

## ***Chapter Four***

### **Socio-political Apprehension of Women's Status**

Political participation is a necessary ingredient of every political system. Although the political process in some societies is monopolized by only a few incumbents of political authority, every system, if found to be quite keen, is ensuring some amount of political participation by the people, by involving many in the matters of the system, political participation fosters stability and order through the re-enforcement of the legitimacy of political authority. A society, in which a substantial part of the population is denied any right to participation whatsoever, is likely to be highly explosive. The idea of this participation naturally assumes greater importance in a democratic system, which, indeed, demands it. After all, participation is the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in democracy and rules are made accountable to the ruled. The citizens must, at least, participate in the choice of their public officials in order to keep public action responsive to the wishes and desires of the people. Participation in politics and in public debate helps to build a better and nobler character in the people. People would be better human beings if they so participated. Thus, the role of political participation has been emphasized not only as a means to understand the nature of the political system and to control the functioning of the system, but also as a means

to build up the character of the people.<sup>80</sup> It gives some sort of satisfaction to the citizen-satisfaction with the Government and satisfaction with one's own role.<sup>81</sup> Participation benefits the participants as well as the larger community. It enables men by giving them a sense of their own dignity and value, alerts both rulers and the ruled to their duties and responsibilities, and broadens political understanding. Participation helps the individual to be effective and it associates him or her with the political system. The higher the rate and levels, the more varied the forms of participation, the healthier is the democratic system. Particularly in a society where certain groups are traditionally behind the others, they can be categorized as 'weaker sections' or 'disadvantaged groups'. Wider participation and mobilization at higher and higher levels would be necessary for their upliftment and that, in turn, would be healthier for the democratic system.<sup>82</sup> It has also been maintained that political participation has some role to play in nation building, since it represents a means of orienting loyalties and a new feeling of national identity. Indicating the importance of the citizen's participation in a democracy, several theorists of democracy emphasize the presence of an active participant citizen as an essential condition of the successful working of the democracy. Democracy is characterized by the fact that power over significant authoritative decisions in a society is disturbed among the population. The ordinary man is expected to take as active part in governmental affairs, to be aware of how decisions are made, and to make his

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<sup>80</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Women and Politics", In *Women and society*, Kalpaz publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.142-157.

<sup>81</sup> See Neera Desai, Maithreyi Krishna Raj, *Women and Society in India*, Ajanta Publication, 1987.

<sup>82</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Women's Empowerment", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.122-133.

views known. Political participation is a complex phenomenon liable to be influenced by different variables. It denotes a series of activities, which have a bearing on the political process. To be specific, these activities mainly are (1) voting at the polls, (2) supporting possible pressure groups by being a member of them, (3) personally communicating directly with legislators, (4) participating in political party activity and thus acquiring a claim on legislators, (5) engaging in habitual dissemination of political opinion through face-to-face communication with other citizens. However, it is to be noted that more people discuss politics than vote, and many more vote than join parties or work in campaigns. Some empirical studies show that most people are just not especially politically oriented and political participation is not a "natural" concomitant of citizenship. Only small percentages, probably fewer than 10 percent in all democratic countries, belong to a political class.<sup>83</sup> The various forms of political involvement fall into hierarchy or continuum according to the cost in time and effort that each demands. But other variables, such as political articulations, saliency, and interest, which can only partially be reckoned into the 'costs'-also affect the frequency of the various forms of participation. Political participation is a complex phenomenon in the sense that its various forms from country to country, from era to era, from one type of people in a society to another. Some of these variations are surely due to the familiar determinants of participation (education, access information etc.). In this context

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<sup>83</sup> Jane Fishburne Collier, "Women in Politics", In Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds.), *woman Culture & Society*, Stanford University Press, 1974, pp.68-89.

attention must also be paid to the differing situational factors in individual countries- tradition, history, access to the governing institutions, and the peculiar forms of political competition. Researchers have shown that the generalizations derived from research in Western countries may not hold equally true in India.<sup>84</sup> It has been pointed out that to exercise political influence is a special kind of political involvement in which female citizens, no matter where they live, or what their level of education is, find it very hard to engage in.<sup>85</sup> Women's roles are such in which political passivity is perceived as the norm. Men heavily dominate women in political systems. Today women are connected directly or indirectly to the operation of society at every level, and at the same time occupy the aggregate position of outsiders. A study of their experience could offer an incomparable window on the internal dynamics of social history. In developed as well as in developing economy today, it is perfectly obvious that the part played by women in various spheres of life is constantly on the increase. But it is no less obvious that women still remain subjects of inequality and oppression. This has a harmful effect both on their status and on the social climate of the society in which they live. Few people would deny today the fact that the degree of women's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation.

The equality of men and women in the matter of right has been established by a large number of the Constitutions, codes and laws. The real question is to what

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<sup>84</sup> See Sita Anantha Raman, *Women in India: A Social and Cultural History*, Praeger, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Women and Education", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.64-71.

extent the legal declaration about the equality of the sexes has been effective in real life.<sup>86</sup> Constitutional provisions do not mean automatic enjoyment of the rights conferred therein. Mention may be made in this connection of the study made by Jean Mann about the women in British parliament. This study stresses that women are still *second-class citizens* in spite of the equal rights conferred on them. William Henry Chafe in his two well-known studies tried to examine the social, economic and political roles of women from 1920 to 1970. His studies point out that discrimination against women was deeply rooted in the structure of society, in the roles played by them and in the sexual division of labour which restrict females primarily to the domestic sphere of life. Whatever it accomplished, the suffrage did not alter the structure.<sup>87</sup>

In India, the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a new era in the history of women's emancipation. The impact of British rule, the capitalist economy, and modern Western culture produced a great awakening-particularly in Bengal-which sought, among other things, to end social oppression of women. A new life was brought to the movement merged in the struggle for political independence was an essential precondition of the emancipation of women.

In India, women's triumph began in the early fifties. Middle class women came forward, from the background of restricted lives, confined to the roles of wives and

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<sup>86</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Man-Woman Relations: Sex, Division of Labour?" Stratification Based on Sex" In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.24-37.

<sup>87</sup> See W.H. Chafe *American Women: Women and Equality*, Oxford University press, London: 1976.

mothers, and entered administrative, professional and political fields as equals of men. Women from aristocratic families, both Hindu and Muslim, began to abandon "purdah" and sought public offices.<sup>88</sup> Women were elected to Parliament and State legislatures. They became Cabinet Ministers, Governors of States, Ambassadors, and Vice-chancellors of University, and judges. Women exercised their votes in increasing numbers in successive general elections. Institutions of professional education, law and technology, which had till then barred women's entry, were thrown open to them. Women entered new occupations in the modern sector in increasing numbers. Local self-governing bodies in both urban and rural areas were asked to include some women on their panels by nomination if they did not come through election channels. In the recent Panchayat election in West Bengal, it has been reflected that there are considerable women who have contested in this election.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolved to secure to all its citizens "justice, social economic and political, equality of status and of opportunities" to attain these national objectives, the Constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights. Indian women were to be the beneficiaries of these rights in the same manner as Indian men. Article 14 ensures equality before law, and Article 15 prohibits any discrimination. There is one specific provision in Article 15(3), which empowers the State to make any special provision for women and children. This

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<sup>88</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Women and Development", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.112-121.

provision has enabled the State to make special provisions for women, particularly in the field labour legislation like the factories Act, the Mines Act, etc. Article 16(1) guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens, in matters relating to employment, or appointment to any office under the State and Article 16 (2) forbids discrimination in respect of any employment under the State on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, etc.

All these could suggest that the expected revolution in the status of women with the extension of their roles in the society was well on the way.<sup>89</sup> But the Committee on the status of women in India reached a very different conclusion. The Committee reported: "... the right to political equality has not enabled women to play their role as partners and constituents in the political process. Instead, these rights have helped to build an illusion to equality and power". In spite of increase in participation women's ability to produce an impact on the political process has been negligible. Parties have tended to see women as appendages of the males. Among women, the leadership has become diffused and diverse, with sharp contradictions in their regard and concern for the inequalities that affect the status of women in every sphere-social, economic and political. Though women do not constitute a minority numerically, they were acquiring the feature of one by the inequality of class, status and political power.

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<sup>89</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Status of Women in India Through the Ages", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.38-47.

Three years after the Committee's Report, a group of social scientists pointed, in an even sharper manner, to what they called "the national neglect of women". It was pointed out that unless the economic and social utility of women is enhanced in the eyes of their families and the nation by opportunities to take part in socially and economically productive roles, neglect of women by the nation would continue. Erosion of productive role emphasizes women's position as consumers and bearers of children, makes their lives cheap and easily expendable through increasing malnutrition and mortality, reduces employability through inadequate training opportunities and increases economic discrimination and exploitation.<sup>90</sup>

Almost the same opinion had been expressed by Lenin when he delivered a speech at the Fourth Moscow City Conference of Non-party working women: "Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive petty, nerve-wracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery."<sup>91</sup>

According to the Marxists, the lower degree of participation by women in politics is due to the nature of modern capitalist economy. The content of existing ideology discourages women from participation in politics, from influencing the prevailing

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<sup>90</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Women and Household", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.56-63.

<sup>91</sup> Lenin V.I. , *On the Emancipation of Women* ,Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985, P.64



power structure.<sup>92</sup> Women have, since ages, been socially taught or forced to subordinate themselves and play submissive roles in all walks of life. The rights given by the Constitution and the demands of democracy are inconsistent with the traditional attitude. This kind of incongruent political socialization has created a conflict in their minds, due to which, it is difficult for them to accept and adjust easily to the democratic political process. It may perhaps be said that there arises a conflict between their role perception and the old content of socialization.<sup>93</sup>

Women constitute half the society and belong to all classes and all sections. So what is called the "woman's question" is not the question of one section only. It is ultimately the question of the entire society. On the other hand, it is an integral part of the entire social phenomenon. Human society cannot move forward without stirring half of its body, the women. Thus, it is in the social and national interest to draw womenfolk into the social and political process. To quote Lenin: "if we do not draw women into public activity into political life. Then it is impossible to secure real freedom, it is impossible even to build democracy, let alone socialism."

It is often held that the growth of education of women and their employment outside the house has led to a social change. An educated woman is more likely to be influenced by the mass media. Her understanding, developed due to education, would enable her to give a proper response to the political issues, activities and

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<sup>92</sup> Lenin V.I., "Women and Society", in k. Marx, Lenin V.I., F. Engels, and J.V. Stalin (eds) *The Woman question: Selections*, International Publishers, New York, 1982, PP.49-55.

<sup>93</sup> J. Gardiner, 'Political Economy of Domestic Labour Capitalist Society', In D.L. Barker and S. Allen (eds.) *Dependence and exploitation in Work and Marriage*, Longman, London, 1976, PP.109-20.

events. Thus, these factors like urbanization, education, employment, exposure to mass media etc., surely have an important impact on the participation level of women and on their attitudes. The present study seeks to find out the correlation among these variables, in order to get an idea about the extent of political participation by the women of West Bengal. In this connection, it will not be irrelevant to mention some of the comments recorded in the report of the Committee on the status of Women, published in December 1974:

“Our findings indicate that women’s participation in the political process has shown a steady increase both in election and their readiness to express their views on issues directly concerning their day-to-day life. But their ability to produce an impact on the political process has been negligible because of the inadequate attention paid to their political education and mobilization by political parties. The structures of the parties make them male-dominated and most party men are not free from the general prejudices and attitudes of the society. We are, therefore, forced to observe that all the indicators of participation, attitudes and impact come up with the same results-the resolution in social and political status of women for which Constitutional equality was to be only the instrument, still remains a very distant objective. While there is no doubt that the position of some groups of women has changed for the better. The large masses of women continue to lack spokesmen for understanding their problems and are committed to their removal, in the representative bodies of the state. The norms and attitudes regarding women’s role

in society remain traditional. In this sense, the new rights proved to be concessional. Thus, it is clear that despite certain legal and even institutional changes, the final legitimating for a successful reorganization of the society lies in a revolution in norms and attitudes in the minds of people. The recommendations that we make are out of a desire to make political rights of women more functional as required by the needs of a democratic system".<sup>94</sup> Women constitute more than half of the world's population; yet, their representation in management has been significantly low in comparison to men. However, the recent trend suggests an assuring rise in the number of women in managerial positions. Today's high profile executive women have acquired the same credibility accorded to their senior male colleagues. They have performed turnaround management tasks. Women have reached a critical mass in virtually all white collar professions, especially in business. They are, no longer, a token minority. Their values, their management styles are closer to the standard norm. These women have broken the glass ceiling to be recognized as successful, talented and practicing executives.

Yet, because of their late arrival on the management scene, their stark minority position, which makes them subject to high visibility and stereotyping and because the work organizations are embedded in a cultural milieu which still upholds, in ways, subtle and obvious, the superiority of men over women, the social reality of work organizations for women managers is often different from that of the male

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<sup>94</sup> *Report of the Committee on the status of Women in India, Towards Equality (New Delhi Government of India, Department of social welfare, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1974), P.372.*

managers. Organizational roles and statuses have traditionally been gendered, i.e., certain positions have been considered appropriate to and filled by, women or men. This gender aspect is located within a large patriarchal social world, which is hierarchically based, with men occupying positions of dominance over women. Male domination of the organizational world in the form ownership control positions of status and authority in cultural values and hegemony has not permitted women into the managerial positions.

Until the late 1970s, women remained virtually invisible as managers and their absence was generally considered a non-issue. Since then women managers have been becoming increasingly visible in many countries. Each country produces a growing number of the qualified women seeking managerial positions, as well as, an emerging cadre of women performing every possible managerial task with zeal and favour.

An analysis of the status of women managers reveals that women managers of different countries share certain common features. These are:

Gradual increase in the number of (women) in the managerial profession increase in their education, changing socio-cultural values, increasing awareness and consciousness about their rights and the need for supplementary income are some of the reasons. However, there is still an under-representation of women in

managerial jobs. Most of them hold lower and middle management positions and the number of women remain extremely small in top management positions.

Major barriers, which restrict women's entry into managerial jobs, are stereotypical attitude towards women managers, geographical immobility of women, conflict between career and family responsibility. The stereotypical perspectives of women's traits as inferior, hence, unsuitable for leadership, restrict women's entry into management. The cultural constraints on women's access to managerial positions can be traced to the deep-rooted images of traditional women's role. Gender differences appear more deeply embedded in Asian countries than Western societies.<sup>95</sup>

Factors that confine women managers to reach the top echelon of management are blocked opportunity, lack of support of employers, limited access to information, restricted access to training, fear of success, marriage and motherhood, prioritizations of family over career, stereotyped perceptions.

Discrimination against women managers exists, relating to remuneration, job allocation performance appraisal, promotion, training opportunities and reward structures. The exclusion of women from policy formulation and decision-making relegates them to peripheral, supportive activities. Women are better represented in

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<sup>95</sup>Zainab Rahman, "Women and Employment", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.80-89.

departments like, personnel, human resource management, marketing public relation and training and there is dearth of women in engineering and finance.

Women managers face a dual problem-work and family-which creates a lot of stress, strain and role conflict. Patriarchal divisions of labour consign household tasks, childcare, etc. to women and women's domestic roles are viewed as equal to or more important than their careers. This affects the career perspective and prospects of women directly. The dual burden is further enhance, because, lack of arrangement of flexible working arrangement, lack of childcare benefits, acute shortage of crèches and daycare facilities and re-entry policies.<sup>96</sup>

Changes have taken place, as a result of which more number of women are recruited, for managerial jobs. The major changes are Equal Remuneration Act (equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex), removal of discriminatory clauses in labour legislation, changes in legal status of women, initiatives taken by NGOs, (Non-Government Organizations) business women clubs and media, training programmes conducted by organizations, greater availability of educational opportunities, delay in marriage and having new children, and greater awareness of women relating to their career development. But, these changes are, yet to provide a discrimination-free work environment. Form the common features; it is revealed that gender disparity owes its origin to gender discrimination, which is a worldwide

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<sup>96</sup> Zainab Rahman, "Women and Health", In *Women and Society*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2005, PP.72-79.

phenomenon. Its persistence over the years has prompted the UNDP<sup>97</sup> to introduce the Gender Related Index (GDI) in the year 1995, in its Human Development Report to compare the levels of gender disparity among different countries across the world, for the Human Development Report, the GDI been calculated for 137 countries in 1996. The five top ranking countries are-Sweden (1), Canada (2), Norway (3), Unites States (4) and Finland (5). Several developing countries and areas also do quite well in the GDI ranking: Barbados (16), Bahamas (18), Hong Kong (25), Uruguay (26), Singapore (29), the Republic of Korea (31), Costa Rica (32), and Thailand (33). These countries have succeeded in building the basic human capabilities of both women and men, without substantial gender disparity. India ranks 103 among the 137 countries. Niger, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso and Mali occupy the bottom five places in ascending order. Women in these countries face a double deprivation as overall human development achievement is low in these societies and women's achievement is lower than that of men's several conclusion that can be drawn from the GDI rankings. First, no society treats its women as well as its men. Second, comparing the GDI ranks of countries with their income levels confirms that removing gender inequalities is not dependent on having a high income. Third, gender equality is not necessarily associated with high economic growth. So the most persistent and rising disparities within nation and between nations has been gender disparity, despite a relentless struggle to equalize

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<sup>97</sup> See Devaki Jain, "*Panchayati Raj: Women Changing Governance*", *Gender in Development Monograph Series# 5*, UNDP, September 1995.

opportunities between women and men and also visible in the management. Women occupy only 14 percent of managerial and administrative jobs (Human Development Report, 1996). The table below highlights the economic participation of women in different countries.

### **Economic Participation of Women in Different Countries**

Names of Countries	Administrators and Managers	Professional and Technical Workers	Clerical and Sales Workers	Services Workers
Japan	9	42	50	54
China	12	45	39	52
Malaysia	12	45	-	-
U.K.	33	44	-	-
France	9	41	-	-
Israel	19	54	55	57
South Africa	17	47	-	-
U.S.	42	53	-	60
India	2	21	-	-



## **Status of women managers in India**

While analyzing the status of women managers in India, it is important to discuss the status of Indian women in general. The social status of women in India is comparatively lower than many other countries of the world. Though the Constitution of India guarantees, 'Equality of Status' to women; they do not enjoy full equality in the society. The vast majority of women are illiterate, underpaid, deprived and disadvantaged. Some of our religious and social practices have steeped women in a morass of backwardness, illiteracy and ignorance, condemning them to inferior positions in society, completely dominated by men. But in urban areas, with the spread of education and the increase in number of working women outside their homes, the situation is gradually changing. Women have risen above socio-cultural tradition and well-defined role of a housewife has gradually evolved into the dual and more self-fulfilling role of a housewife and a working woman. Some of the factors responsible for this change are better education, changing socio-cultural values and the need for supplementary income caused by inflation.

Despite these changes, Indian society remains 'male dominated'. Though women have entered various jobs and professions, they are not yet recognized as sincere professional worker. They are regarded as women first, and as workers afterwards. Through the generations, Indian men have dominated women and therefore, they feel humiliated while being ordered by a woman superior. Even women are

prejudiced against each other, the reason being that women are not used to taking orders for other women. Throughout their lives they are conditioned to identify authority with male person such as fathers, husband and sons.

Coming to the political status, though Indian women constitute 24.3 crores out of a total of 51.4 crores of the electorate, their participation rate in the political process is very low. Many women, especially in the rural areas, do not exercise their franchise during elections and even if they do, they act as 'rubber stamps' of their husbands, brother or fathers. Also the representation of women in Parliament and State legislatures is not satisfactory. In the 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election (1996), out of 538 members elected there were only 36 women constituting less than 7 percent of the total membership.

A review of the economic role played by women in India reveals that, Indian women have played a distinctive and significant role in the process of earning a livelihood for the family, putting in sometimes more, sometimes less and often an equal amount of labour compared to men. In India, one third of the labour force consists of women. Workingwomen constitute only 16.43 percent of the female population of the country. Traditional village women are engaged as agricultural labourers, artisans, and producer of handicrafts and also perform menial services. The cultural

norms that influence women engaged in manual labour outside the home vary according to their positions in social hierarchy.<sup>98</sup>

However, developments in the economic field, with increasing stress on an Industrial mode of production, have opened some avenues for women. Modernization, social change and education have enabled some women to enter new professions, and new occupations, which were totally closed to them earlier (Vidya Rani, 1990). For example, the presence of women in the public, private services and other jobs in the tertiary sector is now an accepted one. In both public and private sectors the employment of women is gradually ascending.

### **Few women in government and politics**

Women's participation in politics and government, however, remains limited. Although their parliamentary representation has steadily increased over the past decade, gender parity in politics, at all, levels is still a long way off. By July 2006, women accounted for just fewer than 17% of parliamentarians worldwide. Then countries have no women parliamentarians at all, and in more than 40 others, women account for less than 10% of legislators. At current annual rate of growth in the proportion of women members of national parliaments-about 0.5% worldwide-gender parity in National legislatures will not be achieved until 2068. The under representation of women at the ministerial level and in local government is even

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<sup>98</sup> Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality", In Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Ed.), *Woman Culture & Society*, Stanford University Press, 1974, PP.18-43.

more marked than in national legislatures, as of January 2005, women accounted for just over 14% of government ministers worldwide, 19 governments had no women ministers at all, and among those governments that did include women, most had a token presence of around one to three women ministers. As of March 2006, only three countries-Chile, Spain and Sweden had achieved gender parity in ministerial portfolios. At the local level, women account for less than 1 in 10 of the world's mayors.

There are, however, some encouraging trends in women's participation at the highest level of national politics; Sub-Saharan Africa has its first woman president. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, and Michelle Bachelet was elected to the presidency of Chile in early 2006, Latvia became the first former Soviet Republic to choose a female president as chief of state in 1999, Finland, Ireland and Philippines also currently have women president. Women are heads of government in Bangladesh, Germany, Jamaica, New Zealand, Mozambique, Netherlands and the Republic of Korea.

### **Advocating for women, children and families**

Through constrained by the limited and nascent nature of women's participation in national legislatures, the available evidence indicates that their involvement fosters direct and tangible changes in policy outcomes that reflect the priorities, experiences and contributions of women, children and families. Women, in politics,

are making a difference in at least three important arenas: national legislatures, local government and post conflict reconstruction.

### **National politics**

A better representation of women in parliament can make legislatures more gender and child sensitive can influence legislation and policies that address the rights of both groups. Case studies confirm a strong commitment by women legislators to issues related to children, women and families. For example, a pioneering study of women legislators in Latin America found that in the 1993-1194 parliaments, women deputies in Argentina were 9.55 more likely to sponsor children and family bills than their male counterparts. Recent evidence suggests that this pattern hold true over the subsequent decade, with women legislators in Argentina playing a crucial role in ensuring the passage of a law that modified that country's penal code to explicitly define sexual crimes against women and children.<sup>99</sup>

However India should work towards empowering women economically through microfinance programs and encourage them to be panchayats or in village councils as women leaders. As India falls in the lowest quartile with respect to the number of women in parliament(9.1%). The UAE with 22.5%, has more women representatives according to the UN's 2008 survey of women in politics which said that 15<sup>th</sup>LokSabha elections have delivered a record having 59 women as members

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<sup>99</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* Princeton University Press, Part-1, Chapter-2, 1981, PP.101-147.

of parliament, most probably the highest since independence, and 17 of these women are under 40 and the representation of women leaders at the grassroots level in India is nearly 50%, since the passing 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment in 1992 according to which one-third of all seats are allotted to women. Panchayati Raj (consists of three levels) ,that bedrock of rural government has fostered more and more women participants and leaders.<sup>100</sup> several states like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and most recently Uttarakhand have allotted not just the required seats of 33% of panchayat for women but also increased it to 50%. In Bihar it has seen that the spouses of women head of panchayats styling themselves as '*mukhiyapatis*'. Rajasthan also announced 50% reservation before 2010 panchayat election. Naturally the rise of Indian women as panchayat leaders is a remarkable and spectacular achievement because India has one of the worst records with respect to the way it treats the female sex as suppressed, violated and discriminated against; basically Indian women have the odds stacked against them. At the end women empowerment along with joint responsibilities of both male and female section is not only essential for emancipation of women, but also for the progress of human culture and civilization.

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<sup>100</sup>Chandrakala, Padia (Ed.) Feminism, Tradition and Modernity, IIAS, Simla, 2002, PP.36-54.