Chapter Two

An Overview Of Literature
Chapter-2:

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This chapter provides a brief survey of select literature that is divided into two parts. The first part takes note of the conditions of women in a historical perspective and the second part presents the trend of studies on leadership in general and women leaders in particular.

2.1 Women Through Ages: Almost half of mankind is really womankind. This half, in every age and every land, has coexisted with men in a relationship, which has varied between complete submission and complete equality. To men, women have been "fair sex", "better half" and "weaker sex" but they had no scruples in evolving a society, which was usually male-dominated. In history, women suffered from natural and imposed handicaps and yet, in all ages, some of them ably projected themselves and acquired the position of leadership and authority (Bhatt, 1995:11). No field of human endeavour remained untouched by them and the contribution made by them was substantial and significant. Even now, women account for two-thirds of the world's work hours. They produce 60 to 80 per cent of the food in Africa and Asia, 40 per cent in Latin America. Yet they officially constitute only one-third of the world's labour force, receive only 10 per cent of its income and own less than one per cent of its prosperity. The work done
by women in the home and on the farm is never calculated into the gross national product of any country. Their unpaid contribution to their nation's economies have largely been overlooked (Holmene, 1985:1).

"The chief of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW), Margaret Snyder, has aptly said that women are the providers of food, fuel, water, and often the whole family income; the sustainers and developers of their families, communities, and countries", (ibid: 2).

Julius Nyerere, the retired President of Tanzania summed up the problem succinctly:

A person does not walk very far or very fast on one leg. How can we expect half the people to be able to develop a nation? Yet the reality is that women are usually left aside when development needs are discussed, (ibid:2).

Shirley Williams (1978), president of the Social Democratic Party of Britain, has observed that:

Curiously enough, considering that in many ways women are more equal in the (United) States, it is more common to find women in high places in Europe and Asia than in America, (Williams: 1987: 28).
The tradition in the old and established societies of Europe and Asia (including India) has permitted women to have their own role in the past - a role, which may even entail the right to command. No such tradition exists in America, Australia, Canada and other new societies, which grew in one-time "colonies". The British politician further observed:

*I don't think that there will be, at least in this millennium, an American woman President. There may just possibly be an American Vice President* (Ibid:31).

So here is a paradox. New societies, like that of the USA, have succeeded in establishing the equality of sexes but have failed to throw up women presidents, Prime Ministers and other women in commanding position in political life. Older societies in Europe and Asia may not have achieved equality of women with men to the desirable extent, but they have propelled to power, through their political processes, women leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Corazon Aquino, Bandamaike and Indira Gandhi.

If the institution of monarchy brought forth Queen Elizabeth I, Catherine the Great or Queen Victoria in Europe, it also brought forth Sultana Razia Begum, Maharani Durgawati and Maharani Aha-lyabai
Halkar in India. If national perils, calamities brought forth women trailblazers like Joan de Arc and Florence Nightingale in Europe, they also brought to prominence women leaders like Chand Bibi and Sister Nivedita in this country. Cleopatra and Madame de Pompadour had their prototypes on the Indian scene also (Bhatt: 1995:13).

The question of women's role all through the history is thus intimately bound up with historical epochs dating from the early cultures of at least 4000 years ago. The discovery of the Indus Valley civilization in the 20th Century bears out the settled nature of the peaceful people who lived around 3500 B.C. like the other societies (ibid: 1995:13).

Going back to the hoary past of the Vedic period about 2500 B.C., women occupied a high status in society and gave evidence of their creative talent, which was no less than that of men. Many gifted women composed sacred hymns, which were included in the Rigveda, the earliest work of literature in the world, (Bhatt, 1995:14).

The Rigveda reveals how women took a prominent part in the Vedic rituals because of their talent in music, which they learnt as a part of their education. It mentions that women sang on ceremonial
occasions and played on a variety of rare instruments, such as the 'vina', the 'kanda vina', the 'taluka vina', as well as flutes and drums.

Ahalya, Sita, Draupadi, Muniadari and Tara were the names of great women, each of different hue and each with her own eminence. How well they anticipate - one wonders did they inspire? Manu the lawgiver's dictum:

*Let the names of women be good to pronounce - sweet, simple, pleasant and appropriate, let them terminate in long vowels and resemble words of benediction (Jain, 1975:51).*

These five women, widely known as Pandharpan, were neither saints nor virgins. None of them is heavenly, they were wives and mothers but they represented the colourful variety of their qualities. In the period of the Upanishads, Maitreyi and her daughter Gargi were prominent philosophers and both distinguished themselves in the art of rhetoric. The Mahabharata of the Epic period makes mention of Uttara, daughter of King Virata and her companions who were adept in dancing, singing and instrumental music, while Madhvi, daughter of King Yayati, was an expert musician. In one of the early Indian Epics, Princess Usha's maid of honour, Chitalalekha, was a portrait painter of
great talent who sketched the portrait of the noble men of her time to help identify Aniruddha, the grandson of Sri Krishna, (ibid: 51)

Muslim rule in India produced many distinguished women, starting from Razia Begum, who was prudent and capable daughter of Ilutmish, Sultan of Delhi. Ilutmish is supposed to have said: "My sons are devoted to the pleasures of youth and none of them is qualified to be a King... there is no one else competent to guide the state than my daughter." Razia's military and administrative leadership were superb. But in a male dominated society, she had been born too soon and found herself in a web of intrigues and revolts. Her reign was, therefore, short and she was murdered in 1240 A.D. Rani Durgawati is famous for her heroic resistance to expansionist drive of Akbar the Great Mughal. How she bravely faced his vast armies with her small army of 500 men will ever be remembered and retold with pride for generations to come. Rani Durgawati fell fighting against Akbar's forces in 1564. The Poetess daughter of Babur, Gulbadan Begum, immortalized her name by writing the Humayun Namah, a valuable contemporary record in beautiful write-up with style of the text of the life of the Emperor and his family in 16th century. (Bhartiya Vidhya Bhavan, 1974:633).
Nur Jahan (1574-1646) which means the light of the world, was brilliant and beautiful wife of Emperor Jahangir. She was blessed with great artistic, intellectual and administrative talent. A rare tribute was paid to her in a Persian couplet, which said: "Though Nur Jahan is apparently a woman yet, in the ranks of the brave, she is the (only) tamer of the lion" (Baig, 1958:169).

Chand Bibi was the caretaker of the infant King Bahadur in Ahmednagar and died fighting the Mughals setting an example in bravery and courage. Jahanara Begum (1613-1683 A.D.), talented daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan, took great interest in both architecture and decorative gardens. Zebunnisa, the accomplished daughter of emperor Aurangzeb, possessed great skill in calligraphy and wrote elegant verses of rare beauty under the pen name of "Makhfi which have been collected in the volume, Diwan-i-Makhfi. Tara Bai emerged as a prudent woman when Marathas were constantly fighting against the Mughals. Tara Bai, a lady of masterly spirit, guided the destiny of the Maratha nation at this juncture as regent for her minor son, Shivaji III. After the death of Mohan Rao Holkar, his widow Ahalya Bai became the head of the administration and became a historical personage in her own right, (ibid: 170).
The position that women occupied in Hindu society at the dawn of civilization during the Vedic age was much better than what we ordinarily expect it to have been. During the age of Rigveda (From 2500 to 1500 B. C.), the position of women was fairly satisfactory. Ordinarily girls were no doubt less welcome than boys, but it must be added that there were also some parents in society who would perform special religious rituals for the good luck of getting learned and capable daughters.

Girls were educated like boys and had to pass through a period of Brahmacharya. The marriages of girls used to take place at a fairly advanced age, the normal time being the age of 16 or 17. Women had an absolute equality with men in the eyes of religion. The position of the wife was an honoured one in the family. If a wife had the misfortune to be widowed, she had not to ascend her husband’s funeral pyre. The custom of Sati was not in vogue at all; on the contrary, widow remarriage was permitted. However, the main disabilities from which women suffered in this age, as well as in the next one, were proprietary ones. They could hold or inherit no property. Otherwise, the community allowed them considerable freedom in the different activities of social and political life, (Bhatt, 1995:14).
In the age of later *Sramittas* (*Brahmanas* and *Upanishads* (1500 to 500 B.C.), changes which took place in the position of women were rather gradual. Their proprietary rights continued to be unrecognized. There was, however, a gradual decline in female education as times advanced. The system of sending out girls to renowned gurus or centers of education came to be discouraged. As a consequence there a tendency to curtail the religious rights and privileges of the average women. The ideals pertaining to marriage and mutual relations and rights of parties continued to be more or less the same as they were in the earlier age. The custom of Sati was altogether unknown, and the widow had the option of remarriage either to her brother-in-law or to another person. (Ibid: 19).

Down to 500 A. D., permission was granted to child widows to remarry. From about 1,000 A. D., no widow in a respectable family could remarry whatever her age might have been at the time of her husband's death. The prohibition of widow remarriage came to be regarded as the most important criterion of the respectability of a class both high and low down to the beginning of the present century. The prejudice against widow remarriage was so deep rooted, that the legislation permitting widow remarriage, passed in 1856 A. D., had no
appreciable effect on the situation for more than half a century. (ibid: 19).

Down to about 800 A.D., Smritis were emphatic in declaring that women who were forcibly taken into captivity or dishonoured should be admitted back to their families. An outsider like Alberuni could not understand the stupidity of the Hindu community in refusing to readmit men and women, who had been captured and converted by force. From 1200 A.D., Hindu society refused to follow the lead of Smriti writers and declared that once a woman was converted or taken into captivity, nothing would justify her readmission to her old family and religion. This rigid and unreasonable attitude has cost Hindu society very dearly.

The survey of the position of Hindu women reveals that there has been a constant decline in the status and condition of women during the last two thousand years. It is no doubt true that women, as a general rule, received similar and often worse treatment in contemporary times in several other civilizations both in the East and the West. There are some evidences also which proved that the average woman during the last two thousand years continued to lead a happy and contented life but her cup of happiness was more frequently spoiled in this period than ever before.
Even today in spite of Independence, good legislation, education of women and reduction of illiteracy, many social evils and customs exist in Indian society. Indian women on the whole never sought to sublimate or rationalize her limitation and disabilities or bypass family life. However, hard and even be cruel to her. On the contrary, their homes and families have invariably come first in their order of priority. This has the very important result, however, of maintaining a stable and integrated society. (ibid: 22).

Status, in pure sociological terms, denotes only the position vis-a-vis others in terms of rights and obligations. In discussions on women's status in any society, the general convention has been to assess their role in relation to men. Two other dimensions have been introduced in the recent times to facilitate such assessment, particularly in a period of process of change: (a) the extent of actual control enjoyed by women over their own lives; (b) the extent to which they have access to decision making processes and are effective in positions of power and authority.

While the politico-legal frame-work of a society indicates the scope of rights and obligations of its members, the advent of quantitative methods has made it possible to adopt certain statistical indicators, e.g.,
literacy and education, employment and political participation, age of marriage and other demographic features that may help to locate the status of women vis-à-vis men, both at a given point of time, as well as to measure the extent of change over a period. But the application of these indicators to a society like India, poses several problems such as cultural variations, social hierarchy, economic inequality and secular law. Rendering the two dimensional formula neither quite relevant nor effective in assessing their role, similarly, woman’s roles, rights and norms of behaviour are greatly influenced by cultural factors like the institution of family, kinship, groups, descent systems, religious and other cultural traditions, caste hierarchy etc. The process of social change, development and modernization, impact of alien and western culture, which are sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory and destructive of each other are also involved in making any worth while assessment, (ibid: 23-24).

Appreciation of this complexity led the Committee on the Status of Women in India to admit that -

"The status of women in Indian context cannot be defined simply by general concepts like equality, role-differentiation, legal, social and political rights, depending or independence are not applicable to
all sections of our population. How do we then assess the status of Indian women, or measure the degree or direction of change in their position? Against the new dimensions in women's status and roles introduced by the constitution and process of social change, this large section of our society still continues to be under the influence of traditional standards. Traditional India has seen a woman only as a member of the family or a group as daughters, wives and mothers and not as an individual with an identity or rights of her own. The radicalism of the constitution and its deliberate departure from inherited social system lay in its implicit assumption that every adult woman, whatever her social position or accomplishments will function the task of nation building", (Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1975:7).

The social movements spearheaded by Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission etc., which began in 19th Century, emphasized enhancement of women's status through education, restriction of child marriage, improvement in the condition of widows and provision of property rights for Hindu women and widows. While the reformers were certainly concerned with the oppressed conditions of women and interested in improving their lot through legislation and arousing of social conscience, very few of them thought in terms of
women's rights to participate in social functions outside the framework of the family.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that the freedom movement, to be successful, had to be a movement of the masses. He felt that "Swaraj" would be meaningless without the reform of the social structure and the upliftment of the weaker sections, namely, the women and the lower social strata to a position of equality with others. While lending his support to the cause of improving women's conditions through education and reform of marriage laws, he declared himself to be uncompromising in the matter of women's rights. He wrote:

_Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand... Woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his... It is up to man to see that they enable them to realise their full status and play their part as equal of men._ (Young India, 7th October, 1921).

Mahatma Gandhi insisted that they must play an equal role with men in the achievement of freedom and social justice. In his opinion women had natural abilities to lead in a non-violent struggle for human liberation. The most significant aspect of Gandhi's ideas lies in the
remarkable similarities between them and the demands which are now being voiced by the women's liberation movement all over the world; equality in family and society, the right of one's own body, the opening of wider opportunities for self-development and a refusal to be regarded merely as sex symbols.

Though the implications of Gandhian social philosophy were not fully realized at that time, the massive participation of women in the freedom struggle in which they participated resulted in transformation of women's position in the eyes of society. As President of the Indian National Congress in 1931, Jawaharlal Nehru accepted equal obligations along with equal rights in the Fundamental Rights Resolution passed by the Congress in that year. Along with adult suffrage, the resolution emphasized the need for protection of women workers and grant of maternity leave to them.

Nehru held that women "must" be trained to participate "in every department of human activity" and play an active part in all professions and spheres. For this purpose, they must fight social institutions like purdah, untouchability, caste, marriage laws and customs that crushed them. But above all, they must participate in a struggle against the root cause of evils. A direct result of the "merging" of the women's movement with the national political struggle was the rejection of all
suggestions for political reservations for women in legislative bodies on the same lines as adopted for other weaker sections of society. Women leaders who had functioned as equals of their male comrades in the freedom movement decided that absolute equality in the political process would be the ideal remedy to raise women's status in society.

As a result of the commitment made by the Congress as early as 1931, the equality clauses were passed by the Constituent Assembly without any debate or discussion. This was, however, disapproved by the sharp controversy in the same body on the question of reform of Hindu Law relating to marriage and inheritance. The suggestions for a reform of Hindu Law had in fact come from the reform movement and the women's movement in particular in the period before independence. Even those who framed the Constitution had not seriously appreciated equality clauses in the Constitution. After years of debate and considerable modifications, the law could be enacted only piecemeal in the mid-fifties.

As a result of these laws, the legal position of Hindu women has improved considerably. These laws include the ban on bigamy; the provision of right of divorce and right to inherit a share of parental property while legal reform has improved considerably the status of
Hindu women similar reforms have not taken place in all the other systems of personal law prevalent in India.

Apart from these, free India has adopted a series of social laws for the control and eradication of certain social practices, such as, dowry and immoral traffic in women, as they were degrading the status of women. Labour Laws adopted on the lines of ILO Convention have sought to protect the health of women workers and ensure for them humane working conditions. The Equal Remuneration Convention of the ILO, though ratified by the Government of India some years earlier, has been given a legal shape in the form of an Ordinance in 1975. (Phudini, Urmilla and Malini, 1978:23). Judging by the standards of many developing and even developed countries, the legal and political rights conferred on women in India would thus appear to be considerably high. When one compares them with the situation that prevailed at the beginning of the 20th century, the progress may even appear fantastic.

The spread of education and access to positions of influence and power in the profession and in Government will undoubtedly open enormous opportunities to women to develop their talent and to participate in all the spheres of activities, competing with men on equal terms. Women have now gatecrashed into hitherto close professions.
like engineering, architecture, business management and public administration, political and diplomatic representation, and all branches of higher education and scientific research. In all these fields they have been accepted at present on their merits.

2.2 Constitutional Provisions: The Constitution of India, implemented since 1950, carried the impact of reforms enacted since the middle of 19th century and demands made during the freedom struggle for women’s development. Article 15(3) under ‘Fundamental Rights’ reads, “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision for women and children”. Article 16(1) guarantees “equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment for appointment to any office under the State” and Article 16(2) forbids discrimination “in respect of any employment of office under the State” on the grounds of “religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them”.

Part IV of the Constitution deals with the Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 36 to 51). Some of the Directive Principles are “women-specific”. Others concern women directly or by implication. Among those, which concern women directly and have a special bearing on their status, are the following:

1. The State is required to “direct its policy towards securing”
That the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. *Article 39 (a)*

2. That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women. *Article 39 (a)*

3. That the health and strength of workers, men and women, are not abused. *Article 39 (a)*

4. The State is also required to make provision for securing just and human conditions of work and for maternity benefits. *Article 42.*

In addition, Article 44 states, “The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India”. This is significantly in the context of the personal laws with the people of different religions follow in matters of marriage, succession and property rights. Not all of them have been pro-women, however.

2.3 Supplementary legislations: Despite these provisions, or possibly to reinforce them and empower women, the Indian Parliament passed various legislations in the field of family, marriage, property, inheritance, etc. so that women could be integrated in the development process and equality brought about. Such integration alone would help women to participate equally in the public and political sphere.

Social legislations, numbering more than 30, dealt with important areas; some of them are as follows:
2. Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956
4. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956
5. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956
7. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
8. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
9. Indian Foreign Service (Conduct and Discipline) Rules, 1961
       Mines Act, 1952; and plantation Labour Act, 1951.
11. Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Service) Act, 1966
12. Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
13. The Adoption of Children’s Bill, 1972
14. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
15. The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1976
17. Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill
19. Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1983
20. The Hindu Widows Remarriage (Repeat) Act, 1986
21. The Family Courts Act, 1984
22. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
23. Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986

As equal citizens of India, women benefit from these rights equally with men. However, since the Constitution recognized the unequal social position of women, a special clause empowers the State to make special provisions for women. This clause has been used to enact special laws for the protection of women workers in factories, mines and plantation and to provide maternity relief to women workers in the organized sector.

Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment and office under the State. This clause has helped to ensure a significant position and status to the Indian women, which is demonstrated in the increasing number of women in the public services and in positions of political power and dignity including such top offices as Governor, Chief Minister and the Prime Minister.

The Directive Principles of State Policy defining the major goals of a Welfare State also contain specific items affecting women. The
special attention given to the needs and problems of women as one of the "weaker sections" of Indian society, and the recognition of political equality was undoubtedly a radical departure from the norms prevailing in traditional India of pre-independence days. It has led many scholars to describe the Indian Constitution as a manifesto of a social revolution. This has to be understood in the historical setting of the Indian freedom movement, and the decision taken by the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, to ensure legal and political equality for women in free India.

2.4 Employment of Women: Turning to the sphere of employment, generally considered as an important indicator of women's status, one finds several contradictory trends. The organised sector of the economy, i.e., in services and professions and that sector of industry which may be described as the creation of the 20th century, the employment of women has increased fairly rapidly in the years since independence, at a rate faster than the growth rate in total employment for this sector. This sector, however, indicates a very small minority of the women workers in this country.

Agriculture still continues to provide livelihood to the largest masses of women in India and has absorbed an increasing proportion of women workers with the decline of opportunities in traditional
industries and services. As a result of the decline in the absolute number of women workers in agriculture has been less precipitate, from 30.8 million in 1911 to 25 million in 1971. In 1971 the number of women cultivators had dropped to 9.2 million while that of agriculture labourers were increased to 15.7 million. Commenting on this transformation, the Committee on the Status of Women in India observed that this "is the greatest indicator of increasing poverty employment and not of improving rights and opportunities for economic participation" (Ministry of Education and Social Welfare: 1975).

While a trend towards equalization of wages between men and women has been visible in the organized sector, discrimination against women is quite apparent in various ways in the rule throughout agriculture and the rest of the organized sector. Since 94 per cent of women workers are engaged in the unorganized sector of the economy (81 per cent in agriculture) they are unaffected by the protection afforded by the Labour Laws, and are victims of low productivity, unemployment and underemployment. According to estimates of various Expert Committees women constitute the larger share of both the unemployment and under-employment in India.
In the face of these demographic trends, the Committee on the Status of Women in India was compelled to conclude that the continuing decline in the sex ratio and the higher mortality rate of women was primarily due to worsening conditions of life of women in the poorer sections of society. While education, legal rights and changing social attitudes have opened new vistas for the active participation in all spheres of life to a minority of women in the privileged sections, the conditions of women among the vast masses of the population lower down have not shown similar improvement but have, on the other hand, registered a decline at least in the economic sphere.

It underscores that women in India have been deprived of power within the family by mainstream religious and social traditions. They have been powerless over their own lives because of forced subservience to fathers, husbands and in-laws, as also due to violence within the family and limited educational opportunity. They have lived in a social set up in which power and authority in both domestic and political spheres have been "built around a hierarchy of males" (Jain, 1984:1790). There have been many cultural barriers to women's equality, which are outside the realm of government action.

The UNESCO Survey revealed in 1989 that there are more women in medicine, education, science, technology and law in India than in the
western countries. The same survey has pointed out that in the city of Delhi, the number of women graduates exceeds the number of men graduates, (ibid: 33). It is no small wonder that women have created some measure of political influence for themselves within the electoral system of India. The political presence of women has made a significant impact on federal, state and local politics. News headlines have been telling us about the exploits of the women guerrillas of the Naxalite movement and the courage of female nurses in wartime hospitals.

One by one, the male bastions (like aeronautics) are falling before the onslaught of the skilled Indian women of the 20th century. They have so far been excluded from the Indian defense forces and their combat units (there are 220,000 military women in The U.S.). Recently Indian Military establishment has now opened at least half a door for them. But they are conspicuous in Police services and, since February 1986, in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) whose Mahila Battalion is the first women's para-military force in Asia, its members have handled Meerut riots and performed police duties in Sri Lanka (as part of IPKF) and Kashmir. (Bhatt, 1993: 34). Thus women in India have marked their presence in occupations and professions, which were hitherto male dominated.
2.5 Women In Politics: The participation of women in Indian politics can be traced in many ways. The freedom struggle in India is one of the few liberation movements in the world, which witnessed a vast participation by women. The extent, nature and method of this participation broadly followed the pattern of the evolution and growth of the Indian national moment as a whole.

Sixty years of the movement witnessed the gradual beginning and growth of women’s participation. There was formal, direct and visible participation of women in various activities - like singing, writing, partaking in protests, processions, going to jail etc. and in the more peaceful forms of satyagraha and non-violent, non-cooperation. Many women even took up training in gun carrying. And there was an informal process of participation such as lending support and backing up with various activities, which have not always been singled out.

The presence and contribution of the women, however, were recognised by the leaders, particularly during the era of Gandhi’s leadership. At the same time, the absence of a separate women’s selection in the movement, meant that the various organisations pursuing the interests of women had to act on their own; they also served as pressure groups both on the British rule and on the Indian National Movement. Many women served in both, establishing a link
between the two. By the beginning of the twentieth century, many women's organisations working specifically on women's issues were born. Women's education, health, training colleges for women, construction of homes for widows, scholarships, medical colleges and short maternity courses for women etc. were some of the issues women's organisations were concerned about. They also recognised quickly that the emancipation was inextricably linked to the political freedom of the nation. The various organisations dealing with the multifarious problems and activities of women had to be brought together and amalgamated, if women's questions had to be highlighted and women's emancipation achieved. It was with this in view that the All India Women's Conference was created in October 1926. Many women believed that women's rights and issues could not be secured in isolation from nationalist struggle (Kaushik, 1996: 53-81)

The mobilization of women in large numbers weakened the bandage of tradition and encouraged them to develop a perspective on the wider socio-political problems. Their close links with the national movement helped them acquire the right to political participation, to franchise and to other constitutional rights. Women occupying various positions, both in the political and professional spheres, began to be tacitly accepted. With this legacy of large-scale participation in national
politics, women in independent India participated as free and equal citizens. This participation can be analyzed in its various domains.

2.5.1 Participation in electoral politics: The participation of women in the electoral process is an indicator of their political consciousness as well as their aspiration for status enhancement. A quick glance at women’s participation in elections over the past three decades and twelfth and thirteenth General Elections will confirm the initial hopes placed in them. The figures concerning women’s formal participation in the electoral process both as actors and objects of attention, bring out a few facts: (i) the extent, nature and level of Indian women’s participation is much greater than in many other countries; (ii) this participation has been more or less steadily expanding over the years through various elections – as voters, as candidates, and in terms of participation in campaigning etc.; (iii) the gap in the turnout between the men and women is increasingly narrowing down; (iv) the number of women getting elected to representative bodies is steadily increasing, (Kaushik, 1993:53-81).

2.5.2 Women’s participation in the grass-roots democracy: Democracy and development, in order to be successful, need the maximum participation of people at the lowest level. Panchayati Raj (democratic decentralization) is an important political innovation and a
vital conduit in India, for popular participation in democratic development. It is envisaged not merely as a method of implementation of rural development policies and the dispersal of developmental benefits, but more importantly, as the training ground for the promotion of local initiative, for increasing people's political consciousness, their awareness of their rights, and for their direct participation in self-rule. *Panchayati Raj* being the best and most widespread training ground for the emergence of Indian leadership, the question of women's participation becomes all the more vital. With this in view, as early as 1962, many State governments like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, initiated Panchayati Raj reorganizations wherein they had specially stipulated the representation of women.

The inclusion of women, by co-option and nomination if necessary, in the elected bodies, it was believed, would lead to their greater participation in the local political processes and thereby promote their development through empowerment. Even though the experiment had not proved totally satisfactory, partly due to the small number of women involved and partly due to a lack of political consciousness, the Gram Panchayats and Mahila Mandalas have been performing their roles moderately and working as a training ground. The whole experiment is considered conducive, in the long run to the process of
democratic decentralization wherein political power can be devolved to women, (Kaushik, 1993:53-81).

2.5.3 Women in Trade Union Movements in India: The participation of women in the trade unions, however, is far from satisfactory. It is primarily due to the nature of women’s work and also due to the trade unions’ ways of functioning. But this is also the result of a strong patriarchal attitude prevalent among the workers and their leaders. Besides, trade unions cover mainly the organized sector and much of women’s work falls under the unorganized sector.

This is so despite the fact that many women have been active participants in the trade union movements. There are women workers who have evinced a great deal of interest and shown loyalty to trade union activities. In fact, Anusuyaben Sarabhai founded the first trade union in India (of textile mill workers) in Ahmedabad in 1917. In general, she remained its President until her death. The patriarchal attitude of the male workers and their leaders appear to be responsible for poor representation of women in decision-making positions and the neglect of issues concerning women. Many male workers view their female counterparts as basically homemakers, (ibid: 53-81).

It is only in recent times that the three major trade unions, namely: INTUC, AITUC and CITU have begun paying attention to
women workers. At the same time, women workers have started struggling on their own, seeking to fulfill demands that concern them as women. This has not always been successful, but many a time their firmness as well as the support received from active women’s groups, have paid dividends. However, even in these movements (except where they are made up exclusively of women members) they have not been able to emerge beyond middle level leadership, despite their commitment and militancy.

2.5.4 Participation in peasant movement in India: Women form the bulk of agricultural labour in India. The history of agrarian movements shows that women had participated in great numbers. Women participants had fled from home and lived without food and endured all kinds of hardships. During the Avadh movement of 1920-21, women had been mobilized on a large scale. The Kisan Sabha movements under Sahajanand saw a wide participation of women. They surrounded fields of grain, gheraoed the authorities and organized the fighting, (ibid: 53-81).

The Tebhaga movement (1946-50) in Bengal witnessed the rise of women’s group called ‘Nari Bahini’. What motivated them were women’s issues such as wife beating and rape by Zaminidars (landlords). They represented cases of violence and molestation in
people's courts. They raised questions of sexual division of labour and control over income. Despite violence, rape and killing, women participated fearlessly to maintain the communication network and shelter the activities, (ibid: 53-81).

The Telengana Movement (1946-51) was another peasant struggle in which women participated in guerrilla tactics and played leadership roles, facing torture, molestation and repression by the police and Razakars in the process. Women also mobilized themselves against child marriage, concubinage and dowry, (ibid: 53-81).

However, the impact of women's participation on the peasant movement itself is not very discernible. Issues of agricultural labour like minimum wages or equal pay for equal work are not enforced or even strongly demanded. Women continue to be the victims of gender violence, with very little protest. They do not figure as objects in land reforms. With a major chunk of rural households consisting of subsistence farmers and with an increasing number of female-headed households owing to the migration of male members to towns, women who actually cultivate are increasing in numbers. But it is the man who owns the land and makes the decisions. Peasant and agricultural labour struggles do not seem to recognize the valuable participation and role of women.
The above analysis shows the present position and trends of women's participation in the formal political processes in India. Compared to many developed and developing countries, Indian trends are positive and optimistic. But by itself, and when compared to its population, women's participation in politics is still very low, and in any case much lower than men. If one has to gauge how ordinary women perceive their realm of politics, what their goals and strategies are, and where they derive their power from, one will have to give up conventional methodologies of finding answers to such questions and how many women got elected to public offices or how they dominate political parties. There is a need to evolve some alternate ways to assess women's participation in politics.

Such a study must deal with the thousands of 'Ordinary Women' rather than the view 'superwomen' and their 'achievements'; it should pursue the ordinary women's ways of empowering themselves in order to 'fit' political institutions to their needs and purposes.

2.6 Trend of Studies on Women Politicians/Leaders:

Four major kinds of writings exist on 'women in politics'. Of these, a good number are in the form of seminar papers, mostly unpublished and not widely circulated, with the bulk being made up of papers presented in the four National Conferences of the Indian
Association for Women’s Studies, Conference of organization of Social scientists, seminars conducted by different universities, colleges, research institutes, and other NGOs. (ibid: 53-81). There are also M.A., M. Phil., and Ph.D. dissertations and reports. The S.N.D.T. Women’s University, Bombay, the Women’s Studies and Development Center, University of Delhi and Documentation Centers of I.C.S.S.R. have compiled comprehensive lists on women’s studies, (ibid: 53-81).

Another set of materials is the books and articles published by commercial publishers, research institutions, universities, and NGOs. Of late, interest in such publications has grown. Among them ‘Kali’ and ‘Shakti’ are especially devoted two books on women. A few journals (Economic and Political Weekly, Mainstream, Lokayan Bulletin, Teaching Politics) regularly carry academic articles on women. Samya Shakti is a journal devoted exclusively to research based women’s studies. So, too, is Manushi, which publishes articles and features based on actual experiences. Then there are Newsletters, Bulletins and occasional monographs from social action groups (Saheli, Chetna, etc.), research institutions and universities, which among other things, present articles, features and data on women’s participation in politics.
Finally, there are government documents in the form of reports, policy statements, schemes, and programmes etc. Some of them do go beyond policies and throw light on women's actual participation. The Report of the Committee on Status of Women (1976) was the first and till today the most important document on the women's participation in the socio-economic and political life of the country. As a pioneering venture, it put together under one cover data analysis on different aspects of women's lives and social participation. This was done after considerable research, many field visits and personal interviews. Though outdated in terms of figures and some of its recommendations, the report is still valid in terms of its analysis. Particular significance is its stress on the values of equality and justice in the context of the Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution, (ibid: 53-81).

It was followed by the reports of the Non-Aligned Conference on Women held in New Delhi in April 1985, which threw light on women's position in the Third World, and particularly in India, and recommended a plan for action. Then came the country paper presented by India at the Conference at Nairobi in July 1985. Among other things, it dwelt also on political participation. But since it was a brief
government paper, its coverage was skeletal and confined to election and administrative details.

There have been more publications of late, which have presented recent statistical data on demographic and socio-economic details on women and on their participation in the socio-economic and political activities of the nation. In addition to this there are two detailed reports by committees formed by the Department of Women and Child Development. The first is the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988), which is in the nature of a stock taking on the position and problems of women, on various government policies and programmes in different sectors as well as the recommendations for further programmes and policies. The other major document entitled ‘Shram Shakti’, a Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector, submitted in 1988. Even though initiated by the government, these documents have been written by academicians and social workers from universities and research institutions and others working for women’s development, (ibid: 53-81).

The literature available on women in politics in India though may not be enormous but it is still considerable. The themes/topics covered by it are the following:
1. Participation in the Freedom Struggle;
2. Constitutional and Legislative Measures and Debates;
3. Participation of Women in the Political Process in Independent India;
   a. Ideology, politics and political parties;
   b. Electoral and party participation;
   c. Local government and politics;
   d. Trade union, peasant and other social movements.
4. Autonomous women's movements and women's organizations;
5. Informal processes – struggles within and outside the family; cultural and social process, (Ibid: 53-81).

Many of the accounts of the freedom movement are mainly in the realm of formal processes such as demonstrations, processions and marches, and peaceful acts of disobedience and 'Satyagrahas'. They highlight other modes of participation too, such as picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops and raising slogans or going into jails. Thus, these facts speak of the mass base among women with the Indian National Movement clearly represented. For source material, the accounts depend on the speeches and writings of important leaders such as M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. This was enlarged with documents from the
Archives, the collections of All India Women’s Conference and other similar organizations. Many doctoral scholars and other researchers have also undertaken extensive interviews with leaders and surviving participants, to supplement this information. In fact, this seems to be the latest trend in Women’s Studies in India.

However, even while such studies highlight different modes of participation, they have yet to come to grips with some of its essential aspects such as the impact of the nationalist movement on the personality of common women, the aspirations and hopes it raised, the inspiration and motivations that prompted them to participate or be involved in the movement. Equally important are the factors that facilitated or hindered the participation of women – factors that were rooted in cultural, religious, economic, geographical and above all patriarchal, familiar surroundings.

2.7 Leadership and Women Leaders:

The social science scholars at different levels have undertaken a number of studies of political leaders. A few studies are presented here to indicate the kind of issues examined in these studies and also indicate relevant findings on the issues proposed in the present work.

“The elite theory in essence argues that whatever is the political system, it is the few capable who are ultimately responsible for decision
making and implementation. Thus, the elite model divides society into the two parts: a ruling minority and the ruled majority” (Parc and Kumar, 1986: 5). Some authors have tried to relate class-model with elite model, by arguing that political elite is the most effective part of the ruling political class. However, this political class cannot be considered a class because, according to Marx, “Society is divided into ruled and ruling classes on the basis of the relations of production, prevailing in a society”. While the elite theory claims that personal qualities of individuals separate rulers from the ruled.

Various authors to support or oppose a political system have also used elite theory. Earlier elite theorists like Pareto and Mosca used the theory to criticize democratic and socialist systems. They wanted to propound a realistic and scientific theory regarding the nature of the ruling authority. Shumpeter on the other hand, held that democracy grew along with capitalist economic system and the process in these capitalist and socialist economic systems are analogous. According to him, the will of the people is the product and not the motive power of the political process. Like market mechanism, in political process also politicians behave like entrepreneurs and formulate policies in the light of popular demands, then they try to sell them in competitive voter’s markets; and masses are like consumers who have to give preference
for any one of the given products (i.e. policy packages). Thus, for him elites in politics are like entrepreneurs in the economic field (Pant and Kumar, 1986: 5).

The elitist concept of democracy was supported and further developed by Anthony Downs (1957), Harold Lasswell (1950), Robert Dahl (1961) and Giovanni Sartre (1976). They developed the theory of plurality of elites to accommodate elites in various groups who try to defend the interests of its members.

“A great deal has changed, in law as politics in the last forty years in India” (Beteille, 1992). The social structure of elites in India had undergone three major transformations in its long history. The three periods refer to pre-British period, period of British and post-Independence period. During the pre-British period, the elite structure in the Indian society remained monarchical-feudal, based on principles of hierarchy and governed by the twin principles of loyalty and patronage. Thus elites remained authoritarian and charismatic throughout this period (Pant and Kumar, 1986: 1-7).

During the British regime, the traditional elites such as landlords and princes were patronized by the regime though the government reduced the power and influence of traditional elites considerably by introducing many institutions. The new elites during this phase emerged
with the help of those very institutions, which were developed by British to consolidate their regime. Thus, introduction of such institutions as the judiciary to establish rule of law, modern system of education, development of science and technology, establishment of a new bureaucratic administration etc. helped the emergence of a new national liberal elite. Though these modern institutions and the liberal values of equality, liberty, justice etc. influenced the new national liberal elite, at the same time it wanted to preserve and continue its cultural heritage as well. In other words, it wanted to maintain a sort of continuity with the old elite, though it was fundamentally different from it in its origin and nature. Its role was not traditionally ascribed and secondly it was not paternalistic feudal. The majority of the new elite came from the new professions such as those of journalists, lawyers, social workers etc. However, it is also true that the new elite had a very narrow social base as it mostly belonged to upper castes, and was more urban rather than rural (ibid: 1-7).

The country's elite structure changed further after Independence. As the competition to reach positions of power became open, regional, ethnic and linguistic interest groups appeared each claiming a share in the national cake. This emergence of new pressure groups widened the social base from which members of the elite came to be recruited. The
new elite structure, which has emerged during the last half a century, shows changes in the following three directions: (i) number and influence of rural based elites is increasing, (ii) member of the non-upper castes are also acquiring elite positions on a significant scale; (iii) elites representing regional, ethnic and economic interests are increasing their power at State level (ibid: 1-7).

Altekar and Puri (1955) have given a full account of the political set up of the ancient village communities. “During the nineteenth century, under the general influence of the theory of social evolution, several social philosophers made a special study of the genesis and development of land tenure, inheritance of property, primitive and rural jurisprudence and other social institutions in the different parts of the world” (Vidyarthi, 1967: 12).

Maine (1871) and Powell (1896) have studied Indian villages for specific purposes, for comparative jurisprudence and for administration. These studies have a direct bearing on the political system and leadership pattern of the village communities, and are examples of the first attempts in this field of study.

Lewis (1954) and Dhillon (1955) have studied factions and leadership in north Indian and South Indian villages. Their studies on the power structure in rural India inspired a number of other American,
British and Indian scholars to take up the study of rural leadership in the villages of the different parts of India. Yogendra Singh (1955) had worked on the changing power structure in six villages in UP and brings out the characteristics of traditional and emerging power structure in the selected villages of Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Srinivas (1959) and Dube (1961) have studied the pattern of rural leadership. Srinivas regards the concept of dominant caste as crucial for understanding of power relations in rural social life. Dube finds that the political power is concentrated in a few individuals rather than diffused in the structure among the two Hinduized tribes, the Bhumij and the Bhil, and refers to the utility of the historical perspective in understanding the changing authoritarian structure of the two groups.

N.D. Kamble (1982), in his study on the scheduled caste parliamentarians and State Legislatures observed that they depend on the higher caste leadership in order to be elected. They are always at the mercy of higher caste leaders to get share in the power for their selfish motives and to emerge superiors among the scheduled castes. Sangwan (1986) has studied the awareness and role performance of Harijan Legislators of Haryana for the period 1977-79. He observed that they were discriminated politically and never were consulted by higher caste legislators while political decisions were taken. They never protested
against such decisions and they were neglected mainly because lack of unity among scheduled caste legislators. Sagwan’s study refers to one time small period that too of a very small number (17 legislators) and limited to few aspects only. Nothing can be generalized based on such study.

Sachchidananda’s (1977) study of Harijan elites is a path breaking study of social, administrative and political elites among the scheduled castes in Bihar State. He identifies elites of three types through web approach and networks of the scheduled castes. Raj Bala (1997) studied scheduled caste leaders in Rohtak district of Haryana State and observed that scheduled caste leaders have been playing a role of an emulsion among their caste people and extracting aids and grants from various governmental agencies for the community welfare activities.

Muni (1970) has also emphasized the same view. Hazel D’Lima (1983) studied women in local government in Maharashtra. In his study of women in Zilla Parishad it is observed that the women of upper castes i.e. those belonging to the families of big land lords or politically influential families try to dominate the positions reserved for women in the Zilla Parishad or Panchayat Samities.

Bhatt (1995) studied all 155 women Members of Parliament (MPs) elected up to the sixth Lok Sabha (1977). She observed that most
of them belonged to the middle class families. Women MPs from general constituencies had higher educational qualifications as compared to those elected from Reserved Constituencies.

Kumari and Dubey (1994) studied socio-economic conditions and other related issues like role of women MPs in parliament proceedings, their association with political parties, the hindrance faced by them and their involvement in the electoral politics, etc. They have covered all the women MPs of tenth Lok Sabha of both the Upper and the Lower Houses; they were total 74 in numbers. She found that many women MPs belonged to families having political background, with support of their parents or their spouses; they have established themselves in the party organizations. Although, they tried to raise various issues but most of them seem to be more concerned with the issues related to women. Irrespective of their party’s affiliation, the women MPs seem to unite and take a common stand on the floor of the House on women specific issues. They also expressed their concerns about the indifference of the male parliamentarians. However, based on this study, no generalization or conclusion can/should be drawn as the sample of women MPs covers only 24 women MPs, only one-third of the universe.
Kaushik (1993), (1996) has studied women in politics in India. In her study, the sample of women politician was drawn from National, Regional and Local levels, which covered Ministers, MPs, Legislators, Members occupying important positions, Members of District Boards, Local Village Bodies, Common women, etc. She distributed the sample totaling 80, under different headings, Nationals = 56, State = 14 and Districts = 8. From the survey of 80 women politicians and 300 common women from different regions and classes, she found that majority of women politicians are drawn from middle class urban family background. Sixty three percent of middle class common women disapproved of their family member’s participation in politics, as it was considered a “dirty”, “corrupt” and “immoral” vocation, (Kaushik, 1993:53-81). Some other researchers have also arrived at similar findings.

The various studies done so far reveal that majority of the women who are actively engaged in politics have come from economically well-off families and have at least one of her close relatives mostly father, husband or mother also involved in the active politics and shows linkage of their political career with their families. In many a cases, the facilitator of women politician’s career has been a prominent leader who holds an important position in his party and in decision-making
committees of the party. Even scheduled castes and scheduled tribes women leaders generally belonged to the higher educational category and to economically well off families. Therefore, “the association between higher social and economic status and higher rate of participation is clearly established” (Bhatt, 1995: 71).

Seth (1979) has studied social background of women MPs from 1951-79 in his Ph. D. thesis entitled “Political participation of Women” which is admired by the social scientist and the study was considered to be a White Book on women MPs of Gujarat State. He has observed that most of the women MPs belonged to economically well off families. Most of them were quite educated and some of them were very well educated. His astonishing revelation was that even the candidates from the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes generally belonged to the higher educational category. It was their background of higher education that gave them a perspective of politics and helped them in their understanding of public issues and political processes, (Seth, 1979: 31).

Seth’s (1979) study further pointed out that family background and a fairly high education harnessed during the work in social and public life made them articulate. This was largely in contrast with the glamorous MPs from the princely houses. By their grooming and
background the latter were neither painstaking nor much articulate. Most of them belonged to the Rightist parties like the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh. But those belonging to the Congress, and latter to the Janata Party in the 6th Lok Sabha, were the ones who made their presence felt in Parliament. The average age of the women candidates was 51.3 years and majority of the women MPs were married to people belonging to middle age group and higher middle-income group. None was illiterate and most of them were well educated. Income-wise and education-wise they were better placed than the average male MPs. The largest group had their linkage with various social, cultural and women’s organization. Many of them had been active in freedom movement and, after independence; they entered active politics through Congress Party, (Bhatt, 1995: 70).

The study also referred to the “male equivalence factor”. This factor applies to a situation in which a woman seeks to gain in political position as a substitute for a man. Thus, it appears that in a “widow succession case”, a woman candidate mostly succeeds a husband in his constituency on the death of her husband. This has been more marked in the cases of the person assuming the political role of an agitator or that of taking up the causes that her husband stood for than in the
position of the power. This may also be considered as a function with political background families. (Ibid: 71).

"The association between higher social and economic status and higher rate of participation is also established. Only in the case of women activists with family linkages, this view may be slightly modified because linkage, irrespective of education is a powerful factor in a woman's politicization in leading, may be to instrument in practical politics" (Ibid: 71). There is one more factor that influences the politicization and participation of women in politics. The factor that shows the significance of the background of their political career is their family linkage. The interested and understanding acquired through father, husband, brother and such other relations constitute the familial influence for women activists. The incidence of membership of politicized family is much more obvious in the case of the candidates belonging to the Congress and Communist Parties. The women leaders have emerged as a leader through contesting elections. Most of them demonstrated their survival capacity in politics by getting themselves elected twice or thrice and few of them even five times. Another factor found to be responsible for their selection as candidate is the personal charisma and impact they have made in the major city or their constituency, (Ibid: 71).
Women leaders are active members of their party and raised a number of women’s issues and got them included into the party’s manifesto, as a representative of their areas as well as those of general concern. In some studies it is found that women leaders in parliament are raising a variety of issues some of which are women specific while many others are not. The issues vary from such as black economy in India to disasters caused by natural calamities, management of food grains, problems of unemployment, etc. The constraints which women generally face in entering into active politics are given tradition, physiology, lack of vertical mobility, concerns for family and home and psychology etc.

One of the major and most common areas of research on Women and Politics in contemporary India is the political participation of women. The subject dealt with the sphere of formal electoral politics. Hence political participation is, by and large, interpreted as the voting behaviour of women voters. This is partly due to the dominant role which electoral politics plays in parliamentary democracy in India, and partly to the dominance of the behavioural approach in social sciences, in general, (Kaushik, 1993:63).

Even while women constitute 45 per cent of agricultural labour in India, and have been participating in the peasant movements since the
Moplah rebellions to the Telengana and Tebhaga Movements, there is very little writing on women's participation in them. A few papers are now available in the form of seminar presentations which show that even while there was enough evidence of women's involvement both in general issues of class and specific issues of women combined with class issues (as in Tebhaga), these have not been sufficiently explored. The question has also been raised in one of these papers as to how far women had any role in decision-making and what the impact was on women's participation on their status in the family and movement, (ibid: 53-81).

The research done on the industrial sector has been of a similar nature. However, it is more extensive in scale when compared to work on peasant struggles. Many articles in journals, papers read in seminars and conferences and reports constitute the bulk of this literature. These micro-level studies unfold developments, women's participation, their demands and methodology in each struggle. They also examine the follow up of women's participation and its impact on women themselves, and generally conclude that this led to the strengthening of the women's movement as such. There are also several dissertations on the working women, (Kaushik, 1993:64).
A few books have been written on women in local governmental and politics, e.g. Nivedita Menon (1999), Sangeeta Purushothaman (1998), Bhavana Jharta (1996), Shusheela Kaushik (1993), Ranjana Kumari (1992), Sunama Pandey (1990), J.K. Baral (1990), etc. They deal with only a few regions of India. Of late, some papers published in Seminar, Economic and Political weekly, National Dailies have also taken up the theme such as Women Reservation, the role of women in politics, extent and nature of women's participation in the local government (known otherwise as Panchayati Raj), the statutory provisions, the nature of selection (nomination, co-option, direct and indirect elections etc.), the limitations and advantages therein. These aspects have been analyzed at length in various papers.

Though undertaken on a local and regional basis, covering the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, these studies, by and large, arrive at the same conclusions. They have assumed a particular significance, in the past few years, with India attempting large-scale changes and reforms in its local government system. Women, along with other weaker sections, have begun to receive some attention. (ibid: 64).

Kaushik (1993), in her study on women's role and participation in Panchayati Raj has arrived at the following findings.
i. The participation of women is low in terms of number and quality. A majority (little more than 50 per cent) is over the age of 50. Most of them belong to the affluent land owning, high caste families and are related to politically active sections of the societies.

ii. Political awareness and participation and knowledge of wider issues are below the mark. The co-option of women is more a tokenism than real representation; and

iii. The continuation of nomination – co-option or even reservation is a reflection of the continuing inability of women to get elected through the normal process, (ibid: 66).

Because of the factors noted above, the role of the State level politicians has become distinct from those at the national level. As such the study of political elites at the state level and their perception of social political and economic change acquires greater importance. Keeping this in view, the study of political elites at the State level and particularly of the women legislators is likely to be more fruitful and important.

The studies done so far merely confirm the popular impression that: (i) women are not independent voters; (ii) that a majority are illiterate; (iii) that a majority make their choice on the basis of
suggestions from male members of the family - husband and sons; (iv) that women lack information and political awareness; and (v) that women were not politically conscious, (Kaushik, 1993:53-81).

A deeper analysis of the socio-economic and cultural factors, more particularly the family position and the power relations within the family, and of factors that prevent the women from gaining access to political information and education etc. are totally lacking. Equally conspicuous by its absence is the analysis of any mobilization and organization of women, their participation in activities/organizations during the inter-election period. In the absence of such a participation and exposure to other than familial sources and activities, women cannot be expected to have developed an independent political consciousness.

The studies on women political participation at the State levels in Panchayats, districts and particularly on legislatures are very rare. Also, detailed studies of women leaders in State Legislatures and Parliament, their roles and contributing factors for their emergence as leaders and their problems in entry to active politics have not been done exhaustively and such studies are few.