

CHAPTER: 6

POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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6.1.INTRODUCTION

The concept of gender and leadership inextricably connected to each other. Gender plays a significant role in determining a person's style of leadership. The gender of a person becomes important while discussing leadership qualities. Also, leadership is not a gender neutral concept. We look at the concept of leadership through a 'gender lenses'. As Linda K. Richter (1990-91) writes "Male dominance has been legitimized in law and custom. Politics or the public life of the polity has been presumed to be a natural sphere for men while for women, to the extent they had a space or turf to call their own, the 'natural' sphere was presumed to be private". Jean Blondel (1987, p. 25) in a cross-cultural study of political leaders concludes that "leaders are overwhelmingly male". Also, Sjoberg(2009) argues that the core ideas of leadership are related to masculine leadership and create stereotypes, therefore, it can be deduced that the concept of leadership is a gendered concept. The characteristics attributed to leadership are those associated with masculinity. In social culture, women and men are still expected to manifest certain qualities in their thought and function. The qualities include friendliness, kindness, and unselfishness which are assumed to be hallmarks of femininity. In contrast the qualities assigned to men such as assertiveness and instrumental competence that are associated with "masculinity".

Gender stereotypes are pervasive, well documented and highly resistant to change. These stereotypes not only describe stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of women and men, they also tend to prescribe how men and women ought to be. Men are stereotyped with agentic characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality and decisiveness whereas stereotypical attributes of women include communitarian characteristics such as concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness and nurturance. In addition to conforming to the stereotype-based expectations, it is also expected that women should avoid behaviours that are incompatible with the stereo-type (Yadav, 2010).

In leadership roles, gender stereotypes are particularly damaging for women because agentic, as opposed to communitarian, tendencies often are indispensable. According to the role congruity theory, the agentic qualities thought necessary in the leadership role are incompatible with the predominantly communitarian qualities stereotypically associated with women, thus resulting in prejudice against female leaders (Eagly& Karau, 2002).

Many of the impediments women face in the leadership domain stem from the incongruity between the female gender role and leadership role. Women face a double standard in the leadership role: they must come across as extremely competent but also be seen as appropriately 'female', a set of standards men are not held to. One way women can increase their perceived warmth and their influence is by combining communitarian qualities such as warmth and friendliness with agentic qualities such as exceptional competence and assertiveness. Because women engage in most transformational behaviours and contingent reward behaviour to a greater extent than men they probably will begin occupying and succeeding in a greater number of leadership positions in our society, helping to break down think leader-think male stereotype. Moreover, the incongruity between the leadership role and female gender role is gradually decreasing. Recent research indicates that women have become more assertive and valuing leadership and power more as job attributes, without losing their femininity. Besides the perception about the leadership role is also changing and it is being seen as less masculine and more androgynous (Schein, 2001).

Therefore, gender is an important factor of both the path to power as well as the exercise of leadership. Gender biased perceptions and expectations are understood to have a significant impact on assessments of behavioural style and performance of the leaders. While, scholars belonging to the post-modern, Southern and Black feminisms criticise the gender-as-difference argument and point to the tremendous diversity in politics across the Indian subcontinent due to differences in identities based on region, religion, caste and class, which come together to create gender inequality in a number of ways (Spary, 2007, p. 263). Thus, one can argue that there are as many differences among women as between men and women, which have been lost in the internalisation of differences between genders that is part of the daily discourse on them (Pai, 2013, p.108). However, the present chapter would focus on the contested issue whether a significant difference exists between the men and women leaders or not. Also, it will examine whether the women legislators of West Bengal stand out as feminine or feminist leaders

6.2. CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

In general, women recognize problems of gender inequality and gender-based discrimination in all most every aspect of life. Gender is one of the major factors influencing women participation and representation in politics. For women, it is difficult

to be a leader or being in leadership positions, particularly at the highest levels of decision making. To rise in power trace women encounter with the obstacles, restrictions and deterrents in the society as well as face strange problems in their political life. To understand the gender gap in political representation, based on literature survey as well as field collected data, we can identify some recurrent barriers:

- Women perceive the electoral environment as highly competitive and biased against female candidates;
- Women are much less likely than men to see themselves as qualified for leadership role;
- Potential female candidates are less competitive, less confident, and more risk averse than their male counterparts;
- Women have disproportionate family responsibilities that interfere with the time required for successful political careers;
- Women are less likely to receive encouragement to run for political office, both from political officials and activists and from family and colleagues;
- Women may also be deterred by the media portrayals of female candidates as less intelligent or mainstream than male candidates. Sometimes media depicts them as bossy, combative and not enough feminine etc (Lawless and Fox, 2012).
- The increasing violence, sexual harassment and victimization of women at the ground level in many of our political parties are even more detrimental in recent decades.
- In addition, women are disproportionately concentrated in lower level and lower authority leadership positions than men, which is commonly called the *glass ceiling*, the invisible barrier preventing women from ascending into leadership positions (Yadav, 2010).

Furthermore, women have more negative feelings than men toward certain aspects, such as losing privacy and sacrificing time with family etc. They dare to enter politics today due to some societal imposed culture or thought, such as sometimes they may believe it is necessary to deny their sex in order to compete with men that is attaining or holding a leadership position. They may think they are successful when they evoke the comment 'she is just like a man'. Women also shouldered disproportionate family obligations. In dual-career couples, they were six times more likely than men to bear responsibility for the majority household tasks and about ten times more likely to be the primary childcare

provider. Women worked about the same hours as men but spent two-thirds more time on child care (Lawless and Fox, 2012, p.14). All these responsibilities and feelings make the situation more challenging for women.

When the person who achieves a top leadership role is female, the political and personal biography both allow and force attention to the interplay of perceptions, expectations, interpretations of life experiences, and myths that make up the social definition of reality and 'appropriate' gender roles (Baxter & Lansing, 1983; Conway, Bourke & Scott, 1989). The lives and careers of women who have headed nations offer a unique vantage point on the role of gender in political life. The prevalence of gender distinctions becomes clearer as one recounts the challenges and opportunities that leaders have faced in their climb to the top. The depth and tenacity of gender stereotypes become clear when they continue to affect individuals even after they have achieved the ultimate political position (Genovase, 2013, p.3). Also, women leaders face cranked judgement than their male counterparts when they make mistake, simply because they are women.

However, women face more primary challenges, perhaps because they are more vulnerable than their counterparts that may discourage them to ascending into leadership positions, while having women in leadership positions does not necessarily bring gender equality but could make a move towards equality.

6.3.WOMEN LEGISLATORS: OBSTACLES AND MEASURES TO INHIBIT THE OBSTACLES

6.3.1. OBSTACLES:

The Figure 6.1 indicates that out of 25 women leader respondents 15 said that they faced direct or indirect obstacles, 1 replied faced problem to some extent and nine women legislators have denied any difficulty in their political career. In details obstacles are discussed below

FIGURE NO 6.1



- Protest or strong objection from the opposition political party in infrastructure development activities, like constructing roads, bridges etc.
- Faced sudden physical attack at the time of routine visit in constituency area even sometimes got open and direct threat to death for standing beside the people to resist anti-social and criminal activities in politically disturbed area.
- Sometimes administrators within constituency did not co-operate to carry out welfare and development works, group politics is also there.
- Sometimes faced gender discrimination within the respective party pertaining to decision making power, even not getting co-operation always from male members of the party.
- In spite of being elected people's representatives did not get recognition in ruling party's political programmes because of not being elected from ruling party and even did not get any call from ruling party for getting involved in some developmental works which is initiated by the ruling party and carried out in respective constituency.
- Need to prove capability repeatedly as an elected leader if once unable to be elected then in the next elections they were not given party ticket to contest the election.
- Mostly, women are allotted lower level and lower authority leadership positions than men.
- Also, faced victimization, mental harassment and character assassination.

6.3.2. MEASURES TO INHIBIT THE OBSTACLES:

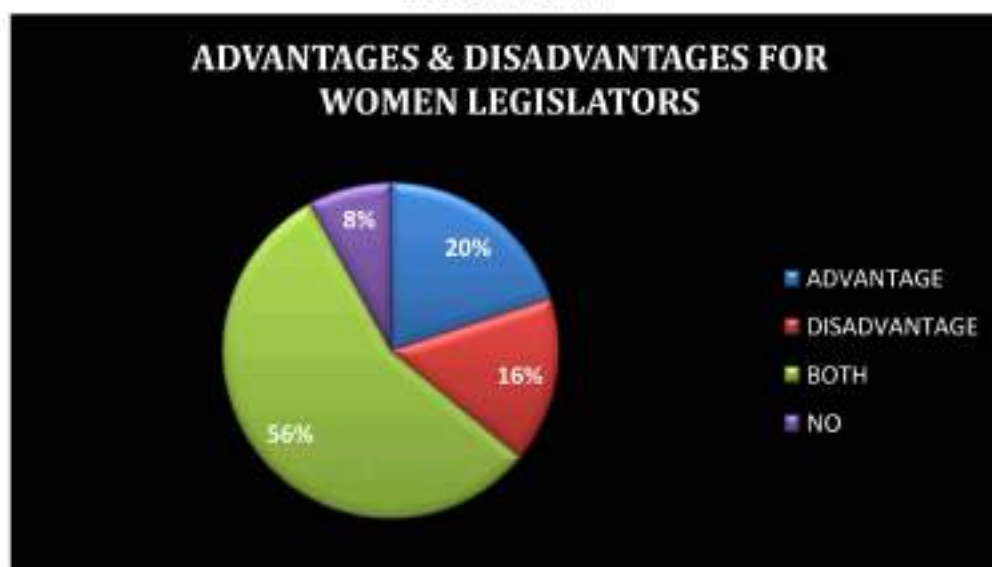
Total Fifteen women legislators said that they have been overcome the obstacles in their political career through the following measures:

- By own rational thought convinced the protesters that the initiated developmental works would improve material well being (welfare) of people and united the people to make a support group in favour of initiated welfare plan for them.
- With the support and co-operation of the public get the courage and confidence to overcome the obstacles and ultimately become succeeded.
- Self-confidence, self-determination and patience helped to handle more complex problems peacefully.
- Sometimes directions, guidance and suggestions from the supreme authority of the party helped to inhibit the obstacles.
- When problem rose on any particular issue within constituency usually communicate face to face with the constituents to reach at the root cause of the problems and took required steps to solve the issue as early as possible.
- Sometimes ignored the criticism of opposition party and build friendly relationship with them to handle the problematic situations.
- Understand the problematic situation and then took the measures as situation requires, for instance sometimes it required to be silent and sometimes to be vocal.

6.4.ADVANTAGES& DISADVANTAGES FOR WOMEN AS LEADERS

In spite of several challenges, women are visible in the legislatures and decision making positions though the percentage always remained low. However, changes in societies, states and organisations are beginning to make it easier for women to reach top positions. The culture almost everywhere is changing; gendered work assumptions such as male model of work, the notion of uninterrupted full-time careers and the separation of work and family are being challenged (Yadav, 2010, p.32). We all know the fact a woman become a leader after facing lots of impediment and even she remain in the position by coherence with the obstacles.

FIGURE NO: 6.2



During the field work we found the data, women leaders are, with deterrents, getting some advantages at the time of performing their duties as a leader. The figure 6.2 shows that along with advantages, 56% women legislators mentioned that they faced some disadvantages also for being women leaders, like due to their responsibility of children and family, they are not allowing to stay outside and out of station for long times; fear to losing social respect they should keep social distance when working with male political workers. 20% women legislators said that for being women leaders they can easily get co-operation from each and every sections of the society particularly in conflictive cases, people withdraw dharna or protest actions very quickly when they get assurance from a woman leader or they may feel ought not to harass a woman, even being a woman leader they get relief from political disturbances especially at late night incidents, women able to gain the trust of constituents easily so they can reach inside the conflicts or problems and find the solution promptly, in the cases of development activities women are able to convince everyone and gain the enormous support and also getting priority when women related issues arose in the house of Parliament or state legislature. Therefore, we found that all these support, co-operation and assistance allow the emergence of female leaders in political systems also motivate and provide the mental strength to common women to be associated into politics.

6.5.DO MEN AND WOMEN LEAD DIFFERENTLY?

Since 1990s, despite the challenges and might be advantages, women are showing a remarkable presence in top leadership positions in Indian politics. Mamata Banerjee as leader of Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Mayawati as leader of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) are instances in point. Therefore in a pertinent way, in our studysome core questions arise as whether a significant difference exists between the men and women leaders? Whether women lead in a different manner from men? Whether women or men are more effective as leaders have garnered greater attention (Yadav, 2010)?

Essentialized accounts attempt to explain differences in leadership capabilities and style between men and women by arguing that women are naturally more caring and nurturing and men are naturally more aggressive because of differing hormone levels, the natural sexual division of childbearing and female attributes bestowed upon them for use in motherhood (Siddiqui, 2010, p.353).Others would argue that these differences are more symbolic than real and that difference exists more substantially among women than it does between men and women. The internalization of symbolic differences on an unconscious level has resulted in their materialization through the everyday “performativity” of gender stereotypical behaviour (Butler, 1999, p.35).Therefore, writers are asserting that there are indeed gender differences in leadership styles and that in contemporary society women’s leadership is more effective (Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995).

Virginia E. Schein (1989, p.154) notes the implications of potential differences between male and feminine style of leadership:

“That women would lead or govern differently is not new. Women’s leadership has been linked with enhancing world peace, reducing corruption and improving opportunities for the downtrodden. If women, as keeper of the values of social justice, nurturance and honesty, are put in charge, then the conflicts, corruption and greed around us will go away-or so say proponents of this view. The maximalist perspective within the now fragmented feminist movement supports this idea. It argues for innate or highly socialized gender differences and views women as more likely to exhibit cooperative, compassionate and humane types of behaviours than men”.

Based upon natural characteristics and assigned gender behaviour we have listed the traits and issues associated with man and woman. The following tables 6.1 present the traits of woman and man & 6.2 present the issues of women and men leader's preference.

TABLE NO: 6.1
TRAITS ASSOCIATED WITH WOMAN AND MAN

Sl. No	Woman's Traits	Man's Traits
1	Compassionate	Emotionally stable
2	Hard working	decisive
3	Speaks out honestly	Tough
4	Moral	Better qualified
5	Handles family responsibilities while serving in office	Handles crisis
6	More liberal	More conservative

TABLE NO: 6.2
ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN AND MEN LEADERS

Sl. No	Woman's Preference	Man's Preference
1	Helping the disadvantage groups	Trade
2	Health care	Agriculture
3	Education	Security
4	Environment	Budget

Whether the style of leadership among men and women is actually different or is simply constructed as so, the significance lies in the effect this perceived difference has on the leader-follower relationship. Astin and Leland assert that "while studies show no clear pattern of difference in behaviour between male and female leaders, subordinates react differently to similar behaviour according to whether the leader is a man or a woman" (Stivers, 1993, p.69). Thus the perception of a leader's behaviour is in part an outcome of gendered societal perceptions of men and women in leadership positions. In cases of political leadership, the issue of gender only becomes an issue for the women politician; failure for the male politician is rarely attributed to gender (Siddiqui, 2010, p.354). Nevertheless, studies show that "female leader's style of governance [in India] is certainly not softer, less autocratic or more equal than that of male leaders...women's rule is not necessarily more democratic or less confrontational than that of male leaders (Hellmann-Rajanayagam, 2004, p.3)...". Behavioural traits may never embody the same meaning for a woman as they do for a man, and vice-versa. Thus male leadership

behaviour will not be interpreted the same as female leadership behaviour, in part due to the institutionalisation of hegemonic masculine behaviour as the behavioural norm (Siddiqui, 2010, p.355). Scholars like Sunder Rajan (1993, p.108) suggest that there is little difference between men's and women's style and performativity, professing that women leaders imbibe the male organisational norms.

Early research on leadership style differences between women and men compare it either interpersonally oriented and task-oriented styles or democratic and autocratic styles. In a meta-analysis of 1990 (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p.233-56), it was found that contrary to stereotypic expectations, women were not found to lead in a more interpersonally oriented and less task oriented manner than men in organisational studies. These differences were found only in settings where behaviour was more regulated by social roles. The only robust gender difference found across settings was that women led in a more democratic, or participative manner than men. These studies also revealed that women were devalued and branded autocratic or directive when they led in a masculine manner. This was a manifestation of the prejudice women experienced in leadership positions (Yadav, 2010, p. 17-18).

However, in the early 1980s, leadership researchers began studying a new style of leadership first articulated by J. M. Burns (1978) as transforming leadership, later modified and expanded into transformational leadership by B. M. Bass (1985, chapter 9). A recent meta-analysis by Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Van Engen (2003) has found that women styles tend to be more transformational than men's, and they also tend to engage in more contingent reward behaviours than men, all of which are aspects of leadership that predict effectiveness (Yadav, 2010, p. 18).

In addition to leadership style, the relative effectiveness of male and female leaders has been assessed by a number of research studies (Jacobson & Effertz, 1974; Tsui & Gutek, 1984). It has been found that overall men and women are equally effective leaders, but there are gender differences. For instance, women were less effective than men in military position, but they were somewhat more effective than men in education, government and social service organisations and substantially more effective than men in middle management positions, where communitarian interpersonal skills are highly valued. In addition, women were less effective than men when they supervised a higher proportion of male subordinates (Yadav, 2010, p. 18).

Thus, empirical research supports small differences in leadership style and effectiveness between men and women. It shows that the women experience slight effectiveness that disadvantages in masculine leader roles, whereas more feminine roles offer them some advantages (Yadav, 2010, p. 19). However, women exceed men in the use of democratic or participatory styles, and they are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviours and contingent reward, styles that are associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership (Fondas, 1977).

6.5.1. POINT AND COUNTER-POINT:

Academic researchers have a greater diversity in their views. Many argue that there are little or no differences on leadership style and effectiveness.

One approach to women as leaders has been characterised as the 'women do lead differently' approach. It is asserted that women in general possess particular skills in communication, interpersonal relationships and negotiation and conflict resolution (Collins and Singh 2006, p.14). Some theorists also attribute to women leaders the rare ability to create easily a strong *esprit de corps* (Stanford, Oates and Flores 1995, p.10). These, as compared with what are taken to be the male qualities of self assertion, independence, control and competition are characteristics which may be valued in subordinates but not, when displayed why women as leadership qualities (Alimo Metcalfe 1995, p.8). Essentialists assume that differences are innate. Others argue that women and men are socialized by family, social and media pressures and by differences in their experiences into differing reactions and styles.

By contrast another approach to leadership by women finds little or no difference in leadership styles. A number of studies have suggested that variations amongst men and amongst women may be as great as those between them (Stevens, 2007, p.136). For example women who become leaders may, to a greater extent than those who do not, exhibit behaviours (thinking strategically and taking risks) that are also notable amongst men who are leaders (Collins and Singh, 2006, p.15; Oshagbemi and Gill, 2003). Two leading American journalists, exploring the likelihood of a female President of the United States, suggested that the first female President was likely to have 'the body of a woman but the character traits of a man'. Amongst the leading American women politicians they interviewed they found a general view that the actions of British Prime Minister Margaret

Thatcher during Falklands war had made a marked difference to the perception of women leaders: she 'did a great thing for women leaders' - it can no longer be said that women leaders cannot be tough (Clift and Brazaitis, 2000, p.21).

On the basis of above mentioned two approaches, we analysed the content of women legislators of West Bengal. In our empirical study, based on '*women do lead differently*' approach, it is found that women legislators Smt. Sakuntala Paik, Smt. Anjali Mondal, Smt. Sadhana Mallick, Dr. Tapati Saha, Smt. Shanta Chhetri, Smt. Minati Sen, Smt. Kanika Ganguly, Smt. Kumkum Chakraborty and Smt. Mitali Roy argued that women leaders work differently than male leaders. While women legislators Smt. Chandrima Bhattacharya, Smt. Protima Rajak, Smt. Manju Basu, Smt. Bilasi Bala Sahis and Smt. Firdousi Begum argued that each women leader work differently. Women legislator only Smt. Rupa Bagchi agreed with both of the above arguments. For the conveniences of the analysis we engendered three approaches as – *individual-as-difference approach*, *gender-as-difference approach* and *mixed (of both) approach*. The individual-as-difference approach implies that every individual possess different characteristics and skills. On the basis of their different characteristics they work differently to each other. And the gender-as-difference approach expounds that leaders work differently on the basis of their gender associated characteristics. As a consequence, women and men leaders work differently from each other. The mixed approach considers that every individual have unique characteristics as well as they perform their gender assigned roles and both the aspects are visible in their working practices.

Women legislators associated with gender-as-difference approach expressed that –

- Woman leaders are work more attentively;
- They are able to identify with everyone particularly with a woman more easily and can build relation with them;
- They are sensitive and more concerned about societal problem and able to take more serious initiative to solve these issues;
- Can paid more efforts to understand the inner problem of the family and can also paid greater attention to problems;
- They are more determined to reach their goal;
- They are hard worker and tried to work impartially;
- They can think deeply and able to take decision promptly;

- Able to give response toward situational demands of the people;
- They try to work with negotiation and co-operation&
- Less confrontational, so they try to avoid the situation which creates conflict.

Our study found also women legislators Smt. Mamata Bhunia, Smt. SeuliSaha, Smt. Swati Khandoker, Smt. Anju Kar, Smt. Asima Choudhuri, Smt. Sabitri Mitra, Smt. Malini Bhattacharya, Smt. Smita Bakshi, Smt. Mala Saha, Smt. Sonali Guha (Bose) stated that *no or little differences exists between men and women leaders*. They consider there are certain attributes which more manifest in leader rather than in men and women. The combination of co-operative, attentive, assertive, objective, rationality, nurturance in a unified effort, which is the mark of the good leader as in fact a bringing together of those traits popularly characterised as masculine and feminine. For example, for ages, competition, aggression and power etc were treated as masculine traits. But now a day, it is found that women are as competitive and prone to power-wielding or aggressive as their male counterparts. Mrs. Gandhi as the Prime Minister was said to be “the only man in the company of old women” in her cabinet. There is nothing that separates Sonia Gandhi, Mayawati, Vasundhara Raje, Sheila Dikshit, Renuka Chaudhury, Kanti Singh, Uma Bharati, Sushma Swaraj and even Mamata Banerjee as less competitive, power-wielding or aggressive than Manmohan Singh, Pranab Mukherjee, Sharad Pawar, Arjun Singh, Digvijai Singh, L.K. Advani, Jyoti Basu etc. Hence, the gender considerations are no longer entertainable (Sharma, 2010) in leadership studies.

However, from the above discussions we have reached to a point that in performing leadership different situations require different styles. The leader adept at recognizing what the situation requires and adapting his or her style of leadership to fit that situation stands a better chance of achieving success than the leader who rigidly adheres to one style of leadership in all situations (Genovase, 2013, p.338). While the stereotypical beliefs remain strong so that, when working as leaders or managers, women (and men) are expected to behave as our culture defines them on the basis of their gender alone. Thus it is anticipated that a woman leader will be more “relationship centered, nurturing, and sensitive” than a man (Martin, 1993, p. 275).

6.6.FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

To examine the important issue of the study that whether the women parliamentarians and legislators in West Bengal stand out as feminist leaders or are they entangled within the

dominant mainstream discourse of leadership, we should know about why feminism is important to leadership, what feminist leadership is and whom we considered as feminist leaders.

A famous feminist scholar in India, Srilatha Batliwala a year ago in a video talked about why is feminism important to leadership. She said, feminism is important to leadership because we cannot actually define feminist leadership without defining feminism itself, what is feminism meant to us. She defines feminism as an ideology, a way of analysing society and a vision of what a just society looks like. As an ideology feminism believes in equality for all not just between women and men, it is a non-binary vision. Feminism is a unique way of analysing society through the lense of power, who gets what, who does what, who decides what and who sets the agenda. Most importantly, feminism is unique because it opens the door and looks inside at how power operate in the most intimate private spaces. It is only feminists who recognize for instance that even our bodies and our minds are sides of power and control and that is why feminism is important to leadership because it seeks equality and justice in spaces where no one has entered before.

Feminists define leadership is a gendered concept. A feminist perspective on leadership focuses on the influence of gender on interpretation of leadership. Leadership texts and role models in society imply that leadership as patriarchal, hierarchical, competitive, heroic, and individualistic. The societal gender roles of men align with leadership and consider that men can and be more effective leaders. With that recognition feminist analysis assumes that the characteristics experiences of men, as more privileged beings, and of women, as the “second sex”, result in different conceptions of good leadership (Bensimon, 1989, p 149). It is generally accepted that women are underrepresented in leadership roles and they have traditionally faced more barriers to becoming leaders than men. The literature and research about women’s styles of leadership have based on stereotypes characteristics and societal beliefs about femininity. While Stereotypes feminine attributes do not generally mesh with society’s perspectives about leadership. The stereotypes feminine attributes are seen as nurturing, more relational, emotional, more caring, less assertive, and less confrontational than men. As Eagly, Karau & Makhijaninote, “gender role expectations spill over onto leadership roles . . . and produce important consequences” (1995, p. 140).

Feminist reformulates the interpretation of leadership based on the concept of power. Gender is about power and power is gendered. The relationship between gender and power has both a substantive aspect (The relatively disempowered position of women) and a conceptual aspect (the power of gender) (Peterson and Runyan, 1999, p.31). From feminist perspective, political leadership is associated with power that inextricably linked with the domination of women, to liberate themselves from this women are trying to organise themselves collectively. Instead of there being leaders and followers, women would empower themselves through taking responsibility for decisions, which would be reached by consensus. Leaders have varying, but substantial, power over followers. Power determines who gets to be the leader, how they lead and the stability of the leadership. This sort of power is the sort that feminists call 'power-over' (Allen, 1998). Amy Allen explains that power-over is the 'ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices available to another actor or set of actors in a non-trivial way' (Allen, 1998, 33). This idea of power is gendered both in theory and in practice. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan (1999, p.213) explain that 'to un-gender power and politics we must alter the gendered division of power that established and had continued to reproduce masculinist politics. Feminist work has looked at power-as-empowerment and power-as-the-ability to work in concert, or power-to and power-with (Allen, 1998, p. 32). In other words, they are looking for power as the ability to work together or fight against oppression, rather than just to dominate or oppress (Dahl, 2000, p. 475–94). Hence, the feminist reinterpretation of power includes not only power-over but power-to and power-with.

Feminisms are not only interested in power but in empowerment, which is a key concept in the logic of emancipation (Lennie 1999, 103). According to June Lennie, empowerment discourse includes: social justice principles; open, honest communication; getting understanding through using ordinary language; developing trust and legitimising and validating community issues; letting everybody 'have their say'; listening to the community without judgment; using consultation to 'break down barriers' between experts and non-experts with the goal of empowerment; and aiming for common understandings (1999, p. 104). Empowerment discourses lead feminisms to an additional, creative interpretation of power (Huntley 1997, p. 300). Amy Allen introduces the concept of power-with, or solidarity used to act in concert (1998, p. 35). Many feminists employ Hannah Arendt's understanding of power (Elshtain 1985; Elshtain 1992; Tickner

1992). Arendt defines power as ‘human ability to act in concert and begin anew’ (Elshtain 1985, p. 51; Arendt 1970). John Hoffman explains that ‘by emphasizing plurality and community, Arendt consciously seeks to distance power from *domination*’ and to understand power collaboratively (Hoffman 2001, p. 151). Arendt’s understanding makes power the true opposite of violence (Elshtain 1992, p. 273). Power, here, can be seen as the *deconstruction* of traditional, coercive forms of leadership. Amy Allen contends that feminisms should look for an integrative approach to power, seeing it as not a mutually exclusive ideal-type but a complex web which we can understand and make choices about (1998, p. 26).

It is noteworthy that mainstream books on leadership do not include discussions of feminist leadership, even when focused on women. For example, neither Brown and Beverly (1998), in a volume entitled *Women and Leadership*, nor Rosenthal (1998), in one entitled *When Women Lead*, index “feminism.” On the other hand, they do index “feminine” and “femininity” (Lott, 2007, p.25). Also, Lisa Mitchell, a feminist labor scholar, writes “The exact term ‘feminist leadership’ proved to be scarce in the literature that discusses women in leadership positions” (Mitchell, 2004, p.2). In practice, there is a difference between women’s leadership and feminist leadership, because the latter has a particular political standpoint (Bunch, 2002). Bernice Lott introduces three insights about the existing approaches to leadership and women (Lott, 2007, p.24-27):

- That mainstream research and theorization only engages with the ‘*feminine*’—not *feminist*—style of leadership;
- Even works *devoted to women’s leadership* do not address or discuss feminist leadership; and
- The *attributes of feminine leadership styles are all within the accepted gendered roles of women*, i.e., nurturing, caring, sensitive, cooperative, consultative, inclusive etc (Batliwala, 2010, p.8).

Before turning to the question of feminist leadership, we need to examine what we mean by the concepts of feminist and feminism. Also in this regard, we should know the distinction between “*feminine*” and “*feminist*”, is a crucially significant one—in both theory and practice. The term “*feminine*” is defined by behaviours presumed to characterize women whereas “*feminist*” is defined by a set of assumptions and values, and

attention to empirically validated historical and contemporary circumstances and power inequities (Lott, 2007, p. 25-26). Lott described fundamental to *feminism* is the value that all persons should be permitted equality of opportunity for full development to the extent that this development does not impede that of others. Since ample historical and contemporary evidence shows that women as a group have experienced significantly fewer opportunities and greater restrictions than men, feminists—who may be either women or men—pay particular attention to women’s experiences and circumstances (Lott, 1994, p. 6). Martin (1993, p. 276) notes that feminism is primarily a “political orientation.” It is aimed at ending the power inequities between women and men, with the social category of woman understood as not unitary—but situated in ethnic, social class, age, and other significant contexts. Thus feminism is concerned with fostering change—political, social, and economic—in the interest of justice and maximizing opportunities for personal growth and well-being. With this as the fundamental objective, feminist practice uses a variety of strategies and tactics to achieve it. Martin (1993) and others suggest that feminist practice illustrates the valuing of mutuality, inclusion, co-operation, nurturance, empowerment, participation, and the devaluing of status differences, competition, and separation (Lott, 2007, p.27).

Indeed, we found the results of our web-based search that many literatures about feminine leadership, female leadership and women in leadership and while very few data exists about feminist leadership. Sometimes it also found that the term feminine leadership and feminist leadership used interchangeably. Also, Lott asserts that it is critical to make a distinction between feminine and feminist leadership, since the former does not engage with gender power and women’s lack of access to formal positions of authority (Batliwala, 2010, p.9). A leadership style that conforms to the way women are expected to behave, whether attributed to nature, socialization, or gender role, is *feminine leadership* (Lott, 2007, p.25-26). But, feminine leadership fails to recognize and make salient the inherent power differential based on societal oppression (or sexism) that disproportionately affects women as compared to men. Feminine leadership also fails to recognize heterogeneity among women, relying on essentialism and stereotypes (Gasser, 2014). On the other side, *feminist leadership* considered as the new paradigm for the social equality, justice, and social transformation which suggests the alternative method of leading. Despite differences among feminist theories, there are

central points of agreement about equality of representation and empowerment (Gasser, 2014).

Much of the early feminist work on leadership emerged from North American feminists, and occurred within larger discussions of power, and of alternative, non-patriarchal, non-hierarchical structures and organizations (Bunch and Fisher, 1976, p. 2-13). Southern feminists were perhaps less focused on leadership per se at this time, but equally engaged in experiments with alternative structures and processes, and with deep analyses of the gendered nature of power in the social, economic, and political realm. And in both North and South, there was widespread research and analysis of women's exclusion from power and authority in the public realm, with accompanying advocacy campaigns for increasing women's access to political power, and for greater representation of women in leadership positions in government, business, and civil society (Batliwala, 2010, p.9).

Consequently, feminist approaches to and definitions of leadership were often indirect products of their struggles to examine their own relationship to and practice of power, to advance gender equality in positions of power in the public and private sector, and to create feminist structures that would not reproduce the patriarchal models that dominated most societies and cultures. There was a very vibrant search for theory and practice in alternative ways of using and applying power, new, non-hierarchical organizational forms, and thus, new ways of leading (Batliwala, 2010, p.9-10).

To find a single definition of feminist leadership is more challenging, there are many different definitions of feminist leadership, some of which are as follows:

The point is that wherever we are as women, wherever we are situated in our lives, we can advance a feminist agenda if we stop thinking about how to be leaders and think rather about how to be doers, how to be agents. Gerda Lerner (1995)

.... feminist leadership is ... women and women's organizations sharing power, authority and decision-making in our common pursuit of social, legal, political, economic and cultural equality. DAWN Ontario

Patriarchy, reflected through all the structures and institutions of our world, is a system that glorifies domination, control, violence, competitiveness and greed. It dehumanizes men as much as it denies women their humanity. So we need leadership that will explore and expose these links and challenge patriarchy. The only leadership that does this is feminist leadership. -Peggy Antrobus (2002)

In modern leadership theory, the leader plays [a] star role (takes the lead, becomes the head), all others become bit players, supporting characters, and extras in the play, the theatrics of leadership. Modern leadership is by definition hierarchical, male and phallic spectacle. Feminist leadership is more circular, bottom up and less male. -David M. Boje (2000)

Leadership from a feminist standpoint is informed by the power of the feminist lens, which enable the feminist leader to identify injustices and oppressions and inspires her to facilitate the development of more inclusive, holisticcommunities. Feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice, and equity and strive to keep issues of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, and ability at the forefront The elements particular to a feminist leadership construction include a focus on both individual or micro-level and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring marginalized voices to the center of the conversation, and a willingness to take risks as on strives to enact a transformative agenda. -Tracy Barton (2006)

Following the above definitions a composite definition of feminist leadership given by Srilatha Batliwala as follows:

“Women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilize others –especially other women– around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realization of human rights for all” (Batliwala, 2010, p.14).

ActionAid, an international federation working for a just world free from poverty, oppression, and patriarchy, to achieve its goal adopted a set of feminist leadership principles. We found that to mention here all these principles because clarity can be

achieved on feminist leadership. So let us turn now to the principles of feminist leadership (ActionAid's Ten Principles of Feminist Leadership", n.d.).

I. Self-awareness

To lead with empathy and open minds, feminist leaders should keep their egos in check. In order to do this, they should work towards accepting their vulnerabilities, as well as recognising and valuing their strengths and those of others.

II. Self-care and caring for others

Feminist leaders should take care own emotional and physical well-being, in order to renew their inner sources of inspiration and compassion so they can continue to give of their best. Also, they encourage and support others to do the same, actively working towards a more flexible and supportive work environment, particularly for those with caring responsibilities.

III. Dismantling bias

Feminist leaders help to uncover and challenge any forms of discriminatory policies and processes at workplace. If they found any discrimination then call them out and change them. Also, they must be aware of how their own privileges can make others feel disempowered or inferior, as well as how they react to others' privilege, and deliberately change their behaviour to treat everyone as equals.

IV. Inclusion

Feminist leaders must create ways for everyone to be equally heard, respected and successful and to recognize and respond to different barriers to participation.

V. Sharing power

Feminist leaders create spaces for others to lead. They work together to establish shared goals and trust and empower colleagues to share leadership in reaching those goals.

VI. Responsible and transparent use of power

Feminist leaders should be clear and transparent in making decisions, with appropriate consultation. They also believe in allocating resources.

VII. Accountable Collaboration

Ensuring collective goals are clearly defined and feminist leaders work collectively to overcome the challenges and also accountable for achieving them.

VIII. Respectful Feedback

Seeking, giving and valuing constructive feedback as an opportunity for two-way learning. Try to resolve conflict through active listening, timely intervention and promoting non-violent and respectful communication and behaviour.

IX. Courage

For the aim transformative change, seeking out new ideas and learning from mistakes rather than fearing failure, and empowering those who work with to do the same.

X. Zero Tolerance

Intolerance for any forms of discrimination, exploitation and abuse of power in the workplace, and support those who do the same.

A feminist management or leadership style, according to Martin (1993), encourages competition not between individuals but between work units, promotes open discussion and democratic participation, shares resources, and helps subordinates grow and do their best by empowering, not exploiting, them. Based on electronic messages posted on feminist leadership website, Chin (2003) proposed collaborative, nurturing, empowering, and consensus building. Others suggested visionary, inclusive, addressing difficult issues, encouraging and honoring the contributions of others, valuing growth and development, and being supportive of others' strengths (Lott, 2007, p.28).

Therefore, what do we mean by feminist leadership? Feminist leadership is the process of re-distribution of power and responsibility and a vision towards social justice, equality, empowerment and fairness. It believes in non-violence, non-discrimination, co-operation, equal share and equal participation. Feminist leadership is not individualistic rather it is collaborative, based on sharing of power and building collective leadership. Feminist leadership is not just the feminine qualities of women leaders rather it offers a political approach for alternative method of leading and through practicing feminist way it could, include certain values like sharing or distribution, inclusion or empowering, relationship building, collectivity, tolerance, sensitivity, integrity, morality, altruism to leadership.

6.6.1. STRESSES FOR FEMINIST LEADERS:

Many feminist leaders participating in the leadership role felt that they were expected to behave in ways consistent with "feminine roles." Some felt marginalized if they behaved in ways associated with gender since they were then viewed as weak. Many felt there was

a gender bias influencing expectations of how they should behave as women leaders, thereby creating no-win situations that became impediments to effective leadership. Many women commented about how they are diminished when they demonstrate “feminine traits” in their leadership styles. They also felt constrained by how they should behave given the gender attributions placed on their behaviours. All too often, behaviours associated with femininity are rated as negative with respect to leadership. Tears signal weakness while nurturing leadership styles are viewed as lacking in substance. Conversely, women are also viewed negatively when they adopt styles and traits characteristic of men leaders. An aggressive and direct man is often viewed as forthright and taking charge as a leader while the same behavior in a woman is viewed as overbearing and angry (Chin, 2007, p.14). Along with, the context, circumstances and social environment in which leadership is practicing is also creates constraints for feminist leaders. Feminist leadership may be far more difficult in some environments than in others (Lott, 2007, p.29). Presently, women in leadership roles typically lead within masculinized contexts, which are homogenous and do not incorporate the diversity of gender and ethnic differences. Power dynamics, gender role expectations, and added stressors in these masculinized environments are different for women leaders compared to men (Chin, 2007, p.15).

6.6.2. SUGGESTIONS TO COPE WITH STRESS:

A feminist leader must advocate for policies that support child care and family obligations, adequate access to health care, pensions, and other employee-friendly benefits. Such advocacy will certainly be met with arguments about the availability of resources, typically described as “scarce” when perceived as challenging to the status quo. But resources can be re-allocated and distributed in accord with feminist values as well as pragmatically geared to improving the environment, satisfaction, and outcomes of work. Madden points out that “there will always be institutional inertia, external pressure, and financial constraints” (2005, p. 12) pitted against thrusts for change. But feminist leaders must incorporate into their work attention to the special issues of women and of people who are among the least privileged and typically invisible: ethnic minorities of colour, poor and working class, and non-heterosexual. And, when challenging status quo hierarchies and patriarchal structures, feminist leaders must be prepared with relevant knowledge about the consequences of power inequities, and about the effectiveness of strategies for change (Lott, 2007, p.29).

6.7.LEADERSHIP STYLES OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS IN WEST BENGAL: IS IT FEMININE OR FEMINIST STYLE?

Women are underrepresented in political leadership perhaps in every country in the world, India is not exceptional. In West Bengal, women's participation in politics and representation in the parliament and state legislature has increased since 1990, but still remains below 20 percent while retaining their credibility and effectiveness as leaders. Among the Indian states, West Bengal is exception in the case of political leadership because it is the only state which is leading by a woman leader. So, it becomes important to find out that are women political leaders of West Bengal following feminine values or they adopted "feminist" styles and still be effective as leaders if they are functioning in masculinised context?

When we consider the question of whether it is possible in our existing mainstream culture to be practiced in a way feminist leadership then we envisage difficult issues. In examining feminist leadership, we may focus on the more important question of what the leadership is intended to accomplish as Chin (2003, p. 2) has observed, that when "women get a seat at the table," feminist principles will "be used to promote a feminist agenda." In this study of legislative leaders of West Bengal we found that differences in the legislative agenda of women. They are more concern with infrastructure development, social services and economic development and much less concern for the issues of women. There is less attention and efforts given to improve the situation of women. Since 2011, the state government is leading by a woman leader though the number of women leader in upper echelon political positions fluctuated within 10% to 13%, it is increasing but at a very slow pace (Discussed in details in the chapter 4). Under-representation of women in the legislature indicates that the principles of feminist leadership i.e. inclusion and mobilize other is invisible in the functions of women legislators. The role-model theory may not practise in West Bengal. In addition, particularly in decision making body still the presence of women is poor, as per current date it is only 18%, even West Bengal follows the hierarchical power structure where low weightage ministry is distributed to women representatives which reveals the fact that equal participation, equal sharing of power is also effectively not working in the state. It is highly unlikely in a hierarchical structure that there will be much encouragement for decisions to be made collaboratively or for empowerment to be an objective. Initially, this study assumed that

with the presence of woman Chief Minister the scenario of unequal power distribution would be abolished but that did not happen. It has been observed throughout the entire research study the leadership nature of the state is individualistic, hence it fails to build collective leadership, which is the core principle of feminist leadership. Generally we were optimistic that with the presence of women legislators feminist principles 'will be used to promote a feminist agenda' as Chin (2003, p. 2) observed, this is also in-existent. In the state, under the woman leadership, few government schemes introduced for the upliftment of women and girls, which are not adequate for the actual development of women. So, the fact is that the presence of women representatives in state legislatures may not influence policy adoption. While the target focus group of women leaders remain the weaker sections of the society, the poor, disadvantaged groups like the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes, women children and minorities which slightly reflect the value of altruism. With respect to style of leadership, the women were as likely as men to be goal-directed, which we considered ideal type of leadership masculine in character traits.

In the practice of feminist leadership the context of leadership plays a very vital role. Context means the situational demands, constraints, and circumstances, the characteristics of the social environment. Sometimes it become difficult to practice feminist leadership in some environments, for instance political party's loyalty create the constraints to represent the women's agenda because political leaders in West Bengal are assumed their position on the basis of electoral performance of a particular party, hence they are bound to represent a party's interests and agenda. Elected women representatives through this process carry the additional responsibility to represent women's interest. In certain circumstances like emergencies, to consensus-building strategies become more difficult since the situation requires directive action. When women leaders intent to follow peaceful coexistence then they may be described as weak, which puts a question mark on their credibility and effectiveness of their leadership.

Along with these, in regard to the other principles of feminist leadership like dismantling bias, tolerance, courage, constructive feedback, we did not find any clear evidence while analysing the style of functioning of women leaders. For leadership to be feminist, the values of feminism must be clearly demonstrated in objectives, practice, and anticipated outcomes, which proceed towards social justice that is absent in West Bengal. Feminist leaders are likely to face serious ethical dilemmas in carrying out the business of the

organization or group where they are employed or voluntarily functioning (Lott, 2007, p. 30). That proves women leaders are working with lots of internal and external pressures and it is very difficult to be a feminist leader who is in a position to counter such challenges.

Most importantly, also it has been observed that in West Bengal within the practice of political leadership the feminine attributes as compassion, nurturing, emotional, more caring etc are seen very rarely. Mostly, women leaders neither exhibit natural qualities of woman nor cultural attributes in their way of functioning. Hence, women legislators of West Bengal cannot be said to practice the style of feminine leadership.

Therefore, the goal of social equality, justice and social transformation is not clearly visible in the functioning style of women legislators of West Bengal, while certain efforts might be taken towards it but the percentage is not optimistic. The absence of feminist leadership might be caused due to our gendered culture, expectation or the context of leadership or apathy to think differently or lack of confidence or lack of courage or fear to get rejected or fear to lose power etc. What may be the reason behind the issue that is not luminous paint, it is found that *the women legislators as well as parliamentarians in West Bengal are still working within rigid hierarchical power structure and unable to challenge and change that so automatically they coped within the dominant mainstream discourse of leadership, which is synonymous with masculinity as an attribute. We are also doubtful whether we can confirm that their style of functions reflects any particular feminine values within the idea of political leadership and to consider them as feminist leaders also. They have been found to take neither an aggressive nor a submissive position but an assertive stand in many cases. They acknowledged that patriarchy has an overbearing presence and influence but they prefer to take a subtle position of continuously hitting it lightly so that the influence weakens. They intend to enter politics and bring a change from within. They intend to act as facilitators for other younger women who intend to join politics.*

6.7.1. WHAT WOMEN LEADERS WANT:

Though, it is doubtful that whether women parliamentarians and legislators of West Bengal would be considered as feminine or feminist leader or not but it is clear to us what they want in regard to leadership style. Interview was taken of selected 25 women leaders

and in the interview the question asked: Do you think that women bring different qualities (e.g. greater attention to collaboration, co-operation, collective decision making, and relationship building etc) to leadership? Except three leaders all were unanimously accepted that women can bring the qualities collaboration, co-operation, collective decision making, and relationship building in practice of political leadership. Women leaders Smt. Protima Rajak, Dr. Tapati Saha, Smt. Shanta Chhetri, Smt. Minati Sen, Smt. Mala Saha, Smt. Kumkum Chakraborty, Smt. Mitali Roy showed their consent that they think they should frame out a feminist style of leadership based on such attributes and should stop to imitate masculinise attributes of leadership in West Bengal and also they argued they exercising political leadership along with their traditional roles and values. While, among them some leaders such as Smt. Sakuntala Paik, Smt. Rupa Bagchi, Smt. Mamata Bhunia, Smt. Seuli Saha, Smt. Swati Khandoker, Smt. Anju Kar, Smt. Asima Choudhuri, Smt. Sabitri Mitra, Smt. Manju Basu, Smt. Bilasi Bala Sahis said that they think the leader should follow both the styles that means what the situation requires and adapting his or her style of leadership to fit that situation for better chance to achieving success. In addition, they suggested and believed that the leader should not be rigid to a particular style of leadership in all circumstances. And other three leaders Smt. Sadhana Mallick, Smt. Smita Bakshi, Smt. Sonali Guha (Bose) did not agree with the question. They did not believe there is or there should be any gender demarcation within leadership style. They rather believe that leadership is gender neutral. They however, agreed that they had to face several challenges both within their homes and outside and work doubly hard to prove themselves.

6.8. CONCLUSION

It is very true that a politically ambitious woman cannot escape the consequences of social beliefs that gender differences are politically relevant. She must come to some understanding of herself as a person and as a political figure that resolves, manages or repress the tensions between her emerging self-view as capable of functioning effectively at the highest political levels and the generalized social view that neither she nor any other woman has that competence. Regardless of how she handles the internal impact of gender roles, she must also develop strategies for dealing with team as a strategic aspect of her career, because others may react to her in terms of gender. At times that will mean overcoming or circumventing restrictions. If one hallmark of the ultimately successful

political leader is the ability to transform apparent liabilities into assets, then we might expect to see her manipulate traditional stereotypes of women to outflank or disarm opponents. However, male-centered theories of leadership may indeed be re-examined in light of the rise of women in leadership positions in both the public and corporate worlds (Genovese, 2013, p.5-10). On the other hand, Bernard Bass notes:

“Because situational changes are rapidly occurring for women in leadership roles, earlier research may need to be discounted. Despite the many continuing handicaps to movement into positions of leadership owing to socialization, status conflicts and stereotyping, progress is being made. Some consistent differences remain between boys and girls and less so, among adult men and women managers and leaders. Characteristics that are usually linked to masculinity are still demanded for effective management. Nevertheless, most differences in male and female leaders tend to be accounted for by other controllable or modifiable factors, although women will continue to face conflicts in their decisions to play the roles of wives and mothers as well as of managers and leader” (Bass, 1990, p. 737).

While some early research into gender differences suggested that men and women were different in their styles of leadership, more recent research, especially that coming from neuroscience, paints a more complex and nuanced picture. Yes, there are biological differences between men and women that do lead to some differences in how boys and girls behave (Gray, 2004). These differences-nature-often lead to an exaggerated sense of gender distinctness and often elicit responses from adults that reinforce and grow these differences-nurture. What begin as biological instincts and biases in brain function, which culturally germinate and grow, are amplified over time by stereotyping and gender role expectations, thereby making differences more pronounced (Gilligan, 1993). As Alina Tugend (2001, p.173) writes, “What start as innate differences lead us to treat boys and girls differently, which then exacerbates the divide”.

Many researchers, such as Astin and Leland (1991), see men and women as exercising very different styles of leadership, with males using a hard style of leadership that stresses hierarchy, dominance and order. Women, on the other hand, exercise leadership characterized by a soft style of cooperation, influence and empowerment. While when were examining the style of leadership exercised by the women who have headed government, no clear pattern emerges (Genovese, 2013, p.337-38).

Further, several key gaps between men and women are closing (Genovese, 2013, p.11). Political leadership by women is not regarded dramatically different from that of men. Women leaders are no better or worse than men. Nor have women leaders been typically anxious to give greater representation to other women within their own organizations or in the political process generally. Representation of women has not necessarily increased greatly under the leadership of women (Yadav, 2010, p.34).

In the context of West Bengal, political leadership by women have not particularly shown significant changes over the last ten years. While, on the one hand some women politicians have reached to higher political positions by their own competence and they agreed it is difficult to rise and work within the male dominated party hierarchies, on the other hand some women have managed to become leaders when they have set up own political party. But the fact is that once they have successfully established themselves as leaders, there has been an unquestioning acceptance of their leadership and decisions even by the party members which is largely male, here we can remember the name of Mamata Banerjee remarkably. With the changing nature of societal culture and institutional structures and the developmental opportunities women are getting attention in power politics and they have proved their competency in political leadership along with their traditional roles and values. Changes also happen in the incongruity between women and leadership. Hence, we are optimistic likely to see more women in leadership roles in near future.

➤ **SUMMARY:**

- Gender is one of the factors influencing women participation and representation in politics. To rise in power trace women encounter with the obstacles, restrictions and deterrents in the society. For instance electoral environment as highly competitive for women; women have disproportionate family responsibilities that interfere with the time required for successful political careers; increasing violence, sexual harassment and victimization of women at the ground level in many of our political parties, the glass ceiling etc.
- In spite of gap, there is a confluence of factors contributes to leadership effectiveness and rise of women leaders. Changes in societies, states and organisations are beginning to make it easier for women to reach top positions.

The culture almost everywhere is changing; gendered work assumptions such as male model of work, the notion of uninterrupted full-time careers and the separation of work and family are being challenged (Yadav, 2010, p.32).

- There are several arguments regarding the issue that whether a significant difference exists between the men and women leaders. Essentialised accounts explain that women are naturally more caring and nurturing and men are naturally more aggressive because of differing hormone levels. A recent meta-analysis by Eagly, Johannesen- Schmidt, and Van Engen (2003) has found that women styles tend to be more transformational than men's, and they also tend to engage in more contingent reward behaviours than men, all of which are aspects of leadership that predict effectiveness (Yadav, 2010, p. 18). The relative effectiveness of male and female leaders has been assessed by a number of research studies. It has been found that overall men and women are equally effective leaders, but there are gender differences. For instance, women were less effective than men in military position, but they were somewhat more effective than men in education, government and social service organisations and substantially more effective than men in middle management positions, where communitarian interpersonal skills are highly valued. Academic researchers have a greater diversity in their views. Many argue that there are little differences and some considered there are no differences on leadership style and effectiveness.
- In the study of legislative leaders of West Bengal, it is found that differences in the legislative agenda of women. They are more concern with infrastructure development, social services and economic development and much less concern for the women issues. There is less attention and efforts given to bettering the situation of women. Even when the state government is leading by a woman leader though the number of women leader in upper echelon political positions fluctuated within 12% to 16%, it is increasing but with a very slow pace.
- For leadership to be feminist, the values of feminism must be clearly demonstrated in objectives, practice, and anticipated outcomes, which proceed towards social justice that is absent in West Bengal. The goal of social equality, justice and social transformation is not clearly visible in the functioning style of women legislators of West Bengal, while certain efforts might be taken towards it but the percentage is not optimistic. The absence of feminist leadership might be caused of gendered culture, expectation or the context of leadership or apathy to

think differently or lack of confidence or lack of courage or fear to get rejected or fear to lose power etc.

- It has been observed that in West Bengal women leaders are neither exhibit natural qualities of woman nor cultural attributes in their way of functioning, more clearly, they are not practising the style of feminine leadership.
- In the context of West Bengal, political leadership by women have not particularly shown significant changes over the last 10 years. Women politicians are still struggling to reach at higher political positions by their own competence and they agreed it is difficult to rise and work within the male dominated party hierarchies. At the same time, the fact is once they have been successful to establish themselves as leaders then there has been an unquestioning acceptance of their leadership and decisions even by the party members which is largely male.
