CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the Indian context, the involvement of women in the political process and decision – making bodies has been a logical outcome of their involvement in the freedom struggle. Unlike the West, where the women had to launch a long drawn movement to win over electoral rights, in India, the culmination of the National Struggle into a mass movement signaled the inclusion of women into political life. Hundreds of women at the behest of leaders like Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose (Militant struggles as opposed to Gandhi and non-violent one) participated in the freedom struggle, faced lathi – charge and went to jail. During this period the primary task which the country and the leaders faced was one of attaining freedom. Although problems specific to women (for instance sati, child – marriage, window remarriage etc.) Were raised they were categorized as being social issues and were dealt with by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekanananda, Dayanand Saraswati, Ishwachandra Vidya Sagar, Mahatma Phile and Savitri Ba Phile etc. It was presumed that liberation from a foreign rule would automatically lead to the freedom of women. Gender discrimination was categorized as a social issue and not a political issue. The emancipation of women was inextricable linked to the nation’s freedom. Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah in their work `The Issues at Stake – Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women’s Movement’ “Rhythms of a Movement” given vivid descriptions of the social reform movement in the 19th century and highlight the gender dimensions of the `uplift of women’ approach of the male social reformers.
Although thousands of women participated in the struggle and many came to prominence on the national scene, the focus of their concern was the Nationalist Movement and not the women’s cause specifically. Moreover women politicians perceived their participation in politics as being supportive of the activity of their male family members, husbands, brothers and fathers. A statement of Vijayalakshmi Pandit is a case in point: She was able to participate in Politics because her husband agreed and encouraged her to do so. She believed that without his consent she would not have participated ‘Gandhiji or no Gandhiji’.²

In the post-independence period, women have been involved in the political processes, voters, as candidates contesting the elections, involved in deliberations both in the State Assemblies, Parliament and Grassroot Level Bodies. They have also held a number of public offices at different levels as also posts in the Judiciary. Yet, whereas, the pattern of their electoral participation (for instance in the Lok Sabha elections) reflects their majority status as voters, their representation in Legislative Bodies clearly depicts their near absence from decision – making bodies at all levels.³

The substantial increase in the number of women as voters and their eager involvement in Politics since independence has led to the mainstream political parties viewing women as a constituency. Now almost all political parties pay special attention to organizing them, campaigning among them and showing them to contest elections. All parties have a women’s forum or a wing which not merely focus on enhancing and increasing women’s involvement in their respective party manifestoes and do focus their efforts and attention on
raising women specific issues by organizing rallies and demonstrations, lobbying with and pressuring the Government for specific policies.\textsuperscript{4}

Despite the substantial increase in women’s strength as voters as also party activists, the actual representation of women in Parliament has remained marginal and low. This under-representation of women in Parliament is related to two important issues.

i) The question of their numerical strength as also their factual performance in parliament not merely in terms of being seen but more importantly in terms of being effective.

ii) Equally pertinent is the issue of whether these parliamentarians in the legislative decision-making bodies have been able to promote the interests of women, hold positions and power and use such positions of power for women’s ends.\textsuperscript{5}

Our study addresses itself to a number of issues concerning women in parliament. Although specific indicators to assess her involvement or non-involvement in the Parliament are difficult to evolve, participation in parliamentary proceedings in terms of the following issues have given us valuable insights and clues:

a) The nature and extent of the parliamentarians involvement in the actual proceedings of the parliament by moving resolutions, carry through motions, raising issues etc.,

b) The nature and kind of issues being raised by women parliamentarians.
c) The position of women as a group in Parliament and the attitude of male colleagues both towards women parliamentarians as well as women’s issues.

d) The constraints faced by the women parliamentarians and specifically those arising out of gender discrimination.

The responses of the controlled group of male parliamentarians on these areas too forms an integral part of the following analysis to make it a more balanced one.\textsuperscript{6}

It has been well reckoned fact by all standard of thinking that the half of the population (women) are deprived of a fair share of joys and pleasures of life. They are by and large, a disempowered lot and suffer from all shorts of physical, economic, political and psychological ailment. Even after sixty long years of working of successful democratic system the political set up has not made up their mind and a consensus has not emerged to provide even thirty three percent reservations for women in Parliament and State Legislature.\textsuperscript{7} The number of women in Parliament has sharply declined in these years. It is not denying a fact that in few cases in middle and upper middle class family, the Dowry Prohibition Acts are misused and very many innocent and honest persons are harassed by the provision of various acts of domestic violence. But these are the cases of few and far between and on certain occasions, even the highest court of justice, the Supreme Court has cautioned the people for such women chauvism. The women in the two-third population of the world the region known as ‘economically deprived region’\textsuperscript{8} are getting importance and assuming power and sharing responsibility with great courage and conviction.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


