibited women in varying degrees from participating in many non-domestic or public activities of the society. Data on global basis indicate an enormous disparity between women's political equality and their actual participation in the decision making process. Enhancing and reshaping women's role requires understanding of the obstacles external and internal. In the framework of the objective of participation this is a modest attempt to highlight the dynamics of development and participation as also to present an overview of barriers both tangible and intangible.

Review of literature has included a studies of many books on feminist literature, prominent among them, books written by Vicky Randall, Neera Desai, Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Snehalata Panda, B. Kuppuswamy, Roopa Vohra, Niroj Sinha and others. Apart from books, periodicals, and newspapers have been studied.

The theme of urban political participation is focused on Cuttack city. This city is rich in cultural heritage, has been the nucleus of political awakening during freedom struggle, and is more than thousand years old. The scope of study basically encompasses awareness and participation in the urban context.

The objective of study is to make an indepth study of the socio, economic, political background of women in Cuttack city, to examine
the pattern of socialization, to assess the extent of awareness and to pin point the retarding factors for free political involvement. It also seeks to formulate strategies for better participation:

The principal hypothesis we have formulated is that urban women are fully aware of the polity and they mostly participate in the political system. In order to test the primary hypothesis, we have drawn a number of subsidiary hypotheses.

The sample taken for our study is three hundred in number. They are women respondents, chosen from four different zones of Cuttack city by dividing the city into rough four zones namely north, south, east and west. The respondent structure is presented through tables and diagrams.

The technique of data collection is through a questionnaire consisting of close ended questions and the data was processed through cross tabulation. The percentage of answer in each category was computed and findings were tested. On this basis we have arrived at conclusions regarding verification of the hypothesis presented.