Chapter Seven
Summary And Findings
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7.1 Summary:

The last two decades have been marked by critical activities both of women and by women. The growing body of literature and evidence on women's integral involvement in varied structures and processes of society have brought gender to the center-stage of all the developmental efforts. "It is now widely recognized that seemingly well worked out plans and programmes being both gender-biased and gender blind can have disastrous consequences for women", (Kumari, 1994:33). Efforts are, therefore, being made to develop alternate strategies and discourses that are both gender-sensitive and gender just.

The studies attempted so far on the participation of women in politics are mainly confined to their voting behaviour or at the best partaking of position as candidates, member of legislatures and ministers. The present study has focused on women legislators in UP Assembly to study their participation in political process particularly to see their socio-economic conditions, their role as leader, the issues they
raised in the assembly and the problems they face being as women politicians.

The question of women’s participation in political process and decision-making bodies forms a key concern of the women’s movement in India. An analysis of the democratic system and representation of various sections of the population therein reveals that women are far behind. Any assessment of political participation of women in a State like Uttar Pradesh has to start by asking the questions like whether such participation has helped in bringing about or moving towards improvement of the equalities of life of women or whether it simply makes life more livable for women? Whether such participation by women either as individuals or as a group has meant working out alternate strategies for development as well as structure of power? Whether the political intentions which women seek to make start with women as points of departure or merely help women infiltrate systematically in the existing hierarchies of power.

Many studies reveal that the women politicians face peculiar problems in their political life, which are totally unknown to their male counterparts. These inhibit their performance in the legislative assembly. "The reasons for women’s diminished role in political arena
include traditions, physiology, lack of vertical mobility, concern for home and family, psychology and lack of patronage, particularly, from senior women politicians (Bhatt, 1995: 90). There may be many more reasons, which hinder women's active involvement in politics. In fact, studies on such issues have been very rare and no systematic and comprehensive study appears to have been done on this issue.

It is, indeed, this that necessitates an analysis of issues that are responsible for limiting women's participation in the political process. Thus, the present study has made an attempt to analyse the background, role and involvement of women in politics and the constraints thereof, if any. The study has been undertaken on the women legislators of Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

7.2 The Statement of problem – Research Questions:

The present study focuses on the following specific questions:

1. Who are the women leaders in UP?
2. How have they emerged as leaders?
3. What role do they play?
4. The kind of issues do they raise in the Assembly? And
5. Whether their social and cultural barriers have stood in their way to participate in politics?
In the first question “who are the women leaders in UP?” we have studied the socio-economic, educational and other background factors of women legislators in this State. Leaders here operationally in this study means the elected women legislators to UP Assembly. There are many other leaders through positional approach like Member of Parliament (MP), Member of Legislative Council (MLA), Municipal Committee Members, Block Samiti Members, Village Panchyat Sarpanch, etc. The present study has been limited to understand the background of the women legislators, in terms of caste, marital status, age, and nature of family, occupation and education.

The second question has taken note of the process through which they have emerged as leaders. This indicates the contributing factors and the process through which women legislators have achieved their position of leadership. The process means whether through election, selection, and nomination or by any other means they have reached to a position recognized as leader and this also includes their earlier channels of participation. Contributing factors include previous participation in socio-political activities, socialization, chance factors, situation which forces them to get involved in some struggle, or any other political training and participation. All these factors have been
studied with reference to those women legislators who were identified as respondents.

The third question, which has been studied, is "what role do they play," actually; this question means their performance in public life. As leaders, they have to play some roles, which are different from the role of common women. By virtue of occupying a position, i.e. status of a leader at certain level what has been their contribution in the upliftment and empowerment of the women in particular and society in general. This has also involved their role for the welfare and upliftment of their community people, youths and indirectly strengthening the position and support of other male leaders.

This question has also been searching answer for the role of women legislators in their party organizations and forums, the level at which their participation is enabled, the share of responsibilities and leadership roles women are allowed to wield at different elections, their role in managing and conducting campaigns, the opportunities they get to articulate, express and integrate their views and opinion into the party functioning and policy formulations.

The fourth question was related to their performance in the Assembly. This has to examine the range and depth of women's
participation and their involvement in the Assembly proceedings, particularly in raising issues, moving resolutions, debate on Bills, proposing motions, etc. This question has also involved an analysis of ‘women’ as a group in the Assembly, the occasions and issues on which they cut across party lines and join hands together.

And fifth question was meant to examine the hindrance mainly due to social and cultural barriers that the legislators face while entering into active politics and performing their role as leader. Some of the major issues, which either facilitate or limit women’s participation in the political process, have also been examined in this question.

7.3 Area of Study:

The study has been confined to the state of Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh (UP) politically is a very sensitive and important state in terms of providing leadership. UP, which is socially more backward than many of the states in the country, have sent more women into the Central and State legislatures. It has the largest legislative assembly, sends largest number of MP in the Parliament and politically has always dominated on the National scene. UP have 85 seats of MPs in the Lek Sabha and 425 seats in the state legislative assembly. The
important leaders have always focussed attention on this state. The state of UP has produced many men and women leaders of National and international repute. In fact, the first women Prime Minister of India belonged to UP. Out of thirteen Prime Ministers of India elected so far, eight Prime Ministers were from Uttar Pradesh. More women members of the UP had become members in the Central Cabinet than women from any other state. Both formal and informal leadership can be observed in this state. That is why UP has been selected for the present study. UP has the highest population in the country. This State provides a specific situation, by its location, general reputation, social composition, large women voters, socio-cultural history and important centre of political activities. The demographic and other important salient features of UP, position of women in State, their political activities and organisations and political parties they belong to have already been explained in the earlier chapter.

7.4 Identification and selection of Respondents- Universe and Sample:

The UP Legislatures consists of the Governor and the two houses known as the legislative Council and the Legislative assembly. At present, the legislative Council of UP has 108 members and legislative
assembly is 425 excluding one member of Anglo-Indian community. The prime unit of our analysis was women legislators in UP assembly. The women leaders, in the context of our study, consist of all women legislators elected in thirteen assembly elections held in UP so far, and therefore, constitutes the universe of the present study. A profile of all women legislators including all former women legislators in UP assembly was prepared and it was observed that about fifty-two women were elected as legislators more than once. Many of them represented continuously their constituencies several times, and some of as many as seven times. Although, concerns are specific to women legislators, their male colleagues formed an integral part of our analysis and therefore, a controlled group of male legislators was to constitute the second unit category of our analysis. But limiting the volume this has been dealt with only illustratively. The study has tried to find out the attitude of her male colleagues toward her and also identify various interventions that can ensure and enhance an increased and qualitatively better participation of women both in assembly and in her political party. Therefore, some male legislators have also been included to form a small part of respondents.
The first assembly elections in UP, was held in the year 1952 after independence wherein eleven women legislators were elected to the assembly. The last Assembly election in UP was held in 1996 and 20 women were elected. However, two had resigned on some pretext or the other and the present strength of women legislators is reduced to eighteen only. Since 1952, 13 assembly elections have been conducted in UP in which a total of 223 women were elected. Out of the total 223 women legislators, 52 women legislators were elected more than once. A list was prepared of all women legislators and it was observed that 52 women have been repeatedly appearing at 149 places in the list. If 52 are excluded from 149, the remaining 97 have to be deducted from the 223 and thus, the total numbers of women legislators were reduced to 126. Out of these 126 legislators, 5 legislators have expired and 10 could not reply queries properly due to their poor health and old age. Fifteen women legislators have not sent filled in questionnaires even after repeated reminders and great persuasion. Also, there was no information available about them regarding their age, education, family background, income, profession, etc. in the literature like Who's Who published by the Vidhan Sabha secretariat. Thus, there were legislators those who have been expired, other those who could
not be contacted and some those who could not answer the queries due
to having old age related diseases; such few have been deleted as the
case of "sample mortality". Their number is about 31 thus leaving the
total respondents as 95.

7.5 DATA COLLECTION: All the available and accessible sources
were fully explored to collect required information and data on all 95
women legislators in three different stages.

At the initial stage, a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the
existing literature on the political processes and decision-making
bodies in particular was made. In the second stage, a structured
questionnaire was formulated to extract information from women
legislators on specific areas and issues. The questionnaire was designed
to obtain facts on personal attributes, information on involvement in
politics, association with political party / parties, involvement in
electoral politics, role in legislature politics and proceedings, role as a
minister, response to certain general and women specific issues,
suggestions on an increased and qualitatively better participation for /
of women in political process and decision making bodies.

The questionnaires formulated were then sent to them. However,
only three women legislators sent written responses in the first round.
As only three women legislators sent back the first round of questionnaires (although majority of them confirmed having received them) another round of questionnaires were sent. After persistent reminders only 40 women legislators responded with filled in questionnaires.

Simultaneously, in third stage, efforts were also made to contact them in person. Personal interviews were held with 40 women legislators (15 sitting and 25 ex-legislators). Most of the sitting women legislators were contacted in Lucknow when assembly session was on while ex-women legislators (25) were contacted at their residence. Interestingly, they were found to be courteous and cooperative than sitting members.

Case studies of seven women legislators were done. They were selected taking into account the representation of different castes, different leadership positions, their experience and background. One of the important criteria for selection of the case studies was their experience as legislators, the number of times they had represented their constituencies and their position as minister. Legislators belonging to the scheduled caste and OBC and the legislators from the different parts of the state have been considered to take up the case studies. For
describing the case studies, interviews of the legislators, observations, supplementary information through knowledgeable persons and available in their life history in various records have been used. With the co-operation of the legislators as also by our own perceptions and preparations, it could be possible to collect required information on all 95 respondents.

7.6 Data Analysis:

The information furnished by the respondents and collected from various other sources was transferred from the notes, diaries, and the interviews schedules to the data sheets and then were analyzed. The huge data on various aspects have been analyzed and arranged in tables for interpretation. The data were analyzed by computing chi-square and co-relational statistics. Case materials, however, were qualitatively analyzed. The information on background variables, were quantitatively analyzed. The relationship of various factors has been indicated on the basis of numerical distribution presented in the tables. Thus, the data of 95 respondents have been analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.
7.7 Concepts/Terms: We have used the following concepts as technical terms and tools for precision and abstraction.

7.7.1 Politics and Political Participation: "Politics refers to the functioning of a whole array of public institutions and forces which are involved in moulding the lives of people by way of decisions and policies that impinge upon their relations with one another", (Kaushik, 1996:35). 'Politics' is often defined in very narrow terms as the electoral participation in democracy. The varied activities that are performed by a person in an elected position or as part of the voter's duty, defined as political participation. This is because such participation is expected to be the springboard of decision making in the public sphere that in turn, is denoted as power.

"The concept of politics has by and large been defined either in terms of "process" or in terms of the "scene" or "place" where it happens i.e. in terms of the 'arena' or the institutional forms (i.e. parliament, assemblies, etc.)", (Kumari: 1996:34). However, there does exist an overlapping between the two. Thus for instance, those who subscribe to the 'arena' concept may regard it as a process but confine this process of politics to certain kind of institutions and organizations. Broadly defined politics refers to a whole gamut of
structures and forces that affect people's lives by way of decisions and policies. It involves not merely the availability of Opportunities, Rights, liberties and Justice to both individuals and the groups but also the extent to which they are availed of and exercised.

7.7.2 Leader: 'Leader' literally means a person who leads or has the capacity to lead. He / she can understand the complexities of the social structures, which are the base of politics, education, economy and social status.

Leader, operationally, defined as one who occupies power position in any organization or association in the government or otherwise. In the present study, the women legislators who occupy position in the most important decision making body, at the state level namely; the State Legislatures have been considered as the women leaders.

7.7.3 Elite: Several Authors have given the concept beginning with Pareto and others. Elite is used in respect of "those positions in a social structures which are supper-ordinate such that the incumbent claims and are granted social superiority". The term is also used to refer to the functions attach to such positions, especially the special responsibility to form and define value standard in a certain social
sphere. The leaders defined above consist of ‘elites’ in political arena of UP.

**7.7.4 Development:** Development is here used to mean both the improved material well being (welfare) of people and the process by which this improved well being is achieved. The concept of development also includes an element of equality – that material benefits from the development process should be fairly distributed, especially benefit to those most in need – the disadvantaged and the most vulnerable. Therefore, the special interest in women’s development arises because women are a majority amongst the most disadvantaged.

**7.7.5 Empowerment:** Empowerment is an important element of development, being the process by which people take control and action in order to overcome obstacles. Empowerment especially means the collective action by the oppressed and deprived to overcome the obstacles of structural inequality which have previously put them in a disadvantaged position. It is the process by which women mobilise to understand, identify and overcome gender discrimination, so as to achieve equality of welfare, and equal access to resources. Empowerment may be analytically
distinguished from "self-reliance"; which may be defined as people's ability to advance themselves within the existing social system.

7.7.6 Gender Discrimination: Gender discrimination means to give differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender. In a patriarchal society, this involves systematic and structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources, and participation in decision-making.

7.7.7 Gender equality: Gender equality means that there is no discrimination on grounds of a person's sex in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in the access to services. Gender equality may be measured in terms of whether there is equality of opportunity, or equality of results.

7.7.8 Gender equity: It means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between the two genders. Gender equality does not have such a well-defined meaning as gender equality, because it's meaning depends on the definition of fairness and justice. In addition, in its legal sense the term equity suggests a limited notion of the concept of justice, since
equity refers to justice within the existing law, rather than justice by changing the law.

7.8 Findings:

In the present work, it was proposed to study mainly five questions. These questions were referred to the socio-economic background of the women legislators, their role and performance as leaders, their emergence as leaders, i.e. contributory factors and the process through which they have emerged as leaders, the kind of issues they raised in the assembly and problems / obstacles (if any) they have faced while entering into the politics. These questions have been studied in the context of women legislators of UP Assembly. Ninety-five women legislators were identified in all 13 assembly elections till 1996.

Out of the 95 women legislators, 52 are those who have represented their constituencies more than once and some of them as many as seven times.

On the basis of the facts collected about the 95 women legislators and the seven strategically case studies, the findings on the main questions are presented below.
7.8.1 Background of the Women Legislators:

(i) Out of the 95 women legislators, 58 are from the General category, 24 are from Scheduled Caste (SC) and 13 from Other Backward Caste (OBC). Mostly, the SC women, (about 85%) belonged to the Chamar / Jatav and Passi castes. This shows that Chamaras / Jatavas and Passies are more developed among SCs than the other 58 remaining castes. In fact, this may be due to the fact that the population of Chamaras and Jatavas in the state has been much higher than the other castes falling under SCs category. However, there has been no woman legislator from the ST category in the state of UP.

(ii) Age profile of women legislators reveals that the maximum women legislators, about 43 percent, entered into the assembly between the ages of 30-39 years. A comparative study of age profile of women legislators also reveals that the present (thirteenth) and (twelfth) assemblies have the highest representation of women belonging to the age group of 25-30 years. This indicates that more young women have been entering in to politics presently than in the past. The youngest women legislator is 25 years old in the assembly.

There were only three women legislators in the assembly above the age of 61 years who joined politics after their retirement from the
government service. There were other three women legislators (3.15%) in the age group of 56-60 years. Thus, bulk of the women legislators, forty-three (43.16%) was in the middle age group of 30-39 years. It is little surprising since women of this age bracket are not fairly free from the domestic and family responsibilities.

(iii) Out of 95 women legislators, only 6 were unmarried and 27 were widows at the time of their entry into the politics. Thus, majority (89) of women were married when they entered into the assembly and therefore, the marital status “married” appears to be relevant and necessary for all the women leaders.

(iv) The majority of women (53.6%) got married below the age of 17 years. In fact, four legislators were married as a child between the ages of 8-11 years, which is much below the prescribed norms. The 16 women legislators who were married as children belonged to the different castes, family background and educational levels (6 from SC, 4 from OBC and 6 from general caste). It is, therefore, may be said that the child marriage was common among all the castes and in all the parts of UP. Thus, the fact that marriage, ipso facto is a hindrance to pursue a political or any other career, stands refuted.
(v) It was found that marital status, age at marriage and the family size of women legislators have not created any direct hindrance in pursuing their political carrier, however, their capacity to participate in politics, to some extent, is related to their marital status and also on the relief she can get from the burden of bearing and rearing of children. Therefore, it may be said that though, the factors like; marital status, age at marriage and size of family to some extent determines the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of women legislators in their public participation, but these factors have no direct bearings on their political ambitions.

(vi) Educationally, it was found that women leaders have a variation from being illiterate to higher education. The numbers of graduates and post-graduates are the highest, more than half (52.63 percent). In the case of under-graduates (33.70 percent), the position is far better than non-matriculates. The women legislators with doctoral degrees were indeed only two. However, the numbers of graduates with professional degrees are significant about 18 percent. Thus women teachers and lawyers were increasingly joining politics than other professionals. Comparative analysis over the years shows
that there is a better representation of women having higher level of education in the present assembly than in the past.

(vii) The under-graduates are also significant in numbers, about 33.70 percent and under-matriculates are only 13.68 percent. This shows that lower or higher education does not appear to be very necessary for entering into the politics. Being an illiterate is also no bar for becoming leaders as a small fraction of women legislators are just illiterate. However, those who could not complete their graduation (under-graduates), many of them seem to be turning to the politics.

(viii) The education level of women legislators from SCs category is equally higher as of the other (General and OBC) castes. In fact, out of 24 women belonging to SCs category in the sample, 10 women (41.66%) are graduates and postgraduates and equal numbers are undergraduates. Only four women legislators (16.66%) are under matriculate.

(ix) The family size and caste factors do not seem to be related to their level of education as it could be expected. There are 20 women legislators (21.05%) those are graduates and postgraduates and having 4 to 6 children. They belonged to the different castes. However, out of
4 legislators having more than six children. 3 belonged to the SC category.

(x) The women legislators have come from various occupational groups. A substantial percentage accounting for about 58% have come from agriculture occupation. Next to agriculture, politics and social work have been the occupation of 28% women legislators. The other significant professions are teaching and lawyer, which have significant (18%) representation.

7.8.2 Emergence of women Legislators as Leaders:

(xi) Most of the women leaders in the present study belonged to the National political parties like Congress, Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These parties have been in power at one time or the other in the State of UP and most of them even at the Centre as well. Thus, the broader understanding and linkages are in the tune with the ideals of the senior party leaders and the emergence of women leadership, therefore, appears to have depended upon the party high command. The high command often made the choices of women candidates for nominating them to contest the elections. Therefore, the emergence of state level leadership is also a show off of the loyalty either to the past or the present leadership of the party high command.
(xii) Majority of women legislators who are seen to be actively engaged in politics have had someone from amongst her close relations who are in politics. Many women from the grassroots level are also coming up to the Legislatures. It is, therefore, pertinent to the question if large-scale participation of women in active politics really exists to elect their representatives to the legislative assemblies.

(xiii) Out of 95 women legislators in the present study, 48 women legislators about 50 percent were having strong family linkages that helped them to become leaders. They have come from the families where the father, brother and mother or husband was in active politics. In those cases, where women legislators came from what may be termed as political families, the familiar opposition / resistance to women entering in politics is almost non-existent.

(xiv) The factor that shows the significance of the background of their political career is their family linkages. The interest and understanding acquired through father, brother, husband and such other relations constitute the familial influence for women activists. In the sample, about 30 women legislators (31.58 percent) were married to persons who were political activists. Though they were elected in their individual capacities, their role was primarily supportive to their
husbands who had leading positions in the politics of their respective areas.

(xv) The inter-relationships of above variables have shown that widow succession has been very pervasive in the UP politics. Out of 27 widows in the sample, as many as 20 women (74%) were those who had been given tickets after the death of their husbands to fill in void. The widow succession has been without any other considerations than the husband’s death and therefore, no relationship does exist between their education, caste, family background and their emergence as leaders.

(xvi) The association between higher social 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 and in practical politics.

7.8.3 Role of Women Legislators:

(xvii) The women leaders have been playing a key role of linkages between the State and the people. Most of the general developmental works like water supply, schools, roads, electricity arrangements, etc. and also the various higher-level official works have
easily been completed under the influence of the women legislators. All most all the women legislators have been able to provide such general facilities for the society as a whole during their terms. The few women legislators could also get the developmental work done at large scale due to their position as ministers. Though, there have been only one or two such women legislators at a time.

(xviii) The role of scheduled caste women legislators for their own caste people has been in the form of social emulsion. Almost all of them have been demanding for the social justice in the legislature, at least for their own caste people. However, a joint action has never been seen in such cases. Their action is guided by the concerned party high command. Even if there is clear-cut case of social injustice, they do not dare to raise their voices against their party high command. Of course, they have some times proved to be as a mediator, to disperse the matter, between the government and the victims.

(xix) Another important role, which the scheduled caste women legislators seem to play is that they have been helping their community to get grants from the various governmental agencies for the development of infrastructure in their constituencies and for the social welfare activities.
(xx) Majority of the women legislators, fifty-five (about 58%) have been working, directly or indirectly for voluntary social organizations, which are engaged in the welfare activities and working for improving the living conditions of poor and oppressed class. They have been imparting training and education among them, which is ultimately increasing their household incomes. Some of them have been working for the rights and the welfare of SCs and STs, industrial workers and the government employees.

(xxii) It was also found that a segment of women legislators has been actively engaged in enhancing the education and residential facilities, self-employment, religious reforms, housing problems, water and sanitation problems, welfare activities for women, girls, poor, widows and person belonging to the SCs and STs. Besides, they have been working for the eradication of the social evils like dowry, illiteracy and child marriage.

(xxiii) Within the parties, there is a marked non-involvement of women in decision-making bodies. In Janata Dal, there is no woman member in Political Affairs Committee. The situation in the Left Parties is in no way better than that of Janata Dal. The Congress and
BJP members, however, did claim of active involvement of women legislators in the decision making within the party.

(xxiii) As regards the choice of candidates during elections, the candidates are generally decided by the male members and are passed on to the women members for ratification, though there are some exceptions. Female members are trusted with such responsibilities as launching an election campaign, holding meetings etc.

(xxiv) Even in the absence of political or decision making power within the parties, women are not cutting across party lines and uniting on issues, like violence and atrocities inflicted on women. The question of solidarity of women on the issue of political power is sidetracked in almost all conversations.

(xxv) Women members were not prone to frequent defections, with a few exceptions. Majority of them have stayed with their original party. In the present study only two cases have been observed wherein women break away and switched over to another party.

7.8.4 Women Participation in the Assembly Proceedings and Issue Raised:

(xxvi) The participation of women legislators in assembly proceedings is not so much determined by the gender factor as it is by
their numbers. Both men and women legislators are governed by certain set of rules and procedures. However, owing to their small numerical strength, women are in a disadvantaged position.

(xxvii) Moreover, the issue of participation acquires significance in the context of the coming in of the visual media to the house, visibility not in terms of being effective but to be effective. This is as true of women as men.

(xxviii) In the assembly, women legislators, by and large, cut across party lines and are united on issues relating to violence and atrocities committed against women. On other general issues, they often toe their party line. Sometimes, this is the case even when the issue is of violence or atrocity against a woman, but has happened in the constituencies of incumbent ministers or Chief minister, the women members from the ruling party take a stand more on party lines than by treating them as women’s issues.

(xxix) Women members are given a chance to speak on a variety of issues, which is determined by their respective parties depending on their interest and specialization. They do raise issues apart from women specific problems. The incidence and frequency of raising issues, moving resolutions and initiating discussions is, however,
linked both to the experiences of the woman member in terms of time as also her exposure to political activities from grassroots level.

(XXX) When women specific issues are raised, the attendance or non-attendance in Assembly is determined more by the ‘time’ i.e. pre-lunch or post-lunch) that is being allotted in the agenda of the day’s proceedings. Generally, the attendance is relatively thin in the post-lunch session and any issue which is being taken up in the post-lunch session is not well attended unless it is something ‘sensational’ or has already attracted the nation’s attention.

(XXI) Approximately all the respondents agreed to the suggestion of having time slots for women in a day’s agenda during each session both in terms of women members raising any issue as well as any member raising women specific issues.

Within the parties, women’s issues are categorized as social and not political issues to be dealt exclusively by women’s wing.

(XXII) Generally, it is observed that the party to which the woman belongs to determines the response of women legislators. The fact that women legislators of one political party were quite vociferous in expressing their discontent with their party can be traced to the structure and age of the Party itself. An infant party (in
terms of political parlance) has structural and organizational problems.

7.8.5 Problems Faced by the Women Legislators:

(333) Except one or two legislators, all have denied any difficulty or resistance to their entry in politics. During the course of interview held with them, two legislators, however, categorically said that their children initially were not happy and had objections to their entry in politics. Some of them have faced mild problems and also were manhandled during election campaign and other visits to their constituencies, as they have narrated some instances of violence inflicted to them during the interview.

(334) There were few instances where women legislators clearly pointed out that their children were reluctant and were not allowing them to join political life. One women legislator enter in to politics even after a gap of 21 years, though, she had sustained her interest all along. There were many other instances, where women were born into political families but could join politics only in their 30s and 40s, since they have to pursue their family duties.
(xxxv) Majority of them has to bear the double burden of carrying on their familial responsibilities as well as carrying out their political career.

( xxxvi) On the issue of financial constraints during elections women were not very forthright, they often responded by saying “Kisi Tarah se bo hi jata hai’ (it gets arranged somehow).

The analysis of above facts indicates that by and large, women are treated well on the floor of the house and to quote a male legislator ‘women have sobering effect on their male colleagues’. Thus, it may be concluded that most of the women legislators have not faced any difficulty in entering politics. Although, one or two of them have confirmed the initial mild resistance from their family, particularly from their children, but majority of women legislators have denied any hindrance from family or otherwise to their entry in to the politics and pursuing their political career further. On the face of it, it appears that women legislators faced no hindrance of any kind at the time of their entry into politics.

The case studies also indicate that the majority of women legislators have come from middle class family and significant number of legislators has family political history and linkages. The
general educational level among legislators has improved in comparison to their old counterparts. The women legislators have been playing multi-faceted role for the benefit of their own society and public at large. The SC leaders have been playing the role of emulsion of their society and extracting grants from governments for their welfare activities. The participation in the assembly, more or less is the function of their numerical strength. The women leaders have denied any hindrance in the entry to their political career.

7.9 Bearing on and the Examination of Concepts / Terms:

The meaning of a leader is “one who leads” the other people, groups or a community and expected to bind the community together in achieving the collective goal of social welfare. The findings of the present study suggest that the majority of the women legislators appear to lead their local groups of their own castes in particular and other social gatherings as well in general. The expectation of binding a community does not appear conclusive, however they have been helping the community for achieving the common goals of the welfare. The women leaders belong to SC category appear excelling in the political activity and advanced to
serve as guide of their own caste people. They have role in setting up the objectives of community welfare, facilitate, manipulation of means and impress upon the instrument of state action for implementation of various welfare policy and programmes for their community people. Majority of them seem to be ‘ideal typical’ leaders as conceptually characterised. Similarly, the women legislators from the general category have better presence felt as leader in their own society and public at large.

The elites are the people who have higher status / scores in the walk of life. They are superiors having power, organisation, influence and are held in the high esteem by the people. In the present study, women leaders have leadership position at various levels in political structure and in voluntary organisations. Majority of them are considered to be of high status in general social life. A few are considered superiors and have power to influence the decision making bodies and also have organisation to exercise power. These few would qualify to be held in high esteem by the people at large, but also by their own caste community people. Thus, a majority of women legislators in the present study would be said to be the elites of the society.
As incumbent of leadership position, the women legislators are expected to perform certain activities (roles) and to show a pattern of behaviour expected from them by virtue of occupying leadership position. It has been found that the women leaders have been largely working for the cause of their respective caste people. They accelerate the flow of grants, aid and various benefits from the State for their community's welfare. The women leaders are also channelising the State assistance through various organisations and helping their brethren to fight against atrocities and social discrimination by the other groups. It is thus implied that although the women leaders have been fulfilling expectations of the society to a limited extent, but this pattern of the behaviour is not expected by the society. Their own community people have perceptions that women leaders have not been fulfilling their expectations of neither of their brethren nor of the society but only acting as handpick tools of the few rich and powerful people of the society. Thus the ideal role performance of women legislators is limited as is expected of incumbents of that position.

Many women leaders appear to exercise influence but largely in their own community more so at the local level. Society at large.
feels least influenced and that too by few women leaders only. Therefore, only few women leaders from the high position in the political structure of society have greater influence on the people. Majority of them have limited influence on their local community. Thus it may be said that the majority of women leaders falls in the category of local influentials. A small segment of them have larger area of influence on the wider society and thinks of the outside world of their local area as well and this segment is to be considered as cosmopolitan influentials.

Those groups and individuals from whom the women legislators get inspiration in the process of becoming leaders, performing leadership roles and maintaining leadership positions have been known as their reference groups. In the present study, a large number considers the popular leaders of their own caste / area, as their role models. A significant number of women leaders, as the finding suggest, consider Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Jayaparakash Narayan and Indira Gandhi as their role model to draw inspiration and to lead their community. In the case of women leaders from SC category, majority of them consider Dr. Ambedkar as their role model.
The majority of women legislators agreed that women are not taken seriously on the floor of the house and therefore, they appear to be well aware of the gender discrimination. However, their lower participation in the assembly proceedings is not due to any gender discrimination but mainly due to their lower numerical strength in the assembly. The gender equality and gender equity seems to be almost non-existent in the party functioning as many important responsibilities in parties are not given to them because of their gender. The women are considered weak and vulnerable to physical assaults and therefore, generally not allowed to go alone in the election campaign in odd hours in their constituencies.

7.10 Bearing on the earlier findings:

Some studies (e.g. Bhatt (1995), Seth (1979) have indicated that the majority of the women leaders (M.Ps) belonged to the economically well-off families and a large segment of them belong to the higher middle class families. Bhatt study observed that women M.P. from general constituency had higher educational qualifications as compared to those elected from reserved constituencies. The present study also indicates that majority of women legislators belong to higher middle class family. However,
a significant proportion has also come from rural background and lower middle class families. The women legislators from reserved constituencies have better or equal educational qualifications than the legislators from general category. This is contrary to what Bhatt has observed in her studies. Parvathamma (1969) has also indicated that SC elites emerged from the better educational and middle categories and from the upper age group of 41-60 years. The findings of the present study are the same except that the larger group of legislators belongs to the age group of 30-39 years. Kumar & Dubey (1994) studied socio-economic conditions and other related issues like role of women M.Ps. in Parliament proceedings, their association with political parties, the hindrance faced by them and their involvement in electoral politics. They found that many women M.Ps. belong to families having political background and with support of their parents or spouses; they have established themselves in the organisation or party. Similar trend has been found in the present study as about 43 per cent of the sample have political family background / linkages and 74 per cent widows were those who had been given tickets after the death of their husbands to fill-in void. Bhatt (1995) has also indicated the
similar finding. Thus the earlier trends get confirmed that the women leaders are drawn from middle categories and majority of them has political linkages. A larger segment of women legislators appear to have the higher level of education among both SC and general category. A very small segment, almost negligible, of women leaders still remained illiterate. SC women leaders are drawn from various castes and among them the majority is from single caste, 'Chamar' / Jatav'. But the caste-wise distribution of the leaders corresponds almost directly to the proportion in the total population of SC. Thus, they appear to be representing their respective castes. Raj Bala (1997) has made similar observation in Haryana.

Important roles of elites in transforming of the society was visualised in general in developing countries like India, (Bottomore, 1964), and of the SC elites in particular, (Sachchidanand, 1974). The present study shows that women legislators are largely bringing in the facilities extended by the State for their societies by acting as linkages and facilitator. They are focussing on the education of the future generation through various voluntary organisations. However, it depends largely on the channelisation of resources from
the States which entirely again depended upon the capability, capacity, experience, influence of women legislators.

The functions of a leader is to lead and attract the followers to create unity among the masses have also been examined. A leader is expected to perform four main functions, i.e. (a) the determination of objectives, (b) manipulation of existing means, (c) control of instrument of action and (d) stimulation of coordinated action. In India, caste is variable in executing any of these functions, particularly in case of SC. Sachchidanand (1974) also pointed out that the SC elites are not effective in performing the general function of a leader. The above characteristics have not been observed in the present study; rather it is reversed. The majority of women legislators are seen performing their role as leader and they are very effective in their functioning. This has been found among both leaders SC and general category as well. The BSP factor seems to be brought a tremendous confidence among women leaders belonging to SC category in UP. A few of them have able to manipulate the existing means of state political power, and have control over the instrumentalities of actions.
The earlier studies done by Bhatt, Kumari, Kaushik and Seth regarding the participation of women politician in the Parliamentary proceedings and debates on bills have found that women Parliamentarian have very low participation. Bhatt has indicated that this is due to mainly their low numerical strength. In the present study, it is found that the participation of women legislators in assembly proceedings, particularly in the debates on various bills and resolutions has been very low. However, it was also mainly due to their low numerical strength and not because of any gender discrimination. All the male and female legislators are governed by the certain set of rules and procedures to participate in the assembly debates. Women are at disadvantageous position due to their lower number.

Regarding the issues, women legislators have been raising a variety of general issues and not specific to the women cause. Kumari and Bhatt have made similar observations. While Kumari in her study found that women face social and cultural barriers while entering into the politics, but in the present study, no such indication has emerged as almost all the women legislators have denied any
hindrance of social or cultural type while entering into the active politics.

7.11 Problems and Limitations of the Present Study:

Arranging the timings for meeting with women legislators for their interview proved to be an extremely challenging and arduous task in terms of their availability and also willingness to co-operate. Persistent and continuous efforts therefore, had to be made to contact them. With the selected timing women legislators, personal interviews were held. This did not prove to be an easy job. The written response from them to filled in questionnaires has also not been encouraging. However, presumably due to the paucity of time owing to a hectic schedule, only a few women legislators sent written responses in the first round. Then many repeated reminders were sent to them and after great persuasions, only 40 women sent reply to the queries.

One of the major constraints of the present study has been the limit availability of the women legislators. It is merely a qualitative exercise if is geared toward generating a debate on the issue of women politi participation and intends to raise a number of questions, rather than prov answers.
Moreover, as the majority of women legislators expressed their inability to send a written response to our questionnaire, collecting information on specific issues became extremely tardy. This was worsened by the paucity of literature (specifically) on women legislators. Although a vast amount of literature, and one that is constantly growing, is readily available on women, no systematic and comprehensive studies have been done on women legislators. The Who's Who available with the Assemblies and Lok Sabha Secretariats may help to draw a biographical profile of women legislators but it does not give such information as how and when the legislators got involved in politics, the problems and constraints faced by them in political career / life etc., which are more crucial for the analysis. Although, the Secretariats have now started segregating information on gender basis, by and large the available information and documented proceedings are not gender-specific. Further, even this information was not easily accessible.

Even the Vidhan Sabha Secretariats attached to both the houses of Assembly have just begun to segregate and document their information on gender basis. Although this paucity of literature specifically on women legislators did make our task difficult to a certain extent, it is in
fact, provided with a challenging opportunity to explore an area that has hitherto been by and large left untouched.

The present study has taken note of women legislators / leaders in the UP Assembly only. This remained limited to analyse their socio-economic, educational background, to some extent the factors and processes of emergence of leaders, their roles and performance within their positional structure and their participation in Assembly proceedings, the issues they raised and to the exploration of factors and relationships. Another limitation of the present study has been the very poor and unclear response to the queries from the respondents (women legislators). The systematic availability of information on gender basis is also not readily available in the Vidhan Sabha Secretariat and other published literature.

The network of all women leaders in the wider complex and within the local context, therefore, could not be dealt with since the study focussed upon the UP Assembly only. There is a need of the detailed analysis to depict upon the linkages of women leaders in the local social structure and the wider political structure. The further study may include all women politician in the State of UP at various levels, i.e. panchayat, district and state together and should
draw the comparison and their effectiveness as women leader with male leaders. Systematic qualification of factors contributing in emergence of leaders, counting effectively their roles and depth and quality of their participation in the assembly proceedings particularly in debates and discussions remains to be attempted exhaustively.

7.12 Suggestions:

(i) Although, criminalisation of politics appears to hinder the entry of women into political processes, it was felt that increase in the number of women in the political process and decision-making bodies will help in countering this problem.

(ii) It was opined that an analysis based on the continuous interlinking of categories of 'class' and 'gender' would be more fruitful than treating either of the two exclusively.

(iii) Women must be brought in from the grassroots level and should be given position of power in the decision-making processes.

(iv) There should be an increase in the numerical strength of women at different levels from lower to higher – the concept of women as a critical mass.
(v) Political training should be imparted to both men and women legislators. There is an urgent need to create a political will to change the attitude of people and process and not merely ‘politics as social work’.

(vi) Education plays an important role as far as entry of women legislators into politics is concerned. Women have to be educated so as to bring them into the mainstream of national politics.

(vii) At the level of assembly, women must not be restricted to the realm of ‘party politics’ – but must involve themselves with the various committees of the assembly as well.

(viii) Majority of women legislators has suggested that there should be 30 per cent reservation for women in the assembly and in Parliament. This will not only increase their numbers but also give the opportunity to women to fight the discrimination against them.