

CHAPTER – III

WOMEN IN ORISSA

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NATURE OF INDIAN WOMEN : THEIR IMPORTANCE AND ROLE IN THE SOCIETY

The human society everywhere is composed of males and females and the society is primarily stratified on the basis of sex. Women constitute half of the population, and thus they are a significant segment of Indian society. Women therefore form almost 50 percent of the human resources of our country. They are considered as greater instrument in the development of human resources than men. Not only can they enter any profession or economic activity but they also remain mothers and caretakers of our potential human resources – the children. Women are the socializer of the new generation with the old values and norms and thereby provide the stability and continuity to the social structure. Hence, their status, role and position determine the progress and development of the society as well as identify the culture and values on which the society is based. But, their position is not the same in all the ages of history. As such, the status of women in society can be systematically examined with reference to the growth of civilization in India, which can be categorized into ancient, medieval and modern periods.

ANCIENT PERIOD

More than 2000 years ago, the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, Kautilya's Arthashastra and many other writings have revealed that women in India

enjoyed a fair measure of equality with men in all spheres of human activity – Spiritual and Statecraft.¹ They were imparted education like men and enjoyed a considerable freedom in their personal matters. Women like Lopamudra, Brahmavadini, Gargi etc., are still heard as the most learned philosopher women of Vedic Age. In ancient India, reverence was given to women as mothers image, a symbol of life, strength and purity with immense capacity of patience, sacrifice and suffering.² Women were depicted as “Shakti”, and it was an accepted belief that where woman is respected there is divine presence.³ The social status of women during this period was also very illuminating. They enjoyed a position of equality and were respected both in the family and the society as well. Girls had their effective say in choosing their life partners and also in the marriage affair. Swayamvara was an accepted practice among the Kshatriy’s in ancient India. The community as a whole showed concern and respect for them and they played a significant role in the familiar, social and political life.⁴ The performance of religious ceremonies would be invalid without the wife joining her husband as his full partner⁵. Child marriage was rare in those days, Prostitution, though existed as a rare phenomenon, did not degrade the status of women. There was the provision of widow remarriage. In short, in ancient India, women enjoyed the status of being the man’s companion, not his attendant⁶.

¹ Navaneeta Rath, *Women in Rural Society*, M.D. Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1996, p-13.

² Bhawana Jhanta, *Women and Politics in India*, forward by S.H. Virbhadra Singh, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p-47.

³ Leela Damodara Menon, “India and the International Women’s year”, *India Quarterly*, VOL-31, No.3, July-Sept., 1975, p-278.

⁴ A.S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Motilal Banarasidas, 1962, p.339

⁵ Radha Kumud Mookerji, “Women in Ancient India” in Tara Ali Baig edited, *Women of India*, Forwarded by Jawaharlal Nehru, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1990, p.2

⁶ Hansa Mehta, *Indian Women*, Butala and Company, Delhi : Baroda, 1981, p.97

The status of women in Orissa during ancient period also resembles the position of women in ancient India, to a great extent. We come across no less than six reigning queens who constituted a third of the total number of rulers of a dynasty that ruled from A.D.736 to A.D. 942. They were both de jure and de facto sovereigns.⁷ There was the system of worshipping Shakti. The Shakti cult seems to have originated in Orissa in a very early period of her history. Thus, it can be legitimately inferred that the predominant position enjoyed by women in the Orissan Society during ancient period was due to the worship of mother goddess. A wife enjoyed with her husband full religious rights and regularly participated in religious ceremonies with him. These ceremonies could not be fulfilled without her presence. Along with this status some special qualities were expected from women, such as single minded devotion to husband, in reverence to Gods, respect towards elders, kind reception of guests and charitable nature were spoken of as some of the commendable qualities. The women in ancient Orissa were judged on the basis of these qualities. This in turn opened the way for restrictions upon women in later period.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

However, the status of women became lowered down from about 300 B.C. when the Aryans encountered various tribal people who inhabited the Gangetic plains. The Aryans took recourse to invasion and needed male child to fight in the battle field. The expectation of a male child gradually reduced the status of a woman. Moreover, constant invasion of our land by enemies resulted women assultance both physically and

⁷ B.Das, "A Note on the Reigning Queens of Ancient Orissa," *Utkal University Journal (Humanities)*, Vo-III, p.27

mentally by the invaders. This led to a number of evil practice like ban on women's education, adoption of child marriage, polygamy, purdha system and deprivation of women from property ownership in order to protect women from invaders. That is why this period is called as one of the darkest phase for women in Indian history.⁸

This medieval period strengthened three atrocious practices, i.e. female infanticide, child marriage and sati system in the Hindu society. The ban on widow remarriage in this period lowered down the position of women in society. A widow had to lead a very torturous, miserable and intolerable life. She was physically exploited, mentally tortured, and economically deprived of the properties of her deceased husband. They were sadly off, with purdha, scant education, early marriage, and cruelties of lifelong widowhood.⁹ Women then were regarded as second grade citizens whose every aspect of life was confined to the rigid restrictions under the grab of casteism, customs and traditions as envisaged in our religion as well as social customs.¹⁰

Women were asked to render corresponding duties and obligations. A women must be true to her husband in her marriage vows, and lead the life of an ideal "Pativrata". Her real happiness centered in her husband. As a river merging itself in the ocean loses its identity, so a wife was supposed to merge her individuality with that of her husband. The domestic responsibilities have always been identified with her role. Though emergence of a few women as rulers, during this period, like Razia

⁸ L.I. Bhushan and Rambha Prasad, *Concern For Status Among Educated Women*, Classical Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1993, p-16.

⁹ *Ibid*, p-16

¹⁰ Dalia Ray, "Position of Women in Indian Society", in C.M. Agrawal (Edited), *Dimensions of Indian Womanhood*, Vol-III, Sri Almora Book depot, 1993, Almora U.P., p-125

Sultana, Chand Bibi, Tara Bai etc. indicates that there was eagerness among women to participate in State's affairs yet most of the women were suppressed and prohibited from participating in any activity out side the home.

The status of women of Orissa, during this period, was also not too good. They were more attached to the family. They were not taking any active part in state's affairs than to meddling in the administrative work.¹¹ The Role of women in the family of medieval Orissa can be known from the writings of Sarala Das. In his sacred treatise, he has depicted women as good housewives. They had the basic duty to maintain household, cooking, maintain homely relation, teach the children and to advise and help their husbands.¹² However, prostitution was practiced by a few women. Although Sati System was recognized in Orissa, its practice was not rigidly followed.¹³ On the other hand, importance was not given on women education. And marriage was regarded as the most indispensable samskara for a girl.¹⁴ The evils of dowry system owes its origin to this period. In the early medieval period, the royal queens of Bhaumakara Dynasty were ascending to the thrones and used to govern the country. But the queens of the Ganga and Gajapati dynasties never participated in the state's affairs.¹⁵ Women in general lived as housewives.

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¹¹ Shishir Kumar Panda, *Medieval Orissa : A Socio-Economic Study*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1991, p.95.

¹² D. Rath, *Sarala Mahabharata re Samajika Jibana (Oriya)*, pp.88-112

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Major Kumudini Barai, *Role of Women in the History of Orissa*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1994, p.108

¹⁵ B. Mishra, *Orissa Under the Bhauma King*. pp.32-39

MODERN PERIOD

The status of women, during modern period can be analyzed in two phases, namely, pre-independence and post-independence phase.

(a) Pre-Independence Phase

The inherent eagerness among some women to participate in political or state affairs during pre-independence period was encouraged by Gandhiji and various social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda. The reformist wind blew in the direction of emancipation of women in India, for the first time, during the 19th century.¹⁶ The idea of the Social reformers become manifested to some extent by the legislations made by the British Government in India in 1829. Lord Bentinck enacted the first social legislation to abolish Sati practice and to declare it as a crime. Simultaneously, the Brahmo Samaj established by Raj Ram Mohan Roy stood for the principle of freedom of women and equality of gender. He also supported Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 which provided social status to such women. The Child Marriage Act of 1872 raised the age for marriage of the girls to 14 and enforced monogamy.

During the national struggle for independence, Gandhiji gave a clarion call for the emancipation of women from household drudgery and to join the movement for the freedom of the country. Being inspired by Gandhiji, the social reformers, the Indian elites and a large number of women jumped into the freedom struggle. These people also formed a number of Women's organizations like All India Women's Conference and Women's India Association, in order to create social and political

¹⁶ Navaneeta Rath, *Women in Rural Society*, M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1996, p.18

consciousness among the women for their rights, equality and upliftment as well as for their greater participation in the freedom struggle. Mrs. Annie Besant, Aruan Asraf Ali, Sarojini Naidu and many other great women in India set golden footprints for the awakening and emancipation of Women in the context of their identity and equality.¹⁷

The region of Orissa also underwent similar situation when Women participated in the process of the Independence movement. Of such women most prominent were Malati Choudhury, Rama Devi, Sarala Devi and Annapurna Maharana. They took part in the "Salt Agitation" of 1930, and the Quit India Movement of 1942 and courted arrest for several times.¹⁸

The political socialization of women in Orissa began during the struggle for independence. The freedom struggle provided women with opportunities to participate in activities outside their homes in the areas of politics and social welfare. The result of this participation of women in the political and social life contributed to their won emancipation. The attitude of men towards woman began to change and a woman participating in activities outside the home was no longer something unheard of. Greater opportunity came to women to participate in social life and political life, when Orissa became a separate province in 1936. Moreover, the enrolling of women in various newly formed organizations like Utkal Women's Conference (U.W.C.), Orissa Women's Education Conference (OWEC), Nari Mangal Samiti, Nari Rakshya Samiti etc. also generated consciousness among women to struggle against age-old oppression and prejudices. The introduction of female education and the gradual realization of the value of education by some zamindars and native people

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Sudhakar Patnaik, *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol-III, Cuttack 1957, p.89

of Orissa brought a change in the life style of its women. Further, the participation of women in the nationalist movement created a tradition of female involvement in politics.¹⁹ This participation has more or less expanded steadily over the years, through the various elections by way of voting, contesting as candidates, participating in campaigning etc. The gap in turnout between the men and women got more and more narrow.²⁰

(b) Post-Independence Period

Adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950 provided equal status and greater liberation to women. Constitution brought Fundamental Rights and Directive Principle of State Policy into practice in which a number of legal provisions were provided for the women community in order to protect them from the tyranny of male domination.

The Fundamental Rights of the Constitution made the women equal with men and gave them special facilities also to avoid discrimination against them. Articles 14 to 20 of the Constitution strengthened the position of women and freed themselves from the shackles of age old exploitation and traditional bondage in the name of custom. Article 14 of the Constitution says that the State shall not deny any person equality before the law on the basis of caste, sex or religions. Articles 15(1) and 15(2) prohibit unreasonable discrimination on grounds of only religion, sex, race, caste or place of birth. Article 15(4) prescribes for the protection of interests of socially and educationally backward classes as well as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This clause provides facilities to women of weaker and minority section.

¹⁹ Vijay Agnew, *Elite Women in Indian Politics*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1979, p.133.

²⁰ Susheela Kaushik, *Women's Participation in Politics*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993, p-10.

Article 16 of the Indian Constitution provides equality of opportunity in public employment without any discrimination on any ground. Article 19(1) (c) guarantees to all its citizens the “rights to form Associations and Unions”. This right empowered the women to organize themselves against any injustice to them. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings, beggar and other similar form of forced labour. Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below 14 years of age in factories and hazardous employment.²¹ All these Constitutional provisions benefited men as well as women. Women’s struggle for emancipation from social and cultural bondage has been more strengthened through Directive Principles of State Policy. The state has taken steps to minimize inequality of income and eliminate inequality in status, facilities and opportunities. Article 39 imposes upon the state an obligation to ensure the health and strength of workers-men and women and it prohibits child labour. Article 39(d) empowers the women to have equal pay for equal work with men. Article 42 embodies that the state shall make provisions for securing maternity relief. Article 45 maintains that the state shall try to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. This provision encouraged the education of both male and female child of the poor families.

On the whole, both Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy empowered the women with equality of status and opportunities along with the men. These rights have also encouraged the women to fight against the male domination through formation of their own associations and forums. As such, they have got higher social recognition in recent times. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 have provided greater political mobility to the women. As

²¹ G.S. Bajwa, *Human Rights in India*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp.182-252.

these Acts prescribe for effective participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipalities respectively by making special reservation of one third of seats for them in the local councils.

Apart from the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, there are several Acts which stand in favour of women and protect them from social insecurities. Some of such important Acts are : The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, Female Infanticide Prevention Act of 1961, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1956, the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961, the Dowry Prohibition act of 1961, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act of 1956, Indecent Representation of Women (prohibition) Act of 1986, the Muslim Women Protection of Rights and Divorce Act of 1986 and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 saves to a great extent to female child from exploitation at the tender age. Indirectly it helps in the prevention of population growth and female infanticide. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act opens the way to widows to marry again and free them from the shackles of social restrictions which were unbearable. The Maternity Benefit Act provides to pregnant women workers for three months of holidays with wages. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 provides that a person can not marry again in the presence of first wife without divorce. This Act Also decides the marriageable age of a male as 21 and female as 18 years. Under the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, a woman gets equal share of property from her parents along with the other family members. The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act of 1956 bans the system of prostitution. According to the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986, no indecent picture of women should

be represented in advertisements, magazines, packet of any product or films. The Muslim Women Protection of Rights and Divorce Act of 1986 empowers the Muslim women to demand for maintenance from their husbands in case of divorce. According to the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956, a woman can adopt a child and can demand for her maintenance after divorce from her husband.²² All these Acts provided women with more legal power to stand against male domination and struggle against injustice and exploitation. In recent years, women participation in decision-making is inducing major changes in the life styles of women. Moreover, the impact of higher education has contributed a lot in changing the out look and widened the vision of young women. Now they want to be economically independent and to be recognized individuals existing in their own right.²³

Obviously women in Orissa enjoy the rights and opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Apart from these Constitutional rights, they have also given certain advantages and privileges by the State Government For examples, the Orissa Government has constituted a "House Committee on women Issue and State Commission for women". Mahila Cooperative Banks have been established in several parts of the state. These Banks have mobilized deposits and vowed to lend to poor women for their economic growth.²⁴ In March 1991 Orissa Mahila Vikas Samabaya Nigam was established. The Nigam provides working capital and margin money assistance with interest subsidy to deserving women

²² Nirupama Rath, *Women and Law* (Oriya), Sanjay Prakashani, Cuttack, 1955.

²³ Anand Arora, *The Women Elite in India*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1990.

²⁴ Premalata Pujari, Vijay Kumari Kaushik, *Women Power in India*, Vol-1, Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, 1994, Delhi, p-152.

entrepreneurs and to its affiliated women societies for setting up of small business enterprises.

Any social transformation, in order to change men or women, necessarily involves political participation coupled with political consciousness. The one third reservation of seats by the Government in Panchayatiraj and Municipal institutions facilitated the entry of more women candidates into local bodies. Moreover, the State government has made provision for reservation of 30% of vacancies in all categories of government posts for providing adequate employment opportunities to women candidates. The Department of Women and Child Development has been constituted which looks into the welfare of women and children. Several welfare programmes are being implemented in the state which include setting up of women training centers, provision for short stay homes for women, rehabilitative services for women in distress, provision for old age and widow pension etc.

WOMEN IN ORISSA UNDER FIVE YEAR PLAN PERIODS

In order to uplift the female population of India many steps were taken under Five Year Plans for female literacy, health care, safeguard of human rights etc. Some special facilities for women's development were also recommended under Five Year Plan Periods in Orissa. The First Five Year Plan was mainly welfare oriented. The Central Service Welfare Board established by Government of India had its agencies in the states through which assistance to voluntary organizations was provided for operating welfare programmes.

In the Second Plan, women were organized into Mahila Mandals in rural areas for facilitating convergence of health, nutrition and welfare measures. The Third and Fourth Plan accorded high priority to women's education, immunization of pre-school children, supplementary diet for children and for expectant and nursing mothers. The Fifth Five Year Plan put emphasis on removal of poverty and attainment of self-reliance. The Sixth Plan took cognizance of the deprivations suffered and discrimination practiced against women covertly and overtly. During this plan a variety of programmes were taken up for improving working conditions of women and to raise their socio-economic status. The Sixth Plan can be considered as a milestone in the planning of women's development as it signified a shift from regarding women as mere beneficiaries of welfare programmes to recognizing them as partners in development. Non-formal education centers were set up exclusively for girls because it was felt, "education is the key of progress. Unless women are educated, they will not be able to enjoy their rights."

Some special schemes for women's development were also launched, such as IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Projects), DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas), TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment) etc. IRDP is a credit linked subsidy scheme which provides credit for agriculture, sericulture, village industries etc. Efforts have been made to bring more and more rural women within the fold of the programme. Also, while selecting beneficiaries preference is given to female-headed households. The objective of DWCRA is to help rural women and children. TRYSEM, on the other hand, put emphasis on equipping rural youth with necessary skills and technology to enable them to take to vocation of self-employment.

In India, a programme aided by the U.N. called the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was introduced which has now been extended to all the development blocks. Under this scheme during Ninth Five Year Plan, special attention was given towards the girl child and adolescent girls preparing them for productive and reproductive roles as confident individual; not only in strengthening the family, but also in the nation building. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) laid stress on reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality rate. One of the major objectives of this plan is to increase the literacy rate both in case of males and females.

The opportunities provided under these Five Year Plans and the steps taken during plan periods provide women a strong and solid base for their development. The advantages given to them opened an independent path for their upliftment and helped them to seek equal status with men and a dignified life.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Apart from the Five Year Plans there are certain new policies and programmes, that have been taken by the Government. One of them is the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in all walks of life. This policy aims at equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation, also in health care, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment safety etc. It also includes elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl child. Along with this it also aimed at

strengthening the legal system in favour of women. Government has set up guide lines for operationalisation of District level Committees on violence against women and Help lines for women in distress. Initiative has been made for preparing Gender Development index for State and Districts, and Swashakti Project have been implemented by the government and by NGOs and self-help groups. The NGOs and self-help groups provide assistance to women in distress.

In spite of all these opportunities, the condition of women in practice is not satisfactory. In many rural areas of Orissa, the position of women is more worse. A little less than 80% of the women live in rural India and a majority of them are labourers in the agricultural sector and allied fields. These poor women have the dual burden of contributing to the family income and of shouldering the responsibility of looking after the family. They have to spend long hours in husking, grinding, cooking, fetching potable water, fuel collection etc. Work outside the home include work at their own farm or cattle shed, employment on wages, or income generating activities. During off-season, she has to do household work in the landlords house. Rural women seem to be more religious, tradition bound and custom oriented. They are unable to form an independent opinion of their own without being influenced by the male members of their family. In spite of their readiness to take up challenges they get limited opportunities and face obstacles from society at each and every step of their life. A certain degree of freedom has undoubtedly come to women with modernization – for female education, employment and mobility offer women broad choices, income security and independence. But modernity has not solved the problem of women exploitation or harassment. There are many incidents of dowry deaths, bride burnings, inequality of wages and sordid tales of rape. In rural society of Orissa more stress is put on the

marriage of a female child than her education. There is undesirability of a daughter in most of the families. But, the changes in the status of urban women due to modernization is noteworthy.

In the urban areas of Orissa, women have become aware of the fact that if she wishes to attain her personal status and an independent social standing she has to become a wage earner. But this does not mean that they are free from restrictions. Even economically independent women have to depend on their parents or husbands or relatives. She has to perform her duties at home as well as at office.

Despite policy interventions for over 50 years after independence, there are disparities between male-female access to education. A review of the growth of education since independence indicates the failure of policies and programmes with regard to women's education. Because factors like increasing corruption, criminalisation of politics, terrorism and demoralization of the people have destroyed and dispersed the essence of political ideology like democracy, socialism and political ideas like equality, liberty, unity, fraternity etc. In this situation the condition of women who are at the end of the dark corner becomes more and more helpless and oppressed. Every effort of empowerment-whether through legal reforms, financial assistance and educational or political reforms ends up in more exploitation. This exposes that there is something lacking in thinking process at ideological level or at implementation level.²⁵

However, women are now becoming more conscious of their own issues due to government's emphasis on education in urban as well as in

²⁵ Geeta Vyas, Empowerment within : A new direction in *sustaining democracy : challenges in the new millennium*, Book of Abstracts, Xth National Conference, Indian Association for Women's Studies Utkal University, Orissa, 2002.

rural areas. Higher education also facilitated women's entry into gainful employment. Women now realize the fact that the only situation to solve women problems is to organize the unorganized. The consciousness manifested itself in the emergence of some Women's Organizations which have done considerable work in the field of uplifting the status of women in the society. At the grass root level, women organizations like Mahila Mandals take the leading role.²⁶ Apart from these Mahila Mandals, there are a number of women organizations playing significant roles in this regard. For example, National Federation of Indian Women, Nari Sikhya Samiti, All India Women's Conference, Self-employed Women's Association, The National Council of Women in India, Nari Mangal Samiti etc. are now very active. Mahila Commission is there to protect women against illegal practices. Media is also involved to create awareness for women's education and their role in economic, social and political development of the nation.

However, the major problem before us is whether women in majority are adequately politically socialized. Because political socialization should ensure their involvement in politics and political process, and shall result in their emancipation in a great way. As such, we have made a study on the said issue in our subsequent chapters.

SUMMARY

The current resurgence of discussion on women's issue in Orissa is due to the international recognition of the problem all over the world. They are becoming more and more conscious of their Constitutional rights, even the rural and tribal women are among them. This consciousness has

²⁶ C. Chakrapani and S Vijay Kumar (Eds), *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*

awakened in them a sense of urgency in experiencing equality and social justice. Modern education has changed women's outlook to a great extent. In fact, a new concept of womanhood is gradually emerging in India as well as in Orissa.

The women movement is gaining momentum by attacking the old customs, working for women's education and on all aspects of legal reform. The educated woman has realized the fact that she can not remain confined to the four walls of her home if she has to play her multifaceted role. Today, the organized women folk of our country as well as of the state are putforthing their demands through demonstrations and strikes. Now they are demanding for 33% of reservation in Parliament also. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee has called upon for a national debate on this issue. If the women succeed in the fulfillment of this demand, there would be a great change in their present status.

Now the government of Orissa have given adequate emphasis on the welfare of women as a vital input for all-round development of the state. Schools and colleges play an important role in this regard. Now the impact of modern life is being felt by our women folk in the cities and the rural villages. Yet they have many hurdles to overcome. But if they utilize the opportunities provided to them there is no doubt that they will achieve a prestigious position for themselves in the society. The important issue before us is whether women at large are politically socialized. Because this alone would play a vital role in their participation in the political process, which in turn shall promote their development. Hence, we have tried to focus on the said aspect in the succeeding chapters.