CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

`Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the very minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. This ought to be the natural condition of things.'

M. GANDHI

Recent decades have witnessed a critical emphasis on increasing role of women in the socio-economic development of the country. The changing political discourse has contributed to the recognition that women must play a greater role in political affairs. This has lead to significant repercussions in social, economic and political domains, and has also altered the parameters of political practices. Today a strong opinion is building up in favour of increasing women’s involvement in the decision making processes of the Government. They need to be involved in the problems of national development. They should achieve the desired goals of equality and opportunity with men and participation in developmental programmes in order to make their full contribution in the larger areas of peace and development.

It is observed that there are inter-regional as well as intra-regional variances in the position and role played by women. It is the outcome of interplay of large number of factors in any given society. These include the level of development, flow of modernization, access to education, impact of colonial legacy, class and caste variations, and the existing cultural milieu. However in any society women suffer discrimination, in varying degrees. The major cause for the unequal treatment is the existence of patriarchy, which is intrinsic in the formation and changes in the various factors that influences women’s position. Patriarchal system is characterized by three conditions. They are:

1. It is a social and political order in which women are thought to be naturally, automatically, inevitably best suited to certain tasks, like listening, caring, taking shorthand, etc. While men are thought to be naturally inclined to perform other tasks

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like talking, exploring, planning, ploughing, welding, fighting, etc. Thus a patriarchal society rests on a sexual division of labour.

(ii) It is a social and political order in which the things that males do are deemed of greater social value, more 'productive' more 'serious' and more 'skilled', than the things that females do.

(iii) In a society that has remained patriarchal, the people who perform the allegedly more valued, masculine tasks are deemed to have the responsibility of looking after, protecting and controlling the people who perform the less valued, feminine tasks!

Thus patriarchy is more than a sexual division of labour arranged hierarchically. It is a system of control of one sector of society over another, and this control is exercised in all fields - educational, employment or with regard to distribution of benefits of science and technology. Maithreyi Krishna Raj gives five different ways of how this control is reflected in the society:

1. Women workers are treated unequally. Thus there is sexual segregation, wage discrimination and unequal burden of reproduction.
2. There is less endowment for women, in terms of education, technology and health facilities.
3. There is subordination of women through violence.
4. It includes media’s negative portrayal of women
5. The support systems for women prove traps for them. Thus the family or state functions within patriarchy.

To bring about positive change, there is a need of transformative perspective on any question that women and men must take by looking specifically at how something affects women and challenging how gender is socially constructed. Thus, it is not fight against men, but against patriarchy. The problem is not really one about bodies, but about the identities or rather how the relationship between the two is conceived. Thus women’s Question should occupy the focal position.

To understand women’s Question there is a need to have a deeper insight into certain contradictions. These finer debates have time and again drawn the attention of the feminists and the scholars alike. One of the major paradoxes involved is, should woman be treated as similar to man or should she be differentiated from him? Also,
are women to be categorized as disadvantaged group, or are there power relations between women? These and such other contradictions are centered around two major dimensions: the first refers to the way in which different factors such as wealth, occupation, education, power, skills etc are distributed in the population. The second refers to the way in which individuals differentiated by these criteria are related to each other within a system of groups and categories. Thus ‘difference’ becomes a relational concept experienced relationally in terms of political discrimination, inequalities of power and forms of domination. These paradoxes need to be given due recognition.

\section*{Similarity v/s Difference}

There is an increasing demand that women should be treated on an equal footing with men. They should be given equal opportunities, and equal share in possession of various power resources, such as personal wealth, assets, land, skills, education, information, knowledge, social status, positions, leadership, etc. However, women also require to be differentiated from men so as to correct the historical wrongs. They have been denied and deprived of opportunities for ages. Even though, now they are provided with legal and constitutional safeguards, little else have changed. There are no alterations in social institutions, in division of labour, in the ideologies that support the division of labour, and the existing power structures. Thus equal treatment and equal access to opportunities actually may lead to inequalities as it is undifferentiated by sex. Thus the concept of equality becomes problematic. The procedural equality has to be differentiated from material equality. Procedural equality involves the requirement that ‘likes be treated alike’ and the idea that women are not fundamentally different from men. While material equality is realizable only by recognizing, when it is appropriate to do so, that there are differences between men and women. The material notion of equality emphasizes that the present material circumstances arise from a history of past discrimination. There is a need to acknowledge that despite the removal of barriers, women are still not at an equal starting point and that some ‘affirmative action’ is necessary. Thus equal

\footnotetext[5]{Ibid., p. 5.}
opportunity is necessary but not a sufficient condition for equality. There is a need to create the prerequisites to help women to assert themselves. Formal equality can be brought in through a stroke of legislation, but for equality to be substantial, women need to be positively discriminated from men. To be similar they need to be treated differently. Thus two very different sets of conceptions with respect to women have to be reconciled. The first is, women are intrinsically ‘similar’ to men, and therefore the two genders have to be treated in the same way. The second concept emphasizes that women are ‘different’ from men and that this difference necessitates separate treatment for the two genders. Thus protective approach constructs the woman as ‘different’ and the equal opportunities approach emphasizes on the woman to be equal to a man.

- **Individual v/s Role as mother, wife and daughter**

Women are more looked upon as members of the family rather than as individuals. They are expected to combine in themselves roles of mother, wife and daughter. This has resulted in strengthening of the existing sexual division of labour due to such hegemonic ideologies, concepts and behaviour produced about women. Women are confined to the home bound activities and domesticity is seen as the natural role for them. There responsibilities and interests remain limited only to their family and friends. As it is rightly pointed out, ‘Housewifization of women steals from women their own resources, which they need for their sustenance. It destroys the social networks and thus atomizes them.’

The division of labour leads to gender typing and compartmentalization. This differentiation results in discrimination and institutionalization of such discriminatory behaviour. ‘There takes place progressive elaboration of an ideology which rationalizes the shift from differentiation to discrimination and institutionalizes it by means of customs, rituals and religious perceptions.’ These roles of wife/mother/daughter, assigned to woman, progressively tie her down to the home, which reduces her chances of wider participation in the economic, political or religious arenas. With the gender difference, women’s lesser participation is taken for granted.

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This results in reducing employment opportunities for women, and their employment is accorded low payment and low status. Even within the family they are often accorded low status. They are central to the family because they bear children, they take care of the household, provide the basic services to the family besides cooking. Yet majority of women are under-fed, overworked, under-estimated and least cared for. In these roles, most of their work goes ‘invisible’. Besides, a gender bias is observed where even the policy documents on education, income, and employment argue that women are not autonomous decision-makers and their decisions are influenced by their husband/father or son. Therefore the policies are made taking family into consideration, assuming that the benefit will trickle down to women from the family. There is a need of ‘role definition’ at the individual as well as societal level. It is necessary to challenge and not confirm these notions. Woman also requires to be recognized as an individual and not merely as wife or daughter or mother.

**As a Subaltern Group v/s Not a Monolithic Bloc**

Women form a marginalized group. However women’s experiences are structured by caste, class, race/ethnicity, age, etc., and so on, and it is therefore necessary to deconstruct the category. It is necessary to acknowledge that there are relations of power between women. However while accepting that ‘women’ is not an uniting category, it is suggested that it is a nonetheless the unifying force. Thus the heterogeneity of conditions of being a woman results in differences but not necessarily in divisions. There are commonalties of experiences. Women belonging to different groups may have individual experiences, however these experiences are the result of patriarchies, which are intrinsic to the very formation of the categories of class or caste. Thus despite caste, class experiences that exist among them at individual levels, women can be identified as also subjected to subordination by common culturally defined and culturally enforced patterns of restrictions. Thus to understand women’s Question it is necessary to understand and synthesize both these strands - the importance of individual experiences and the commonalties of experiences. There is a need to argue for both the universal and the particular - universal particularity, and

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8 Mayur, Rashmi (1997), ‘Women continue to lag behind,’ The Navhind Times, 8 (March), p. 5.
9 Selvy Thiruchandran, (1997), Ideology, Caste, Class and Gender, Bangalore, New Delhi: Vikas, p. XI
visualize women as collective singularity.10 ‘Life may be shaped by multiplicity of differences, differences which may be perceived categorically but lived relationally.’11

- **Beneficiaries v/s Human Resource**

  Women are often looked upon as targets for development. There is a need to look at them as important participants as well. A difference has to be drawn between practical needs and strategic needs of women. They may be looked upon as beneficiaries in matter of practical needs, like food, clothing, etc. However they also have ‘felt needs’. The capacities and potentials of women need to be properly tapped. The strategic needs of women are important as they question the existing gender division of labour, the ideological biases and the patriarchal functioning of the society at large. Women should be seen not as ‘outside’ the model but should be considered as an ‘integral’ part of development. Thus welfare state should not be just a set of services, it has also to be a set of ideas about society, about family and about women who have a centrally important role to play in it.12

**Approaches to Understand Status of Women**

The status of women in a society is the true index of its cultural, social and political levels. It is one of the most important criteria for assessing the progress attained by a particular society. The status of women is co-related to the participating rights and obligations of women in managing society. The status of women in a given society can be understood with the help of four different approaches.

1) **Demographic Indicators**

  It can be assessed with the help of demographic indicators. The variables such as sex ratio, fertility and mortality rates, life expectancy, educational level, health, female work participation can give the overall picture of women’s relative standing vis-a-vis men. This is a traditional approach of assessing status of women and is useful when used in combination with other approaches.

11 Ibid., p. 88.
2) Level of Political Participation

The status of women can be examined by the level of their political participation, their representation and share in decision-making bodies. Higher the level of participation, more are the possibilities of initiation and implementation of policies in favour of women, thus further raising their status. It is observed that political participation of women is dismally low in decision-making bodies world over. An international study shows that women hold just 11.7% of all the seats in Parliaments around the world, and only 7.1% are headed by women.13

There are various reasons for low participation of women:

- The existence of gender division of labour which limits women role to the domestic sphere, while extends men’s role to the public world.
- The cultural socialization which views women as being socialized into feminine and non-competitive roles that do not accord with political activity. It upholds the notion that politics is a competitive activity and hence it is meant for men. Thus while understanding gender in politics it is necessary to realize the politics of gender.
- Women usually lack resources like education, employment, social class, political experience, lack of skills, which reduces the bargaining power of women.
- The reluctance of political parties to field women candidates on winnable seats, and failure to mobilize women also affects women’s entry in politics.
- A broad-base political participation of women has been severely limited due to various traditional factors such as caste, religion, feudal attitudes and family status. The behavioral code imposed on women by these factors adversely affect women’s movements, restricting their role within the four walls of the house. As a result women have been left on the periphery of political life.
- Increasing violence in society has also impaired women from contesting elections. Women cannot compete effectively with men in crimes and gangsterism.14 The sexual abuse and fear of character assassination also hampers women’s participation in politics.

13 'Only 7% parliamentarians world-wide headed by women,’ (1997), Herald, 14 (Feb).
3) Impact of Developmental Programmes

The status of women can be measured by studying their involvement in development. This approach has been widely used in developing countries. It emphasizes on the extent to which women have been assimilated in the nation’s developmental programmes and the impact of developmental policies on women. With globalization most of the developing countries have gone for Structural Adjustment Programme. This has resulted in rise in prices, the substantial cuts in public expenditure, privatization of state enterprise, devaluation of currency which has worst hit the women.(refer Table 1.1) It has pushed back the already marginalized groups which include poor women. The purchasing power of the households have declined while the economic burden on women has increased. Thus development is viewed by some feminists as a new project of western patriarchy and is called ‘mal-development’. 'While gender subordination and patriarchy are the oldest forms of oppression, they have taken new and more violent forms through the project of development.' 15 Jill Cottrell views that women, in addition to fighting against age old discriminatory practices inflicted upon them by male dominated societies, now find

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of Structural Adjustment Programme on Women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cut in food subsidy and increased food price</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Cut in social expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Retrenchment of workers in formal/organized sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Privatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Surplus supply of women labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Increased productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Incentives on assets (land, capital etc.)</td>
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themselves pitted against new challenges posed by economic and development forces. They are likely to be subjected to even harsher conditions of survival under the structural adjustment programmes imitated by many developing countries. Thus women have lost ground relative to men as development has proceeded.

4) Directly confronting the issues that affect women

The status of women in a given society can also be assessed by directly confronting the issues affecting women. Women suffer from violence, though the degree may differ from society to society. This violence may take the form of rape, sexual abuse, prostitution, trafficking, wife battering, sexual harassment at work place, violence in the family, obscenity, female circumcision, etc. The increasing violence against women has led women to organize themselves. Thus the research interest in studying women has extended from the concern with women in decision-making to the women's struggle in other arenas. Two trends have emerged regarding question of women's problem. (i) One which locates the definition of the problem in the experiences of women involved in organizations and groups, mainly urban based, drawing their support from middle class segment of the society. It looks at issues which are specific to women. (ii) The second trend draws from the experiences of women in mass struggle where the thrust of struggle has been towards issues concerning both male as well as female of the society. The study of the degree of violence, number of issues, and quality and intensity of women's struggle can reflect on status of women in the society.

Empowerment of Women

The above approaches not only reflect on the status of women in a given society, but also suggest strategies to empower women. Empowerment of women is defined in various ways. Moore defines it as power to make decision or resist decisions made by others which affect them. According to Margaret Stacey and

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17 Patel, Sujata (1991), 'Women's Spaces within Mass Struggle,' Economic and Political Weekly, 5-12 (January), p. 34.

18 Moore, Henrietta op. cit., 85.
Marion Price the notion undoubtedly has to do with the ability of an individual or group to influence the course of events in the direction they desire even against resistance by others.\textsuperscript{19} Empowerment thus refers to development of skills and abilities in women to decide upon, and undertake actions which they believe are essential for their well-being. There are four components to empowerment:\textsuperscript{20} (i) economic independence, (ii) possession of knowledge, (iii) self image and (iv) autonomy. The two important dimensions involved are (a) the extent of control they have over their personal lives and (b) what role they perform in the economic and political arenas, and how effectively they play it.

Empowerment of women demands:

- Affirmative action for women’s equal participation at all levels of decision making.
- Mainstreaming women’s perspectives and women’s issues in all policies, and plans.
- Identifying women’s needs and priorities while framing development programmes and encouraging direct involvement of women in such programmes.
- Effective utilization of human capital potential of women.
- Support to women NGOs in addressing women’s issues and rights.
- Sensitization and advocacy for gender just society.

Thus empowerment of women emphasizes on creation of environment which will promote equality between women and men.

**Beijing Conference: A Move Towards Women’s Empowerment**

The fourth United Nations World Conference of women held at Beijing in 1995 lobbied actively on several macro issues of concern to women all over the world. The decision to hold the conference flowed primarily from the momentum generated by the three earlier women’s conferences and the United Nations Decade for women(1976-1985), which gave international expression to and support for


national women's movement around the globe. These movements had a profound effect on the recent cycle of world conferences, from the children's Summit in New York, where the special needs of the girl-child were emphasized; to Rio, where the Earth Summit articulated the pressing need for recognition of women's central role in sustainable development; to Vienna, where special emphasis was put on the equal rights of women; to Copenhagen, which underscored the central role that women have to play in combating poverty; to Cairo and, later, Istanbul, where women's right to control over decisions affecting their health, families and homes was affirmed. All of these conferences prepared the way for the Beijing Conference, helping to break new ground in the struggle for equal rights and a central role for women in decision-making at all levels of society. The Beijing Declaration embodied the commitment of the international community to the advancement of women and implementation of the Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. The action plan set time-specific targets, committing nations to carry out concrete actions in such areas as health, education, decision-making and legal reforms with the ultimate goal of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in both public and private life. It emphasized on enhancement of social, economic and political empowerment of women, improvement of their health and their access to relevant education and promote their reproductive rights.

Beijing conference was of strategic importance:-

- Firstly, it emphasized the crucial link between the advancement of women and the progress of society as a whole. It clearly reaffirmed that societal issues must be addressed from a gender perspective in order to ensure sustainable development.
- Secondly, it passed on the message that the issues affecting women were global and universal.
- Thirdly, it drew the attention and sought commitment of the governments to promote women's issues. Governments and UN agreed to promote the 'mainstreaming' of a gender perspective in policies and programmes.
- Fourthly, and more importantly, it strengthened the belief that women of the world can reach to consensus on major issues affecting women, keeping aside their 'differences'.

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National Scenario
The Constitution of India assures the women in India, the right to equality, freedom, dignity and justice. Art. 14. guarantees justice - social, economic and political as well as equality before law, and ensures non discrimination on the basis of sex. Art. 15(3) empowers the State to make special provisions for the promotion of the welfare and development of women. The directive principles of state policy also strive to give equality to women, emphasizing equal pay for equal work, uniform civil code, etc. Various laws are made to protect women from exploitation, there are anti-rape laws and anti-dowry laws. The state has assumed for itself the welfare function and has provided various schemes for women. In spite of all these efforts, there remains a glaring difference between rhetoric and reality.

The demographic variables indicates that women is the most disadvantaged group in India. As per the all India Census 1991, the female sex ratio is 927, the literacy rate is 39.29% and work participation of women is 22.3%. Women constitute only 14.8% of the total workforce in the organized sector, and 7.5% jobs in the central government. Besides, a large amount of work of women is regarded as ‘invisible’. The work carried out by a housewife is never considered by the statisticians. Thus equality in professional sphere is a myth. Only 2.3% of women are in administrative and managerial positions. Poor working conditions, low wages, lack of unionism, and dismissal on flimsy grounds such as marriage and childbirth, have further worsened the conditions of women workers. However the policy makers as well as social analysts have neglected to examine the implications of the demographic trends.

The political participation of women in India is very low. On an average, women’s representation in Lok Sabha, from 1952 to 1996, has been 6% and in Rajya Sabha is 10.3 %. The representation of women at state legislative assemblies is also very poor. Thus there exists a large gap between symbolism and actuality. The 73rd and 74th Amendments, which have enforced 33% reservation for women in local government, has been a major attempt to fill in this gaps. However whether women will be able to avail of this opportunity would largely depend on the availability of other enabling structures in the society.
### TABLE 1.2

WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT 1952-1996

<table>
<thead>
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<th>YEAR</th>
<th>LOK SABHA</th>
<th>RAJYASABHA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>%OF WOMEN</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MPs</td>
<td>MPs</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<td></td>
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Average (Source: Fact File; Sep. 1997; Seminar; 457; pg. 51)

### TABLE 1.3

Women Representation in State Legislatures 1952-1997 (% of women MLAs)

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<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Fact File; Sep. 1997; Seminar; 457; pg. 51)
'The policy of economic development which relies heavily on high technology, multinational collaborations, export promotion and encouragement to private sector has led to higher degree of concentration of capital and extremely exploitative relations of production having serious implications for women.'\(^{21}\) In order to effect the advancement and empowerment of women and bring about improvement in their status the government has floated various schemes for women like, Indira Mahila Yojna, Development of Women and children in Rural Areas, Mahilla Samriddhi Yojna, etc. However, these superfluous attempts cannot hide the drudgery of women in India. The lack of access to land, capital and technology has further worsen the position of women in India. These resources are crucial because they can enhance one’s potentials to contribute to the development of society. They can also improve the quality of life. Land is crucial determinant of economic well-being, social status and political power. Therefore when titles are distributed by the government, they should also be given in the name of women. 'There is substantial evidence that economic resources in the hands of male household members often do not benefit female members in equal degree. Independent ownership of such resources, particularly land, can be of crucial importance in promoting the well-being and empowerment of women.'\(^{22}\) There is need of improvement of dejure access to land by women and access to credit.

There is evidence of increasing violence against women in India. Violence erupts in the form of Sati, rape, dowry, alcoholism, sexual exploitation at workplace, the derogatory treatment in media, etc. According to the study of National Commission for Women about 50% working women in the country have faced mental or physical harassment and discrimination. According to another survey a woman is harassed by her husband and in-laws every 50 minutes and 17 dowry deaths are reported everyday.\(^{23}\) A report stated that from January to April 1998, 3,832 women were raped in different parts of the country and 5,923 were molested.(these are the cases registered, a large number of cases go unregistered).\(^{24}\) The Union Home Minister, Lal Khrishna Advani revealed in Lok Sabha that 1,95, 436 people were arrested for committing offences against women in 1996. From these, only 32,362

\(^{24}\) Bhatnagar, Rakesh (1998), 'Violence against women,' The Times of India, 4 (August).
were convicted by the court of law, 1,63,074 of the accused were left off for any reason including benefit of doubt or want of evidence against them. These problems of women have given rise to women's struggle and growth of various autonomous women's groups. These groups like Saheli, Maitrini, Manushi, Vimochana, Chingari, have the nomenclatures which suggests women's solidarity. They take up various issues and follow varied strategies. The role played by these groups is important as they can hold the government, and society at large, accountable for the commitments made for the betterment of women. They have credentials to be heard as women's voice for better society.

Thus women form the disadvantaged group in India, in all areas, social, economic or political. They continue to remain almost invisible in the power structures. Various reasons can be attributed to the neglect of women's question in India:

- The urban middle class bias among the planners, academics, political parties, and trade unions alike.
- Ignorance of the diversity and plurality that characterizes woman's roles.
- Problems and priorities across classes, communities and religions.
- Influence of theories of social change and development and intellectual tools borrowed from west which are inappropriate for an understanding of a complex society like India's.
- Failure of women's movement to articulate the problems of all classes of women.

There is a need of implementing drastic measures to improve women's position in India. There is need of involving women in playing a significant role in the affairs of the state. They should participate in decision-making and contribute to solving the problems of national development.

A striking feature which requires to be noted is that though overall status of women in India is low, it varies from state to state. Within the Indian sub-continent there are variations in the status of women, diverging according to cultural milieu, family structures, class, caste, property rights and morals. Also different picture of

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25 Ibid.
26 Mazumdar, Vina (1985), 'Emergence of Women's Question in India and Role of Women's Studies,' Occasional paper, No. 7, New Delhi: Centre for Women's Study.
women may emerge from its prescriptive section and the core section and there may be dichotomy between the two in the same region.\textsuperscript{28} For example, the overall literacy rate in Kerala is 90% with 86% female literacy and has a matrilineal tradition, yet the representation of women in state legislative assembly is much lower than in Rajasthan where women live far more restricted lives in aggressively patriarchal families.\textsuperscript{29} Similarly, in the state of Manipur, which has a tradition of women playing a dominant role in family and community, the political participation of women is very low. For that matter, even the caste hierarchies influence the status of women. The upper caste women are more likely to be restricted within the private realm, mainly because the patriarchal hold is more strong in upper caste families, while on the other hand the schedule caste women are more prone to societal violence. Studies need to be conducted to understand the variance in the position of women and to explore ways and means to bring women in the mainstream of political helm. More of such studies will help in comparative evaluation and building up strategies for increasing participation of women. The present study looks at women’s participation through the case study of Goa.

**Women, Political Power And The State In Goa**

Goa was liberated from Portuguese rule in 1961 and became the 25\textsuperscript{th} state of India in 1987. It has an area of 3701 sq. km. It is divided into two Districts, North Goa and South Goa, and has 11 Talukas. The total population of the state, as per the census 1991, was 1169793. The sex ratio is 967 females for 1000 males. The total literacy in the state is 75.5%, male literacy is 83.64% while female literacy is 67.09%. The urban literacy for females is 73.38%, while the rural literacy is 62.87%. Goa has one primary school for every 2.9 sq. km, one secondary school for every 9.36 sq. Km, and one higher secondary school for every 60.68 sq. Km, the highest for any state in India. The life expectancy in Goa is 66.6% as against 54.7% for all India. Goa has good transport system and communication network. The villages in Goa have sufficient supply of electricity and water, and even telephones have reached to these villages. Work participation of women reflects that they are more employed in

\textsuperscript{28} Desai Neera & Krishna Raj, Maithereyi, op. cit., p. 39.

primary sector, as agricultural labourers, and in tertiary sector which refers to food processing, pig rearing, fishing, cashew industry etc. Goa is a coastal area, and one of the main occupations of Goans is fishing. Women are employed in this sector which remains largely unorganized.

The position of women in Goa is better than their counterparts in the neighbouring states of Karnataka or Maharastra. The literacy ratio of women in Goa is comparatively high, 67.09%. While there is lot of discussion and debates going on to introduce Uniform Civil Code in the country, in Goa the Uniform Civil Code that already exists, has placed Goan women in a far better position than their counterparts elsewhere in India. Since Goa is small there are wider employment opportunities for women. Today women in Goa are proud of the fact that they have achieved some degree of equality with men. They receive a better treatment in the society and have access to higher education. The right to inheritance granted to women, on par with men, ensures them a greater measure of social security.

However very few women have appeared on political scene in Goa. Only 8 women have so far been elected to the Goa’s legislative assembly ever since the first elections in 1963. Ms Urminda Mascarenhas was the first women elected to the legislative assembly in the elections held in 1963. She was fielded by United Goans Party. The other women elected to various elections to legislative assembly were Ms L Miranda, Ms Shashikala Kakodkar, Ms Farrel Furtado, Ms Fatima D’Sa, Ms Sangita Porob, Ms Victoria Fernandes and Nirmala Sawant. Ms Sanyogita Rane is the only woman to have represented Goa in Parliament. Ms Shashikala Kakodkar, has achievements which requires mention. She is the only women candidate of MGP.
TABLE 1.5

Representation of women in the Goa Legislative Assembly (1963-1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years/terms of Assembly</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Percentage of Females of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963-67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-72</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-77</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-84</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-89</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3(nominated)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-94</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-99</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Compiled from the Goa Legislative Assembly records)

(Maharastrawadi Gomantak Party), who has been elected to the legislative assembly. She has represented three different constituencies, and has been elected to the assembly for six times. She was the first women minister and later the first women chief minister of Goa. The highest number of women candidates were elected in 1994 elections. They were four women, three of whom had short tenure as ministers.

The most important cause for low political representation of women in Goa is the failure of the political parties in motivating them to take active part in politics. Political parties routinely exclude women from decision-making positions, resist nominating them as candidates, and deny them adequate campaign support. A close look at the membership of political parties reflects that Congress party has been able to attract more women towards it. It has its separate wing for women. It has been fielding more than one woman candidate in elections. The regional party, Maharastrawadi Gomantak Party, though dominated by a woman leader, Ms Shashikala Kakodkar, for six consecutive years, has been gender blind.

On the social front, women in Goa enjoy more social mobility. The trend of late marriages give ample opportunities to a woman to have access to higher education, go for a job (which gives some economic independence), and develop her extra curricular interests. Further, the trend of nuclear families, with two to three children (in 1996 the birth rate was only 17.82%) has reduced drudgery of household responsibilities. Also, women in the family are consulted on important matters.
Though violence against women is less as compared to other parts of the country, women in Goa are victims of violence. On an average 8 to 13 rapes per annum are reported to the police in Goa. The major crime against women committed is domestic torture, and the causes for this is greed for dowry and the scourge of alcoholism.

### TABLE 1.6
REGISTERED CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN GOA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rape</th>
<th>Molestation</th>
<th>Eve teasing</th>
<th>Dowry deaths</th>
<th>Torture of married women</th>
<th>Kidnapping</th>
<th>Abatement to commit suicide</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: As recorded by Readers Branch, Police Head Quarters, Panaji: Goa)

### TABLE 1.7
CASES REGISTERED UNDER SECTION 498(a) IN GOA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cases reported</th>
<th>Charge sheeted</th>
<th>Pending trial</th>
<th>Closed</th>
<th>Convicted</th>
<th>Person arrested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Section 498 (a) deals with the cases of harassment of a married woman either by her husband, or husband’s relatives with an intention to get financial or other benefit from her.)

(Source: ‘Goa needs Women’s Cell,’ (1999), Herald (Insight), 24 (July) p. 1)

While assessing the status of women in Goa, it is also necessary to understand the intra-regional variance, which results due to differences in the level of education, the caste and religious affiliations and the degree of impact of Portuguese rule. Thus women in areas like villages of Pernem taluka are likely to be less assertive, as they have low access to education, have less developed transport and communication systems, and patriarchal hold in the villages of this taluka is more. However women in Bardez taluka, which is though in neighbourhood of Pernem, are better placed in this regard. The colonial impact also has influenced the status of women in Goa. Women in Velha Conquistas are well placed as they could benefit from various reforms introduced by the colonial rule. The Nova Conquistas continued to be

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30 As per the Statistics available with the Readers Branch, Police Head Quarters, Panaji: Goa.
governed by their traditions and customs, which adversely affected position of women in these areas. Thus the study of position of women in Goa assumes major significance. The present study analyzes the position of women in Goa by looking at their participation at various levels.

**Reasons for Study**

The state of Goa has been chosen for the study because of the following reasons:-

1. **Impact of the colonial legacy**

   Goa has had a long colonial history. While the British ruled India for barely 200 years, Portuguese ruled Goa for nearly 450 years. Thus the impact of the Portuguese domination, in political and socio-cultural terms, has been deeper as compared with the impact of the British domination in India. Portuguese introduced various reforms like ban on Sati and child marriage, promoted widow remarriage and education for women. Goa, unlike the rest of India, has a Uniform Civil Code. The laws with regards to property, inheritance, marriage and divorce have given women legal equality on par with men. This has had a significant impact on the social status of women in Goa. Goan culture is a synthesis of traditional and western values. It has absorbed elements of various cultures, from Satavahanas to Kadambas, from Muslim rulers and was tremendously influenced by the Portuguese rule. Different class, caste and creed groups have mixed and mingled together.

2. **Economic transformation of Goan society:**

   Goan society is undergoing an economic transformation from agriculture and fishing to industry. The extractive industry is major development that has taken place in the post colonial period. The Fourth Economic Census (EC-98), was conducted in Goa from May to June 1998, covering both agricultural (excluding crop production and plantation) and non agricultural activities. The total number of enterprises in all the eleven talukas of the state is 72,577 of which 42,729 are in North Goa, and 29,848 are in South Goa. The total number of workers employed are 2.42 lakhs, out of which 1.80 lakhs are adult males while 0.59 are females. Industrialization has resulted

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31 '72,577 enterprises in Goa, says the Fourth Economic Census,' *The Navhind Times*, 31(October), p.5.
in both positive as well as negative impact on women in Goa. It has created more employment opportunities, though it has adversely affected primary and tertiary sector, where women are employed on a larger scale. Also, it has affected the ecosystem, damaging paddy fields, and increasing shortage of water and electricity, which have resulted in increasing burden of development on women.

3. Fast growing Tourism:

The cultural contact with the West is significant because of tourism. However the increasing visit of tourists to Goa has resulted in increasing the cost of living in Goa. Furthermore, the image of women in Goa has taken a beating at the hands of advertisers. Also growing industrialization and tourism have resulted in an increase in crimes committed against women in Goa.

4. Migration:

Migration is another factor which has influenced women’s position in Goa, especially of Catholic women. Before liberation, quite a sizable number of men migrated to other Portuguese colonies, specially South Africa. The present trend is, most of them have migrated to Gulf Countries. According to a conservative estimate there are over 80,000 Goans working in Gulf countries who remit over Rs. 250 crores a year to their families in Goa.32 The migration of male members in the family has led to tremendous influence and change in life of female family members. The male members send a significant portion of their earnings to their families, which has helped in social, economic, educational and health aspects of the family members. This has also led to female dominated families, where women control the spending and investment of the valuables, and decides how to manage their property, their children’s education and their family consumption. It has led to confidence building in these women.

Migration of Goan men for higher studies or in search of jobs in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay has also influenced position of women, though subtly, in Goa. The

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32 Keni, Chandrakant (1999), ‘Policy of Arabisation, a threat to Goa,’ The Navhind Times, 8 (October), p.5.
social mobility enjoyed by the women in these cities, has had positive impact on the minds of people, which has resulted in granting larger space and scope for women in Goa.

5. Active participation of women in different arenas:

A general look at the various major events and women’s participation in it, right from the liberation struggle to date, women have been very vocal in Goa. Thus they actively participated in freedom struggle and the opinion poll, have raised their voice against mechanization of fishing industry, setting up of golf courses, denial of licenses to shacks, or in medium of language issue which would jeopardize their children’s future.

Study of women’s participation in decision making and development in Goa, thus is an issue of major concern, which has so far remain totally unexplored.

**Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- The study looks at the impact of the colonial legacy, the legal system, the cultural synthesis and the forces of economic transformation on sex and gender role of women in Goan politics.

- It investigates the political role of women by using certain statistical indicators like education, income, occupational status, parental status and age which influence participation. It studies participation of women at different levels, it looks at women as political agents/participants in the political process.

- It critically evaluates the role carried out by women as activists. It looks at the functioning of women NGOs in Goa in attending to women in distress and analyzes the extent to which they are successful in mounting campaigns for reforms or redress.

- It looks at the impact of the State policies of development on women in Goa. Have these policies benefited women, or have led to their further victimization is an area of concern.
Chapter Classification

The study is divided into five chapters. **Chapter II : Women as Freedom Fighters**, studies the role played by women in Goa's Liberation Struggle. Women in Goa vigorously participated in the liberation struggle. They attended morchas, meetings, and even went to jail for the cause of liberation. The Portuguese colonialism while it benefited women also sow the seeds for its own demise in that it awakened women to the goal of liberation. The participation of women in the liberation created a tradition of female involvement in politics in Goa.

**Chapter III : Women as Voters**, analyzes voting behaviour of women in Goa. Voting is an important component of political participation. A simple act of voting can lead to the replacement of governments. This chapter studies the influence of factors like socio-economic status, religious affiliation, educational standards, occupation, age, family influence on the voting behaviour of women.

**Chapter IV : Women as Grassroots Leaders**, deals with role played by women at Panchayat level. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments which made 33% reservation for women mandatory at the grassroots level have given an opportunity to women to occupy important leadership positions. This chapter draws the socio-economic profile of the women panches. Further, it probes into various questions such as:- Has the entry of woman in grassroots politics made her more assertive? Have they been able to bring about significant changes in grassroots politics? Has it resulted in bringing about qualitative change in the lives of these women? These and other questions are studied in detail in this chapter.

**Chapter V : Women as Activists**, deals with the role of women NGOs in Goa. The discrimination against women, both in private as well as in public, the patriarchal domination, and increasing violence in the society has led women to organize themselves to bring about desired change. A sizable number of women NGOs has made their headway in Goa. This chapter looks at the functioning of one of the major organizations in Goa, *Bailancho Saad*. It critically evaluates its structures, decision-making process, mode of functioning and examines various strategies adopted by it from time to time.

**Chapter VI : Women as Welfare Beneficiaries**, looks at the impact of the State policies of development on women in Goa. The welfare role of the state has compelled it to take the initiative towards uplift of the marginalized groups. Thus
state has implemented some programmes for women’s development. Have the women benefited from such policies and programmes is the main purpose of study in this chapter. It deals in length with the implementation of Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme in Goa.

**Methodology**

The emphasis in data collection for the study was mainly on field work, though secondary sources have also been explored. The method of interaction and observation has been of immense assistance in the field work. The data for chapter II, is mainly composed of the narration of women freedom fighters. It was a difficult task to trace their whereabouts, as some of them are dead while most of them are forgotten.

Data for Chapter III and IV is based on Survey analysis. For chapter III-Women as Voters, survey was conducted in Quepem Taluka in South Goa, while for Chapter IV- Women as Grassroots Leaders, survey was conducted in Bardez Taluka of North Goa. Quepem is situated in *Nova Conquistas* while Bardez comes in *Velha Conquistas*. It is generally observed that the women from *Velha Conquistas* are better placed than those in the *Nova Conquistas*, as the impact of Portuguese rule was felt more by the former. Thus the study of two different talukas in two districts and in two different *Conquistas* was expected to throw deeper insight in political participation of women in Goa.

Chapter V is mainly based on the observations made in the meetings of Bailancho Saad, and interviews held with its members. The leaflets of the organization have been used in assessing the role of the NGO.

Data for Chapter VI was collected through the technique of personal interviews with officials of different departments of the State. Tiswadi Taluka was chosen through the random method of drawing a lot to study the Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme. The Case Study of the Beneficiaries was the method used in this chapter.