PREFACE

There is growing consciousness to recognize women's autonomy, and their capacity to act as full citizens. They have to be looked as change agents and important contributors to the national development. Their role in social, political and economic context has to be understood in right earnest. The forces operating in the society which ghettoized women need to be recognized and refuted, and not camouflaged.

This study is an attempt to understand the role played by women in political arena in Goa. It is observed that there are inter-regional as well as intra-regional variations in the position and role of women. Various factors such as class, caste, religious affiliations, cultural milieu, the existing patriarchal practices and their diverse histories play crucial role in determining the position of women in a given region. It is therefore necessary to have specific studies on women in different regions in order to build up an adequate theoretical basis. Such an attempt would also assist in developing strategies for combating the forces operating against participation of women.

The political and social life in Goa has given rise to various questions regarding the existence and nature of patriarchal system in a post-colonial society. The pervasive influence of Portuguese rule which by and large showed a positive attitude towards women is noteworthy. Further, the small size of the state has reduced the asymmetries between the representatives and represented, compelling the former to heed the needs of women. This has improved the standard of living of women in Goa, especially in the fields of health and education. However a puzzling paradox is observed where the lot of women is changed due to the welfare provisions and progressive legislation, yet the things have remained the same. This is because the traditional institutions, family, community and the state, are entrapped into the hierarchy of power relations.

Though patriarchy has to be deconstructed, it should not be viewed as a ghost that cannot be fought back. Much depends on the forces operating against patriarchy in a given society. These forces include education, legal safeguards, development of scientific outlook, enlightenment of men, and awareness of their own potentials and capacities by women. Has the Goan society progressed in this terms and to what extent women are benefited by this progress, what role they ascribe for themselves, are they able to play effective role at different levels and actively participate in
different spheres of life, these and such other questions forms the major concern of this study. It looks at women as freedom fighters, voters, leaders and activists. It also studies the role played by the state to promote the well-being of women in Goa. Does the state strive to fight back the forces of patriarchy, does it extend its role beyond merely removing the barriers of equality, and comply to provide ‘special’ treatment to women, forms an important part of this study.

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