CHAPTER XII

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With the acceptance of the goal of a democratic, egalitarian society, the post-Independence period has seen major changes in the role of women, particularly their participation in the political process of India. In a political system making of laws constitutes one of the major functions of the Legislature. In the Indian political system which is a democratic one, both men and women have equal rights to play their legislative roles such as Purposive, Representational Style, Areal and Ombudsmanic in the law-making body of the State - the Legislature. But in India, despite their equal constitutional rights and status women are considered as inferior because of their position related to traditional Patriarchal society manifest in all spheres of life—social, economic and political. Hence, the interest has been taken to study the self-perceived role orientations of the women legislators in the context of such a developing non-Western cultural setting and the democratic set up of India. For this purpose this study, a micro one, is only an humble attempt to analyse the roles of women legislators of Orissa, a constituent unit of the Union of India.
Orissa is economically poor and having a fragmented political culture. Despite spread of industrialisation and exploitation of natural resources, large sections of the people in Orissa make a living out of agricultural activity and, hence, remain poor. A majority of Orissa's population are illiterate and the women of Orissa are in still more deplorable socio-economic conditions.

In Orissa politics women have never been prominent as they do not enjoy a distinctly separate political identity. Though women constitute half of the population of Orissa, absence of effective women organisation and mobilisation of women population have left the women's political potential untapped as yet. Except a few, women in Orissa liked to withdraw themselves from politics, even if some of them had participated in the struggle for Indian Independence hand in hand with the menfolk. Again, since women in Orissa have not yet organised themselves as an electoral force, they have failed to acquire their rightful status and share in politics.

It is seen from the present study that the number of women members have been very small in the Orissa Assembly (taking the average of total members of Orissa Legislative Assembly since 1952 to 1985, only 3% are women members). In this context the question arises as to from which socio-economic group the women legislators of Orissa have come from, and
for this purpose we have taken the hypothesis: "The women members of Orissa Legislative Assembly are likely to represent the upper strata of women of Orissa." It is found in this study that the hypothesis has been proved correct as the women legislators of Orissa mostly belonged to socially high families with higher economic status and better educational background. Though a majority of them were born and brought up in rural places, a significant section of them had opportunities for living in urban areas. A majority of them are either daughters or wives of men of high social stratum.

Again, the women legislators of Orissa are found to have been inducted to political life through their own family circles. In the absence of women movements, effective women political association, and charismatic women leaders, most of the Orissa women legislators are found to have had developed interest in politics through their family members. The present study exhibits that in most cases mother's role as socialising agent is minimal, because mothers of these legislators were not in active politics nor were they interested in politics. But the politically and socially active fathers had strong socialising effect on their daughters so as to generate in the latter an awareness and interest for politics. This then proves the hypothesis in a positive manner that "Family may likely be the only socialising agent for the women legislators of Orissa Assembly."
In order to test the hypothesis: "There is a pattern of relationship between agents of socialisation, socio-economic status and time of development of interest in politics," it is found that those legislators who developed interest in politics earlier in their life came from the families belonging to either high income group or from families whose member/members were either writers or government servants or politically and socially active. There are some women legislators who are self-starters, but developed interest in politics earlier in their life because of their high socio-economic status. Those legislators who do not belong to any of the above groups developed interest in politics late in their life.

The question of pre-legislative experience of Orissa women legislators led us to frame the hypothesis that: "Women legislators are likely to possess career experiences before they enter into the Orissa Legislative Assembly." This hypothesis is found to be fully correct as most of the women legislators of Orissa possessed pre-legislative experiences by being associated with cultural associations, student politics, cooperatives, trade unions and political parties. However, it is observed that though some sort of experience in public field made one's chances of being chosen as candidate fair, no single type of experience emerged as the sole criterion for it. But it is also found that no woman legislator has
used lower public office like membership in local bodies as a spring-board to be elected to the legislature.

Again, though in a few cases entry into legislative politics has been facilitated either by the close relations or by the family members of the women legislators, almost in all cases political parties have played the role of the agent of recruitment. In some cases political parties have utilised the influence of the families of the women legislators and have helped in converting their family's social influence into electoral success. However, women candidates have depended heavily on the party support, rather than on the support of the women population, for success in elections. It is also found that support for the Scheduled Tribe women might have stemmed from their caste communities, but their reliance on political parties was also equally high. Hence the present study supports the hypothesis: "The political party plays the role of an agent in recruiting candidates for election to the State Legislature of Orissa."

As a part of the study orientations, motivations and perceptions of Orissa women legislators towards legislative job attract our attention. The present study shows that all women legislators were expressive of altruistic-contributive intentions for their seeking access to the State Legislature. In the present study the women legislators expressed their view
that they have come to the legislature not as a result of their thirst for power, nor to earn their livelihood, but for the service of the people, particularly to raise the socio-economic conditions of the people. They remain present in the sessions of the legislature and they are more conscious of their legislative job than any other factor, so far as they are the members of the Orissa Legislative Assembly. The analysis of their perceptions supports the hypothesis: "The women legislators of Orissa are committed fully to the legislative job." However, if the commitment to the job is an indicator of satisfaction out of the job, then it is found that the hypothesis is not fully correct. This study shows that when only an exact half of the high caste respondents expressed their willingness to continue as legislators in future, the other half of the high caste respondents showed their disinclination to seek legislative seat in future. But so far as the Scheduled Tribe women legislators of Orissa are concerned, all of them wanted to continue their career as legislators of Orissa. So it can be concluded that so far as commitment to the job means satisfaction out of the job and continuance in the job in future, the above hypothesis is correct for the Scheduled Tribe women legislators but not for the high caste women legislators of Orissa.
In the central area of legislative activity, a legislator may have two main role orientations, namely, he may be committed to observe the paraphernalias of how a law ought to be made, and how floor-debates are to be conducted; and, secondly, he may define his job as articulating the popular demands and protecting the interests of the people. The present study shows that the women legislators of Orissa are more interested in articulating popular demands than merely in the observance of the rules and procedures of the legislature.

The women legislators of Orissa are oriented to follow the mandates of the constituents. And, at the same time, it was found that most of the respondents did not consider any other interest area as more important than their constituencies. They held the constituency-interest orientations as primary to their career goals. They consider themselves as Delegates of their constituents in their Representational Style roles, and Constituency-oriented in their Representational Areal roles.

It is generally expected from the women legislators that they must take up women interest and issues as their service area. But most of the women legislators expressed their view that they did not see any distinction between their constituency and women interests, and viewed women interests to be somewhat integral to constituency-interests. This
indicates that women's issues and interests do not constitute the primary service area of the women legislators of Orissa. Hence the hypothesis: "The women legislators are likely to take keen interest in the promotion of women's interest" is not fully correct.

The last hypothesis taken in this study is with regard to the congruence between the role perceptions and role performance of Orissa women legislators. So far as the participation in the legislative business is concerned there is congruence between the role-perception and role performance of the Orissa women legislators. It is found from this study made on the basis of analysis of proceedings of Orissa Legislative Assembly debates of two Assemblies (1974 to 1979) that the participation of women in respect of asking questions in the House is insignificant. The study also shows that none of the women, except the lady Chief Minister of Orissa (1972-76), has introduced any Bill in the House during the whole period under study. Their participation was also negligible in respect of moving Adjournment and Call-attention motions. It is also pointed out in the study that women legislators participated in floor discussions and debates but it was not remarkable. On the whole, their adaptation to legislative life is nominal, in case of most Orissa women legislators. But, on the other hand, so far as Tribune, Inventor, Broker, Constituency-
oriented, and women-interest roles are concerned there is congruence between role perception and role performance of Orissa women legislators.

To sum up. In the post-Independence era of development in India, women have not yet been raised to equal status with the menfolk despite equal constitutional rights conferred upon them. Women representation in the legislature is not adequate in proportion to their number in society, and those women who have ascended to the position of legislators do not represent the cross-section population of society as they are mostly from high socio-economic group. The women legislators are socialised by family members, particularly by their fathers. Had the mothers been more educated, there would have been more participation of women in the legislative politics. Women legislators depend on party support. As they are not able to influence the political party properly, the need for their candidature is not taken as seriously as in the case of men candidates. Women legislators are fully committed to legislative job, and they have supported the women issues like reservation of seats for women in Orissa Legislature, reservation of office-bearership in political parties and positions in the State Council of Ministers, reservation of government jobs for women etc. But they look upon women issues as secondary to the issues of their own constituencies. They
give primary importance to constituency issues and constituency service. So the women legislators have not made any special efforts to use the forum of the legislature for promoting issues of exclusive importance to women.

On the basis of the study the scholar may venture upon a few suggestions. First, there is much scope for allocating more seats in order to secure larger representation of women in the legislature, and thereby increase their influence upon legislation. In the second place, the base of recruitment of women legislators should be widened so as to include educated women of middle and lower income groups. In the third place, women legislators should be more conscious of enhancing their role performance in the legislature so as to serve the important women issues, and should more intensely take part in the legislative business so as to consummate their adaptation to legislative life.