CHAPTER - 4

WOMEN, POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE

The civilization level of a society can be measured by knowing the status of women in that society. The status given to women will be all-round - social, economic, ritual and political. A few societies have given a lot of social roles and statuses to women and she is also loved and respected at home. But she is barred from political and economic activities. A few others have given her ritual and social statuses, but they are curtailed since they do not have political and economic privileges and rights. The most advanced societies of today like that of U.S.A. and Great Britain have given the greatest freedom and equal opportunity to their women. But the criticism is that it has taken away their modesty and also some of their feminine roles which are so valuable to the society. On the contrary the traditional societies like India, Japan, Latin, America and a few other European countries have given a dual status to their women as mother, sister, wife and daughter. The women are respected in these societies not only in day-to-day life, but also in the fields of art, literature, etc. But owing to a few customs like arranged marriages, no right for property, restriction on going out
to work, no opportunity for divorce, etc., the women here are considered to be unhappy and have a low status — equal to that of chattel.

In the Indian society women are no doubt loved and respected as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. Though not openly, women are consulted in all important familial matters like sale or purchase of landed property, settling of marriage, etc. Though she had no right to hold property till recently, she was allowed to keep her personal belongings like gifts given to her by her parents. She also had the right to dispose of these in whatever way she wanted it. Though Manu and other Hindu Law givers have put lot of restriction on her rights and privileges, her unique position in the family and society always brought her suitable status and place in the society.

However, during later periods of Indian History the status of Indian women underwent lot of changes. In the name of protection she was made to stay at home. This took away her free movement in the society and also the opportunity to communicate with the outside world. She was also made to depend on male members for this benefit. Later in the name of modesty she was made to wear purdah
or stay indoors. Further, thinking she is weak, illiterate and less experienced all activities concerned about her, including the personal ones, were taken away by her male guardians. This took her rights for financial and other privileges. Owing to all these and also due to her weak constitution, she was not allowed to involve herself in public life. As a result she was barred from participating in all public activities and contribute to the public life and hold public offices. This type of a systematic blocking made her socially, economically and politically weak, invalid, incapable, etc. Later she was considered not eligible to hold any office and also to involve herself in any public activity outside the family sphere. This type of a subjugation for centuries took away whatever ability she had and finally reduced her to total dependence on men who may be her father, husband or son.

The Indian villages were ruled locally by a team of caste elders. However eligible and experienced the women were they were barred from holding any office. In fact she was barred from knowing anything about public life. She was also not eligible to hold the hereditary village offices like the headship of the village. Later since she had no property in her name and also the required
education, she was not considered for any public office.

**Women and Politics:**

During the 19th century here in India, the rise of new elite groups was able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the British colonial system, which provided arenas of associational politics in the various regions of India. John Broca Field (1971:60-72) shows that these new elites in most part formed high caste Hindus whose cultural skills and previous social roles enables them to adopt successfully to the British colonial system. Many of the activities focused on women including providing educational and political opportunities for women. By the end of the 19th century a nationalist movement had emerged. For the next fifty years politically active groups in India shared a common interest in securing freedom from the British rule. This common interest, created a level of solidarity among political groups much higher than the State in the post-independence era. The experience of colonialism contributed to a lower level of societal hostility to the women's movement in India in comparison with the western experience.
During the 1930's and 1940's the leadership of the nationalist movement became more egalitarian and less hierarchical in its world views. The Indian National Congress had become a mass-based organisation under Mahatma Gandhi who focussed on the plight of weaker sections, especially the Harijans and women. It is likely that this political climate, in which there was a widespread commitment to equality, influenced the Indian women's movement to turn liberal egalitarian values in justifying its demands on the 1930's and 1940's.

There is a dualism of male and female principles in Hinduism (Shakti-Shiva) and a religious tradition of male female equality in ancient Vedic times which Charles Helmuth (1964:161) has suggested to provide means for improving the status of women.

Patrilineal joint family system figures prominently in Brahminical Hindu law. The institution of the patrilineal joint family among high caste Hindus contributed to the different statuses between men and women. Within the joint family there was strict hierarchy based on sex and age. The joint family discouraged public participation of women, because of greater authority of older women prevented younger women from breaking out of traditionally approved
female behaviour patterns. This discouragement would be stronger in areas where purdah was practiced. Hindu scriptures like the Manu Sarithi, prescribed a dependent position for a woman throughout her life time, dependent first on her father, and then on her husband during successive periods of her life.

During the Muslim rule status and the political movements of women was deteriorated. Purdah, the Muslim custom of female seclusion, was adopted by the middle class Hindus and this also restricted the freedom of women. In the name of security and chastity child marriage became common. Later Sati became more common to solve the problem of widows. Although these customs may have originated as efforts to protect women from foreign invaders, they were continued during time of peace. Hannah Papenak (1973:369) points out, that purdah implied a complimentary division of labour by sex.

The Manu Sarithi concept of women contributed indirectly to the formation of an Indian women’s movement. The social practices of early marriage and harsh treatment of widows galvanized some 19th century educated Indian elites to focus many of their reform activities on women. The efforts of the social reformers established some pre-
conditions necessary for the development of the Indian women’s movement. The emergence of rudiments of women’s movement in this country started from the tiny sector of urban western educated families; indeed they were rather a small minority of this sector. Members of all major religious communities were represented in the Indian women’s movement although high caste Hindus appear to be have numerically dominant. A vast majority of women came from families in which men participated actively in social, religious and political associations. In the process of identity formation, the elites draw both on their previous cultural traditions and on western values and ideas to which they had been exposed during their education. Urban educated male elites encouraged their female relatives to become educated and to participate in public activities and realized that by world view to their female relatives, they were strengthening their evolving cultural identities.

Rabindranath Tagore (1912:677), great poet and social reformer, cautioned that “If we do not spread female education, the harmony between husband and wife will be destroyed in modern educated Indian Society.” Western educated elites believed that the practice of Sati, prohibition of widow re-marriage, early marriage, purdah system were all based on tradition than reason. Charles
Heimath (1964:64) supported this view and suggested that social practices should be based on reason instead of tradition. Elite class companies for women's uplift and established schools, orphanages, widow's homes, associations, etc., where women were educated. Educated women like Annie Besant, Cornelia Sorabji, Subbalaxmi Ammal, Maharani of Baroda, Dorothy, Margaret Cousins, Lady Tata, Lady Aberdeen, Sarala Devi, Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Kamala Nehru, Vijaysalma Pandit and others fought for the welfare of other down trodden women. Women's association like Bharat Stri Mandal in Calcutta (1910), Karnataka Mahila Samaj (1913), Women's Indian Association of Madras (1917), Bombay Presidency Women's Council (1910), National Council of Women in India (1925) were started in different parts of the country for the welfare of women. Gandhiji supported and fought for the uplift of women's status. In 1919-22 Indian women in masses supported the Khalifat and Non-co-operation Campaign. Gandhiji admired women's qualities of self-suffering and spirituality and stated that "to me the female sex is not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge" (1921:12). Gandhiji's attitude towards women seems to have been shaped by his relationship with his mother, whose qualities he remembered as saintly,
selfless, self-suffering and self-control. Gandhi understood that technique of Satyagraha was especially suited for women because of their moral character and their capacity for self-suffering.

Gandhi's ideology and techniques inspired women to participate in public activities and broke down opposition, to their entry into social service and nationalist associations.
The Ilia campaign served as a training ground for many women's movement leaders like Hansa Mehta, Bungabai, Kamla Devi, Chattopadhyaya, Renuka Roy, Jaisire Raji. But reports of 1940 indicate that few women participated in national and women's movement. But this influence did not touch the low caste, working class or rural women. Reasons being the leaders of Congress and of the Indian women's movement remained for the most part wealthy and high status individuals throughout the nationalist period. Their lifestyle and values continued to diverge sharply from those of the masses. This scene has not very much changed even after the independence. The potential of women in the development according to the women's uplift concept involved expanding and strengthening of female roles in the society. Female roles—mother, wife, home maker and female values—sacrifice, loyalty, non-violence were presented as relevant to the problems of development. Women's movement leaders argued that debilitating social practices should be changed and women should be educated so that they might perform their roles in a more enlightened manner, and female values might have a more widespread impact on society. The activities suggested by women's uplift conception were primarily educational and social service in nature although legislation to abolish certain practices restricting women's potential was so implied.
Sarojini Naidu stated in 1906 (1979:11) that "It is not you men but we are the true nation builders". Annie Besant observed in 1901 (1975:79) that "The power of women to uplift or debase man is practically unlimited and woman and man must walk forward hand in hand to the raising of India". Besant and Naidu claimed that women's roles and values within the family particularly suited them for a direct role in national development activities. Naidu elevated women's values to the status of national ideals; the true standard of a country's greatness lies in the undying spiritual ideals of love and service and sacrifice that inspired and sustained the mothers of the race. Annie Besant stated "for India's upliftment her daughters must come out from their seclusion and take back their place in the common life (1939:115). Margaret Cousins (1936:39) stated in 1938 that "All women's struggle for reforms when analysed are our expressions of revolt against a double standard".

In 1923 provincial elections took place in Madras, Bombay, Calcutta. Female electorates were very few; only 10 per cent of women were eligible to vote under Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Government of India Act 1935 movement stressed for an extension of women's franchise and increased representation of women in legislature. In 1930-31 Radhavl
Subbarayan, Begum Shah Nawaz supported the move in the Round Table Conference, that seats should be reserved for women in legislatures. But in 1931 Sarojini Naidu drafted a memorandum that: (1) no sex disqualification in voting, candidacy, public office, (2) adult franchise, (3) rejection of special expedients to ensure women's membership in legislature. Later this draft was accepted by the British Government.

After the Independence of the country, the Constitution of India granted equal status to women in all walks of life, like freedom to speak, vote, education, contesting elections, employment, to acquire property, etc. The present Government policy has given more scope to women of both higher and lower castes. The percentage of women legislators, councillors in India might be more than the West, but the existence of women leaders including the Prime Minister has not been sufficient to achieve sex equality. Kanaladevi Chattopadhyaya, a long time women's leader, stated that: "Women in public life have obviously strayed away from their base, broken their links with the women at large. For, no attempt is made by them to really and purposefully organise public opinion on vital issues (1972:93-97). The early women's associations in India were limited in scope but focused on spreading new values and knowledge to women, very often with remarkable skill."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Lingayat M F M F</th>
<th>Vaishnav M F M F</th>
<th>Viswa- Karna M F M F</th>
<th>Maratha M F M F</th>
<th>Kur M F M F</th>
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<td>-</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>4 4 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>4 6</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>- -</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td>10 6 23</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2 1 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>63 32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- 1 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>14 17</td>
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<th>Tribe</th>
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<th>Muslim M F M F</th>
<th>Negara M F M F</th>
<th>Bhovi M F M F</th>
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<td>5 4 4 22 26</td>
<td>79 92</td>
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<td>71 31 36 12</td>
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<td>30 34 96</td>
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<td>4 1 3 1</td>
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<td>16 6 37 13</td>
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Table No. 5: Strength and Drop-outs from Secondary Schools in Chitradurga District.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>VIII Standard</th>
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<th>IX Standard</th>
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<th>X Standard</th>
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<td>Girls</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>Drop out</td>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>Drop out</td>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>Drop out</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>2439</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>1284</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>2388</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>1432</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>1779</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1435</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>2620</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>1632</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>1184</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11701</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>7190</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>4674</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drop Out

- VIII Standard: 6.63%
- IX Standard: 5.85%
- X Standard: 7.72%

Total Drop Out: 10.62%

Average drop outs in three standards: Boys = 9.705 Girls = 13.585

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The present position of women workers and rural women has probably deteriorated over the past 30 years, as population pressures have increased. Certain other factors have affected women adversely. Women labours have been displaced by men because of industrial rationalisation and women have been dismissed by employers trying to avoid payment of maternity benefits, etc. Existing equal pay legislation does not improve the situation, as women characteristically do different work than men. Female illiteracy remains much higher than male literacy (in 1971, 40% of males were literate compared to only 18% of females). Only microscopic minority of Indian women attend college (8% of females between the years of 18 and 25 are in school). The status of women will markedly improve both socially and politically. Only when the standard of living of the Indian masses is raised substantially. (See Tables 4 and 5 for educational level of Basavapura and its District)

Leadership:

An elaborate discussion on leadership or its typology is not the concern of our study here. However, to provide background to our understanding of leadership it is dealt with some depth so that our study of status and roles of women of Basavapura becomes easy and meaningful.
Man is a social being and social group requires guidance. Guidance is given by some one to whose directions and dictations everyone submits. Such a person is known as a 'leader'. People require guidance or leadership in every sphere of life, including political. A leader, whether he is of authoritarian or democratic type, should have some qualities for leadership like age, ability, goodness, kindness and so on. Leadership is a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers. A leader cannot be a successful unless his followers need not be subordinate to leaders and it is a mutual respectful group and leaders here are always initiators of action. The traditional idea is that leaders are born and not made. The qualities of a traditional leadership, therefore, are age, social standing, etc., rather than achieved statuses.

Leadership is characterised with certain basic features common to all types of societies. Most of the village leaders are of tradition oriented and conservative. As a result most of the significant political events which occur today on national, state, or in some cases on regional level, do not reach them and hence they remain uninfluenced. Owing to their physical and social nature their social relations remain confined to a relatively smaller area or...
region. A remote village in India, like Basavapura, has its own political system and it confines to form a political unit itself having its own institutional leaders like headmen and others. As Vidyarthi (1978:5) states, the village leadership units are generally territorial and linguistic units with their own social system and cultural institution which on psychological level makes them think to separate from the rest of the world.

Concept of leadership:

Knickerbocker (loc.cit, Deb-Agrawal, 1974:2) defines that "a leader may be selected, elected or voluntarily accepted by a group because he possesses or controls means (skill, knowledge, money, association, property, etc.) which the group desires to utilize to attain their objectives". Leadership can have consequences for the lives and welfare of large number of people and, therefore, those who are concerned with the practical consequences of human action must be concerned with leadership. Possession of money is not a leadership criterion at all. As Weber (1947: 60), puts it "mere economic power and especially the 'naked' money power is by no means a recognized basis of social honour".
In Basu's opinion a leader is required to guide persons from darkness to light, from ignorance to literacy as the people require guidance in every sphere of life (1967:35). Park and Tinker (1960:139) view leadership as "situation process in which a person (or persons) because of his actual or supposed ability to solve problems in the field of current group interest, is followed by others in the group and influences their behaviour. Dube (1965:194) considers decision-making as an essential feature of leadership and a reliable index of leadership. But he adds that while all decision-makers are not leaders, all the leaders certainly are decision-makers. A leader is often considered to be the incarnation of the values in the groups and is thus emotionally accepted as leader frequently with more powers than authority.

Types of leaders:

Dube (1965:30) states that no two such classification generally agree with each other. There are virtually as many number of typologies as the number of authors. On the basis of personality types and social roles they have been classified as democratic, political, bureaucratic, diplomatic, reformistic, the agitating, etc. On the basis of modes of
their exercise of their leadership they have been
classified as authoritarian, democratic and charismatic.
Vidyarthi (1947:18) accepting Weberian classification
makes three fold classification of leaders - (1) legal,
(2) traditional, and (3) charismatic. Traditional leaders
are those who are hereditary and institutionalized, like
the sectarian and religious leaders. The charismatic are
religious in their approach. They had little education,
but they derived power through dreams, divinations, etc.,
to lead the masses.

Impact of urbanization, industrialization and
education led to the emergence of other and new types of
leadership which symbolized the aspiration and needs of
the modern generation. These urban-bred, educated and
largely secular leaders are known as modern leaders. In
the contemporary time village leaders are classified into
two groups. Vidyarthi (1947:18) classified them on the
basis of nature of their activities and the type of needs
they fulfill, such as - (1) spherical, and (2) social leaders.
Spherical leaders generally concerned with different spheres
of life and culture of the people and the regulation of
their standardized ideals, norms and behaviours, etc. Social
leaders are those who guide the social life of the people
and help them to conform to its idea. Institutional leaders
are associated with various types of groupings in a society and they guide the behaviour and activities of its members concerned. Modern leaders are those who have modern outlook, secular attitude, and they are in a position to impress the people by creating and satisfying modern needs.

**Qualities of Leadership:**

In order to achieve or reach leadership, one has to possess special characters, qualifications or traits. The differentiation between leaders and non-leaders depend on personal characteristics of the structure of interpersonal relationship and the general community setting. Plato emphasis on character and habit to be the essential qualities of a leader, whereas Aristotle stresses on natural endowments. Bacu (1967) in the Indian context states, that qualities of a leader are that he should be a model, guide, advisor, helper, caretaker and defender of his followers.

Oscar Lewis (1958:127) in his study of a North Indian Village, reveals that leadership in the village depends on the factors like wealth, family reputation, age, generational position, personality traits, state of retirement, education influence with outsiders and, finally,
numerical strength of the family and lineage. Lalith Sen (1967:56) says, status and authority in Indian villages are still ascribed and the fact is recognized and accepted. The study of Gurumurthy (1976:104) reveals that leaders should have social position, capacity to adjudicate disputes impartially, must be of good and helping nature, and should be of clean habits, actions and dealings and must have sympathetic nature.

With this background now let us understand the leadership in rural background, more particularly from the point of Basavapura women, with regards to their political and public life, political awareness, aims and obligations, their opinion about typology of leaders, leadership qualities and roles in the changed situation. The data presented in the foregoing pages were collected during our depth study of our informants in the village. A few cases are also included to bring depth and meaning to our study.

Basavapura is a small village. Here people who belong to different castes, live homogeneously. In the past each caste had its own caste council headed by a group of caste elders. They were also heads of their families and were all male members. At the top of them
was the village panchayat, a council of village elders. These village elders came from different castes and larger and sound family background. They were also sufficiently aged. They were all again, male members. Since the leadership qualities were fixed on the basis of traditions they were all unfavourable to women. Furthermore, the duty of the traditional leadership was to sustain the existing system and most of the disputes they settled were about the violation of rights and obligations. In the course of this they punished those who violated the tradition.

Then came the village official leaders like the Village Patil (the headman), village accountant, the priest, the astrologer, and so on, who were also village officials. In Basavapura all these came from ritually higher castes and also from rich land holding background. Above all the positions were hereditary. Since women were not heads of families, also did not hold any landed property, no women got the privilege to be a village level leader.

This does not mean that women lack leadership qualities and abilities. The women of Basavapura have shown that they are capable of leadership though their
sphere of activities and levels are different. They have also shown that they are in no way inferior to men. For example, they always took leading part in family and kin-group level rites such as marriage, puberty, birth, funeral and also the festivals. Though they did not have any authority and power, whenever the leadership was delegated to them they always played it efficiently. For example, the women are traditionally not entitled to hold any landed property and also the headship of family. But when her husband dies leaving minor children, she is vested with de facto authority to act as the leader of the family and lead the group. In this capacity she sets aside all her modesty and grace and comes out of the domestic shell and works hard giving directions in family work and taking decisions.

In a few cases Bassavapura women have been also forced to assume full charge of the family even when their husbands are alive. This happens when he is permanently invalid owing to incurable disease or an accident or when he is lazy or becomes an addict to alcohol and neglects his family responsibilities. She may also be charged with responsibilities of not only looking after her children and old ina-law but also to run the family occupation.
Many a time there will be no need for her to take this much trouble if she decides to return to her natal home where her parents take care of her. But forgetting her own personal pleasure and health, she struggles to maintain her husband’s family. After many years of hard and dedicated work she may bring-up her children and manage the family occupation taking help from her kin and friendly facilities. Many a time this long, painful journey may not be happy if her sons do not care for her or fail to become industrious.

Whether she succeeds or fails in her duty it is all done in the name and shadow of male members since woman has no status to play roles independently. She gets praises or appreciations for her good work as the de-facto or de-jure leader and not as an important leader. So we can as well drop discussing about her as a leader and concentrate on her opinion about leadership, leadership qualities, etc.

During 1950s with the introduction of democratic type of village and state administration, the less privileged people begin to get political powers in the village. Here instead of the ascribed status the achieved status was much valued. However, in the beginning the changed regulations did not bring much change in the leadership and administrative matters. This was again owing to two reasons - the traditional
leaders were very dominant and also powerful and they also controlled the means or sources of power and authority like land, etc. On the other hand the less privileged and poor, came from lower castes and were also less organised. However, women did not have any roles to play in any of these matters. Realising these problems, when the government amended the 1961 Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act it made provision for the reservation of seats for women, and other weaker sections, including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Instead of the village-wide elections, ward-wise elections were introduced. The safeguards provided to women resulted in permanent representation of women on village panchayat. Today there are two lady members on Basavapura Panchayat Committee - a Lingayat and another a Harijan.

The history of election of lady members to the village panchayat committee shows that no woman from a decent background comes forward to contest for elections. As a result women of low morals and those who can be easily and conveniently used in their political game in the village, are chosen by different political parties in the village as their candidates. Owing to this type of choice of candidates no woman from decent family background will come forward to
contests against them fearing the loss of face in case of
defeat in the election. Furthermore, the importance of
a lady member, as a matter of fact any member of the village
panchayat committee, is reduced immediately after the
elections to the office of chairmanship of the village
panchayat committee. Since they will not attend any
public meetings and functions, usually their assent to
the proceedings of a panchayat meeting is given by putting
their signature in the meeting book.

Since from its inception no woman is elected to
the office of the panchayat chairmanship. Even for membership
no woman used to come forward to contest and as a result there
used to be very little struggle among them for the position.
It is only very recently on the basis of political party
lines, that women from upper strata and good family background
begin to contest for elections.

There are 13 members in the Basavapura Panchayat
Committee, including the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman.
All the members are elected from their respective wards or
divisions in the village. According to our informant except
four members others are young and active. Out of the total
only five members are educated and the remaining members
including the lady members, are all illiterates.
Recent political movement, frequent changes, education and awareness opened new doors to women to enter politics. Out of 100 informants studied only four literate and two illiterate informants were actively involved in village, taluk and district level politics. Among them only two, belong to low caste groups, a Ramara (Blacksmith) and another a Marijan, and they are actively involved in politics. They are members to taluk level committee of a political party and are also active members of the political party in the village. During the last Assembly elections they worked for the sitting members of the Legislative Assembly, who is also the only lady member of this district. During the last parliamentary election in 1980, unlike the high caste women these two ladies went out on a house-to-house canvassing and share the glory of success with the sitting Member of the Parliament. Except these two women so far no one had come forward to take active part in day-to-day politics.

However, the public opinion about these two women is not good. One of them came to this village as the helper to her blacksmith husband and till recently she was seen pulling the bellows and handling the hammer. It is said that to get out of this kind of a hard life she was taken to easy life and finally to politics. She could do it
daringly since she came from outside the traditional village system as an immigrant. The other lady leader is a Harijan and also member of the Village Panchayat Committee. Since her caste-men-folk are busy with earning for the family and women-folk too busy with domestic duties, this widow with very little family responsibility, got an opportunity to lead them. Especially today when the children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes need certificates from village panchayat office to apply for financial aid, etc., she takes them to village officials to get them. In this way she is helpful and also popular among all low caste groups in the village.

During the present study it was found that the literate and illiterate informants expressed different opinion on the following traits of leadership suggested by the investigator - age, education, economic background, honesty, dedication, sympathy, intelligence, hard work, simple living, sincerity, impartiality, influence, good family background and extravagance. Literate informants attached more importance to education (54%), honesty (40%) and hard work (9.6%). Whereas the illiterate informants attached importance to honesty (48%), impartiality (30%), and family background (25%). The informants also felt that
there are other essential traits of leadership. But they considered the above ones as more important. Another finding is that the traditional minded and older informants rated least, - education as a leadership trait. The elderly informants expressed that they never approve the young and educated to become leaders since they lack the basic qualifications according to them. They further say that because education has made them anti-rural and anti-traditional in their outlook. No traditional minded women welcomes a sudden change in the established values. But educated women welcomed it. However, they are very few in Basavapura, though schooling is given since long. This is because the girls from the village, after their marriage, leave for their conjugal villages. So, as Singh (1960:361) says, their absence, rate contact, less interest, in the affairs of the village, less interaction with the residents of the community have made them less effective. Educated and those who have understood the values of education give due respect to educated women in the village. Only among these women-folk the educated women demand respect, honour and weightage.

Knowing the problem faced by illiterates, 98% of literate and 80% of illiterate informants stressed the need for education to all women. They regarded education as an
essential evil to a happy social and political life. They also felt that education will bring benefit to both the individual and the society. Otherwise women will become puppets in the hands of selfish men and the society becomes backward with half of its population being dependent. Only 4% of literate and 20% of illiterate disagreed with the above opinion and told that education is not the only criterion to become a good leader. There were great leaders in this country who were illiterate or less educated but served the society still better. They also told that the basic requirement of a good leader is the urge to serve the community with honesty and dedication and not just education.

Regarding minimum education to leaders, 100% of literate and illiterate informants believed that education is an essential pre-requisite to any leader, men or women. They thought that the educated leaders can understand the problems of the community better than the uneducated. Education will also bring a secular and modern outlook to them and this helps them to understand the problems better than the illiterate leaders. The informants also said that the education widens their vision and understanding. It will also bring them courage to face problems and meet strangers and higher officials.
During the field work, the investigator recorded a few cases of domestic quarrels among the villagers which were settled within the village by the informal leaders. These cases show what type of problems women face at the times of disputes owing to their special status and also lack of women leaders to support them in the adjudicating meeting. They also reveal the partial and dishonest roles played by men as leaders.

Case 1:

In 1978, a well to do bingayat family celebrated the marriage of their daughter, Lalita, with Basavaraja who was educated but economically poor. Basavaraja could not get a job soon and his wife's parents were not ready to send the girl with him though the girl was willing to go. This made the life of the couple miserable and later resulted in constant family quarrels. Knowing the rude nature of their affinal kin, Basavaraja's parents got worried and to save their face asked him to stay separately; which he promptly did. Later the life of Lalita became much worse and she became moody and begin to isolate herself. Gradually her health faded and finally she was taken seriously ill. Her parents who could not bear it any more arranged for a meeting of village elders to settle the matter. The elders, after hearing the two versions,
ordered the parents of Basavaraja to get him back. On the other hand, they also asked the Lalita’s parents to send their daughter to her conjugal home at least till Basavaraja finds employment. All the parties agreed for this and Lalita went to live with her husband.

In this case we can see the girl’s parents who aspired to give their daughter to an educated and employed person failed to harvest its fruits though they spent lot of money in the form of dowry and also marriage expenses. The couple were helpless - with a boy not able to get employment and the girl - whose parents were very proud and not willing to send her to work on the farm in her conjugal home. Here nobody cared to know what the young couple wanted to do. When the matter finally reached its climax that the two parties realised their fault and agreed to settle the issue. Here the girl, since she was helpless and dependent on her parents, could not leave them though her husband established a home of his own. She hesitated owing to the tradition and training she got and also the public opinion which is always against such a disobedient person.

In the following case parents in their haste to give their daughter to an educated person committed an error.
Here again the helpless girl who was to be with her husband enjoying her newly married life was made to suffer from mental agony and suffering.

Case 2:

Rudrama, belonging to a Kuruba family, was married to Chandrappa, her distant and educated relative, whose character was in question. Later Rudrama’s family came to know that he was not employed as it was known earlier and it became clear that they were cheated for a high dowry. Her parents wanted that he should take his wife to his family at last and Chandrappa did not agree. Instead he demanded some more dowry. Since they were poor they could not pay it. Later the village elders convinced Chandrappa and his parents. They also raised one thousand rupees and gave him asking him to make a living by opening a grocery shop in his village. Chandrappa agreed for this and left to his village with the money and his wife.

Here it was not only the education and employment of the boy which were in question but also his character. It was established beyond doubt that he is a cheat and also blackmailer. The village elders and parents were only
interested in saving their status, honour and face and not in the happiness of the girl. Above all they not only did not ask her opinion about this but also took her for granted and took decision on behalf of her and paid him some more money and sent her away with him. It was learnt that the girl was not willing to go with this cheat and she also had her own conditions to put when the matter was settled. But no one bothered to ask her about this though the matter was serious and concerned to her. The leaders took this attitude because of the popular belief, conviction and practice that women are innocent, immature and so on. Like this the poor girl not only missed the pleasant moments of her newly married life but also later forced to live with her bad husband.

Here is a case where women though right or wrong were made to stop their fighting and withdraw from seeking justice because they were women. Men, because they are men, thought can do anything and take matters and issues to any length. But women are barred from this though their status, honour and prestige and gains were at stake.

Case 3:

Kenchaa, a boy belongs to Kuruba family, playfully threw a stone at a hen owned by
his Muslim neighbour and killed it.
When the owner, a woman, questioned
about it and demanded for compensation,
Kencha's mother did not agree to it.
Instead she questioned why the hen was
left in their premises. This sparked a
quarrel between the two women and there
was a free exchange of foul language.
Later they were joined by their men-folk
and they interm freely used sticks and
stones in the fighting. The elders of
the locality collected immediately and
asked them to stop it or else the matter
would be reported to the Village Panchayat
and the Police. Though the two groups were
not willing to stop it they were forced to
stop it. Because their women-folk were
involved in the quarrel and any involvement
of Panchayat and Police meant taking them
to Police Station and Court of Law. So
they obliged the elders and agreed to
settle the matter in the village itself.

Case 4:
Yallava, a Harijan woman aged 21 years,
deserted her husband, Guddappa, and moved
to her natal home on the ground that
Guddappa was cruel to her and never provided
for her. He also drank alcoholic beverages.
Immediately Guddappa accused her of
infidelity and publicized in the village
that she went away because he threatened her of severe consequences for it. In spite of several persuasions and warnings during the two years stay with her parents, Guddappa did not come to take her. A few leaders of Guddappa's caste supported him on political rivalry towards his father-in-law. Later Yallavva's parents filed a suit against Guddappa in the Court of Law asking for the maintenance of their daughter or to take her with him to his house. Then Guddappa received summons from the Court, he got panic and went to village elders requesting them to settle the issue in the village itself. Accordingly in presence of caste-elders he assured his ins-law of good care to his wife in future and took her with him. The court notice was dropped at that stage.

In the above case also we can see gross injustice done to a woman and even her chastity was questioned by her wicked husband to cover his own immoral and anti-social acts. The leaders in the village, who are supposed to be impartial and also honest, failed in their duty and supported him on political rivalry. When all this was going on the girl underwent all the humiliation and also suffering, when the matter was finally settled, (no elders who were present in the meeting looked at the issue from the point of view of women
since they wore men. If there had been a single woman with equal leadership capacity in the meeting, she would have made the culprit to pay for what all he did.

The informants think that the whole sociatal atmosphere is against women. If at all she gets anything, it is due to sympathy, and generosity of males, who may sometimes fight for her cause on pride and prestige lines rather than on the lines of justice and equality. So they also thought it is essential that the women in the village should come forward and attend panchayat meetings, and fight for the just causes of women.

Political awareness:

One of the indications of political change and development is political awareness. Political awareness can be obtained through several means like formal education and the other being involved in active politics.

In Basavanagudi majority of the women are illiterate. The presence of schooling in the village since long is not the criteria to education since very few girls went to school. Even those who went discontinued very early owing to poverty or advanced age (attaining puberty in the
deciding factor in the village). Above all the few who got educated migrated to other villages after their marriage.

On the political side it is only the men who are actually involved in politics since the beginning. The political role of the woman has restricted to only voting during different elections; that too to the candidate told by their men-folk. What little knowledge they get about politics is again distorted and secondary. So we cannot expect a better political awareness among the woman-folk of Basavapura.

But recently there is a sudden change in the political awareness of rural women. This is due to the political turmoil the nation had from 1975 to 1980. In the beginning the split in the ruling Congress Party and emergence of Mrs. Indira Gandhi as the leader of the ruling party and later her policies to uplift the poor and down trodden, brought lot of political activity in the nation. Further, 20-Point Programme (including the Family Planning Programme), brought the rural population directly in contact with the national political issues. Since their leader was a lady, the women-folk emotionally supported Mrs. Gandhi whether they liked or understood her policies or not. Like this the successive elections in the State for Parliament,
Assembly and Taluk Development Board brought a new type of awareness among the rural population. The women who are part of the rural system also fell in line with them. To test political awareness of our informants we asked them to mention the names of the Prime Minister, Member of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly, Chief Minister and also the names of the staff of their school, in which they studied and so on. It was found that 100% of educated informants knew all these correctly. Among the illiterates 100% know the name of the Prime Minister, 40% their Members of Parliament, 60% their Member of Legislative Assembly, and 60% their Chief Minister. Generally it is observed that most of the people in the village know the names of Prime Minister, Chief Minister and the local Member of Legislative Assembly.

Regarding the structure of the State administration 80% illiterate and 40% of literate informants, were not knowing its different levels and officers who administer the State. Even those who claimed to know it did not know correctly. About the capability of women in administration, 100% of literate and 72% of illiterate informants expressed great confidence in the administrative capacity of women. They also told that they are capable to undertake any administrative jobs. A few even told that women can be
better administrators, since they are more sensitive, intelligent, systematic, hard working and sincere than the men-folk. However, 28% of illiterate informants rejected this view and told that women are unfit to undertake any hard and important jobs because they are fickle minded, weak and delicate by nature.

Regarding the lady members and the working of the village panchayat, both literate and illiterate informants vocally accused them to be inactive. They said, of the two sitting lady members, the Harijan is better since she atleast helps her caste members. However, comparatively both are inactive and not at all interested in the welfare of the women-folk. They, by nature, are not social, sympathetic and least bothered, about village affairs. They are also shy and suffer from inferiority complex. So they never actively participate in village level activities, like male members. They are also illiterate themselves and so depend on others. All these, they told, have made them "signature giving members" of the village panchayat committee.

68% of literate and 60% of illiterate informants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the working of the village panchayat. They said it is dominated by old and conservative minded leaders, who never give any scope to the
youngsters to take decisions on the matters of village development. Only 30% of literate and 40% of illiterate informants told that the work done by the village panchayat and its officials is satisfactory. With regard to the basic requirements needed in the village both literate and illiterate informants mentioned the following: protected water supply, electricity facility to economically backward people, health centre, proper drainage system, co-operative society, rural bank, reading room, bus stand, petrol bunk, agricultural implements' society, free hostel for economically and socially backward students, mahila sanaja, tailoring and craft centre, children's park and child care centres. Among these, the most pressing needs listed were health centre, co-operative society and mahila sanaja.

A question was asked in order to know who has to got these to their village. Among the literates 60% expressed that it is the duty of the gram panchayat, 20% mentioned Taluka Development Board and 20% the State Government. Among the illiterates, 50% of informants told that it is the duty of the village panchayat and 50% expressed that it is the duty of the State Government. But in this case it was observed that no one knows in what way the village, Taluka Development Board and State were interlinked to one another and their different functions.
Questions were also asked about the changes taken place in the society, particularly in the field of politics. 96% of literate and 60% of illiterate agreed that lot of change has taken place in administrative set-up in the village. To this they quoted the new type of election, voting and also the changes brought in the administrative set up from traditional to more democratic one. Only 4% of literate and 40% of illiterate informants disagreed with them. They told that there is no change in the village administration and the rural caste-politics. Again 88% of literate, 72% of illiterate informants expressed that now the old traditional type of leaders have lost their control over the village politics. whereas 12% of literate and 28% of illiterate rejected the view and said that they still have control over the villagers, through caste and family lines, however in a different manner. They also told that in today’s politics money, liquor, caste, etc., play a prominent role.

On the whole it was noticed that a greater stress was given to education as one of the basic qualifications for leadership. This is a great step towards change in village leadership. 100% of both literate and illiterate informants agreed that education is essential to every woman, who aspires to enter politics. 60% of literate
and 92% of illiterate informants suggested that the minimum education to a girl should be at least of a secondary level. However, 40% of literate and 8% of illiterate suggested a much ambitious level of education, graduation level.

Informants believed that education is not only useful to get a better job to improve one's knowledge about politics but also it is useful in getting better prospects and weightage in the society. It is found that 100% of literate and 88% of illiterate informants accepted this view. The 12% of illiterate who disapproved this felt that most educated are selfish, have false pride, jealousy, superiority complex and by nature are also dominating.

When asked what type of welfare activities an educated leader can undertake in a village; the informants told they can help in establishing nursery schools, tailoring centres, craft centres, adult education centres, and mahila mandals. She can help to organise family planning, child care, general medical care and such other camps. Organisation of lectures on health education, child care, nutrition, etc., may be added to that. Besides these, she can also serve the
backward groups in the village, especially the women and children in promoting earning, educational and health programmes. In her attempt one can take the help of the village panchayat and other local bodies including the local governmental agencies.
Women Folk Preparing Sāvige
Preparing Papad During Leisure Time
Newspaper Reading During Leisure Time
A Liquor Shop Owner and Her Liquor Bottles