

CHAPTER: 7

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7.1.SUMMARY

In spite of having constitutional provisions, for instance equal franchise and electoral quota system in the grassroots level, women in India are still not visible equally in the political structures, decision making bodies as their counter parts. Representation and leadership are considering the means to empower women 'from above' in political institutions though the problem of women's lower presence in representation and leadership in politics is still clearly visible. Since Independence the struggle of women to prove themselves as equal to men, in the political arena, is found more difficult work due to the existence of gender-inequality and gender-discrimination in our society. Women's lower presence in varied structures and processes of society has brought gender to the centre point of all developmental endeavours. "It is now widely recognized that seemingly well worked out plans and programmes being both gender-biased and gender blind can have disastrous consequences for women" (Kumari, 1994, p.33). Just society cannot afford inequalities that women still facing in power, status and income. In order to bring change conscious efforts should be taken. To eradicate the problem of women's lower presence in formal political structures, our society and families should give importance to women's issue and support them mentally and morally. So, the other agents of society and the governments as well would take this issue seriously. In this perspective, the State has to take some corrective actions to ensure that women participate equally in the political sphere. Also, it is imperative to adopt certain affirmative action to eliminate the existing discrimination to ensure political equality as guaranteed in the Constitution. While we know, in order to bring gender-equality, constitutional provisions and legal steps are not enough, there is most important requirement is to change the mind-set of society and its members (Roy, 2017, p.54-55). Therefore, it is stated that with these special measures the pictures of deplorable presence of women in representation and leadership in politics might be altered. At the same time it is very important to pay more attention to the quality of representation and leadership rather than the quantity.

The low level representation of women in political process and decision-making bodies forms a key concern for our society and states. The success of democratic political system depends on the equal and active participation and representation of various sections of the population, where women are far behind. The present study has focused on women legislators of West Bengal to study political leadership since 1990s, particularly to see the reason behind the rising level of women's political participation post 1990, women's

primary membership level in the different political parties and the percentage of elected women leaders at the state and national level, the contributory factors behind the active participation of women political leaders in the elections, the differences between women and men political leadership and the problems women face being as political leaders.

West Bengal being a part of the world community cannot escape from the effects of gender discrimination and injustice. In terms of sex ratio, literacy rate, women's health and decision making power West Bengal is showing a marked improvement during the last two decades of the 20th century & first decade of 21st century (1991-2021). Though the State improving at a very slow pace. Still it seeks to – (i) protect the rights of women enshrined in the Constitution of India; (ii) enhance their dignity and ensure their participation in the economic, social and political activities. The assessment of women's political leadership in West Bengal raised questions like whether with the increasing number of women in the elected bodies would women perceive the taste of equality in life or would alternate the structure of power. Whether a preliminary leadership would grow among the women in the political sphere in West Bengal or would women have the opportunity to enact policies that can create substantive change for issues important to women and begin work toward changing public perceptions of women and their roles in society.

The existing many research studies reveal that gender affects authority and women leaders. Therefore, 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 women encounter with the obstacles, restrictions and deterrents in the society as well as face strange problems in their political life those are completely unknown to their male counterparts. These barriers restrict their involvement in politics and their performance in the legislative body also. "The reasons for women's diminished role in political arena include traditions, physiology, lack of vertical mobility, concern for home and family, psychology, and lack of patronage, particularly from senior women politicians" (Bhatt, 1995, p. 90). There might be other many reasons which hinder women's active political involvement. Thus, the present study has been undertaken on the women legislators of West Bengal and made an attempt-(i) to analyse the reasons behind the increase if any, in the rate of participation of women in politics since 1990; (ii) to understand the percentage of difference, if any, between the women primary party members and elected members as well as the women leaders who contested elections and have stood elected at the state and

national level;(iii) to probe into the factors that have helped women leaders to participate in the elections actively; (iv) to inquire into the characteristics of women leaders; (v) to find out the style of functioning, the range of issues that they select to support and the difference if any, with their male counterparts etc; and (vi) to find out the nature of obstacles to their political career if any, and how did they counter them.

7.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study focuses on the following specific questions:

1. What have been the changes forced/normal that has led to the increase in the level of participation of women in politics in India post 1990?
2. What has been the percentage of difference between the women primary party members and elected members to the decision-making bodies of the state as well as the women leaders who contested polls and elected at the state and national level?
3. Why do we see that the women political leaders today are actively participating in the elections? Does that indicate a change in structural factors like education, economic empowerment, social reforms etc responsible for high/low/non political participation?
4. Why according to these women leaders they find themselves different from the male leadership?
5. Can we say that the women legislators in West Bengal are initiating feminine or feminist style of leadership?
6. How have been they able to overcome obstacles if any, in their political career?

In the first question “What have been the changes forced/normal that have led to the increase in the level of participation of women in politics post 1990?” we have studied the performance of women in national, state and regional parties even also individually in the general elections of India since 1984 and also studied the rising importance of state level and regional parties in national politics. The present study has been limited to understand the reasons behind the increase in the level of participation of women in politics since 1990.

The second question has studied the primary membership level of women in the different political parties of West Bengal and whether the percentage of women primary members

is reflected in the leadership level within the respective political parties as well. This question has also taken note of the percentage of women leaders who has been given tickets to contest polls at the state and national level and the percentage of women leaders who have stood elected. In this study, leader operationally means the elected women legislators, MPs and MLAs, of West Bengal. This indicates women have reached to a position recognised as leader through the selection and nomination of political parties for the elections and it is very rare they have recognised as leader due to their own hard work without the umbrella of any political parties'. In this perspective, the socio-economic backgrounds and the situation which drives women to get involved in electoral politics- all these have been studied with reference to those women who were identified as leaders.

The third question related to the contributory factors that have helped the women political leaders to actively participate in the elections. As women, they have to play some gender-specified roles, like motherhood, domestic duties etc, given by our society and family which are deterred women from active participation in politics. There are many other factors in the society and problems in the political sphere which determents women to become active in the elections. In spite of various obstacles women are step forward in the post decades of 1990 in West Bengal, there are several factors for women leaders' active involvement in the elections. All the factors have been studied for searching answer of this question.

The fourth question, which has been studied "what makes women leaders different from the male leadership?" actually means their characteristics, their style of functioning and the values espouse by women leaders in politics. Being a leader what has been their contribution towards upliftment and empowerment of the women in particular and society in general. This has also based on the characteristics of political leaders that men and women exercised different styles of leadership from each other. This question has also involved an analysis of positive values which might be included through electing and appointing more women leaders to public office.

And the fifth question was examined the obstacles that have been women leaders faced while performing their duties as a leader and also how they have been able to overcome these obstacles. There are some major issues that facilitate women leaders to performing duties as a leader, have also been examined in this question.

7.3. AREA OF STUDY

The study has been confined to the state West Bengal (WB). West Bengal is a very important state in terms of providing leadership. West Bengal State Assembly is unicameral legislature, which is called Vidhan Sabha, with 295 members (MLAs), including one nominated member from the Anglo-Indian community. The state contributes 42 seats to the Lok Sabha and 16 seats to the Rajya Sabha of the Indian Parliament. In the political history of West Bengal, Indian National Congress (INC) was the ruling party from 1952 to till 1977 (1st to 7th State Assembly election), from 1977-2011 (8th to 14th State Assembly election) the CPI-M remained in power and since 2011 (15th to 17th State Assembly election) in West Bengal under the woman leadership Mamata Banerjee the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) is ruling the State. Since the inception of West Bengal, it had only one female Governor, Padmaja Naidu, from 1956-1967 and presently have woman Chief Minister (Since 2011). Post 1990, women's entry into politics of West Bengal indicates a trend that more and more women are contesting the polls from various political parties and the number of women participating in the electoral process has increased. The important national leaders have always focused attention on this state. The state of West Bengal has produced some men and women leaders of national and international repute. Presently, West Bengal is the only state in India which is governed by female chief minister that is the reason it become important and famous as well. That is why West Bengal has been selected for the present study. Due to its strategic location, general reputation, socio-political fabric and cultural history the state becomes important centre of political activities. The demographic and other salient features of the state, status of women in state, their political activities and political parties they belong to have already been explained in the earlier chapters.

7.4. IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS-UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE

The study deals with the women legislators of West Bengal since 1990s. Actually in this study, women legislators means elected women MPs and MLAs of West Bengal since 1991 in the State Assembly and the parliament (Lok Sabha) as well through the state assembly and general elections and this is prime unit of our analysis. The women leaders, in the context of our study, consist of all women MLAs elected from 11th to 16th (1991-2016) Assembly elections held in West Bengal and 10th to 17th Lok Sabha elections so

far, and therefore, constitutes the universe of the present study. A profile of all women legislators from 1991 to 2016 in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and from 1991 to 2019 in the Lok Sabha elected from West Bengal was prepared and it was observed that about 51 women were elected as legislators more than once in the Assembly and 13 women were elected more than once in the Parliament. Many of them represented continuously their constituencies several times, and one as many as seven times. The study has tried to find out the attitude of her male colleagues toward her and also identify various interventions that can ensure and enhance an increased and qualitatively better participation of women both in Legislature and in political party.

From 1991 to 2016, six Assembly elections have been conducted in West Bengal in which a total of 182 women were elected. Out of the total 182 women legislators, 51 women legislators were elected more than once. Also, from 1991 to 2019, eight Lok Sabha elections held in which from West Bengal total 53 women were elected, out of which 13 women legislators were elected more than once. A list was prepared of all women legislators and it was observed that 51 women have been repeatedly appearing at 119 places in the list of Legislative Assembly and 13 women MPs have been repeatedly appearing at 38 places in the list of Lok Sabha. If 51 are excluded from 119, the remaining 68 have to be deducted from the 182 and thus, the total numbers of women legislators were reduced to 114 and pertaining to women MPs if 13 are excluded from 38, the remaining 25 have to be deducted from the 53 and thus, the total numbers of women MPs were reduced to 28. Therefore, 114 women MLAs and 28 women MPs constitute the total number of women legislators 142. Out of these 142 legislators we have selected purposively 25 women legislators as sample (which is 35% of the universe), the important criteria for the selection of women legislators was their experience as legislators and their position as minister or something else.

7.5. DATA COLLECTION

At the initial stage, a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of existing literature on women from gender approach, women's political participation and women political leadership in particular was made. In the second stage, a structured questionnaire was formulated to extract information from women legislators on specific areas and issues. The questionnaire was designed to obtain facts on personal attributes, information on involvement in politics, association with political parties, participation in electoral

politics, role as a representative and a minister, role in legislature politics, response to certain general and women specific issues, suggestions on an increased and qualitatively better participation of women in political process and decision making bodies. In the third stage personal interviews were held with 25 women legislators (11 sitting & 14 ex-legislators). Most of the legislators were contacted at their residence while some contracted over telephone. Interestingly, ex-women legislators were found to be modest and co-operative than sitting members.

Case studies of nine women legislators were done. They were selected taking into account their experience, the number of times they had represented their constituency and their position as minister or something else. For describing the case studies, interviews of the legislators, observations, supplementary information available in their life history in various records have been used. With the co-operation of the legislators as also by our own perceptions and preparations, it could be possible to collect required information on all 25 women leaders.

7.6. DATA ANALYSIS

The information collected from various sources including interviews schedules was transferred to the data sheets and then were analysed. The huge data on various aspects have been analysed and arranged in tables and in figures for interpretation. The case studies material, however, were qualitatively analyzed. The information on background variables was quantitatively analysed. The relationship of various factors has been indicated on the basis of numerical distribution presented in the table. Thus, the data of 25 women legislators have been analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

7.7. CONCEPTS/TERMS

In our study we have used the following concepts as technical terms for precision and abstraction.

7.7.1. MASCULINITY & FEMININITY:

Both the term emphasizes gender not biological sex. Social gender categories can be classified as masculinities and femininities, where masculinities are characteristics associated with perceived manhood and femininities are characteristics associated with perceived womanhood. Masculinities and femininities are constituted by behaviour

expectations, stereotypes, and rules which apply to persons because they are understood to be members of particular sex categories (Enloe, 2004). The concepts masculinity and femininity is produced within the institutions of society.

7.7.2.REPRESENTATION:

The word 'representation' derives from the Latin word 'representare' which means literally to bring before one, to bring back, to exhibit, to show, to manifest, to display (Beard & Lewis, 1967, p.98). Representation, in the sense of human being representing other human being is particularly a modern conception. Representation involves action or speech on behalf of a person, group, state etc.

7.7.3.POLITICAL REPRESENTATION:

Political representation is understood as a way of (1) establishing the legitimacy of democratic institutions and (2) creating institutional incentives for governments to be responsive to citizens" (Dovi, 2018). In the present study, political representation implies the representation by elected individuals in the legislature.

7.7.4. LEADER:

Leader, generally, defined as one person who is able to influence a group of people or individuals towards the achievements of specific goals. On the other hand, leader, operationally, means a person who possesses position of power in any organization or in the formal structures of the government or otherwise. In the present study, the women elected leaders or legislators at the state level and national level, namely, the State Legislative Assembly, and the Parliament have been considered as the women leaders.

7.7.5.LEADERSHIP:

Leadership is an attempt at influencing the activities of followers through the communication process and toward the attainment of some goal or goals. The core context of leadership is the personality of the leaders. Leadership occurs when persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978, p. 20).

7.7.6. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP:

Political leadership is closely connected with power and authority. It is an agent-centred view of politics and government which rests on the idea that who governs us. It is a system of social relationships involving power, authority, charisma, abilities, views, behaviors and the style of individual (who occupy formal office) as well. Political leadership also determines the success and failure of political institutions.

7.7.7. POLITICAL CULTURE:

The term culture actually defines a way of life and when culture transmitted into political action is known as political culture. In order to understand the political system of any particular country or state it is important to understand the political culture of that particular state or country. Political culture of any country determines by the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour of people towards the political system.

7.7.8. GENDER EQUALITY:

Gender equality means that there is no discrimination on grounds of a person's sex in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in the access to services. Gender equality may be measured in terms of whether there is equality of opportunity, or equality of results (Singh, 2003).

7.7.9. GENDER DISCRIMINATION:

Gender discrimination means to give differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender. In a patriarchal society, this involves systematic and structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources, and participation in decision-making (Singh, 2003).

7.7.10. EMPOWERMENT:

Empowerment is an important element of development, being the process by which people take control and action in order to overcome obstacles. Empowerment especially means the collective action by the oppressed and deprived to overcome the obstacles of structural inequality which have previously put them in a disadvantage position. It is the process by which women mobilize to understand, identify, and overcome gender discrimination, so as to achieve equality of welfare and equal access to resources.

Empowerment may be analytically distinguished from “self –reliance”; which may be defined as people's ability to advance themselves within the existing social system (Singh, 2003).

7.8. FINDINGS

In the present work, it was proposed to study mainly five questions. These questions were referred to the reasons behind the increase level of participation of women in politics since 1990; the percentage of difference between women primary party members and elected members as well as women leaders who contested elections and have stood elected at the state and national level; the factors that have helped women leaders to participate actively in the elections; the characteristics of women leaders; the leadership style of women legislators in West Bengal; and the nature of obstacles they have faced in their political career and the measures to inhibit them. These questions have been studied in the context of women legislators of West Bengal. Twenty five women legislators were selected from 1991 to 2016 in six Assembly elections and from 1991 in eight Lok Sabha elections till 2019.

Out of the 25 women legislators, 22 are those who have represented their constituencies more than once and some of them as many as five or seven times. On the basis of the facts collected about 25 women legislators and the nine purposively case studies, the findings on the main questions are presented below:

7.8.1. THE REASONS FOR INCREASING LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS SINCE 1990:

- (i) Since 1990, state level parties and regional parties have provided the avenues to women for political participation. In the formation of coalition government in India, state level parties played very important role. As a result, the regional political parties become the central factor in the electoral politics in India. With the involvement in these political parties women become aware about the social, economical, political issues and about their rights. So, they gradually become confident about their ability in political spheres and they also started to contest elections in more number under the banner of state and regional parties and even individually than national political parties. Thus changing Indian party system

and electoral politics has led to the increase in the level of participation of women in politics in India since 1990.

- (ii) Women wings of political parties have been playing a key role for increasing women's active participation in politics. Usually, women find a comfort zone in the political parties' women wing, they boosted their confidence for participation in politics being attached with the women wing of any particular political party, and also they got incited by the activities of such wing concerning women issues. It was found that since 1990, regional parties started to gaining important foothold in national politics and also these parties most have followed the national parties in the case of formation of a particular wing for women within the party, and under the inspiration, guidance and activities of such women wings of political parties increasing the number of women in politics.
- (iii) The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment of 1992 has also extended women's participation in politics. These amendments provide the scope of participation by women in deliberative bodies the Government of India, which reserves a third of these seats in the local governments (Panchayats and Municipalities) including the chairpersonship of these local bodies for women. Even, many Indian states introduced 50% reservation for women at grassroots level, so that political involvement of women is increased. Hence, all these initiatives of the central and state governments affected women's political participation at the grassroots level. The enhanced number of women in politics of the grassroots levels to some extent influences the participation of women in the state level politics and which ultimately affects the women's participation in national level politics.

7.8.2. THE GAP BETWEEN WOMEN PRIMARY PARTY MEMBERS AND ELECTED MEMBERS AS WELL AS CONTESTING & ELECTING WOMEN MEMBERS AT THE STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL POLLS:

- (iv) It was found that, as per membership data of the year 2016, INC and BJP have 40% (Approx) and AITC has 50% (Approx) women primary members of their total membership, only CPI-M has very low that is 5% active women primary members of total membership. But the percentage of primary membership of political parties is not reflected in the highest decision-making bodies of the state. The fact is, INC represents 10%, CPI-M represents 27% and AITC represents 16% women members in the highest decision-making bodies of the

state where BJP's women representation is nil. There is found a huge difference between the percentage of women primary members and elected women leaders of all parties to the state legislature, except CPI-M. In contrast to primary members of CPI-M the percentage of elected women leaders at decision making bodies is far better than other parties.

- (v) It has found that no sincere effort is made by the political parties so that a significant number of women can enter into the party organization and particularly at the decision making process. Women primary party members are utilized by the party during elections to mobilize womenfolk or else they are given the responsibility of holding a campaign meeting to represent their party, in place of senior male candidates. Women members are generally used to do social work for the party during natural calamities etc. Even within the party, majority of the women are not given any important positions and responsibilities.
- (vi) Another important aspect that is the difference found between the percentages of women contested elections and women who have stood elected at the state and national level. In the elections of Lok Sabha from 1952 to 2019, the difference is existing, initially (from 1952-1967) there exists not much difference but from later years (since 1971) the difference becomes wider. Particularly from 1991 the difference between contesting and electing women started to become wider and in 1996 the difference was 93%, in 2014 90% and currently it is 89%.
- (vii) The difference between the percentage of contesting and electing women leaders also found in West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections. From 1952 to 2021 seventeenth assembly elections have been conducted in West Bengal. Till 1991, the difference between the percentage of contesting and electing women was not much (though the difference of 1952, 1971 and 1972 is not identified) but since 1996 the difference becomes wider, in 1996 it was 81%, in 2016 80% and presently it is 83%. Thus, it can be said that the difference is narrower in the state level than national level.

7.8.3. THE STRUCTURAL FACTORS FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN LEADERS IN THE ELECTIONS:

- (viii) It was found that the post decades of 1990 in West Bengal women are taking active part in the elections. At a personal level, all women representatives were

unanimous in their opinion that for effective women participation in governance process literacy is must require. Education has played a major role in moulding women's participation in the elections. Out of the 25 women leaders six (24%) were post-graduate and twelve (48%) were graduate, that found almost 75% of the women legislators were highly educated. Education increases their confidence in themselves. They get confidence to speak their mind freely and frankly. It gives them the confidence to believe in themselves and their own power role and responsibilities. All women leaders were unanimous in their acknowledgement of enhancement in their confidence labels, knowledge, decision-making capacity, elevation of social status, political awareness and subsequent personality development.

- (ix) It was found that out of the 25 women leaders 24 (96%) women leaders got full family support in the matter of electoral participation. The role of the families in this regard was very encouraging. The changing nature of patriarchal families paved the way for active participation of women in the electoral politics.
- (x) The patriarchal and conservative societal perception becomes positive in the matter of women's participation in elections. It was found that twenty (80%) women leaders have not faced any social obligations for electoral participation rather with the changing perception of society regarding women's involvement in elections increases the number of women in the political sphere. Society's changing perception has been reduced social obligations for women and also incited them to become active in electoral performances.
- (xi) Now-a-days male political leaders are found co-operative in the matter of women's participation in politics. 23 (92%) women legislators have gotten co-operation from their male colleagues during the time of performing electoral functions and this attitudes of male leaders make a comfort zone for women to perform their electoral duties very actively and significantly as well.
- (xii) The positive attitude of political parties widen out the road for women's participation in politics. 13 (52%) women leaders found positive attitudes of their political parties towards women's active participation for elections. Since 1990, the behaviour of political parties is changing regarding women's involvement in electoral activities which are helping women leaders to perform their political roles. While it was found that in 24% cases political parties did not take any significant efforts for women's active participation in the electoral

process and also in equal percentage cases political parties were indifferent, did not show any concern for women's involvement in politics.

- (xiii) It was found that the Government's policy i.e. quota reservation, played significant role for women's active political participation, which we have seen in local-governance, i.e. Panchayats. The reservation of seats for women provided the opportunity to participate in the electoral functions and ensured their active and fearless electoral participation as well.

7.8.4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ELECTED WOMEN LEADERS:

- (xiv) With the interaction of women legislators it was found that women leaders actually possess several characteristics which are very different in nature from the characteristics of male leaders. According to all women legislators, except four, all these specified characteristics generate diverse qualities to lead which make them different from male leaders.
- (xv) Women are friendly in nature that indicates women have the ability to build relationship with others. Through the quality of relationship building they become aware about the problems of the constituents spontaneously and take the steps to solve these problems. Hence, the quality of relationship building helps women leaders to perform their leadership role well.
- (xvi) Women leaders are polite and flexible in behaviour and also have more toleration power. The politeness and flexible behaviour of women leaders make them more acceptable or approachable to common people and patience also make them able to handle crisis situation very calmly and peacefully.
- (xvii) Women leaders are found more sincere in their duties and responsibilities. When they are given any responsibility usually they perform all responsibilities with very sincerely. Not only sincerity, dedication also found in their works, both the characteristics of women leaders add different qualities to leadership.
- (xviii) It was found that women leaders are affectionate, careful, hard worker, also more concerned about the common good and sensitive towards social problems. The socialization process of girls make them caretaker of the family and nurturer and guardians of dependents (children and senior citizen) that leads to different way of dealing with politics. From family girls learn how a family was living and handled crisis situation that leads to create good management skill in them and which helps to become a good leader.

- (xix) Generally, women have moral power, which renders them not, or less, corrupt and introduce cleaner politics. Women leaders are found that they abide by ethical values and in a better way represent the people. Their style of doing politics is reducing corruption and improving opportunities for the downtrodden.
- (xx) In many cases women leaders had been able to convince people particularly those who stand in opposition side. Even they are more co-operative in works, preferred to work collaboratively with others that lead less aggressive in performing duties of a leader. They are keeper of the values of social justice and honesty as well.
- (xxi) It was also found that out of the 25 women leaders only four did not believe in gendered categorization of characteristics of leaders. Rather they believed that every individual possessed unique characteristics, qualities and skills, so every individual is different from others and also leaders are different to each other in qualities, in styles of functioning etc. From this approach the thought of gender distinctions of leaders' qualities is not a matter of concern. Also, they believed that leader should be gender-neutral and suggested that people must be concerned about the qualities or characteristics of good leader rather than so much focused on gender of the leaders.

7.8.5. LEADERSHIP STYLES OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS IN WEST BENGAL:

- (xxii) Women related issues were not promoted in the legislature by the women legislators rather they were more concerned with infrastructure development, social services and economic development. Since 2011, under the leadership woman Chief Minister, few government schemes introduced for the upliftment of women and girl, while these are not adequate for the actual development of women. Therefore, it may be said that the presence of women representatives in state legislatures did not influence policy adoption. Though 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. With respect to style of leadership, the women leaders were as likely as men leaders to be goal-directed, which considered ideal type of leadership, masculine in character traits.
- (xxiii) In West Bengal, unequal power distribution not abolished. West Bengal follows the hierarchical power structure and low weightage ministry distributed to

women representatives in spite of having Woman Chief Minister, which reveals the fact that the principle of feminist leadership i.e. equal participation, equal sharing of power still effectively not working in the state.

- (xxiv) Still women are under-represented in the legislature. The serious efforts for inclusion and mobilization of women in large quantities into politics were invisible in the functions of women legislators. The leadership nature of the state is individualistic. Therefore it becomes failure to build collective leadership, which is the core principle of feminist leadership.
- (xxv) Political leaders in West Bengal are elected on a party basis hence they are bound to represent a party's interests and agendas. In such circumstances elected women representatives carried the additional responsibility to represent women's specific issues and interest in the legislature. Even in major cases of decisionmaking women leaders were not allowed to express their opinion and they were only directed to follow the imposed decisions of the party. Therefore, it may be said that the collective decision making principle of feminist leadership absent in West Bengal.
- (xxvi) In regard to the principles of feminist leadership like dismantling bias, tolerance, courage, constructive feedback, it was not found any clear concept by 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 was missing in West Bengal. The goal of social equality, justice and social transformation was 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.

7.8.6. PROBLEMS OVERCOME BY WOMEN LEGISLATORS:

- (xxvii) Out of 25 women leader respondents 16 said that they faced direct or indirect obstacles and nine women legislators have denied any difficulty in their political career. During the course of interview held with them, two women legislators, however, categorically said that they faced physical attack and direct threat to death for standing beside the people to resist anti-social and criminal activities in politically disturbed area and other visits to their constituencies. There were many instances where women legislators faced many obstacles like protest or

strong objection from the opposition political party, lack of co-operation, gender discrimination within the respective party pertaining to assigned positions and decision making power, victimization, mental harassment, character assassination etc in their political career, as they have narrated some instances of violence inflicted on them during the interview. They have succeeded to overcome all these problems by pursuing certain measures.

- (xxviii) Majority of them have said that by own rational thought convinced the protesters that the developmental works initiated to 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.
- (xxix) There are few instances where women legislators clearly pointed out that self-confidence, self-determination and patience helped to handle more complex problems peacefully. Direct or face to face communication with the constituents helped them to reach at the root cause of the problems and took required steps to solve the crisis issues as early as possible.
- (xxx) To inhibit the obstacles sometimes helped the directions, guidance and suggestions of the supreme authority of the party. They said that sometimes they have ignored the criticism of opposition party and have built friendly relations with them to handle the problematic situations. Proper understanding of the problems assisted to take the measures as situation requires, for instance sometimes it required to be silent and sometimes to be vocal.

However along with all these findings, the present study also found that a significant number of legislators have family political history and family linkages and majority of women leaders have come from middle class family background. They have been playing multi-facet role for the benefit of their own society and public at large. The participation in the Assembly and Parliament, more or less, is the function of their numerical strength. The women legislators have denied any hindrance in their entry into politics. In the present study, it is also found that majority of women legislators appear to lead local area and could not think of the outside world, they have role in setting up objectives of welfare, manipulation of means of state action for implementation of various welfare policies and programmes for their constituency people. Only very few women leaders

from the high position in the political structure of society have greater influence on the people. As findings suggest, a significant number of women leaders consider Mamata Banerjee, Sonia Gandhi, Sushma Swaraj as their role model to draw inspiration and to lead. Majority of women legislators agreed that they faced gender-discrimination while their lower participation in the legislature is not due to any gender discrimination but mainly due to their lower numerical strength in the legislature. The gender equality seem to be almost non-existent in the party functioning as many important responsibilities in the parties are not given to them because of their gender.

7.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY AND THE SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

With the selected sitting and ex-women legislators personal interviews were held. Arranging the timings for meeting with women legislators for their interview proved was an extremely challenging and difficult task in terms of their willingness to co-operate and also their availability. Therefore, persistent and continuous efforts had to be made to contact them. This proves that it was not an easy job.

One of the major constraints of the present study has been the collecting information on women primary membership of the political parties, except CPI-M no other party maintaining systematic and proper records of membership. It was very arduous task to collect membership data, continuous efforts had to be made to contact party offices and it became extremely tardy. Moreover, as leaders of major three political party of West Bengal expressed their inability to provide exact number of primary members of respective parties.

Another limitation of the present study was the paucity of literature specifically on women legislators of West Bengal. No systematic and comprehensive studies have been done on women legislators. This paucity of literature did make our task difficult to a certain extent. The available information and documented proceeding are not gender specifically arranged in the Vidhan Sabha Secretariats, further even this information was not easily accessible. Hence, the fact is that it was a challenging opportunity to explore an area that has hitherto been left untouched.

The present study based on limited number of women legislators and could not deal with all women politicians in the state of West Bengal. Another limitation has been the very

poor and unclear response to the queries from the women legislators. This study focused upon the legislators of West Bengal only. This study has opened up directions for future research which may include all women political leaders from state to grassroots levels in the state of West Bengal and should draw the comparison of women leaders with male leaders and their roles, performance and the quality of their participation on the floor of the Assembly and the Parliament.

7.10. INFERENCES

We can draw the following inferences, based on the findings of the present study:

- I. Since 1990 there has been a sizeable increase in the number of women leaders throughout India.
- II. The number of women increases in the decision making processes with the growing importance of state level regional parties and the active and continuous efforts of political parties' women wings.
- III. The enhanced number of women in politics of the grassroots levels influences the number of women's participation in the state and national level politics.
- IV. A wide gap is there between the percentage of primary members and elected women leaders of all parties to the West Bengal state legislature. Also the difference found between the percentages of women contested elections and women who have stood elected at the state (West Bengal) and national level and day by day the difference becomes wider.
- V. Political parties are utilized the strength of women primary party members during the election but not promoted them in the important positions after won the election.
- VI. Proper education, family's encouragement and support, changing perception of society, positive attitudes of political parties, co-operation of male political leaders, and Government schemes, e.g. quota reservation, are important factor behind the active participation of women leaders in the elections.
- VII. Affection, care, sensitivity, politeness, sincerity, morality, co-operation, hard work, ability to build relationship all these characteristics of women leaders make them different from male political leaders. While different opinion also there that gendered characteristics are not associated with a good leader.

- VIII. Women interests are less promoted by the women leaders in the legislature rather they are more concerned with common welfare/good.
- IX. In West Bengal women leaders are neither exhibit the principles of feminist leadership nor feminine leadership in their way of functioning rather West Bengal follows the hierarchical power structure, and women leaders grappled within the dominant mainstream discourse of leadership.
- X. There are several obstacles during the electoral participation of women leaders and with their intelligence, courage, and confidence they are able to overcome such obstacles. Also, with their self-confidence, self-determination and patience they handle more complex problems peacefully.

7.11. RECOMMENDATION

In order to bring change to develop leadership, conscious efforts must be taken to instil self-confidence and to nurture self-esteem in women who have the potential for political leadership. Also change require in some context that may fill the gap between women and political leadership. For bringing change certain measures should be followed.

- Gender implies the differences of men and women political leaders which effects leadership role vehemently. Similarly, the intersections of gender with race, ethnicity, class, caste also influence the context of leadership, while women leaders are less concern to bridge those differences in pursuit of common goals. More women need to be convinces that we cannot adequately improve the lot of women without challenging all the sources of subordination with which gender interacts (Rhode, 2014, p.158). As Audre Lorde noted, "It is not our differences which separate women, but our reluctance to recognize those differences and deal effectively with the distortions which have resulted...." (Lorde, 1984, p.122).
- Lack of social consensus confronted with the women political leadership. Most of the women leaders do not think that there are more advantages in being a man than a woman in today's society. They also thought that the presence of women in the political positions and the enactment of laws against sex discrimination etc are the evidence that the woman problems have been solved. This type of thoughts creates the sense of complacency which becomes obstacles to broader change (Rhode, 2014).

- There is a huge gap between legal rights and practice in reality. Equal opportunity in law is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee equal opportunity in fact. Women need not just equal rights but equal respect and equal recognition of values traditionally associated with women, e.g. motherhood. Women need an expanded set of rights like equal pay for jobs, bans on discrimination based on sexual orientation. They also need a change in funding priorities like more resources should be available for childcare, shelters or financial assistance for divorcee women or homeless women and reproductive assistance that meets basic subsistence needs. In addition, states need more effective prevention and treatment programs for sexual violence (Rhode, 2014).
- Changes require in workplace structures which is equally important. Women need not only equal treatment in existing mainstream institutions but also require fundamental changes in those institutions they are working. Employers need to do better in policies and practices concerning family and medical leave, and flexible and part-time schedules. To make this agenda possible, more women must see personal difficulties as social problems calling for collective actions (Rhode, 2014, p.159).
- Gender based stereotypes culture devalued the competence of women that generates assertive behaviour in women leaders. We need to change this stereotype culture, also need to address the ways through which society practising sex based discrimination and inculcating sex-based aggression. To end these practice elected women leaders in the states should connect themselves to elected women in local bodies and they should connect themselves to common women. This pyramid of women representatives can become a political network that would work to increase political consciousness of common women.
- In democratic set up, the political road to decision making usually leads to the system via the political parties. But, this agent of democratic government gives only lip service to the ideal of women in politics. Political parties and other organizations should encourage women's participation in politics and in the exercise of political responsibilities. The strategy should be to encourage a greater number of women in decision-making power. The women's wings of political parties as well as elected women leaders have to take immediate and necessary efforts to unite and incorporate ordinary women and should encourage them to participate in political affairs (Roy, 2017, p.54).

- Additionally, elected women leaders of the state should be aware about their style of functioning and the common goal of social transformation. They have much responsibility to inculcate the values like collectivity, tolerance, sensitivity, integrity, morality etc within the political process and structures throughout the entire leadership role. The values would sensitize people, both men and women and the change the political scenario.

All these agenda should not be considered as modest agenda rather we should perceive it as essential. The majority of women leaders believe that women and men are entitled to equal opportunities. Just society cannot afford inequalities that women still facing in power, status and income. The gender roles and expectations transformed from one to another through family and society. So our society and families should give importance to women's issue and support them mentally and morally. So, the other agents of society as well as Governments will take this issue seriously. In this perspective, the State has to take some corrective actions to ensure that women participate equally in the political sphere (Roy, 2017, p. 54). The elected women leaders should fight not just for a space in the legislature, they should fight for social transformation.

7.12. CONCLUSION

After shedding light on different perspectives, issues, concerns and facts on women's leadership pattern in politics in our research study, we have come to some observation on women's political leadership in West Bengal. By observing the recent trends of women leadership in West Bengal we can suggest an alternative style of women leadership for the state that must be different and should have unique characteristics than the existing style.

In the pre-independence period, Gandhi encouraged women by saying that India needed women leaders who were "*pure, firm and self-controlled*" like the ancient heroines: Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi (Forbes, 1998, p.124). While, for the public role of women in post-independence India Gandhi chose Sita, as his ideal woman and not Draupadi (Mies, 1975, p.57). To Gandhi, 'Sita' is the "Indian Ideal of Womanhood". He recognised the importance of women's participation in the freedom struggle because he understood very well that social progress is impossible without the feminine ferment. Gandhi believed that women have some special qualities; he appraised women's natural tolerance, kindness,

moral courage, spiritual determination, selflessness, voluntary service, self-sacrifice, dedication, non-violent nature and the potential for social reconstruction as higher than that of men. Gandhi advocated equality for women because they are as powerful as men and have various qualities and have equal power in the management of the brain (Dasgupta, 2018, p. 248).

He said: "Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minute detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things and not as a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stop half way because of the conditions of our women. Much of our works done dose not yield appropriate results; our lot is like that of the penny-wise and pound-foolish trader who does not employ enough capital in his business" (Prabhu, 1960, p. 59). But he did not think that imitating men was the norm for women. Women and men have equal rights, but the same kind of work, feeling, behaviour and tendency is not of them and cannot be of them, one is complement to other. He and Tolstoy were agreed on this point (Dasgupta, 2018, p.248). However, imitating men or being masculine does not mean women's emancipation; it is just a disorder of women's emancipation. Moreover, in terms of ideals, are men or are they showing that they should be followed? (Prabhu, 1960, p. 60). Gandhiji said: "I believe in the proper education of women. But I do believe that women will not make her contribution to the world by mimicking or running a race with man. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man. She has to be a complement of man" (Harijan, 27-2-'37).

Also, we quote Gandhi regarding the matter of equality of sexes:

"Equity of sexes does not mean equity of occupations. There may be no legal bar against woman hunting or wielding a lance. But she instinctively recoils form a function that belongs to man. Nature has created sexes as complements of each other. Their functions are defined as are their forms" -Harijan, 2-12-'39.

Along with Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose also believed in equality of sexes. In this regard Bose's idea of the potential of women was differed markedly from other Indian politicians, except Gandhi. Bose was advocating 'a society in which the woman will be free and will enjoy equal rights with man and take upon her all civic and political responsibilities' (Bose, 1982, p. 231-32). He argued that the first important step was for women to become engaged in the political process with the goal of changing women's position in society to full emancipation and genuine equality (Gordon, 1997, p. 160).

In spite of proponent of gender equity, Subhas Chandra Bose often responded with traditional paternalistic Indian prejudices. Apparently, Bose's intellectual and political commitment to equality of the sexes clashed with his more conventional Indian male outlook (Hildebrand, 2017, p.84). However, Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose both urged women to join the freedom movement and believed in that way women will liberate themselves. Also, both statesmen believed in the potentiality of women and said that after independence, they expected women to take an active role in politics. But Gandhi never made a serious effort to include women as political leaders. On the other hand, Subhas Chandra favoured to include capable women to fill upper-level political positions. Here, only this thought of Subhas Chandra Bose we have pursued.

By idealizing Gandhi with regard to leadership and collaborating Subhas Chandra Bose's thought to include capable women in the upper-level political positions (for political leadership women are equal to men), we framed an alternative style/model of leadership for women that we call '*Womanist Leadership*'. The new concept of leadership is very close to Gandhi and Bose's concept of equality of sexes and framed on mutual co-operation and consultation between men and women. We cannot deny the fact that man and women are naturally entitled with unique potentiality and qualities. So, in respect of leadership we must accept such fact and follow the concept of complement not imitation or competition. Men and women should work with mutual co-operation and consultation as Gandhi believed both the sexes complements to each other. But we are socialized to give importance on societal norms that is gendered and ignoring the natural potentiality and qualities of the both sexes. In the patriarchal or gendered society men have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. Also, women considered that they must imitate men to be a leader or to remain in leading position instead of exercising own natural qualities as Gandhi defined. The Womanist leadership strongly believed in the recruitment of leaders

who would deviate from politics as *samaj seva* only to politics as a profession. Women political leaders who would be imbued with the values to work for the progress of their constituency and also contribute to policy making.

The entire study has examined several perspectives of women's political leadership. Though, such a study cannot draw a general conclusion on the problem rather it may be hoped that such a research study will contribute, at least to some extent, to the establishment of a theory on women's political leadership which may have extensive application. This study, it may be further hoped that will fill the gap in the existing academic literature on women's political leadership. Thus, the study of women's political leadership in West Bengal opens up further opportunities to research on gender and politics.
