

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**MASTER OF ARTS-POLITICAL SCIENCES
SEMESTER -III**

**WOMEN AND POLITICS
OPEN ELECTIVE 304
BLOCK-2**

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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First Published in 2019



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FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

WOMEN AND POLITICS

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BLOCK 2 : WOMEN AND POLITICS

Introduction to the Block

Unit 8 deals with the Contemporary women's movement and also we will interrogate the gender biases in contemporary India and how the women's movement responded to it.

Unit 9 deals with Indian Constitution and provisions relating to women and how the Constitutional provisions give them the equal opportunity with other counter part in our Indian society.

Unit 10 deals with debate on Reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies and how it deals with twentieth century, the issue of political empowerment of women gained momentum throughout the world

Unit 11 deals with the Women and their Political Participation. This unit will also examine the women's reservation bill as one of the strategies for enhancing women's participation.

Unit 12 deals with women and electoral politics in India. Focus on Panchayati Raj Institutions. It also explains the legal framework for women's representation in Panchayat and Municipal elections.

Unit 13 deals with the issues and Representation in Governance and Critique the relevance of 'quota' in addressing issues of women's representation in governance

Unit 14 deals with Women Leaders and the characteristics and importance of Women Leadership and their representation of Women in Different Sectors.

UNIT 8: WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS- CONTEMPORARY INDIA

STRUCTURE

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- 8.1 Introduction
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- 8.3 Women's Studies and Women's Movements: Dialogue
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8.0 OBJECTIVES

After completing this Unit, you will able to:

- To analyse how gender biases are challenged by women's movement in contemporary India;
- To find out the methods of Functioning of the New Women's Groups

- To discuss the Women's Movement and the Development Agenda
- To know about the Social Movements and Mainstream Political Processes
- To evaluate the nature, dynamics, composition, methods of functioning, political-social-economic agenda; and
- Critically identify different ideological trends and debates.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

We also read the challenges and the strengths before the women's movement (WM). In this Unit, we will interrogate the gender biases in contemporary India and how the women's movement responded to it. We studied the type of nature, dynamics, composition, methods of functioning, and political-social-economic agenda of the women's rights movement. We will also identify different ideological trends and critically evaluate important debates in the women's movement.

It is well recognized that women are victim of many domestic crime since ancient time. To tackle such situation and enhance the position of women, numerous woman movements were started. It is said that women's movements are among the most important crusade of modern social movements. Historical records indicated that since nineteenth-century, Canadian women's suffrage campaigns to recent direct actions for sustainable development in India, wherever women's movements have been established, national organizations and local grassroots groups have worked together to support women and girls. Diverse, even conflicting, compassions of women's interests rise from differences in gender, race, class, cultural, religion, and sexuality, as well as from global divisions of wealth and power. However, the rife of oppression against women has resulted in formation of international women's movements with common agendas, linked to struggles for sovereignty, democracy, and secures livelihoods around the world.

To honour woman, March 8th is celebrated around the world. It is considered as a historical day, an icon of the struggle waged against

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mistreatment and oppression by women all over the world, for over a century. It is a day to express and demonstrate collective strength and to renew struggle of women for equality and justice.

When apprising the ideologies of women movements, it is specified that within the women's movement, there have been different understandings of patriarchal oppression and its outcomes and, therefore, also varied strategies to combat it. Some organizations have small intellectual groups while there have been some that have had mass support. Some have emerged in support of certain causes or for the purpose of a focused campaign, while there are some groups that have existed for years with evolving agendas. The principles vary from radical, liberal, socialist, Marxist and Gandhian, to the new fundamentalist.

It is documented in many studies that the women's movement has a long history in India. Much longer than the current 'second wave' movement, or even the 'first wave' of earlier this century. The Shakti cults go back centuries, and the concept of Shakti, the female power principle was recognized thousands of years ago. In this form, the women's movement signifies, not merely an oppositional force powered by anger, a rather negative reaction to oppression, but the development of a distinctive female culture, a positive creative force inspiring men and women alike (Liddle et al. 1986). The changes or rather the transitions that have occurred within the women's movement in India have not followed a chronological or linear pattern, but have at all stages involved a collage of influences, local, national and international.

The goals and structures of women's movements reveal the commonalities as well as the differences among women. For example, feminist movements tend to be related with the aspirations, and the opportunities, of middle-class women. Feminist movements include women's rights movements focusing on the goals of equal rights under the law and equal access to education, careers, and political power; women's liberation movements that challenge cultural patterns of male dominance in the family and personal life through strategies that raise the

awareness of women of their own subjugation, often within the context of women-only groups. Black feminist movements address racism along with sexism; and socialist feminist movements look women's empowerment as tied to the role of government, labour, and civil society in safeguarding the rights of all citizens to equity and social security. The campaigners in feminine movements tend to be working-class women organizing to address problems of poverty and sexism and their overwhelming effects on the health and wellbeing of their families. Womanist, a term invented by the writer Alice Walker, refers to the confidence, strength, and wisdom of African-American women based in their cultures and long struggle to support their children and communities and to end racism and all forms of prejudice.

Religiously diverse, multilingual, and caste-divided India also has one of the most vibrant and many-stranded women's movements in the world. One of their primacies is challenging patriarchal religious practices, while at the same time respecting religious differences. Another is lessening the poverty and insecurity of women and their families.

It is found in reports that the women's upliftment period began in the late nineteenth century, first among elite Hindu men and women and, later, Muslims. Besides stressing education, they called for reform of the practices of widow remarriage, polygamy, purdah (the veiling and seclusion of women), property rights, and sati (the ritual suicide of widows). To curb these sinful acts made by society's traditional leaders or heads, Women established their own autonomous organizations, the most important of which was the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927. In 1934, when AIWC introduced a bill for equality in marriage, divorce, and property rights, they drew upon the nationalist rights discourse; and after independence in 1947, women were granted constitutional equality. However, the Hindu, Islamic, and other religious communities retained jurisdiction over family law (Desai 2001).

In second phase of women empowerment, grass-roots organizations formed and these focused not only upon gender but also upon caste,

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class, and culture as roots of women's persecution. The groups in this movement were associated with grass-roots labour, labourer, and tribal movements as well as leftist opposition parties. Among their activities were protests by tribal women in the Toilers' Union in Maharashtra against alcohol-related domestic violence and by the Chipko movement of poor women in the Himalayas to protect their forest resources and highlight women's unrecognized economic contributions. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a union of women working as street vendors and rag-pickers and in home-based industries, established the first women's bank for poor women (Desai 2001).

Women's participation in movements has been in four major forms:

- I. For social, economic and political rights of specific categories of people like tribal, peasants and industrial workers.
- II. For improvement in conditions of work and autonomy to women.
- III. For equal remuneration for work.
- IV. In general social movements on issues affecting men and children like abortions, adoption of children, sexual exploitation.

Sustainable, grassroots development as a precedence of Indian women's movement organizations is demonstrated by the organization Stree Mukti Sangharsh (Women's Liberation Struggle). They envisaged development that promotes equality between men and women and overcomes the economic and environmental consequences of the rural areas precipitated by large multinational corporations whose focus on short-term gains has created unsustainable forms of development (Desai 2001). In the decades 1970s, autonomous, openly feminist women's movements ascended. These groups were annoyed by the dismissals of cases of girls raped by police and by religiously sanctioned violations of women's human rights. Their campaigns refocused on violence against women, dowry deaths (the murder of brides for their dowries), sex-selective abortions, and sati (Kumar 1995).

The success of women's movement organizations has met with an antifeminist repercussion, which calls upon familial, communal, and

religious identities to try to push back women's gains (Kumar 1995). Since poverty and insecurity raised the flame of reactionary fears, the feminist tactic of promoting grassroots-based sustainable development is a double-edged one. It addressed both the economic independence of women and the long-term security and well-being of the whole community.

In academic domain, The International Women's Decade, 1975-85, has provided push to the growth of social science literature on women, their status in society and issues related to gender-based discrimination and inequality in particular. Gender studies are always on the priority agenda of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). Several universities have Centres for Women's Studies. A research institute focusing on women, the Centre for Women's Development Studies was established with the support of ICSSR in 1980. There is also a full-fledged academic journal focusing on gender studies. A survey of literature by Malvika Karlekar (2000) on 'Women's Studies and Women's Development' sponsored by ICSSR covers the studies up to 1990. It is a valuable document for further research in the field. By now, we also have a few compilations including an annotated bibliography on women's studies (Vyas and Singh 1993). Social science texts on various aspects of gender have increased significantly during the 1980s and 1990s. Many monographs and essays use the term 'movement' in a broader sense in their titles dealing with women writings, discourse, issues affecting women's position in socio-economic spheres, rather than confining themselves to mobilization and collective action by women.

Except for a few, many of the studies are subjective, impressionistic and polemical for action prescription for action written by feminist activists in journalistic style. For activists involved in feminist movements, feminism is not merely a discourse to be analyzed, but 'a method of bringing about social change'. Some theoretical studies are also available, but it is sensed that they deal mainly with issues raised by western

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scholars. Even if this is so, this should not disparage the importance of such studies. Western influence affects all spheres of our life.

In the period of globalization, 'women's resistance to male domination' was the product of western education. British, women took the initiative in establishing women's organizations and defining their objectives. Women's liberation movements in India are believed to be mainly influenced by women's movements in the west, which emphasized the 'universality' of gender oppression and therefore 'universal sisterhood' of women. This has been interrogated by many intellectuals. It is contended that feminism as a movement is entrenched in the specific 'national history and culture' (Niranjana 2000).

A few scholar-activists have begun to raise issues relevant to the Indian background. Liddle and Joshi stated that the nature of male dominance is different in India from that in western society, therefore, the demands and resistance of women against males are also different. They argue:

"Ideologically, cultural imperialism has introduced the notion of female inferiority which had no part in Indian culture, where female power and its containment were stressed. Although females were segregated in the upper castes into the domestic sphere, this separation did not imply an inferior evaluation of the domestic, since that arena was crucial to the maintenance of caste purity. The inferiority notion adds a derogatory component to the gender ideology, serving to worsen women's position. It also makes for a degraded position for women abroad when added to the imperialist ideology of Western racial superiority; for, the context of imperialism creates a notion not only of women's inferiority to men, but also of Indian women's inferiority to Western women (Liddle and Joshi 1986)."

Some editors and activist scholars also emphasized the need to look into Indian traditions and try to separate the devastating aspects from the points of strength within the cultural traditions, and start using the strengths to transform the traditions. Indian cultural traditions have

remarkable potential within them to combat reactionary and anti-women ideas. If people can identify their points of strength and use them creatively. Gabriele Dietrich criticized that the use of religion has been ignored by women's movements as an obscurantist hangover. She feels that the women's movement needs to go into the cultural question more profoundly. The effort to give women a new sense of identity beyond family, caste and religion needs to grapple with the problem of cultural identity and continuity. It is reasonably easy to point out what has been oppressive and destructive of women in cultural.

It is a fact that there is a gap. Traditional idioms and symbols are also creatively used to liberate women from subservient positions in the social system. In that context, there is a debate on Gandhi's role during the freedom struggle to bring women into the political domain. Vina Mazurkar (1976), Devaki Jain (1986) and others perceive Gandhi as a great liberator who embraced a revolutionary approach to enhance the status of women. Malavika Karlekar argued that Gandhi developed the 'tradition' of a new femininity. Thus, the Gandhian woman was to use her traditional qualities to build a new positive image of action, resistance and change. The Gandhian method of self-questioning and analysis is now being picked up by the women's movement which denies the universality of incarcerating stereotypes' (1991). Madhu Kishwar contended that while in many ways, Gandhi's views on women and their role in society are not very different from those of the 19th century campaigners, in some other important ways he marked a crucial break from that tradition. The most vital difference is that he did not see women as objects of reform, as helpless creatures deserving charitable concern. Instead, he visualized them as active, self-conscious agents of social change. He is principally concerned with bringing about radical social reconstruction. One of the most lifelong contributions of Gandhi to the women's cause was that he gave it moral legitimacy. He helped to create a tradition and socio-political atmosphere in which even today; hardly anyone will publicly stand up and explicitly oppose women's fundamental rights or will deny them participation in politics. Gandhi's action, in bringing women self-respect in social life, in breaking down

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some of the prejudices against their participation in social and political life, in promoting an atmosphere of sympathetic awareness of their issues, goes far beyond his own views and pronouncements of women's role and place in society (1985).

Other scholars asserted that Gandhi endorsed the fact that women's 'primary function is to look after the home' (Shah 1984). He did not interrogate 'class based forms of the patriarchal oppression of women' (Sangari and Vaid 1989). Sujata Patel argued that Gandhi's 'reconstruction of women and femininity did not make a structural analysis of the origins and nature of exploitation of women. Actually, Gandhi used essentialist arguments to reaffirm his place as mother and wife in the household (1988). Many empirical studies have represented that many organizations which claim to follow the Gandhian path reinforce the traditional position of women which is subordinate to the male. Granting that Gandhi's views, scholars must examine why most of the Gandhian women organizations have stuck to Gandhi's position of the 1930s. Why do many, though not all, these organizations tend to feel closer to the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) philosophy on women?

Traditions and symbols are also competently used by the champions of status quo to mobilize women in the public area. Culture and traditions are conceptualized in a way to reinforce the women's position submissive to the male. Community rights based on traditional religious codes are emphasized over citizens' rights. Women are organized and mobilized to defend and disseminate traditional institutions with patriarchal authoritarian structures and value systems. Hindu women organizations supporting Hindutva ideology demand a Common Civil Code which has in practice a Hindu bias. The Mahila Morcha of BJP observed, 'We conceptually differ from what is termed as the women's liberation movement in the West.' We require a sort of readjustment in the social and economic setup. No fundamental change in values is desirable.

Women in India do not have comfortable place within the household, and the society. That has only to be re-established and reaffirmed (Kapur and

Cossmann 1995). For the champions of this position, tradition and values are derived from Brahminical scriptures rather than custom and usage. This is being done for the elimination of political opponents and the establishment of saffron power (Kapadia 2002).

It was documented in reports that The Sangh Parivar protected the sati system and formed the Rani Sati Sarva Sangha which canvassed and mobilized women for the celebration of sati. They stolen a slogan used by women's liberation movements: 'Hum Bharat ki nari hain, phool nahi, chingari hain' (We, the women of India, are not flowers but fiery sparks) (Akerkar 1995). Some of the leaders (both male and female) of the Parivar motivated their women members to be rebellious and challenge male supremacy. Amrita Basu observed that the message these leaders convey 'is that women can assume activist roles without violating the norms of Hindu womanhood or ceasing to be dutiful wives and mothers. The support of prominent men in religious and political life not only legitimates their roles but also bridges the rift between good citizens and devoted wives and mothers' (1999).

In theoretical studies, it is well shown that communal riots in different parts of the country provide enough evidences of women's participation on communal lines. These organisations use traditional symbols and idioms not only to reinforce patriarchal values but also successfully mobilize large numbers of women of one community against another (Agnes 1994).

The riots dealt a severe shock to the principle that women have a separate existence away from their communal identity where people can debate problems of rape, divorce and maintenance on common platform. The women's movement does not stand in isolation and is an integral part of other social movements (Agnes 1994). Some reports by women's groups on communal riots during the post-demolition of disputed structure of Ayodhya period in 1992-93 in Ahmedabad, Surat and Bhopal also observes, 'Even the most committed work among vulnerable sections of women is not capable of enabling such women to liberate themselves

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from the pressures of divisive identity politics, without a conscious direction to confront this type of politics which is so inimical to women's rights and the movement for equality (Agnihotri and Mazumdar 1995)?

There is no repudiating that it does empower a specific and socially crucial group of middle class women, if not in absolute feminist direction then definitely in a relative sense. It helps previously homebound women to retrieve public spaces, to acquire a public identity, it confers upon them a political role and even leadership. It teaches the woman not to regard herself as merely feminine but as full-fledged citizen. It gives her access to serious intellectual cognition. It prepares the woman to be a citizen of an authoritarian Hindu rashtra, to crash secular, democratic politics (Sarkar 1991).

It is argued, Gender does not have an emancipatory potential that is 'natural' or 'innate'. Gender power grows from a sense of solidarity to being a force for itself only through intervention, contestation, and an exercise of and struggle over choices. Certainly, a feminist consciousness does not snuggle within a woman, ready to attain progressive self-realisation within a congenial environment, but is acquired through bitter conflicts and problems of choices within herself most of all (Sarkar and Butalia 1995).

Many scholars categorize women's movements according to their theoretical perspective. Neera Desai observed that 'the women's movement is the organized effort to achieve a common goal of equality and liberation of women and it presupposes sensitivities to crucial issues affecting the life of women. For a concerted action to move towards the objective there has to be some unifying ideological thread for various units' (1988). On the basis of the ideological paradigm, Gail Omvedt (1978) organized women's movements into two types:

1. Women's equality movements
2. Women's liberation movements

First category may not directly challenge the existing economic or political or family structure, but rather aim at accomplishing an equal place for women in it, and at abolishing the most open remnants of feudal patriarchy, whereas the women's liberation movements directly challenge the sexual division of labour itself.

Jana Everett (1979) grouped women's movements on the basis of two different ideologies of feminism. They are

1. Corporate Feminism claiming a larger role in politics for women on the grounds that they have a special contribution to make as women
2. Liberal feminism, claiming that the rights of men should be extended to women on the grounds that women are equal to men and thus should have the same rights.

Kalpna Shah divides the women's movements into three categories on the basis of their approach towards elucidating women's unequal positions in the modern society and ways to liberate them from subjugation. They are:

1. Moderate or Women's Rights Position
2. Radical Feminism
3. Socialist Feminism (1984)

Sangari and Vaid make a distinction of women's movements into two theoretical categories:

1. Modernizing of patriarchal modes of regulating women.
2. Democratizing of gender relations both at home and the work place.

These theorists stated that 'movements by working class and peasant women have a greater potential for democratizing patriarchal power relations than the modernizing movements' (1989).

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In general, Women's movements in India are divided into periods (Kumar 1993). They are:

1. Social reform movements during the freedom movement.
2. The movements from 1947 till 1975.
3. The movements emerging during and after the International Women's Decade.

Gail Omvedt also explained four kinds of movements related to women which can be called as women's movement and also distinguishes between them.

- 1) Movements where women participate: In these movements, men and women together fight some form of oppression. But the oppression due to sexual differentiation is not the focus of these movements. So Omvedt does not call such type of movements as women's movements.
- 2) Movements of women: There may be movements on general issues (slum improvement, price rise) where women are the only participants. But sole participation of women itself does not make them women's movements. In fact such movements may confirm the gender division of labour where men fight for wage rise and women fight against price rise, without challenging the male-dominated family and social structure.

According to Omvedt, these movements has a progressive role as they give women participants a chance to experience their own collective strength.

- 3) Women's reform movements: Reform movements include the series of movements on education for women, for abolition of Sati that took place in the pre-independence India. Although these issues were concerned with women, Omvedt refuses to call them

women's movements because these movements did not challenge the fundamental structure of oppression in family and society.

- 4) Women's liberation movements: These are channelled by an ideology of fighting the sexual division of labour and patriarchy. They also act against the specific issue of women's oppression and move in the direction of liberation. Omvedt called these movements, as women's movements.

Women's movements do not see women's issues as subordinate to the social goals, but keep them in focus in relation to other social goals. As Agnes (1994) stated that the women's movement in India does not stand in isolation and it is an integral part of other social movements. the women's movement in India can be deliberated in terms of its two phases, the social reform phase; and freedom movement phase.

There is a discrepancy between pre-independence and post-Independence women's movements in India. The pre-independence movements were fundamentally about social reforms and initiated by men. Comparatively, the post-independence movement demanded gender equality, questioned gender-based division of labour and highlighted the oppressive nature of the existing patriarchal structure.

When evaluating the women initiatives in other countries, it is demonstrated that in the euphoria of post-independence, it was believed that women's status would radically improve along with other marginalized groups because they were now the masters of their destiny. However, when this was not achieved, there was an increase of various movements which raised a number of issues around diverse subjects such as land rights, wages, security of employment, equality. Some of the issues on which women got together were work, population policies, atrocities on women, including rape and liquor.

After India gained independence from British rule in 1947, the Congress party formed the Government. The government made certain attempts to

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fulfil the promises it had made to women during the pre-independence period, and also in the initial period after independence. While framing the Constitution of India, it included the very important aspect of equality of men and women in all provinces of life.

Article 14 of the Constitution of India states that, "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India".

Article 15 states that "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, sex, place of birth or any of them." Article 15(3) states that "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children".

Article 16 states that "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State". According to Veena Majumdar, "The Constitutions radical departure from inherited social values represented to women of that generation its greatest intrinsic quality.

A number of administrative bodies were established for the creation of opportunities for women. Many women were inducted into the government. In the two decades that followed, 1950s and 1960s, there was a lull in the activities of feminists and in the women's movements in India. Women, however, started realizing that the constitutional promise of equality did not by itself resolve the equality questions, especially in a country as diverse as India, which comprises different religions and cultures.

The challenge of addressing inequality issue of women still exist. Women's organizations and feminists were unable to tackle the problems of women belonging to different religious groups. By the time, the feminist movement stepped into the 1970s, minority identities had begun to harden. This divisive environment affected Muslim women. Religious fundamentalists tried to place the responsibility of preserving religio-

cultural identity on women. This identity condition, with women in the centre, diverted attention away from Muslim women's grim realities and the deviations from the actual Islamic position. Having been a secular movement, the women's movement found itself facing major challenge that it did not know how to handle. On the conceptual level, Indian Feminists were in a quandary: how to assimilate Muslim women's issues into broader feminist issues and, at the same time, defend their religious and cultural identity. This has been most obvious in the case of Muslim Personal Law. Placing Muslim women's issues within the confines of religion has further marginalized them, and created uncertainty among the secular feminists in addressing their problems for fear of hurting religious sentiments. The 1970s also witnessed the split of the Indian Left Front. This led to a number of doubts regarding their earlier analysis of revolution. New Leftist movements and ideas emerged. A few streams of feminist movements also developed, such as the Shahada movement, which was a Bhil tribal landless labourer's movement against the exploitation of the tribal landless labourers by non-tribal landowners. It began as a folk protest, and became militant with the involvement of the New Left party.

It has been said that women were more active in the movement, and as their aggressiveness increased, they demanded direct action on issues specific to them as women, such as physical violence and abuse as a result of alcoholism.

Women were more aware after independence. Groups of women would go from village to village, enter liquor dens and destroy liquor pots and containers. If any woman reported to be of physical abuse by her husband, all other women would surround him, beat him up and force him to apologize to his wife in public. The formation of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was undoubtedly the first attempt made to form a Trade Union attached to the Textile Labor Union in Ahmedabad. It was formed in 1972 at the initiative of Ela Bhatt, and was an organization of women who were involved in different trades, but shared a number of common features and work experiences, low

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earnings, extremely poor working, harassment from those in authority, and lack of recognition of their efforts as socially useful work.

Major objective of SEWA is to improve the working conditions of women through a process of training, technical aid, legal literacy, collective bargaining, and to teach values of honesty, dignity and simplicity, the Gandhian goals to which SEWA subscribes. The anti-price rise agitations in Maharashtra were the direct result of the drought and famine conditions that affected rural Maharashtra in the early 1970s. These led to a sharp price rise in urban Maharashtra. In 1973, the United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front was formed to mobilize women against inflation.

There was mass women's movement for consumer protection and the demand was for the government to fix minimum prices and to distribute essential commodities. Large groups of women, between 10,000 and 20,000, would hold demonstrations at government offices, houses of Members of Parliament and merchants, and those who could not get out of their homes would express their support by beating thalis (metal plates) with lathis or belans (rolling pins). This movement spread to Gujarat, where it was called the Nav Nirman movement. In Gujarat, the movement started as a student's movement against spiralling costs, corruption and black marketeering. Soon, it became a great middleclass movement and thousands of women joined it. The methods included mock courts where judgments were passed on corrupt state officials and politicians, mock funeral processions, and processions to greet the dawn of a new era.

Women started participating in increasing numbers in the Naxalbari movement in West Bengal and the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh, the Navnirman youth movement in Gujarat, and the Chipko Movement. The Shramik Mahila Sangathan (Working Women's Organization), the Progressive Organization of Women, and the Mahila Samata Sainik Dal (League of Women Soldiers for Equality) were some of the organizations that emerged during this period.

Significant landmark for the liberation of women empowerment is mainly because of the U N consideration against maltreatments of women, UNO declared international women's decade (1975-1985), this declaration gave women a new trend in their viewpoint, and Indian women were influenced by this declaration and changed their perspective in movement.

One of the important movements was Anti Rape movement: Women's rights movement in India gained a national appeal with an anti-rape movement in 1980. Its origin lay in the excesses committed by the state repressive machinery during the Emergency Rule in India from 1975 to 1977. The anti-rape movement is a socio-political movement which is part of the movement whose objective is to struggle violence against the abuse of women. The movement seeks to change community attitudes to violence against women such as attitudes of entitlement to sex and victim blaming, as well as attitudes of women themselves such as self-blame for violence against them.

This movement happened when a new conceptualization of rape arose out of second wave Feminism. Rape was discussed as an issue of civil liberty. Anti-Rape Movement was popularized when some organization took the issue as primary concern to work out those organizations are Mahila Dakshita Samiti (MDS) , Stree Sangarsha Samiti (SSS) , Socialist Women's Group, Feminist Network Collective (FNC) ,Purogami Sangatana , Stree Sakti Sangatana , Pennurumi Iyyakum, and some AUTONOMEOUS Women's Organizations they fought and conducted mass rally regarding some dreadful rapes cases.

Some of the important rape cases that lead to mass rallies are the gang rape by police on a beggar woman called Lakshmi in Punjab, the cases of Rameezabee and Shakeelabee in Hyderabad raised public furry. Democratic rights organizations and journals also brought into light the cases of gang rape in Pathnagar, Rajahar , Agra , Bhojpur. It was in this time the highlighted Matura rape case came to light, Mathura was a 14 year old girl was summoned to the police station late in the night at

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Chandrapur near Nagpur in Maharashtra, two police constable raped her and session court of Nagpur alleged Mathura as "Loose of Morals" and declared police as innocent. The High Court convicted the rapists and lashed to seven and half year imprisonment. This gave birth to nationwide anti-rape demonstration. From every corner of the country, women's group demand for law amendments. One of the important organization named Freedom Without Fear Platform (FWFP) fought and the laws amend mended and came new Anti-Rape Law.

Another important women's movement was Anti Arrack Movement: It was one of the historic and most significant movement in the decade of 1990 by women. The women's movement against social evil, the movement was started in a small village called Dubagunta in Nellore district. The main reason for this movement was the successful literary mission of Nellore district. In Dubagunta village Rossamma was the leader who gave slogan 'Give up Drink and Wake up from Ignorance'. They stopped Arracks (local liquor) from making it. Anti-arrack community with 24 members blocked the roads conducted dharnas. Renuka Chowdary as the chairperson of Anti arrack community played a pivotal role in this movement. In 1st October 1993 arrack was prohibited because of the movement and 1st January 1995 selling liquor became offensive.

Anti-Dowry Movement was also breakthrough in the wave of women liberation. It emerged around 1979 continuing through till 1984. It was largely urban based yet nationwide in scope not just in rhetoric but also in the active participation of woman across classes in the country. In 1974 the committee on the status of women in India (CSWI) and later the parliamentary joint select committee found two things that one is female child election or identification and second is prevailing dowry. Dowry has spread to all castes, communities, religions, and regions. Dowry has to come to include the entire character of gift exchange between the two groups. By 1982 women's organization were insisting that majority of young bride death is due to the reason of dowry or suicide is because of the insisting dowry problems. Some organization like Mahila Daksataha

Samiti, National federation of Indian Women, All India Democratic Women's Association, NARI RAKSHA SAMITI, came forward to oppose the system by possessing the dishonourable murder of Sudha Goul, in 1983 high court sentenced husband death penalty and mother in law, brother in law as life imprisonment. In 1984 government amended the dowry bill and further implementation was in 1985 October.

One of the major important movements was Dalit Women's Movement: The Dalit Mahila Samiti (DMS) is the organizational name for a movement of Dalit women in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP). DMS is supported by Vanangana, a feminist NGO that has its roots in the Mahila Samakhya (MS) program, which was launched by the Government of India in the late 1980's to empower women through the popular education approach. The Mahila Samakhya staffs was given a firm grounding in feminist thinking, and trained in grassroots mobilization and leadership based on feminist empowerment principles. Dalit movements fight against untouchability, casteism and economic exploitation exists in India since 1920s. Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and E.V.R. Periyar have made historical contributions towards the abolition of the 'monstrous crime of untouchability' (NCDHR, 2000). Despite the fact that India constitutionally abolished the practice of "untouchability" in 1950, the practice continues in the constitution's fifty second year and violence has become a defining characteristic of the abuse. The government needs to take strong steps to end untouchability (Hilaria Soundari, 2006).

In the end of eighties, dalit women progressively started arguing that their needs, difficulties and aspirations were rarely accounted for by both movements. They felt the need for a separate platform and emerged as a recognizable group of dalit women's movement in the early nineties. During this period, three Dalit Women's Organisations were created on national level. In 1987, Manorama, President of Women's voice, an organisation helped to organize the first national meeting of dalit women in Bangalore and it gave rise to the National Federation of Dalit Women

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in 1995 and that was protesting in Durban at the antiracism conference from August 31 to September 7, 2001.

It revealed and demanded that caste discrimination be considered and condemned on par with racism. The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), a national women's movement organized a convention on 'Dalit Women's Rights against Untouchability and Oppression' to support the causes of Dalit women (Hilaria Soundari, 2006). The 'National Conference on Dalit Women' held in 1999 brought out a report on Dalit Women's rights and status in India (NCDHR, 2000). The position of dalit women in Tamilnadu is dejected. Dalit women's movements have taken numerous efforts to improve their situation. AIDWA, took the initiative to organize women in different parts of India especially in Tamil Nadu (Bumiller, 1991).

In September 2000, a dalit women's conference was organized by Tamil Nadu Dalit Pengal Iyakkam (Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement) mobilizing nearly 10,000 dalit women from all over the state. The conference deliberated various issues such as untouchability, caste atrocities, the impact of globalization on dalit women and violence against women during caste clashes. The conference inherited a separate identity for dalit women and made them aware of their rights (Hilaria Soundari, 2006). Tamil Nadu Dalit Pengal Iyakkam (Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement) organised a state level meet in Erode on eradication of untouchability, in November 2001.

It necessitated a regulator committee to avert untouchability crimes, priority for dalits in education and job opportunities, an awareness campaign on human rights and distribution of 'panchami' land to dalit women (Hilaria Soundari, 2006). In the International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), Tamil Nadu Women's Forum occupies a significant position by doing the entire documentation of cases of discrimination and violence against dalit women.

The Dalit of Maharashtra launched the Dalit Panthar movement in the early 1970s. Panthar discards the dominant culture and identity for the oppressed classes especially for women. The defence for this movement was mainly from intellectual side by literature. Dalit fought against devadasi system, another incident was from Kerala under the leadership of C K Janu she fought for the justice of Wayanad adivasi people. There is some other Dalit women's movement like Anti Untouchable movement, Harijan movement, Dalit Liberation movement. Dalit women participated in these Movements. There are some associations that stand for the justice of Dalit women which are Rural Community Development Association, Rural Harijan Agricultural Development Society, and association of Poor.

Numerous NGOs and Organizations that support to women's movement in India are mentioned below:

- Joint Women's programme
- National Council of Women in India
- Committee on the Portrayal of Women in Media
- National Commission of Women
- National federation of Indian Women
- Diverse Women for Diversity
- Kali for Women
- Sahile
- SEWA
- Single women's Organization
- Maitreye
- Nav Jargon Women's Association
- Madras women's association
- Women's Indian Association
- AP Mahila Samakaya

Social reform movements and women:

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The origin of the modern women's movements in India is often stressed to the social reform movement within the Hindu fold in the last century. Renowned social reformers like Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Behramji Malbari, protested against the dominant religious and social customs subjugating women (Chaudhari 1990). Their influence encouraged the British government to pass certain laws against the sati system, permitting women to remarry, abolishing the custom of child marriage. There were great efforts made to educate girls. Some of these issues continue to affect women even in this century. The difference is that till the turn of the last century, very little effort had been made by the reformers to mobilize women for participation in public life in general around the issues concerning them. Political rights, equal franchise and representation in legislatures for women were demanded by women leaders, who were supported by the Congress party (Shah 1984). Women's organizations, such as the Women's Indian Association and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), came into existence in the 1920s to spread education among women. These organizations raised similar issues and carried out welfare programs during the post-independence period. Social reformers, as well as women's organisations, openly blustered women's issues which primarily affected Hindu ideology, based on the notion of Vedic times. Most social reformers believed in the separation of the roles played by the male and female in society. Though they were not against women working outside their homes, they were not in favour of independent careers for women in the wider world. They believed that women should not compete with men in all spheres (Basu 1976). The reformers 'continued to demand that women should be pure, firm and self-controlled. Those women's organisations which were offshoots of the social reform movements, share more or less the same ideology. Kalpana Shah witnessed that:

"The role of the AIWC in the struggle for the liberation of women is negative. In fact, through its programmes the Parishad (AIWC) strengthens the traditional role of a woman as a wife, housekeeper and mother. And despite wishful thinking of the moderate thinkers like

Gandhi, woman's role as a wife is not considered to be equal to man's by women themselves. She is asked to perform some of the functions outside the four walls to assist her husband rather than to raise her head, to develop her dignity as a human being. Such women's organisations have become instruments in spreading an ideology which assigns inferior role to women. They strengthen revivalist values which are oppressive to women. These organisations have lost the zeal even to fight against oppressive social customs (1984)."

Jana Everett (1979) recognized five factors which have formed such reformist Indian women's movements. These are:

1. The hierarchical caste system
2. The Hindu religion
3. The joint family system
4. Islamic rule
5. British colonialism

The caste system allows some mobility and tolerance for some sections of society. Everett argued that the Indian women's movement could be seen as an attempt by a previously excluded segment to enter the political system. These women do not challenge the hierarchical framework, they justify their demands on the grounds of restoring previously held rights because the Indian women's movement was composed of high-status individuals. It was represented a low level of threat to the stability of the system (1979). Though the Hindu religion assigns a subordinate status to the woman, the religious dualism of the male and female principle (Shakti-Shiva) and also the religious tradition of male-female equality in ancient Vedic times, provide a justification to Hindu revivalists for improving the status of women (Heimsath 1964).

The purdah system was also a major barrier for women liberation. This system kept women secluded from men and discouraged them from public participation. It gave women a certain sense of solidarity. This conceptual implications of purdah would tend to shape the goals of early

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women's movement leaders toward corporate ideals (improving women's performance of traditional female roles) and away from liberal ideals (achieving identical rights for men and women)' (Everett 1979). However, under British rule, liberal education spread in India. The educated upper-class males reinvigorated women's education to bridge the gap between the male and the female; and thus enabled wives 'to prepare their sons for western educated milieu'. Jayawardena (1982) argued that the national bourgeoisie emerged to fight simultaneously the imperialist powers, and internally, the feudal structure and philosophies.

The important national organizations:

- Bharat Mahila Parishad (1904)
- Bharat Stri Mahamandal (1909)
- Women's Indian Association (1917)
- National Council of Women in India (1925)
- All India Women's Conference (1927)
- Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust

Institutionalization of women's movements:

As mentioned earlier, there are massive women movements were active and still continued.

Women self help group: Self Help Group foundation is sincere effort to enable the poor women to participate in the process of development. Therefore, the role played by Self Help Groups in the field of empowering women particularly in the rural areas is being recognized. It offers not only economic prospects but also a change to learn new skills, make broader social contacts and experience. It creates an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential. Therefore, the concept of Self Help Group certainly plays vital role in women

development. Since the overall empowerment of women is crucially dependent on economic empowerment, these SHGs could generate income and employment to build their empowerment.

Nilakantha Mahila Kosha is the main figure of a women self-help group from Puran Panchayat of Baliana Block. It was created, with the help of a local NGO, after the Super Cyclone, in 1999. This eighteen member group, besides undertaking micro credit enterprise, shares all their problems and try to resolve it collectively. During the critical floods from 2001, the group faced one more challenge. It fortunately could be solved with techniques and information they acquired in the trainings promoted by the Disaster Campaign and Preparedness Programme. It was last year, when one of the villagers got drunk. He did not take proper care and went near the river to see the floodwater. Suddenly, he swayed and fell into the river and began to drown. The self-help group was informed in time and, with the help of the local youths, could save him. Nilakantha Mahila Kosha came to his rescue. The self-help group gave from their savings a financial assistance to the family. The group, after this experience, called a meeting with all the male members of the village to try to close all the liquor shops of the village. Also, the local police and the Panchayat the village level politician helped them in this mission. In addition, the villagers came forward to prepare a contingency plan for the natural disaster faced by them and this women self-help group took the lead in doing so. They organized male groups and started rehabilitation works of the community by repairing roads, monitored relief distribution and management of village affairs.

The Self Help Group system has proven to be very pertinent and effective in offering women the possibility to break gradually away from exploitation and isolation. In India, the creator in this field is Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). Without the Grameen Model, SEWA was started in 1972.

The All India Women's Conference (AIWC):

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AIWC was huge women organization. It was established in 1927 to function as an organization dedicated to the upliftment and betterment of women and children". The organization continues its task and has since expanded into various social and economic issues concerning women. In the 80th year of service to the nation, over 1,56,000 members in more than 500 branches of AWIC across the country carry on the work zealously with selfless dedication. AIWC is popular in the world over as a best organization working for women's development and empowerment.

AIWC Was registered in 1930 under Societies Registration Act, XXI of 1860. (No. 558 of 1930) The main objectives of the organization are:

- To work for a society based on the principle of social justice, personal integrity and equal rights and opportunities for all.
- To secure recognition of the inherent right of every human being to work and to achieve the essentials of life, which should not be determined by accident of birth or sex but by planned social distribution
- To support the claim of every citizen to the right to enjoy basic civil liberties.
- To stand against all separatist tendencies and to promote greater national integration and unity.
- To work actively for the general progress and welfare of women and children and to help women utilize to the fullest, the Fundamental Right conferred on them by the Constitution of India.
- To work for permanent international amity and world peace.

At and international level, AIWC has:

1. Consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC)
2. Membership of UNICEF Executive committee for 10 years

3. Membership of CONGO. Elected as Vice-President of CONGO for two terms
4. A national Focal Point for International Networking for Sustainable Energy (INforSE)
5. Membership of the World Renewable Energy Network (WREN)
6. Membership of ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Energy
7. Global Village Energy Partnership
8. Membership of World Water Partnership
9. Affiliated member of the International Alliance for Women (IAW)
10. Affiliated to the Pan Pacific South-East Asian Women's Association (PPSEAWA)
11. Affiliated to NIMROO Education Centre, Japan

Kali For Women: Zubaan:

Kali for Women was significant start-up feminist publisher in India. In 1984, Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon created Kali for Women, India's first feminist publishing house. Major objectives of this movement were to publish quality work, keep overheads low, and ensure that not only the content, but also the form of what they published met international standards. Within five years of its establishment, Kali had become self-sufficient. Over the years, Kali has emerged as one of the most significant publishing houses within Indian and internationally. Its name stands for quality, editorial attention, excellence of content, and, most importantly, for providing base for women's voices to be heard. Kali's goal is to increase the body of knowledge on women in the Third World, to give voice to such knowledge as already exists and to provide a forum for women writers. Apart from publishing English translations of significant fictional writings by women from various Indian languages, Kali also deals with issues of representation of women in the media, their social roles under right wing Hinduism and Islam, as a workforce in agriculture, and as victims and saviours of environmental degradation.

The Centre for Women's Development Studies:

The Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) was established on 19th April 1980, in the middle of the International Women's Decade, by a group of men and women, who were involved in the preparation of the first ever comprehensive government report on the 'Status of Women in India' entitled 'Towards Equality' and who were later associated with the Women's Studies Programme of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The Advisory Committee on Women's Studies of the ICSSR suggested the need for an autonomous institute to build on the knowledge already generated, but with a wider mandate and resources to expand its activities in research and action. The recommendation was accepted by the ICSSR, and communicated to the Women's Bureau of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India. After few months, under the leadership of late Prof. J.P. Naik, the CWDS was registered under the Societies' Registration Act, 1860 in New Delhi and started functioning since May 1980, with a small financial grant from the Vikram Sarabhai Foundation, under the Chairpersonship of Dr. Phulrenu Guha and Dr. Vina Mazumdar as the Director.

These organizations took up issues such as women's education, abolition of evil social customs (purdah, child marriage) equality of rights and opportunities and women's suffrage. Some women leaders with the support of the Congress party, demanded right of franchise and representation in legislatures.

It can be believed that Indian women's movements are operated for some major objectives namely, liberation or uplift of women, i.e., reforming social practices so as to enable women to play a more important and constructive role in society; and equal rights for men and women, i.e., extension of civil rights enjoyed by men in the political, economic and familial spheres to women also.

Globalizing Women's Movements:

With the process of globalization of the economy and massive growth of international trade associations and governmental organizations, women have found it increasingly useful to organize across national boundaries. The United Nations has vital role in making women's movements international and in defining women's rights as human rights. Women have used the opportunities provided by the four U.N. World Conferences on Women (in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995), the official ones and the alternative NGO forums, as arenas in which they could set goals, plan, network, and inspire one another to continue their work (West 1999). They have seized upon the various U.N. accords, especially CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), as bases for demanding national changes.

Women have established regional networks, such as Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) to implement U.N. policies and other regional human rights charters, including the African Charter for Human and People's Rights. In these efforts the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, directed by Charlotte Bunch, acted as a coordination centre for international women's human rights campaigns. These have focused on sex trafficking, issues of health and reproductive rights, female circumcision and female genital mutilation, and violence against women. Regional meetings, such as the biannual Encuentros held in various Latin American cities to define the issues of Latin American women's movements, have been a source of inspiration and strength for many feminist leaders (Sternbach et al. 1992).

In 1984, meeting in India of women from different regions of the South led to the formation of Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era (DAWN) to focus on sustainable development to address the worsening of women's living standards as they relate to international lending policies (Stienstra 2000). The first WAAD Conference, held in Nigeria in 1992, brought together Women in Africa, and the African Movement. Conference coordinator Obioma Nnaemeka (1998) affirmed, "Our faith in possibilities will clear our vision, deepen mutual respect, and give us hope as we follow each other walking side-by-side." Such

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efforts to the success of grass-roots women's movements, is harder to sustain in more distant and bureaucratic international women's movement organizations; but it is vital.

To summarize, Women's movements are planned efforts made by women's associations to bring about impartiality and freedom for women. The status of women has been the main concern of many reform movements before and after independence. It is well known that The Indian society is innumerable society with caste, religion, ethnicity and gender as some of the important dimensions influencing politics and the development of the society. It is argued by many scholars that gender has been a key issue in the history of the nation since the beginning of British colonial rule over India. (Sen, 2002). Gender, and the term "women" has been used to both front and confront issues of equality in the society. The colonial rulers used gender, and they considered as vicious and barbaric patriarchal practices towards women, as a justification for the rule forced on India. The gender issue has been the basis of women's movements in India mobilizing against violence and discrimination, and for improved living conditions and their human rights, amongst other Leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj were concerned with issues like sati, remarriage, divorce, female education, purdah system, polygamy, and dowry. Some researchers have scrutinized the role of women in political independence movements at micro level. After independence, an energetic although uneven women's movement has taken shape in India. Women from diverse castes, classes and communities have participated in the movement along with activists drawn from a variety of political trends, parties and groups belonging to various philosophies making the movement highly heterogeneous. It is reviewed that Women's movement in India especially after post-Independence formed a new type of challenging movement of social problems and struggle for the social equality.

8.2 NATURE, DYNAMICS AND COMPOSITION OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The genesis of the new women's liberation movement lay in the radicalization of Indian politics in the late sixties. The rebellious mood of the youth, poor peasants, marginal farmers, educated dalit and tribal men and women, industrial working classes found its expression in the formation of innumerable special interest groups addressing themselves to the needs and demands of the local masses. Macro political processes were also finding major shifts in their rhetoric as the protest movements of the subaltern masses had taken militant paths guided by different political ideologies. The official communist parties faced major political challenge in the form of the Naxalbari movement in Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab. Middle class mass upheaval in Gujarat (popularly known as Navnirman movement) against corruption, price rise, unemployment, speculation, hoarding and black-marketing in 1974 was replicated in Bihar in the name of Sampoorna Kranti Movement under the leadership of a Gandhian leader, Jay Prakash Narayan. The unprecedented strike of the railway workers gave proof of the political power of collective strength of the working class. Tribal people's struggles against destructive development which served the interests of the kulaks, moneylenders, contractors, bootleggers and indigenous industrialists thriving on the barbaric means of surplus extraction developed in Chhattisgarh, Singhbhum, Bhojpur, Srikakulam, Chandrapur, Dhulia and in the pockets of the North Eastern states. The tribal masses in Dhule region of Maharashtra demanded the Employment Guarantee Scheme in response to the 1974 drought paralysing normal agricultural activities. This historic demand revolutionized the thinking of the development workers about responsibility of the state at the time of economic crisis (Patel 1985).

In Maharashtra, women activists and women intellectuals involved in progressive movements took initiatives in forming a united front called Anti-price rise Women's Committee and organised direct action against the culprits who created man-made scarcity of essential goods.

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Thousands of poor and lower middle class women joined the struggle under the leadership of seasoned and able women from the left and socialist background. Mrinal Gore, Ahalya Ranganekar, Manju Gandhi and Tara Reddy made their special mark in the eyes of the masses as a result of their unique ability to reach out to women of different class backgrounds. Their intellectual self-sufficiency, ability to relate micro issues to macro political reality, simple lifestyle and non-bossy nature provided role models to the younger generation of women's liberation activists of all political hues. Around the same time, a conference of Women's Liberation Movement Coordination Committee was organised in Pune. This had an even larger socio-political and cultural base as right from young educated women, professionals, writers, teachers, and industrial working class women, women workers from the unorganised sector, temple prostitutes and tribal women participated in the deliberations and highlighted their demands. The Stree Mukti Sangathana in Bombay and Progressive Organisation of Women in Hyderabad were formed in 1974. In Delhi, new leadership among women evolved from the radical students' movement and the democratic rights movement. Individual women in different political groupings all over India were feeling discontented about patriarchal biases in their organisations but they came out openly against it only after the emergency rule got over. These were independent, self-determining democratic movements, which questioned all hierarchical structures. In India, young people of that period had not participated in the dreams of the nationalist movement. Faced with multiple crises—economic, social and political, along with corruption, drought, inflation, unemployment, pauperization of the rural poor—the disenchanted youth responded with protest. Widespread, open discontent was expressed in action and consolidation of the action developed into powerful organisations throughout the country. These movements raised a number of diverse issues—land-rights, wages, employment, security at work place, water availability, destruction of nature, oppression and exploitation of Dalits and the working masses. Many women participated in these struggles with enthusiasm, responsibility and creativity (Patel, 2002).

The UN Declaration of 1975 as an International Women's Year coincided with the Emergency Rule in India. By the time the Emergency was lifted in 1977, several women's groups had vouchsafed democratic rights issues. The press swung into 'action' after the imposed silence of nearly two years. Atrocities committed against women during the Emergency were openly documented and reported in the press. These atrocities struck a chord in most women's own experience of life in the family, in the streets, in the workplace and in political groups. The culmination of this process was reached in 1980 when many women's groups took to the street to protest. During the 1980s, the issue of women's oppression was depicted not only in discussion forums, seminars and 'serious' articles but also in the popular media. Women, who had on their own identified the sources of their problems and indignity, began to acquire a language, an organisational platform, a collective identity and legitimacy they did not have earlier.

The Status of the Women's Committee appointed by the Government of India released a voluminous report in 1974. This report called 'Towards Equality' was prepared by the scholars with an interdisciplinary perspective and was presented in the Parliament of India, where it received a tremendous response from the decision-making bodies, the state apparatus and the print media. Shocking description of Indian women's reality, which manifested in declining sex ratio, very high rate of female mortality and morbidity, marginalisation of women in the economy and discriminatory personal laws were some of the major highlights of the report. Nevertheless, the report failed to throw any light on violence against women in the civil society and by the custodians of law and order. Major achievement of the report lay in the policy decision taken by the principal research body like the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) i.e. to provide financial support to scholars committed to the women's cause, to conduct research into problems faced by women in poverty groups. Between 1977 and 1979, new women's groups emerged in the cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Patna, and Madras.

They organised protest actions against dowry murders, beauty contests, sexist portrayal of women in media, pornographic films and literature imported from abroad, introduction of virginity tests by the U.K. immigration authorities, custodial rape and pitiable condition of women in prison. These groups were multicultural in their composition and worldview. As a result, their political agenda reflected the contemporaneous handling of the complex reality of women constructed by interplay of class, caste, religion, ethnicity and globalisation (Melkote and Tharu, 1980). The spokespersons of these groups had an advantage of high levels of ideological investment and the experience of the radical movements of the late sixties. Their collective wisdom provided the main backbone to the movement. Their newsletters, magazines and booklets in regional languages as well as in English provided a creative way of handling Indian women's problems.

The launch of Manushi in January 1979 was a qualitative leap in this direction. The need to study women's issues in academic institutions and to conduct research based on experiential material and affirmative action was beginning to be discussed among Indian women's studies scholars by the early eighties. Further, the discourse on this subject proved to be a fruitful exercise for activists, academics, researchers, policy planners and the United Nations system. The apex body of higher learning, University Grants Commission defined women's studies (WS) as a discipline that involved research, documentation, teaching, training and action. It is understood that women have subordinate status in our society so the knowledge base created by 'women's studies' should be used for the empowerment of women (Patel, 2009).

8.3 WOMEN'S STUDIES AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS: DIALOGUE

It was in the early 1980s that women's studies' centers, functioning autonomously or within the university system, started accepting empirical and experiential evidence from the women's movement. It was a time when participatory research, action research and subaltern studies

were gaining ground in the field of social sciences as well as among the social work institutions and Non-governmental organizations focusing on specialized fields. This process indirectly facilitated the interaction of 'women's studies' and the 'women's movement'. Wide range of issues concerning women was extensively discussed with tremendous technical details in the first National conference on perspective for women's liberation movement in India in December 1980. In terms of alternative cultural inputs, this conference was a trendsetter. It constituted songs, music ballets, skits, jokes, vocabulary, plural lifestyles and multilingual dialogues. The conference made it possible for women from totally divergent political moorings to come together for democratic discourse. Four months later, in the first National Conference of Women's Studies in April, 1981 at SNDT Women's University, a wide variety of issues were discussed by activists, researchers, academicians, administrators and policy makers. These included the developmental process which bypassed women, the gender bias in textbooks, sexism in the media, gender blindness in science and technology, health needs of women and violence against women—rape, domestic violence and prostitution. The general consensus among the participants (both women and men) was that WS was pro-women and not neutral. It was seen that WS would build a knowledge base for empowering women by pressing for change at policy level and in curriculum development, by criticizing gender-blindness as well as gender-bias within mainstream academia, by creating alternative analytical tools and visions and by advocacy for women's developmental needs in the economy and in society. This Conference established a new trend by which, gradually, women activists were invited, as resource persons and participants, to academic seminars, consultations and training workshops.

8.3.1 Participatory Technique

Participatory technique is used more often in training development personnel and organising awareness programmes. Action being an important constituent of WS, this technique is used to conduct researches on the existing movements and developmental projects. Those who have been working with women at grass roots have felt the need of using

various techniques to break the silence of women, to get their participation and eventually generate a climate of equality. The hiatus between the trainer and the trainee needs to be obliterated; the gap between producer of knowledge and user of knowledge has to be removed (Rebello, 1982). In 'women's studies' we have been saying that women's voices have to be heard; how they perceive dowry or violent situations are very crucial. While studying objective reality and micro forces, 'women's studies' also examines subjective reactions and psychological issues. To understand social oppression, personal involvement provides a deeper understanding of the problem. Hence, women's studies recognizes the role of personal accounts in highlighting the dynamics of women's oppression in situations like draught, communal riots, caste riots, Bhopal gas tragedy, appropriate technology, family planning programmes, fuel, fodder, water management, income generation activities and developmental policies.

8.3.2 Research and Action

During the International decade of women declared by the United Nations (1975-1985) for quite some time research on women and action on women were moving parallel. After the eighties, as funds started pouring into women's research, the chasm between the researcher and the activist sharpened. Many women activists worked for the established research institutions on a subcontract and freelance basis for below subsistence wages because the funding was used mainly for institution building and for the perks of the decision-makers of the institutions. The government through its ministries, such as Labour, Rural Development and Social Welfare and the United Nations system sponsored studies only for academics initially, which might have resulted into a hierarchical situation. Simultaneously with the growth of grassroots work and autonomous women's groups organising campaigns and lobbying for political action, a necessity to study the problem with participatory perspective arose. Foreign funders started supporting such actions or activists who resulted in debates— whether one should accept foreign funding or not? It was believed to have implications of unequal power

dimensions, apart from the fact that the funders might determine research priorities. Another dimension of this issue concerned the role of the researcher. If women's studies are both understanding and action, then commitment to social change is essential. Women's oppressive reality is not to be merely studied in a classroom but has to be eliminated. The logic of adopting innovative techniques like life history, autobiography, and experiential data provides self-awareness and motivation for change (Gotoskar, 1982). Articulation of one's experiences in terms of oppression or growing identity on the one hand, indicates a changed situation wherein a woman is able to frankly and honestly express her inner tribulations and a critique of the most private relationship. On the other hand this realisation, some day, ought to lead to action for changing this relationship. It could come more rapidly if there is support available through the women's movement. Of course, there are levels and levels of action, but activity and empathy are of prime significance in women's studies. As a result of the collective endeavour of women's studies scholars and the women activists, two important documents providing insights into enormity of Indian women's problems have come into existence. They are: SHRAM SHAKTI Report focusing on poor self-employed women and women in the unorganised sector and National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000A.D.). These documents provide political agendas for the mainstream political bodies and women's organisations.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Explain the nature, dynamics and composition of the women's movement in the contemporary period.

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2) Women's Studies and Women's Movements: Dialogue.

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8.4 METHODS OF FUNCTIONING OF THE NEW WOMEN'S GROUPS

Most of the women who took an initiative in the formation of the new women's groups were extremely averse to authoritarian structures within the family, educational and religious institutions and society at large as all of them did not allow women critical thinking and a space to grow as independent, cerebral and politically conscious human beings. Hence, they were very clear in their approach that they would encourage each and every member of the group to articulate thoughts and establish intimate working relationships based on the collective decision-making processes. Initially this method proved very effective in creating a new cadre of women who were intellectually enlightened, politically articulate, well informed and supportive to each other within their small groups. This was because there were no male political bosses to curb their initiative and make them rot in routine activities of fund-raising, translating, typing, posting, cleaning and cooking for the members of their political groups. Such groups in Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Bombay, Pune and Delhi brought out documents, position papers, manifestoes, pamphlets and reproduced whole lot of documents of the women's liberation movements in the other countries containing debates that had direct bearing on our situation. They had tremendous urge to reach out to more and more likeminded women. Their meetings were throbbing with new ideas, powerful polemics on epistemological issues, at the same time they reflected deep concern for immediate problems of

women. As they believed that women's issues needed to be taken upon a day-to-day basis and patriarchal power needed to be challenged in both 'personal' and 'political' spheres of life. They simultaneously started engaging in support work to individual women, solidarity work for the mass movements and united front work on an issue-to-issue basis. But, at the same time, they were committed to maintaining their own political autonomy and organisational identity. These groups kept in touch with each other by circulating their leaflets in English and regional languages, mimeographed documents and letters. They functioned purely on an informal basis and organised meetings in the homes of one of the members or sympathizers. Between 1977 and 1980, only in Maharashtra, a new culture of exclusively women's workshops, women's conferences and women's gatherings, in which women of politically diverse views were invited, was found. As these gatherings were multi-class and multi-caste (within the matrix of Brahminical Hinduism), women pursuing different occupations—right from agricultural labourers, beedi workers, industrial working class women, students, teachers, journalists, writers, researchers, white collar employees shared their experiences and put forward their demands.

8.5 POLITICAL-SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AGENDA OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The nationwide anti-rape campaign in 1980 resulted in the emergence and proliferation of autonomous women's organisations in several cities and towns of India. These groups such as Forum Against Oppression of Women (Mumbai), Saheli (Delhi), Stree Shakti Sangathana (Hyderabad), Vimochana (Bangalore) managed to get tremendous publicity in the print as well as the audio-visual media because at that time 'violence against women' was the most sensational and the newest issue. Family members, especially fathers and brothers of the women victims of violence flooded the women's groups. Later on, the women victims started approaching these groups on their own. While doing agitational and propaganda work against the series of rape cases in custodial situation, domestic violence and dowry harassment, these groups realised that to work on a sustained

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basis and to take care of the rehabilitative aspects of violence against women, it was important to evolve institutional structures for supporting women victims of violence based on feminist principles of solidarity (mutual counselling) and sisterhood. The criminal legal system in India made it inevitable for these groups to establish rapport with the police for an immediate redressal to the women victims of violence. The condition of women in the remand homes and the Nari Niketans were so repugnant and barbaric that they could not be trusted for women's rehabilitation. In fact, many women who suffered at their hands approached the new women's groups. The women activists had to deal with the attitude of victim-baiting and double standards of sexual morality, sexist remarks, and sick humour from the staff of the police, the legal apparatus and the public hospitals. At each and every step, they encountered class, caste and communal biases (Lalitha, 1980). These resulted into confrontation between the women's groups and the established institutions. However, in course of time, they realised that it was necessary to suggest concrete alternatives for attitudinal changes in terms of legal reforms, method of interventions and staff training. For public education, literature written in convincing style was a must. Audiovisual material for reaching out to more and more people was necessary. Professional bodies and educational institutions were approaching these groups for understanding the women's question. In this context special interest groups focusing on agit-prop, media-monitoring, resource material for consciousness raising, creation of cultural alternatives, publications, research and documentation, bookstalls, legal aid work came into existence during the eighties and got consolidated in the 1990s. These groups played complementary roles in each other's development.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Analyse methods of functioning of the new women’s groups.

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- 2) Write your understanding about the women’s political-social rights movement in India.

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8.6 ISSUES TAKEN UP BY THE NEW WOMEN’S GROUPS

The movement acquired momentum with the campaign against the Supreme Court of India’s judgment against Mathura, a teenage tribal girl who was gang-raped by policemen at the dead of night in the police station in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra in 1972. After 8 years of legal battle by her sympathetic lawyer Advocate Vasudha Dhagamwar in the Session’s Court, the High Court and the Supreme Court, Mathura lost everything—her status, her self-esteem and her credibility. The Court declared that Mathura was not raped by the men in uniform but Mathura, being a woman of ‘an easy virtue’ gave a willful consent for sexual intercourse. Vasudha Dhagamwar and her three colleagues in the legal profession wrote an open letter challenging the Supreme Court’s verdict in an extremely poignant and logically convincing style. This letter was widely publicized in the print media. Two major points concerning this issue were: Reopening of the ‘Mathura Rape Case’ and amendments in the ‘Rape Laws’ that put burden of proof on women and had a narrow definition of rape. Around these demands, the women’s groups were formed. They collected signatures on their petitions, conducted study-circles where experienced lawyers spoke, organised rallies, sit-ins,

demonstrations in front of the offices of the concerned authorities, prepared poster exhibitions, plays, skits, songs, slogans against violence against women, wrote letters to the editors of different news-papers, wrote articles in newspapers and magazines for the first time on women's problems (FAOW, 1985). Initially they concentrated on the women-specific issues such as wife-battery and dowry-murders, rape and eve-teasing, pornographic films, plays and literature on harassment of women at the work place. Militant actions, social boycott, gherao of tormentors, raiding of the matrimonial homes for retrieval of dowry had to be resorted to because of antipathy/lethargy of the state apparatus. From these experiences of direct action, the activists of the women's groups got to understand and know the power relations operating within modern families (working class, middle class and upper class), different religious communities and various caste organisations (Patel, 1985).

8.6.1 Fight Against Unjust Family Laws

While providing support to women facing problems concerning marriage, divorce, maintenance, alimony, property rights, custody of child/children and guardianship rights, the activists realised that the existing personal laws and most of the customary laws were discriminating against women. Hindu daughters were deprived of coparcenary rights in parental property as per the codes of Mitakshara. Christian women could not get divorce on the ground of husband's adultery; it had to be coupled with cruelty, bestiality and sodomy. While Christian husbands could just declare their wives as adulteresses and divorce them. These antiquated laws were enacted in the colonial period to serve the interests of the British bureaucrats who had their legally wedded wives in England and were cohabiting with the Indian (in their language 'native') women. Parsee daughters who married non-Parsee men lost their property rights and non-Parsee wives of Parsee husbands got only half the shares in husband's property as per the Parsee Personal Law. Shariat Law subjugated Muslim women by imposing purdah, allowing polygamy and unilateral divorce by men to his wife/wives and

by depriving divorced Muslim women of maintenance rights. The underlying philosophy of all these personal laws was that: women are not equal to men. They are governed by the patriarchal ideology. Irrespective of their religious backgrounds, these personal laws perpetuate patrilineage, patrilocality, double standard of sexual morality for men and women and perceive women as dependent on men. Individual women from different communities have challenged the constitutional validity of discriminatory aspects of the personal laws in the Supreme Court of India. Increasing number of educated working women and housewives from all religious backgrounds have been approaching secular women's organisations. The main problems faced by them from their natal families have been forcible marriage, murderous attacks in cases of inter-caste, inter-class and inter-religious marriages, property disputes, incest and from their husbands and in-laws have been adultery, bigamy, polygamy, divorce, custody of child/children, property, incest etc. As the issue of personal laws is intertwined with the religious identities, the secular women's movement had to face tremendous hostility from the elites of the different communities, mass organisations, the patriarchal secular lobby and the parliamentary parties cashing on block-votes. Individual women (divorced, deserted, single and married under duress) were questioning discrimination in the customary laws. Tribal women in Maharashtra and Bihar filed petitions demanding land rights in the Supreme Court of India. Several women's groups (Saheli, Delhi, Vimochana, Bangalore and the Forum against Oppression of Women, Mumbai) and human rights lawyers' team (The Lawyers Collective, Mumbai and Indian Social Institute, Delhi) have prepared drafts containing the technical detail of gender just and secular family laws (D'mello and Agnes, 1982).

8.6.2 Legislative Reforms

During last 30 years, laws concerning violence against women and girls have come into existence. India was the first to enact the Family Courts Act (1984). Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (DV) Act (2005) was enacted due to pressure exercised by the women's movement

to safeguard interests of survivors of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act has broadened the definition of domestic violence to include violence against women senior citizens (abuse of 'mentally unfit' certificate), incest and rape by family members and relatives forcing women and girls into prostitution. The marked features of the Act are: recognition of the right to residence, provision for the appointment of Protection officers and the recognition of service providers, trainings for Protection Officers and judges, awareness creation and budgetary allocation for legal, counseling and other support services. From the very beginning of the women's movement legal reforms has been the top most priority. Women's organizations campaigned for reforms in the rape law (1980) and dowry prohibition Act. Thirty years of campaigning demanding the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence resulted in an Act in 2005. Similarly struggle against pre-birth elimination of girls resulted (Patel 1988) in inactions of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act (2002), Public Interest Litigations to deal with sexual harassment at workplace filed by the Non-governmental organizations resulted in the Supreme Court Directive for Prevention of Sexual Harassment At workplace, 1997. In spite of all that has been done, we still need to make more inroads. For instance, we now strongly need common legislation for the region to deal with cross-country trafficking of women and girls for sex-trade and organ transplant. Many cases of violence against women also get resolved in the neighbourhood committee, community organisations and lok adalats (People's Court). The women's movement has emphasized that violence against women is a manifestation of unequal power-relations between men and women. If women are empowered by the community and via official support, we can tilt the balance in the favour of gender justice.

8.6.3 Reproductive Rights of Women

When it comes to the reproductive rights of women, most of the efforts of the women's groups in India have been directed against excesses committed in the name of family planning programmes. The Indian Council of Medical Research, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences

and the Institute of Research in Reproduction (IRR) had shown readiness to discuss scientific, medicolegal and operational dimensions of bio-medical researches conducted on human subjects. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (1998) and World Health Organization (WHO) have drawn guidelines about population policies that its focus shifts from targeting women for population control to women's reproductive rights. Ethical guidelines for bio-medical research have also been drawn. Still in the interior parts of India, poor women have been the main targets of the abusive sterilization operations and unsafe injectable and oral contraceptives. Recent researches on adolescent girls and abortion have highlighted the problem of teenage pregnancies, trafficking of young girls for sex trade and the complicity of the criminal justice system. The campaign against sex determination resulted in the central legislation banning amniocentesis, chorion-villai-biopsy and sex pre-selection techniques for femicide. But, much is needed to be done to make the legislation effective in the real life. Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) and the Lawyers Collective have jointly supported a petition (Public interest Litigation in the Supreme Court of India) filed by Dr. Sabu George for effective implementation of the Act (Patel, 2009).

8.6.4 Anti Arrack/Alcohol Movement

Since mid seventies, tribal women in different parts of country—Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Maharashtra have been fighting against alcohol sale inducing alcoholism among men resulting in the devastation of families and domestic violence against women and children. In Andhra Pradesh, the anti-arrack movement was strong in 1992 to 1993 and it spread into other states at different levels. More than 40,000 women uniting and blocking the arrack auction in Andhra was a historic chapter in the Indian women's movement. In Maharashtra, the elected women representatives in local self-government institutions, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have forced the state government to declare their block/village/taluk 'alcohol free zone' if 50% of women in the area give their vote against sale and distribution of alcohol.

8.7 WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

During 1970s and 1980s, the women's movement highlighted the marginalisation of women from the economy. The efforts of women activists were directed in agitation and propaganda for women's rights, street-fighting against escalating violence against assertive women and team building to counter sexual harassment at the work place. In the 1990s, the women's movement demanded its legitimate place within the mainstream with its own agenda of empowerment of women with partnership with men. It has been able to identify its allies in all sections of society. Its horizontal and vertical networking has created congenial atmosphere to execute development agenda with the help of effective use of information technology, communication channels, modern managerial practices, efficient law and order machinery. The most difficult areas have been providing educational opportunities for the poverty groups, dalit and tribal women, low-cost housing, environmental and occupational safety and human rights concerns. The state, political parties and beneficiaries of women's groups too have a duty to ensure democratic and multicultural atmosphere within which the women activists can take judicious and gender-just decisions about allocation of developmental resources and development funding for the construction of schools, community centers, sports-clubs, libraries, reading rooms, low cost hospitals and low cost housing for the impoverished groups. Gender Budgeting as a tool is used by elected women representatives to promote gender equality.

8.8 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND MAINSTREAM POLITICAL PROCESSES

Women's movement and the state have had areas of both collaboration and conflict. Regarding legal reforms, gender budgeting and providing institutional support to women survivors of violence, the women's movement has worked with the state (specifically the criminal justice

system). Women's movement has also fought with the state with regards to discriminatory family laws and state terror is unleashed on people's movements-struggles for safe environment, water, atrocities against minorities, displacement of masses for mega projects. The slogan 'Personal is Political' popularized by the western women's liberation movement appealed to many city-based women's groups who realized how individual cases of violence against women were not merely 'personal problems', but an outcome of socio-cultural, historical, political and economic realities in which Indian women had to survive. As a result, the issues which affected women and were treated as personal problems such as rape, family violence, dowry-murders, harassment at the workplace were put on the 'public-political agenda' of the women's movement. The pressure from the new women's groups forced the mainstream political parties also to show greater concern for women's issues at least in their public speeches, press statements and election manifestos. After the nationwide anti-rape movement in 1980, cases of violence against women became issues for parties to score points against contenders in electoral battles as well as in the local power struggles.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Give a profile of issues taken up by the new women's groups.

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2) Discuss the women's movement and development agenda.

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3) Describe the Social Movements and Mainstream Political Processes

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8.9 LET US SUM UP

From 1970 onwards, development of social movements highlighting the problems of the rural and urban poor, industrial working class, tribal masses and minorities threw up new kind of women decision makers who had the combined strength of street-fighting, formal education and strategic thinking. They had to work under tremendous adversity, as they were a part of the politics of protest. In the nineties, other sectors of society also gave space to competent and highly qualified women to be in decision-making bodies. At present, gender sensitisation of the state and central government, management and trade unions, mass organisations, educational institutions is one of the topmost priorities among the development-oriented organisations. In the last two decades, women who have held important positions have had positive experiences whenever they have done thorough homework and have played roles of problem shooters diligently and fearlessly. At the same time, in several places they have faced tremendous male hostility and physical violence. Competent women in public life who have promoted the ethos of distributive justice have managed to get popular support.

8.10 KEY WORDS

Contemporary: living or occurring at the same time.

Agenda: An agenda is a list of meeting activities in the order in which they are to be taken up, beginning with the call to order and ending with adjournment. It usually includes one or more specific items of business to be acted upon. It may, but is not required to, include specific times for one or more activities.

Movement: an act of moving.

8.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Explain the nature, dynamics and composition of the women's movement in the contemporary period.
2. Analyse methods of functioning of the new women's groups.
3. Describe Political-Social-Economic Agenda of the Women's Rights Movement.
4. Give a profile of issues taken up by the new women's groups.
5. Discuss the women's movement and development agenda.
6. Describe the relationships with other social movements and mainstream political processes.

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8.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 8.2
2. See Section 8.3

Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 8.4
2. See Section 8.5

Check Your Progress 3

1. See Section 8.6
2. See Section 8.7
3. See Section 8.8

UNIT 9: INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND PROVISIONS RELATING TO WOMEN

STRUCTURE

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Constitutional Provisions
- 9.3 Legal Provisions
- 9.4 Special Initiatives for Women
- 9.5 Let us sum up
- 9.6 Key Words
- 9.7 Questions for Review
- 9.8 Suggested readings and references
- 9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the historical and contemporary dimensions of women's movement in India. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- describe women's movement as an important variant of social movement
- explain how women's issues are raised in the reform movements of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- state and describe the basic aspects of women's organisation, issues and their participation in the freedom movement

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the post-Independence period a series of institutional initiative has been introduced for the emancipation of women in the society. The most important of these pertain to the constitutional provisions and social legislation for women and planned economic development. Women's movement has been widely influenced by these broad socio-economic

and political processes of this period. Let us examine briefly a few important aspects of these processes and the manner they have affected women's movement in the latter half of the twentieth century.

9.2 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The Constitution of independent India followed the basic principle of women's equality as accepted in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Karachi Congress. The provision of Article 15(3), which empowered the state to make special provisions for women and children, suggests that there was a realisation of women's disadvantaged position and the need for the state to enact special measures to bring them at par with men. During freedom movement it was felt that with the nation's Independence would disappear many of the disabilities, and problems of women attributed to colonial rule. The national government undertook to remove the legal disabilities suffered by women and initiated major reforms in Hindu family laws. The legal reforms in the 1950s sought to provide greater rights to Hindu women in marriage, inheritance and guardianship. However, they failed to Women's and Movement Bridge the gap between legal and social realities. Similar changes in the family laws of other communities like Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews, have not yet come up due to political resistance despite the Directive Principle of State Policy clearly stating the need for uniform laws for all the communities. With these legislative measures in the fifties women's organisation became passive and lost the vigour shown during the pre-Independence period. Several of these organisations received government grants and their activities were shaped by the grants they received for activities like adult education, nutrition programmes for children, tailoring classes under vocational training programmes and family planning programmes. Most of these organisations were urbanbased and the leadership came from the educated middle and upper class women. In the post-Independence period, two important organisations for rural women were set up, i.e., Kasturba Memorial Trust and Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh (Indian Rural Women's Organisation). Their main objective was to assist the rural women in developing leadership potential.

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

Constitutional Privileges

- (i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- (ii) (The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- (iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- (vi) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- (vii) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)

- (viii) The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- (ix) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
- (x) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- (xi) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
- (xii) Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
- (xiii) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
- (xiv) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

- (1) Discuss the Constitutional Provisions for Women in India.

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9.3 LEGAL PROVISIONS

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

- (1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- (i) Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- (ii) Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
- (iii) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
- (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
- (v) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
- (vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- (vii) Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

- (2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL) Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests like

- (i) The Family Courts Act, 1954

- (ii) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- (iii) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- (iv) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- (v) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- (vi) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
- (vii) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- (viii) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- (ix) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- (x) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- (xi) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- (xii) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- (xiii) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- (xiv) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- (xv) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

9.4 SPECIAL INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN

9.4.1 Planned Development and Women's Issues

In the post-Independence period it was assumed that economic development policies i.e., agriculture development and modernisation, industrialisation, technological development etc., will bring about better life for everyone including women. The overall growth strategies failed to take note of the existing class, caste and gender inequalities. Planned development in India increased socio-economic inequalities. Let us discuss the observation in more detail.

i) Thrust of Development Policies

The main thrust of development policies for women was provision of education, health and welfare. The continued absence of concern for women's economic roles till the Sixth Five-Year Plan shows that

women's economic independence was given a low priority. In the Sixth Plan a separate chapter on women and development was included in the Plan document for the first time. It reviewed the status and situation of women in general and came to the conclusion that in spite of legal and constitutional guarantees, women had lagged behind men in almost all sectors. For the first time it clearly spelt out that the economic independence would improve the status of women and suggested setting up of cells at the district level for increasing women's participation through employment. The successive five-year plans continued suggesting programmes for the improvement of the status of women. The Ninth Plan stressed the need for national policy for the empowerment of women for empowering women as the agents of social change. It also discussed the need for reservation of seats for women in the Parliament and State legislative assemblies. However, it must be said that women are as yet nowhere near receiving their due share of the planned development (Seth 2001). Apart from this the nature of economic development in the post-Independence India benefited only a small section of urban educated middle and upper class women whose visibility as legislators, administrators, doctors, lawyers, teachers etc. led to an erroneous belief that women have made great strides and have achieved equality

ii) Women's Educational and Economic Status

The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) was a watershed in the debate on women's issues in India. The Committee provided evidence of the decline in women's employment due to technological changes, biases on the part of employers to 'replace women by men and machines'. High illiteracy among women particularly among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and poor rural and urban women coupled with inadequate training facilities for them. In the year 1981 the rate of female literates was around 29 percent and in the years 1991 and 2001 this rates was 39.29 and 54.16 respectively. In the rural areas the female literacy rates was around 21 percent and 30 percent in 1981 and 1991 respectively. The Committee on the Status of Women

in India was of the view that planners, government officials, employers and trade union leaders perpetuated the middle class perceptions of women's primary role as the homemaker and not as the bread winner.

Such a view ignores the realities of millions of women in the poorer sections in rural and urban areas, who work for the survival of the family. Millions of rural women work hard on family farms and within the home as unpaid workers, collect fuel, fodder and water, work as artisans, craftworkers (weaving, cane and bamboo works etc.) with their men but are recognised as helpers and not as workers. When they work as wage labourers they are invariably paid less wages than men. The Government passed the Equal Remuneration Act (1976), however, it remains ineffective. The neglect of women's economic roles, which you will study in greater detail in unit 31 of this Block, results in exploitation of women workers, unequal wages between men and women, higher unemployment due to loss of jobs in traditional sectors like textiles, mining, manufacturing and household industries.

- (i) **National Commission for Women:** In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

Mission – Women

To strive towards enabling women to achieve equality and equal participation in all spheres of life by securing her due rights and entitlements through suitable policy formulation, legislative measures, effective enforcement of laws, implementation of schemes/policies and devising strategies for solution of specific problems/situations arising out of discrimination and atrocities against women.

Vision

The Indian Woman, secure in her home and outside, fully empowered to access all her rights and entitlements, with opportunity to contribute equally in all walks of life.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

1. General The complaint shall disclose complete picture of the matter leading to the complaint. The Commission may seek further information/affidavit as may be considered necessary in the matter.

2. Complaints not ordinarily entertainable The Commission may summarily dismiss complaints of the following nature: i) Complaints illegible or vague, anonymous or pseudonymous; or ii) The issue raised relates to civil dispute, between the parties such as contractual rights obligations and the like; iii) The issue raised relates to service matters not involving any deprivation of women's rights; iv) The issue raised relates to labour/industrial disputes not involving any deprivation of women's rights; v) Matter is sub judice before a Court/Tribunal; vi) The Commission shall not inquire into any matter which is pending before a State Commission or any other Commission duly constituted under any law for the time being in force. vii) Matter already decided by the Commission viii) Matter is outside the purview of the Commission on any other ground;

3. Receipt and Registration of Complaints

a. All communications/complaints in writing (by whatsoever mode they are received) addressed to the Commission, its Chairperson, Members or other officers of the Commission, either by name or designation, shall be received by the C&I (complaints and investigation) cell, who shall enter the complaints in the complaints register containing particulars such as, date of receipt, diary number, sender's name, address, case number and category and State.

b. Such registration of complaint shall be done within 24 hours from the date of the receipt of the complaint c. An acknowledgement shall be sent to the complainant within 3 days of the receipt of the complaint d.

Without prejudice to the Chairperson's power to set up an Investigating Committee, complaints on which cognizance has been taken shall be serially noted and allocated as per roster amongst the members and the counselors assigned to each case to assist the member in the matter.

4. Scrutiny of complaints (a) On receipt of the complaint by the Counselor, he/she shall prepare the BTR/ (Bill Transmission Report) and submit the same to the DS (b) The (BTR) shall be prepared as per the format at Annexure I – BTR shall disclose the course of action to be adopted in the complaint Such BTR shall be placed before the DS within 24 hours from the date of receipt of the complaint. The DS shall decide whether the complaint is cognizable or not and shall forward the complaint which has been taken cognizance of to the members after getting full information and reports as necessary. DS will be deemed to be act on behalf of the Commission for getting full information and reports on behalf of the Commission. (c) Subject to the provisions above, complaints and other communications requiring urgent attention shall be placed expeditiously before the member or the chairperson as the case may be. (d) All complaints and other communications which are not in English/Hindi and which are required to be placed before the Commission shall be got translated into English/Hindi with utmost expedition. Provided that only the gist of the complaint shall be prepared in English if the complaint is not entertainable or is of an urgent nature, requiring immediate attention. (e) Any complaint directly received by the chairperson or any member shall be sent to the C&I Cell who shall process the same as per the provisions here in above provided. (f) In case of any suo moto action taken or proposed to be taken by either the chairperson or any Member the procedure as described shall be followed.

5. Placing complaints before the Commission A brief data of the complaints registered, whether taken cognizance or not shall be placed before the commission for its information and consideration. Any member/Member Secretary to whom a complaint is forwarded and on which cognizance has been taken shall be deemed to act on behalf of the commission.

6. Manner of dealing with complaints Subject to such special or general orders of the Chairperson, all complaints shall be initially dealt with by a Member of the Commission. However, the Chairperson may, having regard to the importance of the matter, place the case / complaint requiring a detailed enquiry before two or more members or a Committee appointed in this behalf or set up a Investigating Committee for the said purpose.

7. INQUIRY INTO COMPLAINTS The Commission while Inquiring into the complaints may- (i) Call for information or report from the Central Government or any State Government or any other authority or organization subordinate thereto within such time as may be specified by it: Provided that if the information or report is not received within the time stipulated by the Commission, it may proceed to inquire into the complaint on its own; (ii) If, on receipt of information or report, the Commission is satisfied either that no further inquiry is required or that the required action has been initiated or taken by the concerned Government or authority, it may not proceed with the complaint and inform the complainant accordingly; (iii) Without prejudice to anything contained in clause (I), if it considers necessary, having regard to the nature of the complaint, initiate an inquiry. (iv) Call for further particulars or information from any person or authority.

8. Preliminary consideration, Issue of Notice, etc. (a) If on consideration of the complaint, the Commission dismisses the complaint in limine, the said order shall be communicated to the complainant and the case shall be treated as closed. (b) If on consideration of the complaint along with the BTR, the DS admits/takes cognizance of the complaint, she may direct issue of notice to any authority including the complainant, calling upon, to furnish information/ report, or calling for further particulars .This shall be issued in the form at ANNEXURE II enclosing a copy of the complaint there to. Such notice shall be signed by the DS. (c) If, however, the Commission issues any other direction or order, action shall forthwith be taken accordingly. (d) If the reports/information is not

received from the concerned authority within the given time, or received late or not complete in all respects, the case shall be placed before the Member for further direction.

9. Procedure for conducting enquiry (A) On receipt of information/report called for as per provision of Regulation 7 or 8 the Chairperson or Member concerned may, if so considered necessary proceed with the complaint in the manner hereinafter provided. (B) Where no further action is called for, the complaint may be: (a) Closed, under intimation to the complainant. (b) Complaint may be sent to the appropriate Government/other authorities for their consideration (c) May be referred to concerned State Police/State Govt. Provided that where the action has been taken as (b) (c) above, the same shall be monitored till the issue/matter has been decided/settled. (C) Where cognizance of the complaint is taken or/on suo-moto action. - The proceedings in the form of an enquiry may be initiated. - On suo-moto or any urgent action, the CP may direct setting up of Investigating Committee U/Sec.8 of Act

10. Preliminary hearing of the complaint (a) At the preliminary hearing, the Member shall ascertain from the complainant whether he/she admits the allegations made by him/her. (b) Such complainant may be examined on Oath (Annexure-III) or May file an affidavit supporting the facts of the case or may be directed to produce list of witnesses/documents proposed to be relied upon, if any, to support her claim. (c) Thereafter the witnesses on behalf of the complainant shall be examined and the opposite party shall have the right to cross examine. (d) The opposite party against whom the complaint has been made would then be required to submit his written statement of defense either on oath or on affidavit and produce list of documents/witnesses, if any, relied on. (e) The committee or any member investigating or inquiring into a complaint may issue a commission for examination of any witnesses in accordance with the provisions of the CPC

11. When a complaint has been filed before the Commission, Summons (as per ANNEXURE - IV / V') may be issued to the opposite

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party/parties to appear & answer the claim on the day to be therein specified.

12. The opposite party/parties to whom summons have been issued may appear in person or by a pleader duly authorized, if so permitted by the commission, & able to answer all material question relating to the complaint.

13. Every summons shall be accompanied by a copy of the complaint or by a concise statement. Such summons shall be signed by the DS or the Law Officer.

14. Circumstance for issuance of summons. To afford an opportunity of being heard in person and/or to adduce evidence in support of the complaint. Cause production of the records. Examine as a witness To afford an opportunity of being heard as in the opinion of Commission his/her reputation is likely to be prejudicially affected by the decision that the Commission may give in the above proceedings. To afford an opportunity of being heard in the matter as your conduct in connection with subject matter of the above proceedings is being enquired into. Where the Commission sees reason to require the personal appearance of the defendants/opposite party, & the summons shall order him to appear in person on the day therein specified.

15. Investigation.- The Commission may, for the purpose of conducting any investigation pertaining to the inquiry, utilize the services of any officer of the Central Government or any State Government with the concurrence of the Central Government or the State Government, as the case may be or any retired officer or any other person and co-opt such officer or such person as a Member of the investigating committee.

16. Powers relating to inquiries.- (i) The Commission shall, while inquiring into complaints under this Act, have all the powers of a civil court trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908), and in particular in respect of the following matters, namely:- (a)

Summoning and enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath; (b) Discovery and production of any document; (c) Receiving evidence on affidavits; (d) Requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office; (e) Issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents; (f) Any other matter which may be prescribed.

17. Steps after inquiry.- The Commission may take any of the following steps upon the completion of an inquiry held under these regulations, namely- (i) where the inquiry discloses, the commission of violation of any rights or negligence in the prevention of violation of any rights by a public servant, it may recommend to the concerned Government or authority the initiation of 9 proceedings for prosecution or such other action as the Commission may deem fit against the concerned person or persons; (ii) Approach the Supreme Court or the High Court concerned for such directions, orders or writs as that Court may deem necessary; (iii) Recommend to the concerned Government or authority for the grant of such immediate relief to the victim or the members of his family as the Commission may consider necessary; (iv) Subject to the provisions of Sub clause (v) provide a copy of the inquiry report to the petitioner or her representative; (v) the Commission shall send a copy of its inquiry report together with its recommendations to the concerned Government or authority and the concerned Government or authority shall, within a period of one month, or such further time as the Commission may allow, forward its comments on the report, including the action taken or proposed to be taken thereon, to the Commission; (vi) The Commission shall publish its inquiry report together with the comments of the concerned Government or authority, if any, and the action taken or proposed to be taken by the concerned Government or authority on the recommendations of the Commission. Misc provisions

18. Recording of Orders / Proceedings The order sheet is the mirror to the proceedings and hence the counselor has to ensure that right from the date of the receipt of the complaint, its enquiry / investigation till its final disposal, the gist of the proceedings are reflected in the order sheet and

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therefore shall ensure that - (a) All orders, notices, summons, day to day proceedings etc issued in the matter are legibly recorded in the Order Sheet; provided that the orders which are lengthy shall be recorded on separate sheets and appended to the order Sheet. (b) The order sheet shall invariably reflect the brief of the proceedings conducted which shall be signed by the counselor, member concerned/ committee and the parties if any. (c) No routine inter office correspondence or any deposition shall be recorded in the order sheet. Such correspondence should be made separately in an annexed file. 19. Mode of Communication Unless otherwise directed, all summons and notices from the Commission shall be sent by registered post 20. Procedure regarding Suo Motu Action. The procedure contained in this Chapter shall mutatis Mutandis apply to suo moto action taken by the Commission.

- (ii) **Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government:** The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

The bill, which promises 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, was surprisingly also a part of the BJP's manifesto ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha Polls.

The bill also proposes that one-third of the seats from the reserved seats will be fixed for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The reserved seats will be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the Lok Sabha. Besides, the reservation will cease to exist after 15 years of commencement of the law.

Maharashtra: Onion prices rise after crop damage due to rains

Govt looking at gold policy: Finmin official

Uddhav Thackeray has agreed to be Maharashtra CM: Sanjay Raut

However, it seems that there still are mixed opinions on the subject.

Those who believe in the passage of the bill rely completely on the numbers. Out of a total of 543 MPs in the current Lok Sabha, only 62 are women. Essentially, that means one in every 10 parliamentarians is a woman, which is a skewed proportion considering that 49 percent of the Indian electorate consists of women.

In fact, a report by Factly suggests that between 1957 and 2015, the total number of women contesting elections has increased by a whopping 15-fold. During the same period, the number of male contestants witnessed a five-fold increase. In addition, the chances of women candidates winning has always been more than that of male candidates, the report points out. However, this does not reflect in the number of women in Parliament, warranting the need for the bill to be passed.

While it is easy to label those against the bill as being 'sexist', it wouldn't be fair to dismiss them.

Those who are against the passage of the bill argue that reserving a constituency for a woman would translate to a loss of opportunity for the men who could have been better or more qualified candidates. This could also result in disregarding the choice of the voter.

In addition, the Women's Reservation Bill comes in with the same shortcomings as any other law that renders quota to the underprivileged. It has been argued, that in a representative democracy, where 131 of 543 seats are already reserved for SCs and STs, an additional 33 percent quota will be a disproportionate representation of people's wishes.

- (iii) **The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000):** The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child. National Policy for Children-2013 was adopted by the Government of India on 26th April 2013. National Plan of Action for Children 2016 is in Draft Format.

- Strengthening of the existing primary health care infrastructure
 - Consolidation and maintenance of levels of immunization coverage
 - Stepping up immunization where coverage is low
 - Polio eradication through immunization
 - Ensuring essential supplies and drugs
 - Training of doctors and para-medical health workers
 - Educating women and girls on safe motherhood
 - Providing primary education facilities in unserved areas
 - Providing child care servicesCommunity mobilization and involvement
- (iv) **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001:**
The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2016 is under draft stage.

The Government of India had adopted the National Policy for Empowerment of Women on 20th March, 2001 with the objective to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. The policies/programmes of the Government are all directed towards achieving inclusive growth with special focus on women in line with the objective of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women.

Given the long term nature of issues which impact on women, need was felt to strengthen the processes that promote all-round development of women by focussing on a coordinated approach for implementation of the schemes of the concerned Ministries/Departments and by creating an

enabling environment conducive to social change. With this in view, the Government has set up National Mission for Empowerment of Women on 08.03.2010 with the objective of convergence of schemes/programmes of different Ministries/Departments of Government of India as well as State Governments/UT Administrations. The Government of India also has constituted a High Level Committee for study of the Status of Women in the country since 1989, the mandate of which inter-alia, includes measures evolving appropriate policy interventions based on a contemporary assessment of Women's needs.

The late 1970s and 1980s was marked by a resurgence of women's struggle and emergence of new women's groups and organisations. After their participation in nation's independence struggle women again withdrew from public life and the debate on women's issues also faded out from the public arena. Several scholars have talked about the absence of women's movement in the 1950s and 1960s in India and the slow erosion of concern for women's issues. The growth of 'protest politics' and breaking out of a limited perspective of legislation and education as the main instrument for improving women's position marked the women's movement in the 1970s. Even the older women's organisations set up during the pre-Independence or during the 1950s which were mainly engaged in 'welfare' and 'charity' work, gradually started changing their stand on several issues concerning women. There were various issues that inflamed women's movement in India. Figure 30.1 depicts some of them. However, many women activists, who were working with political parties, trade unions, peasant and workers movements, realised that they were hesitant to take up issues which concerned women exclusively. The issues women raised were the retrenchment of women from textile mills and other industries due to technological changes and replacing them by men who received training on new machines, lack of maternity benefit to women workers, lack of provision of children at work place, wage discrimination between men and women, inadequate education and training facilities for women workers and discrimination at work places. These led to the emergence

of separate women's organisations in various parts of the country, which seriously attempted to organise poor women for change.

9.4.2 Emergence of New Organisations and Approaches

The growing economic hardships of poor rural and urban women (fifty per cent of the households were below poverty level at the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan) and failure to take up women's issues by the general agrarian and industrial workers' movements resulted in women labourers organising separately. Let us now look at the new organisations and approaches in more detail.

- i) Organisation Such new organisations as Self-Employment Women's Association (Gujarat), Working Women's Forum (Tamil Nadu), Sramik Mahila Sangathna (Maharashtra) concerned themselves with the plight of women workers in the unorganised sector. Organising women labour and taking up the issues of their wages, working conditions, exploitation and health hazards became an important task for these women's organisations. Research on women in the unorganised sector helped in developing new strategies for dealing with the problems of poor rural and urban workers. Anti-price rise movement in 1973-74 was a united front of women's organisations belonging to several parties.
- ii) Approaches In the late nineteen seventies several women's organisations emerged which were not affiliated to political parties or to trade unions. They were called 'autonomous women's organisations'. They rejected the 'welfarist' approach adopted by the previous women's organisations, many of which were set up during the pre-Independence period, and adopted 'protest politics' for mobilising women on specific issues.

9.4.3 Deforestation and Ecological Movement

Women's and Movement

Economic hardships faced by women in the Himalayan region due to cutting down of forests resulted in spontaneous mobilisation of women. They hugged the trees to prevent the contractors from felling them. This is popularly known as Chipko movement. The disappearance of forests means acute hardships to women who are primarily responsible for the collection of fuel, fodder, fruits, herbs for medicine and other forest produce which give them income and employment. This is why we find that women are even now in the forefront of these ecological agitations.

9.4.4 Issue Based Movements in the 1970s and 1980s

The ineffectiveness of social legislation at reform is clearly indicated by several studies in the 1970s. The autonomous women's organisations' took up issues related to women's oppression like dowry, violence within the family, alcoholism among men and wife-beating, discrimination at the work place etc. to mobilise women for collective action. For the first time some groups in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Patna etc. raised issues such as sexual exploitation of poor scheduled castes and scheduled tribe women by upper caste landlords. Issues of rape, dowry murders, crime and violence against women were taken up. All India anti-dowry and anti-rape movements were launched by women's organisations and Civil liberties and democratic rights organisations also joined them. They launched important issue based movements. Let us examine few of these movements.

i) Anti-dowry Movements

Dowry murders have witnessed a sustained campaign by several women's organisations and civil rights groups. Journalists wrote extensively about the dowry problem. In the 1980s several women's and

other progressive organisations formed a joint front in Delhi called “Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch”. Organisations in other major cities also campaigned through protest, demonstrations, discussions, street theatre, posters etc. against the ghastly murders of young brides for dowry. The Law Commission and the Parliamentary Committee also looked into the problem. After a sustained campaign, finally a Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 1984, which made certain changes in the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1961. The Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984 was passed. The Act sets a limit to the amount given in dowry but does not ban dowry. While cruelty by the husband and his relatives leading to suicide or death has become an offence, punishable with imprisonment, still dowry deaths continue. In 1986 alone 1,285 dowry deaths were reported but there were few convictions. In 1998, as many as 6917 dowry deaths were reported throughout India (National Human Development Report 2002).

ii) Anti-sati Movement

In 1829 the practice of Sati was abolished through a legislation which marked the culmination of a debate initiated by the British. The burning of a young widow Roop Kanwar in 1988 on the funeral pyre of her husband in Deorala, Rajasthan, sparked off strong protests by women’s organisations. The delayed response of the government came in the wake of mounting agitation in the shape of Commission of Sati (Prevention) Bill, which 38 Women and Society was hurriedly passed in the Parliament. The Act assumes that it is a practice sanctioned by the custom. It does not seek to punish those who profit by raising money by selling photographs and raising donations in the name of so called ‘sati’. There is nothing on preventive action. The pre-sati feeling within the community mounted a counter agitation against the so called attack on their religious custom. It is strange that the barbaric practice, against which social reformers raised their voices, still persists in a country, which reveres mother goddesses.

iii) Anti-rape Movement

An anti-rape movement was launched in the last decade demanding review of the Supreme Court judgment in a rape case, which acquitted the culprit. Women activists forced the government to review Rape Laws. Several women's organisations and legal and social activists held discussions with the Law Commission to amend the law and in 1983 Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed. In the 1990s women took up the issue of communalism and globalisation through a wider networking both at the national and international level. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the women's organisations in India are linked together through networks on different issues and campaigns. While former methods of protest and advocacy are still used, new methods of resistance and mobilisation for change are also being evolved.

9.4.5 The Emerging Trends and Government's Response

One should not get the impression that women's movement in India is largely urban based. We find that it has also involved middle class educated women. There are several active grassroots organisations of poor rural and urban working class women, tribal, self-employed women who are fighting against all forms of oppression, injustice and exploitation. Various national and regional political parties and trade unions have also set-up women's wings. As a response to women's movement that began in the late 1970s, the government set up women's cells within a few ministries (Rural Development, Labour and Human Resource Development). In government's programme for rural poor 30 per cent women beneficiaries are to be selected for training and income generation programmes. In the late 1980s the government prepared a National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000 A.D.), which has made several recommendations relating to legal, economic, social and political status of women. The government also appointed a National Commission on selfemployed women and women in the informal sector to look into the specific problems of unorganised women labour who constitute eighty seven per cent of women workers but do not get any

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protection from Labour Laws like equal wages, maternity benefits, childcare facilities and better working condition. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution prepared in the late 1980s was passed in 1993 and it contained an across the board reservation of 33.33 percent in panchayats, panchayat samitis, zilla parishads and local body institutions for women. The National Commission for Women was set up in 1992 envisaging to cover all facets of issues relating to safeguarding women's rights and promotion of their empowerment. It was visualised as an expert body to advise the government on women's issues and be a powerful advocate of their rights and hence a statutory body to lend it independence (Annual 39 Report of Women and Child development Department, Ministry of Human Women's and Movement Resources, 2002). Besides this the government has come out with various programmes such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY), Swasakthi Project etc. for the benefit of the women. The shift in issues and agenda for action within the women's movement and response from the government are also due to the fact that research on women's problems, particularly on women in the working class and other weaker sections especially during the 1970s and 1980s has thrown several challenges for the women's movement as well as the government. The new knowledge, being generated by scholars to understand the subordination and oppression of women and their points of strength, is broadly termed as 'women's studies' or 'gender studies'. It is gradually finding a place in universities, colleges and schools as teaching material. 'Women's Studies' scholars and women's organisations see a strong link between 'Women's Studies' and action for change. The women's movement during 1970s and 1980s while being effective in bringing women's issues back into the arena of public debate was only a beginning of the long struggle ahead for equality, justice and dignity to all women.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

(1) What are the Legal Provisions for the protection of human rights in India?

.....
.....
.....

(2) Discuss about the Planned Development and Women’s Issues.

.....
.....
.....

9.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit began with a brief discussion on women’s movement as an important variant of social movement. Then we discussed how women’s issues were focused in the reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries especially in the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Arya Samaj movements and in the social reform movements among the Muslim women. We have also discussed in detail the aspects of women’s issues and women’s participation in the nationalist movement. The broad socio-economic and the political processes, which have affected women’s movement in the post-Independence period, are also discussed in this unit. Lastly, we have discussed the resurgence of women’s movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

9.6 KEY WORDS

Evolutionary Process: A process of gradual change in a society from one stage to the other

Franchise: Right to cast vote

Metropolitan city: Urban places with more than one million populations.

Polygyny: A form of marriage in which a husband has more than one wife at the same time.

9.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- (2) Discuss the Constitutional Provisions for Women in India.
- (3) What are the Legal Provisions for the protection of human rights in India?
- (4) Discuss about the National Women Commission.

9.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Jayawardena, K. 1986. Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World. Kali for Women; New Delhi (Chapter 6)
- Geabrielle, D. 1988. Women's Movement in India: Conceptual and Religious Reflections. Breakthrough: Bangalore.
- Seth, Mira 2001. Women's Development the Indian Experience. Sage Publications: New Delhi

9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 9.2

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 9.3
2. See Sub Section 9.4.1

UNIT 10: DEBATE ON RESERVATION OF SEATS FOR WOMEN IN LEGISLATIVE BODIES

STRUCTURE

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Indian Perspective
- 10.3 Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures
- 10.4 Women contestants in General Elections
- 10.5 Reservation for Women in Local Bodies — Encouraging trends
- 10.6 Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Previous efforts
- 10.7 Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Current Initiative
- 10.8 Differing perceptions about the reservation for Women
- 10.9 Alternate Proposals
- 10.10 Gender Quotas/Reservations in Legislatures — General Perspectives
- 10.11 What are Quotas?
- 10.12 Political Parties and Quota
- 10.13 Let us sum up
- 10.14 Key Words
- 10.15 Questions for Review
- 10.16 Suggested readings and references
- 10.17 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about Indian Perspective on reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies.

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- To describe Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures
- To highlight the Women contestants in General Elections
- To know the Reservation for Women in Local Bodies — Encouraging trends
- To discuss the Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Previous efforts
- To know about Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Current Initiative
- To find the Differing perceptions about the reservation for Women
- To find out Alternate Proposals
- To discuss the Gender Quotas/Reservations in Legislatures – General Perspectives
- What are Quotas?
- To know about the Political Parties and Quota

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the issue of political empowerment of women gained momentum throughout the world. In 1990, the United Nation's Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of 30 per cent women in decision-making positions in the world by 1995. This target was far from being met by 1995, only 10 per cent of the world's parliamentarians were women. Today, around 16 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are women¹, still far from the target of 30 per cent. This figure implies that politics is still predominantly a men's business, with men making up 84 per cent of parliamentarians. And in India, in the fourteenth Lok Sabha there are only 51 women, constituting 9.51 per cent of the House and in the Rajya Sabha there are only 23 women members constituting 9.50 per cent of the House.

10.2 INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

In India, normatively, women have been given an exalted position in society. During ancient times they were treated at par with men even in political and philosophical spheres. However, down the centuries, the position of women in society deteriorated and politically they were pushed to the background. It was only in the twentieth century, particularly during the freedom movement under the charismatic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, that involvement of women was accepted as the natural course in India. In fact, Gandhiji's notions and approach towards the role of women in the freedom struggle stood in sharp contrast to the age-old prejudices against them ingrained in the Indian psyche. The social condition of women was quite appalling in those times and it was primarily due to the conscious efforts of the leadership, at the forefront of the freedom struggle, that women fought against the might of the British empire in partnership with men. Gandhiji believed that women have to play a much meaningful role in politics, making it more accountable, transparent and corruption free. Writing in Harijan on 21 April 1946, he emphasized the need to "enroll women as voters, impart or have imparted to them practical education, teach them to think independently, release them from the chains of caste that bind them so as to bring about a change in them...If they will do this, they will purify the present unclean atmosphere." He prophetically said, "as long as the women of India do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country."

Our freedom struggle was viewed by the national leaders in a wider perspective of restructuring the socio-economic and future political set up, to provide in it, among other things, equality of both men and women. It is worth mentioning that way back in 1920 Smt. Sarojini Naidu and Ms. Margaret Cousins led a group of women to demand equal rights of representation for the fair sex in the Indian Provincial Legislatures. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was of the view that political action on the part of women could be independent of their social status and that political action was possibly more important than social reform in empowering women. The attitude of our national leaders was

evident from the Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme which was adopted in 1931 by the Indian National Congress.

The Congress declared that it could agree to a Constitution which provided for equal rights and obligations of all citizens, without any bar on account of sex and provided for adult suffrage. Thus, although the British Government turned down the demand for women's franchise, the Indian National Congress in 1931 adopted a resolution in favour of women's franchise and representation. In independent India, women have held important political and administrative positions. For instance, Shrimati Indira Gandhi guided the destiny of the country as Prime Minister for more than one and half decades. Women have also served as Governors, Chief Ministers, Ministers in Union and State Governments, Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies, Judges of the High Courts and Secretaries to the Government of India. Currently, we have a woman as the President of our Republic. Despite the fact that Indian women have held important positions both at the national and international levels, women's participation in the political arena and in the decision making bodies is not in proportion to their population, except in the local bodies. Their effective participation, even in these bodies, leaves much to be desired.

10.2.1 Constitutional Provisions

Adoption of our Constitution heralded a new era of equality for women of India. It guarantees equal political rights including the right to vote to women. Also, almost all the provisions contained in the UN Convention on the 'Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' are there in the Indian Constitution. Not only does the Constitution guarantee equal political status to women, there is even a scope for 'positive discrimination' in their favour as is evident in Article 15(3) of the Constitution. There are many other provisions in the Constitution which lay stress on equality between men and women. Article 14 provides for equality before law. Article 39(a), states that the State shall direct its policy towards securing equally to men and women the right to an

adequate means of livelihood, and 39(d) enjoins the State to direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 42 provides for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief and Article 51(A) (e) refers to the fundamental duty of citizens to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

10.3 REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT/STATE LEGISLATURES

Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures Political representation was initially based on the premise that it deals primarily with individuals. It was believed that though very few women were actually joining politics at a given time; the overall improvement in terms of education and employment opportunities would necessarily percolate into the political sphere too and their representation would commensurately increase. During the first general elections, 66 women contested the elections to Parliament and 19 were elected to the House of the People. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was quite appalled at the low representation of women in Parliament. Expressing his anguish and pondering over the issue he wrote thus on the matter in his letter to the Chief Ministers: I have been meeting our new Members of Parliament.

There are over 700 of them as between the two Houses. I have noticed with great regret how few women have been elected. I suppose this is so in the State Assemblies and Councils also. I think we are very much to be blamed. It is not a matter of showing favour to any one or even of injustice, but rather of doing something, which is not conducive to the future growth of our country. I am quite sure that our real and basic growth will only come when women have a full chance to play their part in public life. Wherever they have had this chance, they have, as a whole, done well, better if I may say so, than the average man. Our laws are man-made, our society dominated by man, and so most of us naturally take a very lopsided view of the matter. We cannot be objective, because we have grown up in certain grooves of thought and action. But the

future of India will probably depend ultimately more upon the women than the men.

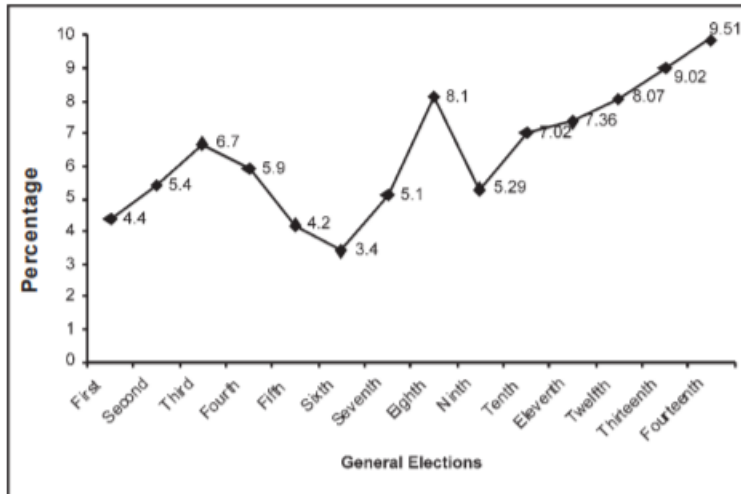
10.3.1 In Lok Sabha

Even six decades after Independence, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha do not present an impressive picture. It has not crossed 10 per cent (Table 1). In the First Lok Sabha, there were only 22 women constituting 4.4 per cent of the House. It increased marginally over the years except in the Sixth Lok Sabha when the House had only 19 women members. In the Thirteenth Lok Sabha, there were 49 women members. However, in the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, the strength of women members is 51.

Table 1: Number of Women Elected to Lok Sabha

General Elections	No. of Women Elected	Percentage
First	22	4.4
Second	27	5.4
Third	34	6.7
Fourth	31	5.9
Fifth	22	4.2
Sixth	19	3.4
Seventh	28	5.1
Eighth	44	8.1
Ninth	28	5.29
Tenth	39	7.02
Eleventh	40	7.36
Twelfth	44	8.07
Thirteenth	49	9.02
Fourteenth	51	9.51

Chart 1: Percentage of Elected Women in each Lok Sabha



Source: *Who's Who Lok Sabha*

10.3.2 In Rajya Sabha

Similarly, in the Rajya Sabha, in 1952, the number of women members was merely 15 constituting 6.94 per cent of the membership of the House. Over the years, the percentage of women has increased and now, out of 242 members, 23 are women constituting 9.50 per cent of the House. In the Rajya Sabha, the representation of women has never crossed 12 per cent (Table 2).

Table 2: Women Members of Rajya Sabha and their Percentage (1952-2008)

Year	Number	Percentage
1952	15	6.94
1954	17	7.79
1956	20	8.62
1958	22	9.52
1960	24	10.25
1962	18	7.62
1964	21	8.97
1966	23	9.82
1968	22	9.64
1970	14	5.85
1972	18	7.40
1974	18	7.53
1976	24	10.16
1978	25	10.24
1980	29	11.98
1982	24	10.16
1984	24	10.24
1986	28	11.98
1988	25	10.59
1990	24	10.34
1992	17	7.29
1994	20	8.36
1996	19	7.81
1998	19	7.75
2000	22	9.01
2002	25	10.20
2004	28	11.43
2006	25	10.41
2008	23	9.50

Source: Who's Who, Rajya Sabha

10.3.3 In State Legislatures

Women representation in State legislatures has also been equally dismal. At present the average percentage of elected women in State Assemblies is 6.94 per cent, the highest being 14.44 per cent in Haryana and the lowest being 1.34 per cent in Karnataka. States like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Union Territory of Puducherry have no representation of women in their Assemblies (Table 3).

Table 3: Women Members in Legislative Assemblies and their Percentage

Sl. No.	Name of State/UT	Total No. of Seats	Women Members	Percentage
1	Andhra Pradesh*	294	28	9.52
2	Arunachal Pradesh*	60	0	0.00
3	Assam*	126	13	10.32
4	Bihar#	243	25	10.29
5	Chhattisgarh*	90	5	5.56
6	Delhi*	70	6	8.57
7	Goa*	40	1	2.50
8	Gujarat*	182	16	8.79
9	Haryana*	90	13	14.44
10	Himachal Pradesh*	68	5	7.35
11	Jammu & Kashmir#	87	2	2.30
12	Jharkhand<	81	5	6.17
13	Karnataka*	224	3	1.34
14	Kerala*	140	7	5.00
15	Madhya Pradesh*	230	19	8.26
16	Maharashtra*	288	12	4.17
17	Manipur*	60	0	0.00
18	Meghalaya#	60	2	3.33
19	Mizoram*	40	0	0.00
20	Nagaland#	60	0	0.00
21	Orissa*	147	11	7.48
22	Punjab*	117	7	5.98
23	Puducherry*	30	0	0.00
24	Rajasthan*	200	13	6.50
25	Sikkim#	32	3	9.38
26	Tamil Nadu#	234	22	9.40
27	Tripura#	60	2	3.33
28	Uttar Pradesh*	403	25	6.20
29	Uttarakhand#	70	4	5.71
30	West Bengal#	294	37	12.59
TOTAL		4120	286	6.94

Source: *Website of the respective Assemblies/State Governments;

Website of Election Commission of India;

It is unfortunate that in India after 58 years of the working of the Constitution, women are still fighting for their empowerment; women's representation in Parliament is merely 8 per cent. It is not surprising that the Global Gender Gap Report 2007 of UNDP had placed India at a disappointing rank of 114 out of 128 countries studied, based on indicators, among others, of political empowerment.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. How do you know about Indian Perspective on reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies?

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2. Describe Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures.

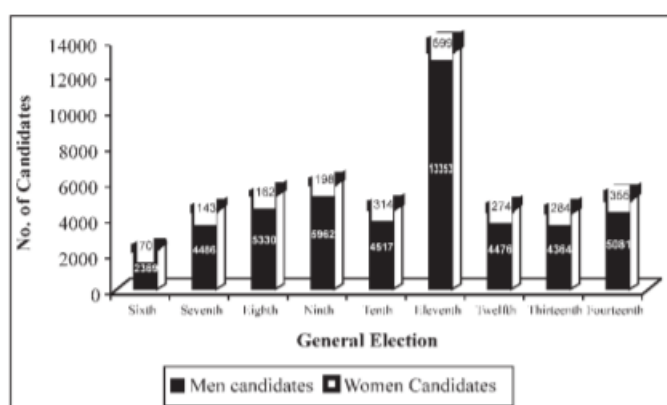
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10.4 WOMEN CONTESTANTS IN GENERAL ELECTIONS

Even though women enjoy equal political rights, very few of them are actually participating in the elections. In the Sixth General Elections out of the total contestants of 2439 only 70 candidates were women and in the Fourteenth General Elections, out of the total numbers of contestants of 5435, only 355 were women. Though the number of women participating in the elections may be increasing gradually, they continue to constitute a very small percentage of the total number of contestants. (Table 4).

Table 4: Gender-wise break-up of Contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (Sixth to Fourteenth)

General Elections	Total contestants	Men contestants	Women contestants
Sixth	2439	2369	70
Seventh	4629	4486	143
Eighth	5492	5330	162
Ninth	6160	5962	198
Tenth	4831	4517	314
Eleventh	13952	13353	599
Twelfth	4750	4476	274
Thirteenth	4648	4364	284
Fourteenth	5435	5081	355

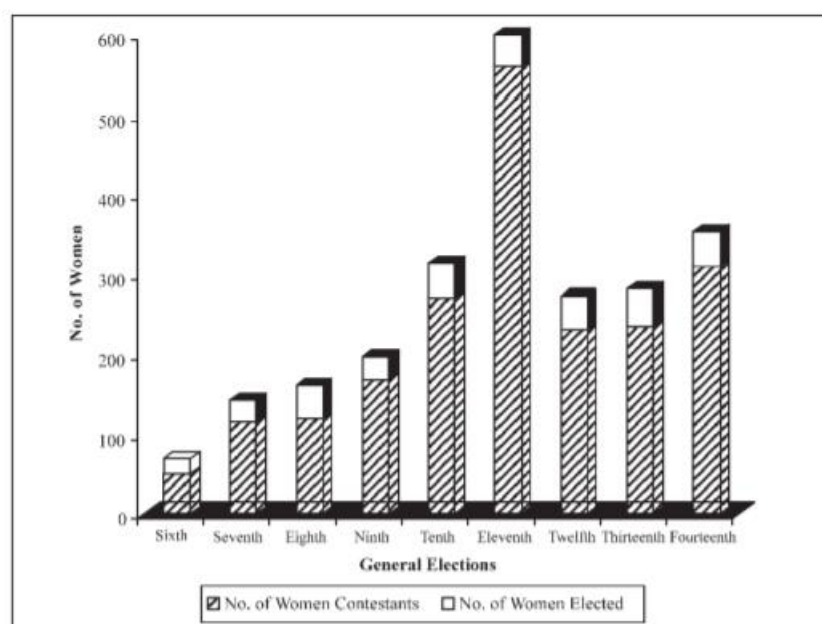
Chart 4: Gender-wise break-up of contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (Sixth to Fourteenth)

Source: Election Commission of India

Another startling fact is that out of the number of women who actually contest the elections, the percentage of women who finally make it to the Lok Sabha is very less. In fact, over the years, the percentage of women who have found their way to the legislature has reduced. In the Sixth General Elections, 27 per cent of the women contestants won the elections and by the Fourteenth General Elections, less than 15 per cent actually made it to the Lok Sabha (Table 5).

Table 5: No. of Women contestants and Women elected in General Elections

General Elections	Total No. of Women contestants	No. of Women elected	Percentage
Sixth	70	19	27.00
Seventh	143	28	19.58
Eighth	162	42	25.92
Ninth	198	29	14.64
Tenth	314	44	14.01
Eleventh	599	40	6.67
Twelfth	274	43	15.69
Thirteenth	284	49	17.25
Fourteenth	355	50	14.08

Chart 5: Women contestants and Number of Women elected in General Elections

Source: Election Commission of India

There is no denying the fact that a political party is an authentic institutional voice in a democracy. In a multi-party democracy, such as India, the role of political parties in elections, in mobilizing public opinion and also in governance process cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the backing of a political party for the success of a candidate in election is also imperative. This trend was evident when women contestants fielded by political parties won in larger numbers in comparison to independent candidates (Table 6).

Table 6: Women candidates from National Political Parties

General Elections	Total No. of Women contestants	Women contestants from Political Parties	No. of Women elected	No. of Women elected from Political Parties
Sixth	70	41	19	17
Seventh	143	77	28	27
Eighth	162	63	42	39
Ninth	198	87	29	26
Tenth	314	N.A.	44	N.A.
Eleventh	599	125	40	36
Twelfth	274	107	43	31
Thirteenth	284	104	49	35
Fourteenth	355	110	50	30

Source : Election Commission of India

10.5 RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN LOCAL BODIES — ENCOURAGING TRENDS

Given the low representation of women in politics, there has been a consistent demand for more meaningful ways to increase their representation in decision-making bodies. In pursuance of this notion of empowerment of women, the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1993 and the Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act, 1993 reserved seats for women at the local level bodies, namely, the Panchayats and Municipalities with the hope that these measures will set the trend to provide women their legitimate place in public life. After these amendments, Articles 243 D and 243 T were added to the Constitution to provide that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct election in the local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities) would be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the local bodies.

This, indeed, makes a historic beginning for the effective participation of women in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. In the elections to these local bodies, more than one million women were have been elected every five years. In 2006, 9,75,116 women were elected to

Gram Panchayats; 58,094 women to Panchayats at Intermediate level; and 5779 women to Panchayats at the District level.⁷ It is but natural that a larger number of women have participated in these elections and this signifies a very encouraging trend for women's empowerment. Though it has taken time for women to translate their numerical strength into active participation in the rural and semi-urban areas, the results have been truly astounding. Before reservation, the percentage of women in this area was merely 4.5 per cent, which after reservation has gone upto 40 per cent. As per the Fifteenth Anniversary Charter on Panchayati Raj, "Today more than 26 lakh representatives stand elected to the three levels of Panchayats. Of these, over 10 lakh are women. The last fifteen years of Panchayati Raj, have thus succeeded in empowering marginalized groups who have gained political representation and valuable experience. Many of them have successfully taken on the challenge of governance and brought about enduring social change through their close links with the community." Women have prioritized issues of health, education and access to basic services and in some cases have been able to ensure a significant change in living conditions for the entire community. The efforts and work of several women representatives in Panchayats in Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal have been widely acclaimed.

10.6 RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN LOK SABHA/ASSEMBLIES — PREVIOUS EFFORTS

Attempts to have seats reserved for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies have had a chequered legislative history. After years of painstaking struggle by the women's groups, the Bills for women's reservation were earlier introduced in Parliament in 1996, 1998 and 1999, respectively, without being passed. The Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996, was introduced on 12 September, 1996. Some of the significant features of the Bill were as under:-

- (i) One-third of the total number of seats filled by direct elections in the House of the People and in Legislative Assemblies of the States shall be reserved for women.
- (ii) One-third of seats shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes from amongst the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes under clause (1) of article 330 and clause (1) of article 332 of the Constitution.
- (iii) No reservation of seats in Lok Sabha for women from a State having less than three seats in Lok Sabha.
- (iv) If the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes was less than three in any State, no reservation for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes was provided for in the State.
- (v) The seats were to be reserved for women by rotation in the manner laid down by law of Parliament.
- (vi) No time limit up to which reservation for women was to continue.
- (vii) It did not provide for reservation of seats for women belonging to the Other Backward Classes.
- (viii) It did not provide reservation of seats for women in the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils of the States. After intense debates and dissenting opinions, the Bill was referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament consisting of 31 members from both Houses of Parliament. The Committee chaired by Smt. Geeta Mukherjee presented its report⁹ on 9 December 1996.

The Committee in its report, inter alia, recommended as under—

- (i) The words ‘not less than one-third’ occurring in the Bill should be replaced with ‘as nearly as may be, one-third’.
- (ii) The Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi should also be brought under the purview of the Bill.

Notes

- (iii) The provision for reservation of seats for women should also be made in respect of nominations made under article 331 and 333 of the Constitution.
- (iv) The provision of reservation for women should cease to have effect on the expiry of a period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Act, 1996.
- (v) The issue of extending the benefit of reservation to Other Backward Classes may be considered by the Government at the appropriate time.
- (vi) The Government should work out the modalities for providing reservation of seats for women in Rajya Sabha and in the Legislative Councils and bring out suitable legislation in this regard at the appropriate time.

The Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996, as reported by the Joint Committee of Parliament, lapsed with the dissolution of the Eleventh Lok Sabha. Thereafter, a similar Bill, namely, the Constitution (Eighty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1998 was introduced on 14 December 1998. The said Bill also lapsed on the dissolution of Twelfth Lok Sabha. Yet another attempt was made by introducing the Constitution (Eighty-fifth Amendment) Bill, 1999 in Lok Sabha on 23 December 1999. But this Bill also could not be pursued due to lack of consensus amongst the political parties.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write about the Women contestants in General Elections.

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2. What do you know the Reservation for Women in Local Bodies — Encouraging trends?

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3. Discuss the Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Previous efforts.

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10.7 RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN LOK SABHA/ASSEMBLIES — CURRENT INITIATIVE

The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008, popularly known as Women’s Reservation Bill, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 6 May 2008. The Bill aims at eliminating gender inequality and discrimination against women, by political empowerment of women, so as to fulfill people’s mandate of Women Empowerment as envisaged in the National Common Minimum Programme of the Government and seeks:

- Reservation for women, as nearly as may be, one-third seats of the present strength of the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly of every State;

- to provide, as nearly as may be, one-third reservation for women including one-third the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assembly of every State to be reserved for women of that category;
- to provide for reservation for women in respect of nominations of members of Anglo-Indian community in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States;
- to provide reservation for women in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi; and
- to provide that reservation of seats for women should cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of fifteen years from the enactment of the Bill.

The Women's Reservation Bill introduced in the Rajya Sabha has been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Personnel, Law and Justice, headed by E.M. Sudarsana Natchiappan for examination.¹¹ The 31 Member Committee has been seized of the matter and would submit its report, to both Houses of Parliament after making wider consultation on various issues involved in the Bill.

10.8 DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE RESERVATION FOR WOMEN

The Bill has evoked mixed reactions across the political spectrum, both inside the House as well outside. While some political parties are unanimous that the Bill, which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State legislatures, be passed in its present form at the first available opportunity, others are demanding quota to be fixed for the women belonging to backward sections of the society within this 33 per cent. Otherwise, they contend, benefit of this reservation is likely to be cornered by the women belonging to upper and well-off sections of our society. One party has stated that it is committed

to the demand for the 33 per cent reservation for women. It has, moreover, favoured the Election Commission's proposal for making it mandatory for parties to reserve 33 per cent seats for women. Most of the parties have pledged their support for the Bill provided there is consensus on it. Some parties while maintaining that they are not opposed to women's reservation contend that the interests of women from Dalits, backward classes, Muslims and other religious minorities should be adequately protected. Others are of the view that if 33 per cent reservation for women is added to the already existing 22.5 per cent for scheduled castes and tribes, then more than 55 per cent of seats in Parliament would be reserved. This would not be fair to other sections of the population. However, they favour making it mandatory for political parties to give 10 per cent of election tickets to women. They also argue that if inadequacy of representation is the issue, Muslim women also deserve this kind of benefit as there are only two women in the present Lok Sabha from this category. Reserving one-third seats in our legislatures would undoubtedly bestow special powers and privileges on the approximately 180 women who would make it to Parliament and many more to State legislatures on the strength of the quota system. It would also create new aspirations among women at large. However, the larger question is whether it will actually "empower" ordinary women citizens. Has the presence of 500 plus male legislators in Parliament empowered the men of India? Have these MPs facilitated the growth of men's freedom from abuse and harassment? Freedom from hunger and malnutrition? Do men feel secure and safe in today's India? If most men in this country have not benefited from the preponderant presence of male parliamentarians, why should we naively believe that 180 women in Parliament will change the fate of women in India?

10.9 ALTERNATE PROPOSALS

Few alternate proposals have been suggested to address the concerns of women's reservations without having 33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. These are enumerated as under:

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- to make it mandatory for every recognized political party to nominate women candidates for election in at least one-third of the constituencies.
- to increase the strength of the Legislatures to the extent of one-third of the total number of existing seats and provide one-third (i.e. to increase seats by 33% and make reservation) seats to women.
- to implement the proposal of the Election Commission of India (known as the Gill formula) to make it mandatory for the recognised political parties to ensure putting of minimum agreed percentage for women in State Assembly and Parliamentary elections so as to allow them to retain the recognition with the Election Commission as political parties.
- to provide for adequate enabling measures for improving the conditions of the women socially, educationally and economically so that women stand up on their own with their intrinsic strength. Occupation of seats in legislatures must be earned by women not through a scheme of reservation but through a positive enabling environment alive with gender equality in terms of access and opportunities, distribution of resources and so on.
- The Economic Times, in an editorial, suggested that given the lack of consensus on the issue of quota for women in the Parliament, they should effect a tactical shift in their emphasis towards other areas of institutional life. They should, for one, put in place legislation mandating quotas for women on boards of companies. Norway, with its legally mandated 40 percent quota for women on boards of its companies, could be a good example to follow.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What do you know about Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Current Initiative?

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2. How to find the Differing perceptions about the reservation for Women?

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3. How to find out Alternate Proposals?

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10.10 GENDER QUOTAS/RESERVATIONS IN LEGISLATURES – GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

It is an accepted fact that without being proportionately present in the political system, a group’s ability to influence policy-making, or indeed the nature of representative system, is rather limited. Greater the number, greater the possibility of wielding power and influence. However, despite the women constituting about half of the world’s population as well as the labour force, they do not have any major and effective say in the decision making and priority setting. ‘Women in National Parliaments- (World Classification)’ prepared by Inter-Parliamentary Union is placed in the Annexure-I. Not involving women in decision-making therefore, is blatantly against the democratic framework. Democracy, by definition,

cannot afford to be gender-blind. The equal participation of women and men in public life is one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1979, and in force since 1981. India is a signatory to the Convention. Despite that, discrimination in matters of representation of women in decision-making bodies continues. In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing generated renewed pressure for the implementation of the CEDAW provisions: the Beijing Platform for Action identified ‘inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels’ and ‘insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women’ as two areas of significant concern where action was critical for the advancement of women. Given the slow pace at which the number of women in politics is growing, different policy measures are being introduced to bring about gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism to increase, and safeguard, women’s presence in Parliaments and are now being introduced in many countries. What are the arguments for and against the use of quotas? What types of quotas have led to substantial increase in women’s political representation in practice?

10.11 WHAT ARE QUOTAS?

Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government. Quotas aim at increasing women’s representation in publicly elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils. Gender quotas draw legitimacy from women’s under-representation due to exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large. Quotas place the burden of candidate selection basically on those who control the selection process, first and foremost the political parties. Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and give them chance which they otherwise would not get.

Types of Quota

The two most common types of electoral gender quotas are candidate quota and reserved quota.

Candidate quota: It specifies the minimum percentage of candidates for election that must be women, and apply to political parties' lists of candidates for election.

It could be done in following manners:

Legal candidate quotas are laid down in the Constitution, in electoral laws or in political party laws. Such quotas as are enacted in legislation, force all political parties to nominate/select the required percentage of women.

Voluntary party quotas are adopted voluntarily by political parties, and are most common in centre-left-leaning parties, while liberal and conservative parties generally tend to be reluctant about or strongly opposed to adopting quotas.

Reserved quota: It sets aside a certain number of seats for women among representatives in a legislature, specified either in the Constitution or by legislation. One might argue that reserved seats should not be counted among electoral quotas. However, reserved seats today come in many different types, some excluding, others including, the election of women, rather than appointment, to fill these seats. In Uganda 56 seats, one elected in each district by a special electorate, are reserved for women. In Rwanda, 30 per cent of the seats, elected by a special procedure, are reserved for women according to the Constitution. In Tanzania 20 per cent of the seats are reserved for women and allocated to the political parties in proportion to the number of parliamentary seats won in an election. Reserved seats can also be filled by appointment, as in Kenya and some Arab states. Previous notions of having reserved seats for only one or for very few women, representing a vague and all-embracing category of women, are no longer considered sufficient. Today, quota

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systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a 'critical minority' of 30 or 40 per cent or aim for 'gender balance' as demanded in various international treaties and conventions. Quotas may be seen as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed. Most quotas aim at increasing women's representation because the problem to be addressed is usually the under-representation of women. This is particularly relevant since women constitute more than 50 per cent of the population in most countries, but worldwide they hold less than 16 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

Gender-neutral quotas

Quota systems may, however, be constructed as gender-neutral also. In this case, the requirement may be, for example, that neither gender should occupy more than 60 per cent or less than 40 per cent of the positions on a party list or in a decision-making body. While quotas for women set a maximum for men's representation, gender-neutral quotas construct a maximum limit for both sexes. Genderneutral quota rules are sometimes used as a strategic choice in order to refute the arguments of opponents of quotas that they are discriminatory against men.

Quotas/Reservations: Pros and Cons

Various arguments have been put forward the world over, for and against, the introduction of reservations as a means to increase the political presence of women. These are given as under:

Pros

- Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.
- Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.

- Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- Women's experience is needed in political life.
- Men cannot represent the interest of women. Only many women can represent the diversity of women.
- Election is about representation, not educational or other qualifications.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.
- Quotas do not discriminate against individual men. Rather quota rules limit the tendency of political parties to nominate only men. For the voters, the opportunities are expanded, since it now becomes possible to vote for women candidates.
- Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but only temporarily.
- Several internationally recognized conventions on gender equality have set targets for women's political representation, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which 179 countries are now party to, as well as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.
- How can it be justified that men occupy more than 80 per cent of the parliamentary seats in the world?

Cons

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference.

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- Political representation should be a choice between ideas and party platforms, not between social categories.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications, and that better-qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, which will result in a politics of sheer group-interest representation.

Electoral gender quota represents ‘the fast track’ to equal representation of women in contrast to ‘the incremental track’. It rejects the idea of incremental improvement in women’s representation. It is assumed that an increase in resources might not automatically lead to equal representation. Exclusion and discrimination are regarded as the core of the problem and the solution to which could very well be affirmative action. There is growing impatience and the Scandinavian experience cannot be considered as a model today because it took 70 to 80 years to get that far. Today women are not willing to wait that long.²⁰ In general; quotas for women represent a shift from one concept of equality to another. The classic liberal notion of equality was a notion of ‘equal opportunity’ or ‘competitive equality’. Removing the formal barriers, for example, giving women voting rights was considered sufficient. The rest was up to the individual women. Following strong feminist pressure in the last few decades, a second concept of equality is gaining increasing relevance and support—the notion of ‘equality of result’. The argument

is that just removing formal barriers does not produce real equal opportunity. Direct discrimination, as well as a complex pattern of hidden barriers, prevents women from getting their share of political influence. Quotas and other forms of active equality measures are thus a means towards equality of result. The argument is based on the experience that equality as a goal cannot be reached by formal equal treatment as a means. If barriers exist, it is argued, compensatory measures must be introduced as a means to reach equality of result.

Research on women's representation shows that women are often met with double standards. Women politicians are accused often of lacking knowledge and education but at the same time criticised for representing a small group of educated elite women; women politicians are often accused of being tokens of their clans, families and parties. The concept of tokenism or 'proxy women' is often used against women elected on the basis of quota regulations. The argument is that quota women are dependent on their husbands and families, political parties or an autocratic leader both before and after the elections. It is important also to state the obvious: quota provisions do not solve all problems for women in politics and that they may even create new ones. If there are prejudices in society, quotas or reservations do not themselves overcome this difficulty. However, it might make it possible for women to surmount some of the barriers that prevent access to certain opportunities. They could enable a 'jump start' where women have almost no representation at all.

10.12 POLITICAL PARTIES AND QUOTA

At the time of elections, the quota system touches the very foundation of the democratic process, and according to opponents it may clash with the principle of the voters' right to choose the representatives they want. However, nominations are the crucial stage and the power of the nominations rests with the political parties, not with the voters. Since the political parties in most countries are the real gatekeepers to political office, quotas may lead to a dispute between the central and

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regional/local branches of the political parties. The local branches often fight for their right to choose their own candidates without the interference of the central party organization. Undoubtedly, it is easier to introduce quotas for women when other forms of quotas are also formally introduced, for example, quotas based on occupational or ethnic criteria. Regional 'quotas' which distribute the parliamentary seats to various parts of the country, not just according to their share of the population, but giving non-proportional shares of the seats to certain regions over others, are in fact used in most countries. However, such arrangements are seldom called quotas

The 'fast-tracking' of women into legislatures through gender quotas is not necessarily accompanied by sufficient sensitization among parties and voters to the need for women in political life. For their part, political parties play an ever-increasing role in the management of parliamentary politics, and it is therefore at the party level that the principle of equality must be put into practice. Political parties, which are traditionally male bastions, need to be further encouraged to revise their statutes, admit more women into their internal structures and include them as candidates in elections. The examples of France and Belgium are illustrative. From a paltry 5.6 per cent in 1995, women now represent 17 per cent of the French Senate (an increase of 11.4 percentage points). Over the same time period, women's parliamentary representation in the Belgian House of Representatives increased from 12.2 to 35.3 per cent (23.3 percentage points). In both countries, the electoral laws were amended (France's in 2000; Belgium's in 2002) to oblige political parties to present an equal number of men and women on their electoral lists. Some political parties in France showed tremendous resistance to complying fully with the law. In some instances, they even preferred to pay a fine rather than include women on their electoral lists. While change has come gradually, the results of the latest elections to the French Senate, which saw women's representation improve from 11 to 17 per cent, give cause for some optimism.

Need for stronger quota rules

Whether a quota system meets its objective depends largely on the process and method of implementation and enforcement. While reserved seats are by their nature enforceable, candidate quotas are often not enforced. If the method of implementation is not clearly defined and enforceable, a candidate quota requirement of 30, 40 or 50 per cent is not likely to be met. The quota must be embedded in the selection and the nomination processes of political parties from the very beginning. Political parties may meet the requirement that 30 per cent of their candidates must be women but place them at the bottom of the lists, in largely unwinnable positions. Additionally, if the number of seats to be filled in a constituency is small and many parties stand for election, by and large men will be elected as they usually hold the top positions on a party list. In some countries using a proportional representation (PR) electoral system with open lists, voters may demote women candidates (or promote male candidates), thereby negating women's chances of election. For these reasons it is crucial that quota systems and their rules for enforcement are introduced that work with the electoral system. Several quota laws have been amended, or today are drafted, with placement mandates specifying which positions women are to hold on electoral lists. While quotas seek to ensure their proportionate presence in Parliament, there is no guarantee that women will be able to use that power effectively. The debate about quotas, particularly in some Asian countries, continues today with the criticism as to how reservations have afforded women the visibility, but not empowered them. There is the dire need for training of women and the need for greater gender sensitivity in the administration.

There is the need to look beyond numbers to develop strategies to increase women's skills and ability to participate actively in politics. There are always questions around whether quotas should be instituted on a temporary or permanent basis. Some argue that quotas should be considered as a temporary measure, not only for strategic reasons when seeking to have them introduced, but also because the quota in itself should change perceptions about gender equality, thereby levelling the

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playing field for men and women to contest elections on an equal basis. While significant gains have been made in Scandinavian countries, they should not be considered the model, as it took 80 years to shift from no women in Parliament to 35-45 per cent. In Scandinavia, quotas were not introduced until women already had obtained 20-25 per cent in Parliament, thus consolidating women's political power. Quotas ensure a quantitative jump, shifting from a concept of equality of opportunity to equality of result. However, this will only happen if quotas are properly implemented. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party has an internal quota of a minimum of 40 per cent women, combined with a 'zipper' system'. Similarly, the African National Congress party in South Africa has a 30 per cent quota for women. Yet countries like France have different electoral systems and different quota rules, which have a direct effect on the number of women elected in the system. For example, the implementation of quotas was successful at the local level but less successful at the national level in France. The lack of comparative research makes it difficult to generalize about successful strategies and to present 'best cases' of how quotas can be implemented. It is, therefore, extremely important to generate more comparative research and to learn both positive and negative lessons of individual country experiences with quotas.

Without specifications regarding the ranking of candidates on party lists, as well as sanctions for non-compliance, quota provisions may be merely symbolic. On the other hand, where electoral gender quotas have fulfilled these qualifications, they have proved extremely effective in increasing the political representation of women the world over.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss the Gender Quotas/Reservations in Legislatures – General Perspectives.

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2. What are Quotas?

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3. How do you know about the Political Parties and Quota?

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10.13 LET US SUM UP

(i) The aim of quota systems is to increase considerably the political representation of women.

(ii) Successful quota systems lead to:

- the active recruitment of women by political parties in order to have a sufficient number of qualified candidates to fulfil the quota;
- a larger minority of women, rather than a token few, who will be able to influence political norms and culture; and

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- women having the possibility to influence the decision-making process as individuals or with specific points of view and concerns.

(iii) It is not sufficient to pass rules that ensure women 30 per cent of the seats. The next step of implementing quotas is critical. With respect to implementation, the following should be kept in mind.

- The more vague the regulations, the higher the risk that the quota regulations will not be properly implemented. Quotas for candidates do not automatically lead to the election of more women.

- Pressure from women's organizations and other groups is necessary for the successful implementation of quotas.

- There must be sanctions for non-compliance with the quota requirement.

(iv) Contrary to what many supporters of quotas believed or hoped for, in quite a lot of countries conflicts over quotas for women seem to return again and again with each electoral cycle. In other countries where there had been vehement discussions about the introduction of quotas, the conflicts died down once the quota system was in place. But in still other parts of the world, gender quotas have been introduced after almost no controversy at all.

(v) It is important to remember that quotas for women do not remove all barriers for women in politics. Stigmatization of women politicians may even increase in quota systems. Difficulties combining family life, work life and politics still remain a severe obstacle to women in the political field. Further, political representation cannot stand alone, but must be complemented with necessary socio-economic changes in society at large.

Domestic responsibilities, lack of financial clout, rising criminalisation of politics and the threat of character assassination are making it difficult

for women to be part of the political framework. Although there is no single remedy for increasing women's presence in Parliament, the discussions on quotas and electoral systems point to some important options. There is also some agreement that quotas in themselves are not sufficient to change fundamentally women's under-representation in politics. Yet quotas are a key step towards ensuring inclusive decision-making processes and policy development, thereby involving women in the decisions that have a direct bearing on their lives as well as on the society as a whole. Underpinning all efforts is the need to foster political will that nurtures and promotes true gender equality.

10.14 KEY WORDS

Quotas: a fixed share of something that a person or group is entitled to receive or is bound to contribute.

Lok Sabha: Lok Sabha is composed of representatives of the people chosen by direct election on the basis of the adult suffrage.

Rajya Sabha: The Rajya Sabha or Council of States is the upper house of the bicameral Parliament of India. It currently has a maximum membership of 245, of which 233 are elected by the legislatures of the states

10.15 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How do you know about Indian Perspective on reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies?
2. Describe Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures.
3. Write about the Women contestants in General Elections.
4. What do you know the Reservation for Women in Local Bodies — Encouraging trends?
5. Discuss the Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Previous efforts.
6. What do you know about Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Current Initiative?
7. How to find the Differing perceptions about the reservation for Women?

8. How to find out Alternate Proposals?
9. Discuss the Gender Quotas/Reservations in Legislatures – General Perspectives
10. What are Quotas?
11. How do you know about the Political Parties and Quota?

10.16 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Madhu Kishwar, The Logic of Quotas, Women's Movement Splits on the Reservation Bill, Manushi, Volume No. 107.

10.17 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 10.2
2. See Section 10.3

Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 10.4
2. See Section 10.5
3. See Section 10.6

Check Your Progress 3

1. See Section 10.7
2. See Section 10.8
3. See Section 10.9

Check Your Progress 4

1. See Section 10.10
2. See Section 10.11
3. See Section 10.12

UNIT 11: WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

STRUCTURE

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Participation of Women in Elections
- 11.3 Women as Voters
- 11.4 Women's Representation in Parliament
- 11.5 Barriers for Women's Participation
- 11.6 Women's Issues in Elections
- 11.7 Women Politicians and the Media
- 11.8 Women's Reservation Bill: A Tool for Enhancing Women's Participation
- 11.9 Let us sum up
- 11.10 Key Words
- 11.11 Questions for Review
- 11.12 Suggested readings and references
- 11.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- Analyze women's participation as voters, representatives, and contestants in parliamentary elections in India;
- Identify the barriers for women's participation/representation;
- Discuss women's issues in elections and the image of women politicians in the media; and
- Critically examine the women's reservation bill as one of the strategies for enhancing women's participation.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In the past Unit, we discussed the women's seat reservation in electoral bodies in India. How political parties function on ideological basis and make their representation in national and state elections. In what ways women participate in the electoral system. What factors inhibited women's representation in political parties. However, there is increasing acknowledgement that longstanding peace and nationwide prosperity can only be attained when institutions are democratic and representative of all groups of society. Full involvement and equal participation of women in electoral processes is essential to building peace and democracy and advancing the equality of women and men. Thus, this Unit offers the critique that though women have made their presence felt in many male dominated professions, their representation in the decision-making bodies/processes is far less than that of men. There has been a historical social exclusion of women from polity due to various social and cultural reasons and patriarchal traditions.

11.2 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ELECTIONS

Elections offer the best chance to ensure women's voices are taken notice of, their concerns are attended to, and their potential contributions to peace and democracy are capitalized. Out of 188 countries classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House as on 30 November 2011, India stood at a low 99th position. Even Afghanistan and Iraq are better placed than India with 30th and 36th rankings, respectively. That said, the 15th Lok Sabha elections held in 2009 have delivered a record 59 women as members of Parliament, the highest since independence, raising their parliamentary participation to 10.9%. Seventeen of these women are under 40. Nevertheless, if we go further back in time, these figures still appear insignificant. In the 1937 elections held under the Government of India Act, which had reservations for women, 80 women were elected to power. The naked truth is that there is no adequate representation of women in the social, economic and political life of the country even after over six decades of

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Independence. Though women have made their presence felt in many male dominated professions, their representation in the decision-making bodies/processes is far less than that of men. There has been a historical social exclusion of women from polity due to various social and cultural reasons and patriarchal traditions.

Women play a twin role in election politics—as voters and political representatives. The participatory trends of women in elections are described as under: The Constitution of India guarantees equal rights to men and women as voters and citizens and women form an influential vote-bank that political parties can ill-afford to ignore as there now are about 342 million registered women voters, only marginally less than 376 million male voters. In all the elections held since independence, women had the voting rights.

The political parties who approach women—very often for party issues—easily mobilize women in the political processes. They also fulfill short-term goals by winning elections. However, they are mostly unable to fulfill long-term goals of bringing about social changes and gender equality in political power sharing. Generally, in India, registration and participation of women as voters is less than that of men (Table 11.1 and 11.2). In recent past, there has been an upward trend in participation of women as voters. The gap between men and women's participation has come down from 16 per cent to less than 10 per cent during the past five decades. In the 1962 elections, only 47% women voters made their way to the booths which increased to 58% in 1998. Incidentally, women turnout has been around 53 to 56% in the last three general elections (1999, 2004, and 2009) with Lakshadweep recording the largest number of women voters. The highest poll turnout was in 1984 during which 59% women cast their votes. This has, however, not reflected in the representation of women in Parliament which is about 10.9%.

Table 11.1: Size of Women Electorate and Voter Turnout (in cores)

Election Year	Electorate		Voter Turnout	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
2009	37.48	34.22	22.58	19.10
2004	34.95	32.20	21.72	17.27
1999	32.38	29.57	20.71	16.45
1998	31.67	28.92	20.86	16.68
1996	30.98	28.28	19.23	15.10
1991	26.18	23.65	16.12	12.15
1984	19.67	18.28	13.41	10.71

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

The higher participation of women in recent years is also contingent on the mobilization efforts made by political parties, Non-Governmental Organizations, Action Groups and the general awareness among the community of the importance of women exercising their franchise. Again, a note of caution is required, lest it be assumed that political participation always indicates political awareness on the part of the woman voter.

Usually, however, countries that do hold regular elections show an improved recognition of women as a political constituency and parties and candidates tend to adopt pro-women stances and appeal specifically to women's votes, especially at the time of elections. This becomes very evident when we look at consecutive elections in the Indian context, wherein there is a growing consciousness of the need to woo the woman voter and the need to pay attention to the needs and issues of women, in the election manifestos of political parties.

Table 11.2: Voting Percentage of Women in General Elections

General Election	Year	Men	Women	Total percentage
First	1952	-	-	61
Second	1957	-	-	62
Third	1962	63	47	55
Fourth	1967	67	55	61
Fifth	1971	61	49	55
Sixth	1977	66	55	60
Seventh	1980	62	51	57
Eighth	1984	68	59	64
Ninth	1989	66	57	62
Tenth	1991	62	51	57
Eleventh	1996	62	53	58
Twelfth	1998	66	58	62
Thirteenth	1999	64	56	60
Fourteenth	2004	62	53	58
Fifteenth	2009	60	56	58

Note: Calculated on the basis of valid votes polled.

Gender-wise break-up of electors is not available for First and Second General Elections.

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

Since Independence, due to exercise of their franchise, Indian women have been exposed to the political processes and are showing increasing awareness about not only lack of rights but also their utility. A majority of illiterate rural women are also politically sensitive and aware of the various issues confronting them. According to the 2009 electoral rolls (Annex-1), women voters are in a majority in six states—Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Puducherry. While Andhra has 2.92 crore women voters as opposed to 2.87 crore men, in Kerala the ratio is 1.13 crore women to 1.05 crore men and Manipur has 0.09 crore women compared to 0.08 crore men. While Meghalaya has 0.065 crore registered female voters and 0.063 crore men, Mizoram accounts for 0.032 crore women in comparison to 0.031 crore men and Puducherry boasts of 0.040 crore women to 0.037 crore men on its voters list.

It is no surprise that even in states where women do not outnumber men as voters; governments have made it a point to announce women-oriented schemes, with Madhya Pradesh being a good example, Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has announced several schemes for women and girl children. At present having the National Capital has 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign'. It has now become apparent that the poll manifestoes of parties are bound to devote more than a few paragraphs to this important constituency. There is a slight departure from accepted norm in the 2004 poll data where Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Daman and Diu had more registered women voters than men. But in the 2009 rolls, the number of registered male voters had overtaken women in both Tamil Nadu and Daman and Diu. However, Meghalaya made an entry as a state with a higher women voter registration.

11.3 WOMEN AS VOTERS

Though voting is an important indicator of political participation and mobilization, it is not necessarily indicative of representation. Voting is simply a tool of political equality and it mobilizes women but voting by itself does not result in the desired end of equality. Almost all parties vie with each other in appealing to women's votes at the time of elections but very few women get to contest in the elections. In other words, despite the gradual increase in number of women participating in the elections, women continue to constitute a very small percentage of the total number of contestants. During the Fifteenth General (2009) elections, out of over 8,000 candidates fielded, only 556 (6.9 per cent) were women (Table 11.3).

Table 11.3: Women Contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (6th to 15th)

General Elections	Total contestants	Men contestants	Women contestants
Sixth	2439	2369	70
Seventh	4629	4486	143
Eighth	5492	5330	162
Ninth	6160	5962	198
Tenth	4831	4517	314
Eleventh	13952	13353	599
Twelfth	4750	4476	274
Thirteenth	4648	4364	284
Fourteenth	5435	5081	355
Fifteenth	8070	7514	556

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

In fact, there is a definite gender bias in selection of women candidates for elections in India. Over the years, very few women candidates have been fielded for Lok Sabha elections and most of the women fighting elections belong to the established political families or are proxy candidates. When selecting candidates, political parties want strong and 'established' leaders. Women are given tickets only if they have an 'exceptionally strong' chance of winning. Another astonishing fact is that out of the number of women who actually contest the elections, the percentage of women who finally make it to the Lok Sabha is very less. In fact, over the years, the percentage of women who have found their way to the legislature has reduced. In the Sixth General Elections, 27 per cent of the women contestants won the elections and by the Fifteenth General Election, less than 11 percent actually made it to the Lok Sabha (Table 11.4). The percentage of seats won against the seats contested shows a declining trend only because the number of women contesting elections has increased sharply.

Table 11.4: No. of Women Contestants and Women Elected in General Elections

General Elections	Total No. of Women Contestants	No. of Women elected	Percentage
Sixth	70	19	27.14
Seventh	143	28	19.58
Eighth	162	42	25.93
Ninth	198	29	14.65
Tenth	314	44	14.01
Eleventh	599	40	06.68
Twelfth	274	43	15.69
Thirteenth	284	49	17.25
Fourteenth	355	45	12.68
Fifteenth	556	59	10.61

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

There is no denying the fact that a political party is an authentic institutional voice in a democracy. In a multi-party democracy such as India, the role of political parties in elections, in mobilizing public opinion and also in governance processes cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the backing of a political party for the success of a candidate in election is also imperative. This trend was evident when women contestants fielded by national political parties won in larger numbers in comparison to those belonging to state level parties, including registered parties and independent candidates (Table 11.5). Interestingly, for both the BJP and the Congress, women constitute about 11% of the candidates' fielded and 10% of those elected.

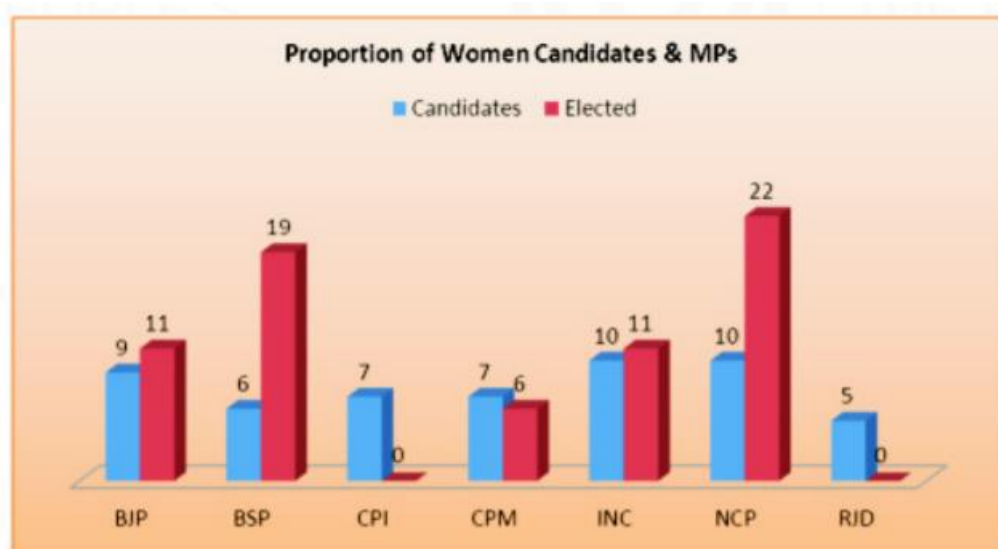


Fig 11.1

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

Table 11.5: Women Candidates from National Political Parties

General Elections	Total No. of Women Contestants	Women Contestants from National Political Parties	No. of Women Elected	No. of Women Elected from National Political Parties
Sixth (1977)	70	41	19	17
Seventh (1980)	143	77	28	27
Eighth (1984)	162	63	42	39
Ninth (1989)	198	87	29	26
Tenth (1991)	326	119	37	35
Eleventh (1996)	599	125	40	36
Twelfth (1998)	274	107	43	31
Thirteenth (1999)	284	104	49	35
Fourteenth (2004)	355	110	45	30
Fifteenth (2009)	556	134	59	43

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

The number of women candidates in the 1998 and 1999 parliamentary elections was not even half the number of women in the 1996 elections. In 1998 and 1999, there were only 274 and 284 women candidates, respectively, as against 599 in the 1996 elections. In the general elections in 2004 and 2009, the total number of women contestants increased up to 355 and 556, respectively. The Congress Party and BSP led by women had only 9.8% and 6.5% of women among the candidates in 2009 (Table 11.6). The BJP and the CPM had 8.8% and 7.3% of women among the candidates. Despite the low numbers, many women apply for election tickets, which they are mostly denied. As such, their only choice is to contest as independent candidates or not at all. For instance, of the 207 independent women candidates who ran in the 2009 general election, none was successful.

Table 11.6: Participation of Women in National Parties General Elections – 2004 and 2009

Parties	2009			2004		
	Total Contestants	Women Contestants	% of Women	Total Contestants	Women Contestants	% of Women
BJP	500	44	8.8	364	30	8.2
BSP	433	28	6.5	435	20	4.6
CPI	56	4	7.1	34	2	5.9
CPM	82	6	7.3	69	8	11.6
INC	440	43	9.8	417	45	10.8
NCP	68	7	10.3	32	5	15.6
RJD	44	2	4.5	-	-	
Total	1623	134	8.3	1351	110	8.1

Source: Election Commission of India. <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

It is important to note that while the number of women contesting elections has been consistently increasing, their numbers still continue to be very low in comparison to that of men. This is despite the fact that the probability of winning is higher for women than men, being almost

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double. In the 15th Lok Sabha, while 10% of all women candidates won the election, the corresponding figure for men was 6%. Yet, due to paternalistic family and male dominated political structures which do not provide space for women in decision-making bodies, political parties are still reluctant to field women candidates at national level. They prefer supporting and investing in men rather than women, thereby putting women at a disadvantage in both accessing funds from the parties and raising their own funds.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss the Participation of Women in Elections.

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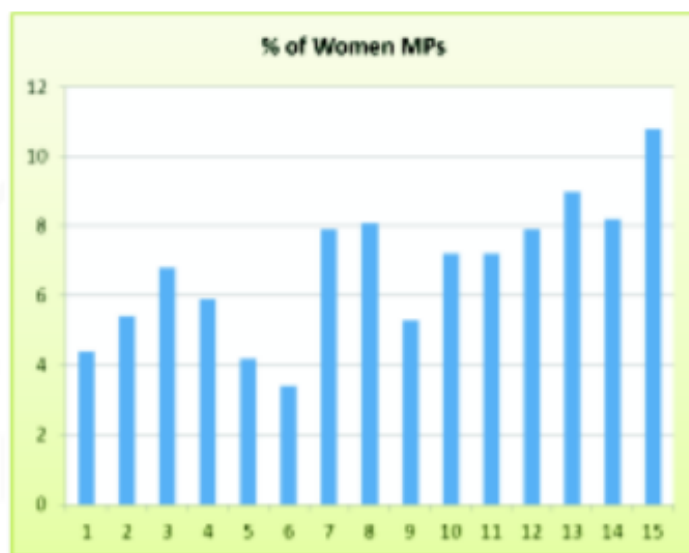
2) Write about the Women as Voters.

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11.4 WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

The upward trend in participation of women voters does not reflect in the representation of women in Parliament. The percentage of seats won against the seats contested is showing a declining trend. This implies that women play the role of spectators and not of active members of the

decision-making process. The trend has not changed much even in the last five elections when the government has undertaken quite a lot of developmental and welfare schemes for women. As reflected in Table 11.7, the percentage of representation of women in the Lok Sabha varies from 4.4 in 1952 to 8.1 in 1984, declining to 5.2 in 1989, rising to 7.9 in 1998 and 9.02 in 1999, declining again to 8.1 in 2004, and rising for the first time up to two figures (10.8) in 2009. However, it still remains much lower than 33 per cent, the critical mass of women required for meaningful decision-making strength, as expressed in the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).



Source: Election commission of India website.

Table 11.7: Women's Representation in Parliament, 1952-2009

S.No	Year	Lok Sabha (Lower House)			Rajya Sabha (Upper House)		
		Total Seats	Women Members	Percentage Women	Total Seats	Women Members	Percentage Women
1.	1952	499	22	4.4	219	16	7.3
2.	1957	500	27	5.4	237	18	7.5
3.	1962	503	34	6.8	238	18	7.6
4.	1967	523	31	5.9	240	20	8.3
5.	1971	521	22	4.2	243	17	7.0
6.	1977	544	19	3.4	244	25	10.2
7.	1980	544	28	7.9	244	24	9.8
8.	1984	544	44	8.1	244	28	11.4
9.	1989	517	27	5.3	245	24	9.7
10.	1991	544	39	7.2	245	38	15.5
11.	1996	543	39	7.2	223	20	9.0
12.	1998	543	43	7.9	245	15	6.1
13.	1999	543	49	9.0	245	19	7.8
14.	2004	545	45	8.2	245	28	11.4
15.	2009	545	59	10.8	245	21	8.57

Note: CSDS Data Unit

Source: 1. India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Women and Child Development.

(2004). Government of India, II and IIIrd Periodic Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: CEDAW Periodic Report. New Delhi. p. 86. 2. www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

In the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament, the proportion of women members started with 7.3 per cent in 1952 and rose to 15.5 per cent in 1991, but again declined to 6.1 per cent in 1998 and rose to 11.4 per cent in 2004, again slightly declining to 8.57 per cent in 2009 (Table 11.7) Increasingly, women face competition from male politicians for nomination to the Rajya Sabha, especially since political parties prefer to give seats to their important members who have lost in the general elections. More often than not, these important members are male. Overall, the representation of women in Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) thus remains low and despite the increase in electoral participation of women, their representation in the formal political

structures has not changed much. India has never had reserved seats for women in its national legislature, and without reservation or some other affirmative action policy, it will be a long time before 33 per cent of parliamentary seats are occupied by women. There has been a lot of debate on this issue and the consensus of major political and women's groups is in favour of reservation. India's successful experience at the grassroots level has helped to strengthen the case for reservation. However, the Women's Reservation Bill (108th Constitutional Amendment), passed by the Rajya Sabha on March 9, 2010, has not yet been passed by the Lok Sabha. A problem faced by women parliamentarians is that they are seldom appointed to ministries that are normally considered high powered or influential. Usually only social welfare related ministries are assigned to women members. The first woman cabinet minister of India was Indira Gandhi who was appointed Minister for Information and Broadcasting. In 1966, when she became the Prime Minister; ironically, no woman was appointed to her cabinet. During her time as Prime Minister, the two significant contributions made for women were the introduction of Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1972) and the Equal Pay for Equal Work Ordinance (1976). In 1969, a woman was appointed to the Ministry of Social Welfare. She was India's second female cabinet minister. Since then women have been consistently present in the Indian Cabinet through the social welfare portfolio. Women ministers have also been appointed to urban development, external affairs, and youth and sports portfolios. As on January 31, 2012, out of 34 Union cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister, there were two women Ministers—the Minister of Information and Broadcasting and the Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation and a further two women were Ministers of State with Independent Charge (Minister of Women and Child Development and Minister of Environment and Forests) and four women were Ministers of State. Encouragingly, during the last three general elections, large but relatively backward states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal elected a higher number of women MPs compared to more developed states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Punjab

(Annex-2). Women MPs from these states accounted for nearly 47% of the total number of women representatives in the three successive Lok Sabhas since 1999. On the contrary, the six relatively developed states accounted for only around 27% of the total women MPs in 1999 elections, about 36% in 2004 and 22% in the 2009 elections. Some studies of Parliamentary participation indicate that women members participate more actively in 'women's issues'—health, welfare, atrocities against women, crimes like dowry and violations of human rights. This participation is confined to the more articulate women. In issues such as defence, finance, politics, etc., their participation is relatively limited (UNESCAP, India Report, 2001).

11.5 BARRIERS FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

There are a variety of reasons as to why women do not participate in electoral politics in large numbers or are not encouraged to take part in elections as contestants. The main reason for low political participation of women in electoral politics is the patriarchal structure of Indian society. It is generally accepted by a majority of the people, both men and women, that women's role is in the home. Women are considered ignorant when it comes to matters of any real importance. When they are constantly being told that they are not intelligent enough to participate in politics, it is no wonder that they lose their confidence. Women are generally encouraged to believe that politics is much too complicated for them to understand and so it is best left to men. They should stay at home, cook, clean, bring up and take care of children. Women with an inclination to achieve something in life might be encouraged to take up a soft and 'feminine' job. There is no doubt that this scenario is gradually changing. Literacy rate of women is considerably lower than that of men in India. Boys are encouraged to attend school whereas girls are of more use in the home. This denial of a basic education means that the majority of women do not realize that they are not receiving their full rights. It is not always easy to teach them when they cannot read and it is difficult for them to stand up for themselves when they cannot write. Women's participation in electoral politics also depends a lot on family support. It

is easy for women who come from political families with a strong political history to continue the legacy. Others need the permission and support (both moral and monetary) from their husbands or fathers in order to embark on a political career. Without such support, it becomes very difficult for women to become full-fledged and successful politicians. Electoral politics in general has proved to be very inhospitable for women. One important reason is the pervasive gender discrimination which results in making even veteran women politicians feel bypassed and ignored.

However, sidelining of women goes beyond gender discrimination. It is part of a larger process in which most honest, decent people have become politically marginalized, as our politics and government have become the hotbed of crooks, thugs and even outright criminals. Very few honest men or women have survived in electoral politics and kept their honesty intact. As things stand today, even those women who have made a mark in electoral politics find it hard to sustain their involvement unless they too become moneymaking racketeers. For the honest, the heavy investment of time and money that is required proves too burdensome to be sustained for more than a short time (Kishwar, 1999). A key component of politics is the art of building alliances. In a culture where even formal interaction with men unconnected to one's own family is frowned upon, women are severely handicapped in politics because they cannot cultivate close association with men without jeopardizing their position in the family. A woman operating on her own strength in a party filled with corrupt politicians who think nothing of slandering their own women colleagues would find the going very tough, even if she could somehow mobilize other compensatory resources by her own special efforts. Thus, women are handicapped from getting crucial information which men pick up easily from casual gossip with all kinds of people (Kishwar, 1999). The breakdown of institutional politics in favor of gangster politics has made things much tougher for women, especially given the strict regime of restrictions that most women are made to live under. Even though most men in India favor women's political participation, this does not easily translate into relaxing restrictions on

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the women in their own families. Behavioral change at the family level will require consistent hard work to change cultural norms and reduce women's domestic responsibilities. A number of institutions do exist—both governmental and nongovernmental, for helping the overall development of women. Nevertheless, there is a lack of institutional mechanism, which encourages and supports women to take part in elections. Women's organizations affiliated to different political parties also take up women's causes and agitate on their behalf. But, there are very few women's organizations that are willing to provide moral and financial support to women who are interested in getting involved in politics. Women belonging to the ruling party generally do not participate in agitational politics; as such, participation would virtually amount to censuring their party's government. Bound by party discipline, they are expected to air their grievances and express their difference, if they have any, in the meetings of the party. There are very few women who dare the party and such women invariably face dire consequences. It is on account of such constraints that women MPs of Samajwadi Party or the Rashtriya Lok Dal, which are critical of the Women's Reservation Bill, have voiced their views in its support.

The main reason for the lack of women's representation are:

- A lack of effective government action;
- Lower levels of female employment and education;
- Sexist attitudes, sometimes but not always deriving from religion or traditional practices;
- A corrupt and patronage-based political system;
- Violence at elections, including against women candidates

Women's organizations in India first began to emerge in the early 1800s, and later in the 1970s after a period of limited activity from the 1950s to

1970s. One of the earliest women's organizations, Bharat Stree Mahamandal, formed in 1910 and focused on helping women escape oppression from men. Women's associations had traditionally begun with the help of men giving few women access to work and education, while limiting the expansion of traditional gender roles. In 1927, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) was formed to advocate for women's education and was helpful in the passage of the Hindu Code of Bills between 1952 and 1960. Women were also active in the freedom movement in protesting British colonial rule over Indian holding protests and public meetings in support of independence.

Women at farmers rally

The new wave of feminism in the 1970s was in response to gender inequality issues and stagnant development in India. The Committee on the Status of Women in India released a report in 1974, and had a significant influence in the reemergence of activism towards gender equality. The report highlighted the significant differences between men and women in India, including the disparity in the sex ratio, mortality rates, employment, literacy, and wage discrimination. The report fueled the women's movement by signifying the ongoing discrimination towards women in India. Gender inequality has remained the focus of the women's movement with specific emphasis on issues such as the Uniform Civil Code, Women's Reservation Bill, and sexual violence against women. Women's organizations both informal and formal have developed at the rural, urban, national, and state levels in India. Women's organizations in India address a variety of issues from the environment, poverty, empowerment, and violence against women. One of the most prominent women's organizations in India is the AIWC, which was established in 1927, focusing on empowering and educating Indian women. The AIWC has over 100,000 members and 500 branches in India, and has helped with the passage of the Sarda Act, Maternity Benefit Act, and Hindu Code Bills.

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Indian women are significantly involved at the grass roots level of activism. The Chipko movement that arose in the 1970s is one example of success among the women's movement in India, as women protested the deforestation in Uttarakhand leading to the protection of the region. Since the Indian independence, women's organizations have focused on issues of violence towards women. Women's movements have focused on rape, female mortality rates, female foeticide, dowry deaths, sati, and domestic abuse. Tragedies such as the Mathura rape case in 1972, the dowry death of Tarvinder Kaur in 1979, the death of Roop Kanwar by practice of sati in 1987, the gang rape of Bhanwari Devi in 1992, and the New Delhi gang rape case in 2012, have kept the movement focused on rape and given rise to many women's organizations at the local and national level

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss Women's Representation in Parliament.

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2) What are the barriers for Women's Participation?

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11.6 WOMEN'S ISSUES IN ELECTIONS

The phrase ‘women’s issues’ is commonly used to refer to events, policies and practices perceived as primarily—if not exclusively—having an effect on the lives of women and girls. Unfortunately, Indian women are primarily conceived of as wives, mothers and homemakers, and their responsibilities within this realm define the notion of ‘women’s issues’. Thus, ‘women’s issues’ continue to be primarily located within the social sector, with health—especially reproductive and child health—and girls’ education as the centre of attention. There is usually little on women’s issues in party campaigns and manifestos. Most women vote without taking women’s issues into consideration. Among the poor and rural communities, other factors—caste and religious affiliations or more basic needs—trump women’s issues. The urban and educated seem sceptical about the government’s ability to ensure safety or freedom, or remain resigned to the fact that they are a minority demographic. Nevertheless, the situation is changing of late. Women specific issues have started acquiring prominence during elections, especially in terms of distinct difference in the attitudes of major political parties towards women. For instance, several political parties promised introduction of prohibition as part of their election campaigns of 1999 in direct response to women’s demands to curb domestic violence due mainly to alcoholism. However, the gender implications of this can be potentially problematized offering differing analysis of the party promises to impose prohibition and the failure to implement the same. The top leadership of the major political parties, such as, Indian Bhartiya Janata Party, INC ,CPM, CPI, NCP, etc. now feels that women representation in electoral politics will not work if their problems are ignored. Therefore, they do devote a section in their election manifestoes on problems faced by women in rural and urban areas. For instance, the manifesto released by the Indian National Congress during the 2009 Lok Sabha election containing the word ‘women’ 16 times in its text claimed to have empowered them by ‘passing a new law to protect women from domestic violence’; ‘giving women equal rights to inherit property’; and ‘reservation for women in panchayats and nagarpalikas’. It also promised to ‘enroll at least half of the country’s rural women population as members of self-help groups linked with banks so that they will get loans from banks at moderate

interest rates' and reservation of 'one-third of all central government jobs for women'. All the major political parties including the Bhartiya Janata Part, Indian National Congress promised to ensure that the Bill for reserving 33% of the seats in the Lok Sabha and the State legislatures was passed in the 15th Lok Sabha. As a result, despite stiff opposition from Samajwadi Party (SP) and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the Women's Reservation (108th Constitutional Amendment) Bill was successfully passed in the Rajya Sabha on March 9, 2010. Its passage in Lok Sabha, however, remains awaited. Price rise, which strikes an instant chord with women, always becomes one of the main poll planks for all the political parties. Similarly, removal of malnutrition among women and children, favourable atmosphere for women, especially their security, and declining sex ratio or female foeticide have also emerged as important challenges for the society through every available platform, including the elections. Despite these positive developments, it is important to remember that political parties are increasingly becoming more strategic and negligent towards their promises made in manifestos. Instead of treating manifestoes as vision and mission statements of contestant political parties. Electorates, including women voters, see them more as propaganda materials of the concerned parties—not to be fulfilled in future. Women specific promises made in election manifestoes simply manifest the importance that political parties lay to lure women as vote banks in Indian politics. At the same time, in a country where many lack basic amenities like food, water and electricity, there is also a certain guilt associated with asking only for specific needs for women. But, given our dismal track record in terms of women's empowerment, women's issues need to be given more attention and it's time the country's electorate realised that they should take the lead in demanding this for all women.

11.7 WOMEN POLITICIANS AND THE MEDIA

The mass media, also called the fourth estate because of its influence on public opinion and public consciousness, is a tremendous source of information for individuals as well as society. The media in any society

has two roles: to serve as a chronicler of current events and as an informer of public opinion, thereby fostering different points of view. Often, the mass media tends to minimize coverage of events and organizations of interest to women. The media, including women's publications, does not adequately inform the public about the rights and roles of women in society; nor does it take issue with government measures for improving women's position (International IDEA, 2002). The media can be used to cultivate gender biases and promote a stereotype about 'a woman's place', helping political establishments and societies put the blame on women for the failure in family policy and reinforce the idea that women are responsible for increasing social problems, such as divorce and the growth of minor crimes. Another widespread trend in the media is to depict women as beautiful objects. Such an approach encourages the long-standing patriarchal stereotype of the 'weaker sex', where women are sexual objects and 'second-class' citizens (International IDEA, 2002).

No doubt, the mass media does tell stories about women politicians and their successes and failures, but this kind of coverage is occasional and sporadic. The plethora of women politicians catapulting to positions of preeminence, breaking and making governments has caught the media unawares, which, in an attempt to cope with the phenomenon, has resorted to gender stereotyping and reducing the game of politics to a battle of the sexes. It is the Peeping Tom syndrome which engulfs the media in its treatment of women politicians. While male politicians are judged by their statesmanship, the political ideals they uphold; it is the kinship, the oddities and the eccentricities of women politicians which is highlighted (Indian Express, 2nd June, 1999). Journalists often hold women politicians accountable for the actions of their husbands and children, though they rarely hold male candidates to the same standards. They ask woman politicians questions they do not ask men, and they describe them in ways and with words that emphasize their traditional roles and focus on their appearance and behavior. Sample this: "We can no longer afford the luxury of some future fat lady toppling a government because of some sudden whim, some imagined insult or

because the lifts did not work properly in some government hotel’’ (Indian Express, 2nd June, 1999). It seems the media is somewhat unable to cope with the new confident women entrants and therefore resorts to their personal lives. This behaviour also has largely to do with the perception of the society at large which is shared and reinforced by the media. It is also a reflection of the fact that we are not consistent in our criticisms, which more often than not are highly biased. Everyone makes use of relationships when it comes to power but if women do so they are doubly criticized (Indian Express, 2nd June, 1999). The negative social constructions of women politicians are fraught with enormous danger. Projecting women as upstarts and capricious suggest that they are not to be trusted in the game of governance. Needless to say, it sends out wrong signals to the public. Instead of acting as mere mirrors of the social and cultural traditional patterns, the media should become an agent of change through their approach to women or rather to gender at large. If they understand that the integration of women into politics strengthens democracy, the media, which have a crucial and increasing role in the democratic process, should try to convey this message in all possible ways (www.ipu.org). Media personnel at all levels, from editor to reporter, from publisher to columnist, should be made aware of the fact that ‘stories’ that sell or pretend to do so often perpetuate gender patterns which are adverse to the strengthening of democracy. On the other hand, women politicians should also understand the media better and learn how to get their message across through training on how to conduct media interviews and press conferences, make presentations, prepare press kits and communiqués, etc(www.ipu.org).

11.8 WOMEN’S RESERVATION BILL: A TOOL FOR ENHANCING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION

As we have seen, although equality of the sexes is enshrined in the Constitution, it is not the reality. Therefore, vigorous affirmative action is required to improve the condition of women (Singh, 2010). Reservation for women is needed to compensate for the social barriers

that have prevented women from participating in politics and thus making their voices heard. The Women's Reservation Bill is a crucial affirmative step in the right direction of enhancing the participation of women in the State legislatures and Parliament and increasing the role of women in democratization of the country (PSCR, 108th Amendment Bill). Therefore, after years of painstaking struggle by the women's groups and major political parties, the Women's Reservation Bill (the 108th Constitutional Amendment Bill) was passed by the Rajya Sabha on March 9, 2010. While the Bill continues to face other barriers, of which the securing of the Lok Sabha's approval is the most crucial, some of its main features are described below:

- The Bill seeks to reserve, as nearly as possible, one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies (including Delhi).
- As nearly as possible, one third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies shall be reserved for SC/ST women.

- Reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist 15 years after the commencement of the Act.

- Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory. If a state or union territory has only one seat in the Lok Sabha, that seat shall be reserved for women in the first general election of every cycle of three elections. If there are two seats, each shall be reserved once in a cycle of three elections. Similar rules apply for seats reserved for SC/STs. Of the two seats in the Lok Sabha reserved for Anglo Indians, one will be reserved for women in each of the two elections in a cycle of three elections. Opponents of women's reservation argue that separate constituencies for women would not only narrow their outlook but lead to perpetuation of unequal status because they would be seen as not competing on merit. Opponents also contend that reservation would not lead to political empowerment of women because

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a) larger issues of electoral reforms such as measures to check criminalisation of politics, internal democracy in political parties, influence of black money, etc. have not been addressed, and

b) it could lead to election of ‘proxies’ or relatives of male candidates. There is however no denying the fact that there is no adequate representation of women in the social, economic and political life of the country even after more than 60 years of independence. Therefore, As the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women’s Reservation Bill observes, reservation of seats for women is a valid and necessary strategy to enhance women’s participation in the decision/policy making process.

Quota within Quota Issue

To put it simple, quota within quota means, ‘sub-reservation for STs, SCs, OBCs and minority communities within the 33 percent quota’. However, the Bill in its present form doesn’t favour this view—mainly because of lack of political consensus around this issue. This demand is also unconstitutional. There is nothing like an OBC quota in the constitution. And surely no quota based on religion. In its written views submitted before the Committee, the Nationalist Congress Party has opined that “we don’t find any need for reasons for special quota for OBC within the women’s quota as suggested from certain quarters. Now there are 429 seats excluding reserved seats for SC/ST category in the Parliament. There is no reservation for OBC in the abovementioned existing unreserved seats. But still there is good representation for OBC category in the Parliament at present. Same is the case of OBC category in the State Assemblies as well” (Singh, 2010). Of the 543 Parliament seats, 84 seats are currently reserved for Scheduled Castes and 47 for Scheduled Tribes. So, the Bill in its present form simply means that the sub quota within this quota is that of these 124 seats, 41 will have to be reserved for SC/ST women. Thus, these 41 seats will be a part of 181 seats reserved for women. So the math in simple terms would mean—140 seats in general category and 41 seats in reserved category = 181

seats. In other words, 55% (33% for women and 22% for SC/ST) of the Parliament seats will be reserved.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

3) What are the Women’s Issues in Elections?

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4) Discuss the Women Politicians and the Media.

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5) Write about the Women’s Reservation Bill: A Tool for Enhancing Women’s Participation.

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11.9 LET US SUM UP

India is the first country in the world that gave voting rights to women along with the men while adopting its Constitution. However, our democracy continues to be going on by the fact that women’s political

participation still remains an unfinished agenda. Women's slender percentage in the Parliament also reflects their lack of participation in decision-making process. This anomaly is a result of number of a barriers and constraints that prevent women from joining the electoral process. In this context, it is essential to increase the capacity of the women to fight elections, remove the preventive barriers and bring in new affirmative steps, such as quotas, that can enhance their participation national and state electoral politics. Wide-ranging women's representation could be achieved if women constituting half the population find a proportionate number of seats in government. However, electoral participation and quotas through affirmative action alone are not enough to bring in gender equity. The existing networks, which are working on women's issues in party politics need strengthening to support and help sustain women in politics.

11.10 KEY WORDS

Participation: the action of taking part in something.

Politics: Politics is a set of activities associated with the governance of a country, state or an area. It involves making decisions that apply to group of members. It refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance—organized control over a human community, particularly a state.

Reservation Bill: The **Women's Reservation Bill** or The Constitution (108th Amendment) **Bill**, 2008, is a **pending bill** in the Parliament of India which propose to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for **women**.

11.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1) Discuss women's participation in politics as an agent of transformation with suitable examples?
- 2) Do you think that women's representation in parliament brings changes in the life of women and society?

- 3) Analyze the debates on Women's Reservation Bill and how it helps to enhance women's positions in political process.
- 4) Discuss the Participation of Women in Elections.
- 5) Write about the Women as Voters.
- 6) Discuss Women's Representation in Parliament.
- 7) What are the barriers for Women's Participation?
4. What are the Women's Issues in Elections?
5. Discuss the Women Politicians and the Media.
6. Write about the Women's Reservation Bill: A Tool for Enhancing Women's Participation.

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11.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 11.2
2. See Section 11.3

Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 11.4
2. See Section 11.5

Check Your Progress 3

1. See Section 11.6
2. See Section 11.7
3. See Section 11.8

Annexure-1

Women Electors in Indian States (in crores)

State/ UT		2009			2004		
		Total Electors	Women Electors	% Share	Total Electors	Women Electors	% Share
1.	Andhra Pradesh	5.79	2.92	50.44	5.11	2.58	50.43
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.07	0.04	49.63	0.07	0.03	48.60
3.	Assam	1.75	0.84	48.26	1.50	0.72	47.91
4.	Bihar	5.45	2.53	46.36	5.06	2.35	46.49
5.	Goa	0.10	0.05	49.77	0.09	0.05	49.44
6.	Gujarat	3.65	1.76	48.19	3.37	1.63	48.50
7.	Haryana	1.21	0.55	45.22	1.23	0.57	45.94
8.	Himachal Pradesh	0.46	0.23	48.64	0.42	0.21	49.10
9.	Jammu & Kashmir	0.66	0.32	47.84	0.64	0.29	45.54
10.	Karnataka	4.18	2.05	48.97	3.86	1.90	49.20
11.	Kerala	2.19	1.13	51.75	2.11	1.10	51.87
12.	Madhya Pradesh	3.81	1.79	46.99	3.84	1.84	47.83
13.	Maharashtra	7.30	3.48	47.65	6.30	3.02	47.96
14.	Manipur	0.17	0.09	51.71	0.15	0.08	51.44
15.	Meghalaya	0.13	0.06	50.72	0.13	0.06	49.69
16.	Mizoram	0.06	0.03	50.48	0.05	0.03	50.28
17.	Nagaland	0.13	0.06	48.77	0.10	0.05	47.47
18.	Orissa	2.72	1.31	48.20	2.57	1.25	48.57
19.	Punjab	1.70	0.81	47.84	1.66	0.80	47.93
20.	Rajasthan	3.71	1.75	47.19	3.47	1.66	47.72
21.	Sikkim	0.03	0.01	47.63	0.03	0.01	48.31
22.	Tamil Nadu	4.16	2.07	49.76	4.73	2.40	50.76
23.	Tripura	0.21	0.10	48.79	0.20	0.10	48.27
24.	Uttar Pradesh	11.60	5.26	45.32	11.06	5.03	45.47
25.	West Bengal	5.25	2.49	47.45	4.74	2.26	47.72
26.	Chattisgarh	1.55	0.76	49.27	1.37	0.68	49.67
27.	Jharkhand	1.79	0.84	47.11	1.68	0.79	46.98
28.	Uttarakhand	0.59	0.29	47.90	0.56	0.27	48.98
29.	Andmn&Nicb Island	0.03	0.01	46.75	0.02	0.01	45.58
30.	Chandigarh	0.05	0.02	44.23	0.05	0.02	44.58
31.	Dadra&Nagar Haveli	0.02	0.01	46.21	0.01	0.01	46.97
32.	Daman & Diu	0.01	0.00	49.30	0.01	0.00	50.03
33.	NCR Delhi	1.11	0.49	44.21	0.88	0.38	43.47
34.	Lakshadweep	0.00	0.00	48.87	0.00	0.00	49.07
35.	Puducherry	0.08	0.04	51.84	0.06	0.03	51.21
	Total	71.70	34.22	47.73	67.15	32.20	47.95

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

Annexure-2

Participation of Women Candidates in General Elections

Participation of Women Candidates in General Elections

	State/ UT	2009			2004			1999		
		Women Cont*	Women Elected	% Share	Women Cont*	Women Elected	% Share	Women Cont*	Women Elected	% Share
1.	Andhra Pradesh	39	5	8	21	3	7	17	3	6
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Assam	11	2	3	6	0	0	9	2	4
4.	Bihar	46	4	7	14	3	7	20	5	10
5.	Goa	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
6.	Gujarat	26	4	7	11	1	2	8	3	6
7.	Haryana	14	2	3	8	1	2	3	2	4
8.	Himachal Pradesh	1	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	0
9.	Jammu and Kashmir	6	0	0	4	1	2	6	0	0
10.	Karnataka	19	1	2	10	2	4	11	2	4
11.	Kerala	15	0	0	15	2	4	13	1	2
12.	Madhya Pradesh	29	6	10	30	2	4	23	3	6
13.	Maharashtra	55	3	5	29	5	11	17	4	8
14.	Manipur	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
15.	Meghalaya	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
16.	Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17.	Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18.	Orissa	9	0	0	9	2	4	8	2	4
19.	Punjab	13	4	7	10	2	4	14	2	4
20.	Rajasthan	31	3	5	17	2	4	15	3	6
21.	Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22.	Tamil Nadu	48	1	2	23	4	9	17	1	2
23.	Tripura	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24.	Uttar Pradesh	100	13	22	61	7	16	61	9	19
25.	West Bengal	29	7	12	34	4	9	26	5	10
26.	Chattisgarh	15	2	3	12	1	2			
27.	Jharkhand	14	4	7	13	1	2			
28.	Uttarakhand	7	0	0	5	0	0			

29.	Andn and Nic. Island	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
30.	Chandigarh	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0
31.	Dadra and Ngr Haveli	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
32.	Daman & Diu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
33.	NCR Delhi	18	1	2	15	1	2	7	1	2
34.	Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35.	Puducherry	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	556	59	100	355	45	100	283	48	100

Source: Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

- 1) Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes (2004), OSAGI, www.un.org
- 2) Women in National Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Union, www.ipu.org

UNIT 12: WOMEN AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN INDIA. FOCUS ON PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

STRUCTURE

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Background
- 12.3 Women and Regional Elections
- 12.4 Profiles of Women Leaders
- 12.5 Women Representatives in Panchayat Raj
 - 12.5.1 Legal Framework
 - 12.5.2 Barriers for Contesting Elections
 - 12.5.3 Impact of Women's Participation in Panchayats
- 12.6 Women in Urban Local Governance
 - 12.6.1 Legal Framework
 - 12.6.2 Profile and Quality of Participation of Women Elected Representatives
- 12.7 Let us sum up
- 12.8 Key Words
- 12.9 Questions for Review
- 12.10 Suggested readings and references
- 12.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- Examine the trend of women's representation in State, Panchayat and Municipal elections;

- Analyse the profiles of select women leaders at the State and grassroots level;

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- Explain the legal framework for women's representation in Panchayat and Municipal elections; and
- Identify the barriers for contesting elections for women at the local level.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

By now, you would have gained a fairly clear understanding on women's participation as voters, representatives, and contestants in parliamentary elections in India and the the main barriers for women participation/representation. You have also studied the ways in which the media discusses women's issues in elections, the image of women politicians and the critical Women's Reservation Bill. This Unit explains the various trends of women's representation in State, Panchayat and Municipal elections. It helps us understand how the legal framework for women's representation in Panchayat and Municipal elections help us to empower women and also analyse the barriers for women in contesting elections at the local level.

12.2 BACKGROUND

As a federal democratic country, elections in India take place both at the national (parliamentary elections) and state (assembly elections) levels. Until 1967, elections for parliamentary representation and assembly elections were held in tandem, but subsequently the two series of elections became dissociated. For a long time after independence, the state government was the most focal form of governance in practice. In 1992, a more formal structure of grassroots governance was launched, by means of the three tiered Panchayati Raj system and Urban local Bodies (ULBs). The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) to the Indian Constitution provided for reservation of one third of seats for women at level of local governance in rural and urban areas. There is also a one-third reservation for women for posts of chairpersons of these local bodies. Women play a twin role in politics—as voters and political representatives. While they have been active participants in the voting

process at all levels, their representation in State assemblies has been rather dismal. As the saying goes, women dominate the election scenario in India, but disappear after elections. Today, several of India's most important political parties are either headed by women or have vocal women leaders, yet the records available of the past 60 years, since the independence, suggest that the strength of women in the political field as reflected in State legislatures remained only at an average of 3 % to 5% of those elected. At the level of Parliament, however, the position of women members has varied between 5% to 7%. On the other hand, with about 1 million elected women representatives in Panchayats and Municipal Bodies, women are at the forefront of elections at the grassroots level.

12.3 WOMEN AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Women's representation in the state legislatures in India emerged from 1935 onwards. By 1940, there were 80 women members in the state and provincial legislatures (Challa, 1995). Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy was identified as the first woman to secure nomination to the Madras Legislative Assembly. Kamala Devi Chotopadhyaya contested for the Madras Legislature but lost. Ammanna Raja was elected as Deputy Speaker in the Madras Legislative Assembly. She held the position with high dignity, proved her capabilities, and subsequently got elected to Rajya Sabha after independence. In 1946, Rukmini Lakshmi pathi became not only a member of the legislature but was also inducted as minister in the Prakasham Ministry (Challa, 1995).

Women in State Legislatures/ Vidhan Sabhas

After independence, women like Nandini Satpathy in Orissa; Suseela Gopalan and Gouri in Kerala; Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu; Roda Misthi, Sarojini Pulla Reddy, Sada Laxmi in Andhra Pradesh; Yasoda Devi, Kamala Beniwali, Girija Vyas and Sumitra Singh in Rajasthan; Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh; Uma Bharti in Madhya Pradesh; Sheela Dikshit in Delhi; and Mamta Banerjee in West Bengal emerged as

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powerful women in their respective legislative assemblies. They proved their abilities and among them Suchitra Kripalini, Nandini Satpathy, Jayalalitha, Mayawati, Uma Bharti, Sheela Dikshit and Mamta Banerjee could handle the highest power and authority of Chief Ministership at the state level. These are some of the examples to suggest that eminent women have been present in state legislatures in India.

Performance of Women Candidates in State Legislative Assembly Elections

Andhra Pradesh	1957	85	17	7(8.2)	2004	294	161	26(8.8)
Bihar	1957	264	46	30(11.4)	2005	243	138	25(10.3)
Gujarat	1962	154	19	11(7.1)	2007	182	88	16(8.8)
Haryana	1967	81	8	4(4.9)	2005	90	60	11(12.2)
Goa	1967	30	1	1(3.3)	2007	40	14	1(2.5)
Karnataka	1957	179	24	13(7.3)	2004	224	101	6(2.7)
Kerala	1957	114	9	6(5.3)	2006	140	70	7(5.0)
Madhya Pradesh	1957	218	36	15(6.9)	2003	230	199	19(8.3)
Manipur	1967	30	0	0(0.0)	2007	60	12	0(0.0)
Nagaland	1964	40	0	0(0.0)	2008	60	4	0(0.0)
Punjab	1957	121	19	9(7.4)	2007	116	56	7(6.0)
Rajasthan	1957	136	22	8(5.9)	2003	200	118	12(6.0)
Tamil Nadu	1967	234	11	3(1.3)	2006	234	156	22(9.4)
Tripura	1967	30	1	0(0.0)	2008	60	31	3(5.0)
Uttar Pradesh	1957	341	39	18(5.3)	2007	403	370	23(5.7)
West Bengal	1957	195	17	6(3.1)	2006	294	139	37(12.6)
Delhi	1971	56	9	3(5.4)	2003	70	78	7(10.0)

Source: Compiled from various Statistical Reports of Assembly Elections, Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

Figures in parenthesis show percentage of women representation.

However, the performance of women candidates in state legislative elections as gauged by their membership in state legislatures is abysmally low. Data from the States show that West Bengal (12.6%) has the highest proportion of women members followed by Haryana (12.2%)

and Bihar (10.3%). Other States with relatively high proportions of women in the State Assemblies include Delhi (10.0%), Tamil Nadu (9.4%), Gujarat (8.8%), and Madhya Pradesh (8.3%). States like Manipur and Goa have no representation of women in their Assemblies. One of the most puzzling features of the depressed performance level of women candidates in state legislative bodies is that it seems to have no direct correlation with literacy and other seemingly logically related indicators.

A comparison between the states of Kerala and Rajasthan, whose literacy rates are at opposite ends of the spectrum, demonstrates this clearly. In Kerala, the overall literacy rate is reportedly 90 percent with 86 percent female literacy. By contrast, in Rajasthan, female literacy is a mere 20 percent and only 12 percent of the females are literate in rural areas. Kerala has a matrilineal tradition in which women have a much larger measure of autonomy and freedom of movement. Kerala's women also tend to marry at a much later age compared to women in other states. Most women in Rajasthan live far more restricted lives in aggressively patriarchal communities, many of whom still practice purdah and even child marriages. Even the cultural and educational advantage that women in Kerala have could not translate into higher political participation as compared to Rajasthan. The percentage of women in the legislative assemblies of both states is low. In Kerala, it has marginally come down from 5.3 percent in 1957 to 5 percent in 2006. However, in Rajasthan, the representation of women was 5.9 percent in 1957 and reached eight percent in 1985-90, slightly more than in Kerala, but not significantly greater. However, since then it has been going down (6% in 2003). Similarly, the state of Manipur, which has a tradition of women playing a dominant role in both the family and the community (again due to a matrilineal heritage) never elected a single woman legislator until 1990 when it elected its first. A similar low level of women's representation is true for Nagaland and other North-eastern states, which are known for a less repressive culture for women. By contrast, though the proportion of women in politics is very low in UP, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh and these are the states known for their low education levels and repressive

cultural norms for women, they have elected relatively more female ‘member of legislative assembly (MLA).

In independent India, pervasive gender discrimination results in bypassing and ignoring veteran women politicians. It is far more difficult for women to establish a foothold without patronage from powerful men in the party, that too through close personal relations—as wives, daughters, sisters or even mistresses. This is indeed a matter for serious concern because the political participation level of women in any society acts as a reliable barometer of the health of its democracy. The agenda of women’s empowerment seems to have lost the kind of moral and political legitimacy it enjoyed during the freedom movement, as was evident from the ugly scenes over the tabling of the Women’s Reservation Bill in parliament. What is clear however is that given the situation as represented above, an affirmative state initiative is necessary to facilitate and enable women to participate in state assembly elections? Women’s representation in politics requires special consideration, and cannot be left to the forces that presently dominate our parties and government.

12.4 PROFILES OF WOMEN LEADERS

Let us read some of the women leaders’ emerged in India.

Mayawati

One of the most interesting figures in Indian politics, Kumari Mayawati is leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and a prominent politician in India’s most populous state Uttar Pradesh. She is the first Dalit woman to hold the post of Chief Ministership in any Indian state. Born on January 15, 1956 to father Prabhu Das, a clerk in the Telecommunication department and mother Ram Rathi, Mayawati graduated from Kalindi College in Delhi and studied law in the University of Delhi before taking up the job of a school teacher job. She was greatly influenced by Dalit leader Kanshiram and joined active politics when BSP was formed in

1984. Mayawati first won a Lok Sabha seat contesting from Bijnor constituency in 1989. While a Rajya Sabha member, she became chief minister of a short-lived coalition government in Uttar Pradesh in 1995. She again held the post for a short period in 1997.

In 2000, Kanshiram announced Mayawati as his successor and she became the chief of the BSP. She again became chief minister of Uttar Pradesh for a somewhat longer time in 2002-2003. She stormed back to power in the 2007 assembly elections winning absolute majority, the first by any party since 1991 in Uttar Pradesh. In the 2002-2003 elections, she for the first time came out of her Dalit-only vote banks by including upper caste people including Brahmans in her poll arrangements. After her win, she distributed ministerial berths among upper caste people too. This is seen as a major shift in caste politics in India. Mayawati is regarded with respect, reverence and awe in the Indian politics as she is the only politician in the India having a mass appeal and firm hold and command over her voters and also the charisma to get mass vote bank transferred to any individual and to any party, a rare thing, of course, in the contemporary Indian politics. Her brand of politics has attracted attention of political observers far and wide. In a state where Dalits are nearly one quarter of the population, she has used caste as a mobilizer, building on a social and political revolution 60 years in the making. It is a phenomenon that has reshaped the politics of India.

Mamata Banerjee

Born on January 5, 1955, Mamata Banerjee, the current Chief Minister of West Bengal, created history by defeating the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in the 2011 Assembly Elections. Popularly known as 'Didi', this firebrand orator has been in forefront of the fight against land allocations to 'special economic zones' in Singur and Nandigram of West Bengal. She waged about three decades of war on LDF rule in West Bengal and finally succeeded in dethroning the CPI (M) lead government. She started her political career with the Congress. Her ability made her so popular among the party that she was appointed General Secretary of the

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State Mahila Congress (1976- 80). Mamata Banerjee was the first MP to best veteran Communist politician Somnath Chatterjee from the Jadavpur Constituency in the 1984 general election. Within a short period in her career, she became the General Secretary of the All India Youth Congress. She lost the election in 1989. However, she was back in the 1991 general election from the Calcutta South constituency. She retained her seat in the 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004 and 2009 general elections.

During the Congress led Narsimha Rao Government at the Centre in 1991, she was the Union Minister of State for Human Resources Development, Youth Affairs and Sports, and Women and Child Development. Following a difference with the government, she was discharged of her portfolios in 1993. Mamata Banerjee quit Congress in 1997 and formed the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal. TMC was an alliance partner of the NJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in 1999. She was appointed as the Railway Minister. She walked out of the NDA in early 2001 and allied with the Congress Party for West Bengal's assembly elections. Throughout her political career, she has maintained a high profile but simple life style.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1. Discuss Women and Regional Elections.

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.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Give the description Profiles of Women Leaders.

12.5 WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN PANCHAYAT RAJ

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women (NPEW, 2001). Since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78), India has been making a marked shift in its approach to women's issues from welfare to development while keeping the empowerment of women as the central issue in determining their status within society. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women.

12.5.1 Legal Framework

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution in 1993 has provided for reservation of seats in Panchayats for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels. It provides reservations for women in PRIs set up in two ways; for the office of the members and for that of the chairpersons. As per the clause (2) and (3) of Article 243(d), not less than one third of the seats meant for direct election of members at each tier of the Panchayats are to be reserved for women. Apart from one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the act has given constitutional powers and responsibilities for a range of issues including resource management, family planning, education and health. With the participation of women in PRIs, interpersonal relations within their families have changed for the

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better and this political process has heightened women's perceptions of their own capabilities.

Even much marginalized women have taken political participation further to become activists despite constraints like illiteracy, lack of experience, family responsibilities, restrictive social norms, lack of enabling environment and violence. This landmark legislation gave India the unique distinction of having more number of elected women representatives (EWRs) than the rest of the world together. What followed over the course of the next twenty years is a political and social transformation that has impacted the nature of governance itself. The presence of more than 1 million elected women representatives in the institutions of local governance in rural India has rightly been termed as 'silent revolution' within the process of democratic decentralization ushered in by the 73rd amendment. Out of the total 28 lakh elected Panchayat representatives, around 10 lakh are estimated to be women. With the amendment in Article 243D of the Constitution of India in 2009, which provides 50% reservation for women in seats and also offices of Chairpersons in all three tiers of Panchayats, the number of elected women representatives (EWRs) is expected to rise to more than 14 lakh. The state-wise break up of elected representatives in the three tiers of Panchayats is given below:

No. of Panchayat Representatives and Elected Women Representatives in the Three Tiers of Panchayats in States/UTs

SN	States	Gram Panchayat			Intermediate Panchayat			District Panchayat		
		Total		Women	Total		Women	Total		Women
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
1	A.P.	225276	80518	35.7	16148	5341	33.1	1097	368	33.5
2	Arunachal Pr.	7415	2561	34.5	1646	577	35.1	136	45	33.1
3	Assam	22898	8977	39.2	2148	791	36.8	390	135	34.6
4	Bihar	124339	58044	46.7	11566	5371	46.4	1162	568	48.9
5	Chhattisgarh	157250	53145	33.8	2831	954	33.7	305	103	33.8
6	Goa*	1509	513	34.0	0	0.0	50	20	40.0	
7	Gujarat	109209	36400	33.3	4161	1394	33.5	819	274	33.5
8	Haryana	66588	24406	36.7	2833	962	34.0	384	135	35.2
9	Himachal Pr.	22654	8864	39.1	1676	596	35.6	251	92	36.7
12	Karnataka	90748	39318	43.3	3665	1519	41.4	1003	373	37.2
13	Kerala	16139	5701	35.3	2005	695	34.7	343	119	34.7
14	M.P.	388829	134368	34.6	7008	2393	34.1	855	304	35.6
15	Maharashtra	223857	74620	33.3	3922	1307	33.3	1961	654	33.4
16	Manipur*	1675	859	51.3	0	0.0	61	22	36.1	
17	Orissa**	93781	33602	35.8	6227	2188	35.1	854	301	35.2
18	Punjab	88136	30875	35.0	2483	814	32.8	196	64	32.7
19	Rajasthan	113437	40044	35.3	5257	2014	38.3	1008	377	37.4
20	Sikkim*	905	352	38.9			100	32	32.0	
21	Tamil Nadu	109308	36824	33.7	6524	2313	35.5	656	227	34.6
22	Tripura	5352	1852	34.6	299	106	35.5	82	28	34.1
23	Uttar Pradesh	703294	273229	38.8	65669	24674	37.6	2698	1122	41.6
24	Uttarakhand	53988	20319	37.6	3152	1079	34.2	360	126	35.0
25	West Bengal	49545	18150	36.6	8563	2953	34.5	720	248	34.4
26	A & N Islands	758	261	34.4	67	25	37.3	30	10	33.3
27	Chandigarh	104	34	32.7	15	6	40.0	6	1	16.7
28	D&N Haveli*	114	45	39.5			11	4	36.4	
29	Daman&Diu*	77	30	39.0			20	7	35.0	
30	Lakshadip*	85	32	37.6			25	9	36.0	
31	Puducherry*	913	330	36.1	108	40	37.0			
	Total	2678183	984273	36.8	157973	58112	36.8	15583	5768	37.0

Source: Excerpts from Annexure-1, Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 424 (answered on 26-04-2010), Election Commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html> and Parliament of India, <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/>

* Two Tier Panchayati Raj System

** 2002 election (2007 election data not available) ,

As evident from the above table, the average of women's representation in Panchayats across the country is 36.94%. However, a few States have gone beyond the mandated 33% and provided for more reservation for women. For instance, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have reserved 50% seats for women in Panchayats and Sikkim has reserved 40% seats for women while roughly 54% of elected representatives in Bihar are women.

12.5.2 Barriers for Contesting Elections

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The participation of women in Panchayats has been a fascinating, yet flawed story. Fascinating because it has shown that even deprived, illiterate, marginalized women can become competent and concerned elected representatives. At the same time, it is also flawed because the women have to function in a society that will not accept that they can think independently, understand matters of governance, and take responsibility outside the four walls of their homes. Thus, for every success story there are many more of women who front ambitious men and only act as token leaders while it is really the men who back them who pull the strings. Women representatives face many social constraints—including restrictions on going out of the house; lack of literacy and education; the household chores of fetching water and fodder, cooking and raising children that affect their performance in office. It is true that many women have been nominated by their husbands, fathers and fathers-in-law to take advantage of the quota which made it difficult for the man to contest the election himself. It is also not unusual to find that election materials—banners, posters, etc.—are made in the name of the man rather than the woman who is the official candidate, and that the man tends to assume the role of the Pradhan or Sarpanch, attending and even chairing the meeting in place of the elected woman representative. The phenomenon of proxy or surrogate representation is a familiar one, though over time women have become increasingly aware, conscious and assertive of their rights. Apart from prejudice, these women function against the background of the reality of women's status in the country. An increase in the number of elected women does not necessarily alter this reality. Take just four indicators that are also used to judge the status of women in the Global Gender Gap Index—economic participation, educational attainment, political empowerment and health and survival. In 2011, India's overall ranking was a dismal 113 out of 135 countries surveyed. As if this was not depressing enough, its ranking in the specific areas was even worse. It fared worst in terms of economic participation of women with a ranking of 131 and a percentage of 39.6—fifth from the bottom. Though India scored well in political participation of women with a rank of 19, probably thanks to the million and more women elected to Panchayat Raj

Institutions, the percentage was abysmal: 31.2 per cent. India is doing relatively well in absolute terms on the educational attainment and health & survival fronts, but in terms of rankings it is way behind others. India is ranked 121st (83.7%) in the former, and 134th (93.1%) for the latter.

Against this background, the women who enter politics through the panchayat route— mainly because there are seats reserved for them—do so in an environment where they have to struggle between their role as primary caretakers of their homes and their responsibilities as elected officials, where they can only contest if there is family support, and where once the reserved seat reverts to a general seat as a result of the system of rotation of reserved seats, they inevitably have to step down. A survey initiated by the Panchayati Raj Ministry in 2008 revealed that 89 per cent of the women interviewed did not contest a second election and that 11 per cent who did so, lost. Nearly half the women said that they felt the work was ‘unsuitable’ and that they felt incompetent and a third said their spouses had discouraged them from contesting a second time. Limited access to economic resources such as income, land, house, and credit facilities impairs women’s effective participation in electoral processes viz., contesting elections, campaigning, building and sustaining their constituencies and fulfilling their role as elected representatives. Efficacy of an elected representative, particularly in the Panchayati Raj Institutions is dependent on their accessibility to government officials, as most programs are routed through them. The resistance among the government officials due to gender insensitivity impedes the effective functioning of women elected representatives. Certain legislations also act as hindrances in the way of women contesting elections. For instance, to control the population growth, the states of Rajasthan, Haryana and Orissa have legislated that candidates standing for elections cannot have more than two children. The average age at which women gets married, 19 is lower than that of men, 21. By the time they stand for election they already have two or more children, and therefore are not qualified to contest election (Mohanty, 1995, p.3346). Caste dynamics also poses to be a more difficult barrier than gender in electoral politics. The one major problem with reservations for

lower castes, according to Madhu Kishwar is that they have been “permanently ghettoized to reserved constituencies” (Kishwar, 1996, p.2871). Money and muscle power are used to threaten opponents and the voters; and impose their decisions on the electorate and to raise the kinds of funds required to get into and stay in power. Violating women’s dignity is an integral part of politics, instilling fear in women, thereby restraining their entry into politics. In addition corruption is also institutionalised systematically. Criminalization and corruption are not generally seen as a part of women’s value systems and therefore they are kept away from politics in general.

12.5.3 Impact of Women’s Participation in Panchayats

Despite several barriers, both institutional and social, the participation of elected women representatives has resulted in both developmental and empowerment outcomes. It has often been observed that women prioritize those developmental needs that seem to be more pressing from their perspective. As opposed to the infrastructural development (carrying the enticing promise of contracts and kickbacks) favoured by men, women have initiated work on plans to bring piped water into the village or to build a middle-school or high school in the village so that their daughters can study there. Women are also seen to be more involved in monitoring the presence of teachers and medical staff in the school or health centre, and inspecting nutrition centres under the Integrated Child Development Scheme. They have taken the lead in making efforts for smokeless stoves, crèches, community halls, and have taken the initiative in family and matrimonial matters, counseling abusive and/or alcoholic husbands. Sometimes, women headed Panchayats have even experienced a dramatic increase in their revenues, sponsoring the auction of village ponds, community forests and village markets for the larger welfare of the community (Jayal, 2006). Above all, it has been observed that women accord great importance to education. The experience of being unable to read agenda papers or minutes, or even to follow the proceedings of Panchayat meetings, has contributed to

this awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls. This is why we find many elected women representatives placing high on their agenda the goal of getting a middle or high school for girls in the village. A Sarpanch in Dahod district in Gujarat said that she had proposed setting up a primary school in the village, but was told there was no necessity for it because there were only three children whose parents wanted it. She set about mobilizing support for the school which was established, and came to be attended by 300 children. Attendance was at least partly achieved through stiff penalties for non-compliance: a fine of Rs. 600 and 6 months in prison for the parents of those children who do not attend. It is notable that until she came to the Panchayat, this woman had not stepped out of the boundaries of her home, or even been a member of any other organization (Mishra, 2007-8). While the developmental gains of women's participation in the Panchayats are impressive, the empowerment gains are also considerable. Women elected representatives often report on the open discrimination against them in Panchayats—the domination of meetings by male colleagues, the refusal to pay attention to the opinions and suggestions of women members and the generally dismissive attitude of (male) officials. Nevertheless, small gains are visible, such as the gradual change in the social custom that women sit separately (with each other) and do not speak in the presence of men. Now, not just other women in the household, but sometimes also the men, willingly share household responsibilities. There is a sense that election brings to the family as a whole an enhanced sense of status, expressed in more social respect and invitations to weddings of higher-caste families. Similarly, while there are innumerable examples of scheduled caste women representatives being disallowed from chairing Panchayat meetings, there are also cases where the woman Sarpanch has asserted her right to do so, despite being told to make the tea or go home. This increased consciousness of their rights, as well as the ability to perform their functions more effectively than before, is often the result of capacity-building efforts by non-governmental organizations. The pioneering efforts of Mahila Samakhya in Karnataka, for instance, took the form of mobilizing poor, lower caste rural women into sanghas or collectives, preparing them for political

participation, training them after the election, and generally creating a climate of responsiveness and accountability. Women were particularly encouraged to attend and helped to participate in the meetings of the Gram Sabha (Narayaban, 2002).

12.6 WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 (came into force on June 1, 1993) is a landmark initiative of the Government of India to strengthen local self-government in cities and towns. The Act stipulates that if the state government dissolves a Municipality, election to the same must be held within a period of six months. Moreover, the conduct of municipal elections is entrusted to statutory State Election Commission, rather than being left to executive authorities. The mandate of the Municipalities is to undertake the tasks of planning for 'economic development and social justice' and implement city/town development plans.

12.6.1 Legal Framework

Let us now understand the legal backdrop of the Act, Article 243 T(I) of the Constitution Amendment (1992). The act states as follows: "Reservation of Seats:

1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

4) The office of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and common in such manner as the Legislature of a State may by law, provide.

5) The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of office of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in article 334.

6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for reservation of seats in any Municipality or office of Chairpersons in the Municipalities in favour of backward class of citizens.” Different political parties in India have shown great reluctance to field women candidates. Nevertheless, reservation of seats at Municipal level has put pressure on political parties to identify and field more women candidates. According to a 2006 study by National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi, India had 3641 urban local bodies—107 municipal corporations, 1439 municipal councils and 2095 Nagar Panchayats with total elected representatives numbering 67,990. Of these, the number of elected women representatives was 22,665, which constituted 33.3 percent of the total. Most of these women entered politics due to reservation of seats. The number of women counselor (as on October 2004) is given below in the table:

No.	Name of State/UT	Number of Councillors					
		Municipal Corporation		Municipal Council		Nagar Panchayat	
		Total	Women Members	Total	Women Members	Total	Women Members
1	Andhra Pradesh	399	139	3104	1060	21	7
2	Assam	57	20				
3	Bihar	280	70	1156	292	1545	413
4	Delhi	134	37				

5	Haryana	25	8	656	231	601	219
6	Himachal Pradesh	24	8	201	68	204	60
7	Karnataka	410	147	3275	1222	1390	573
8	Kerala	298	100	1597	550		
9	Madhya Pradesh	724		2040		3540	
10	Maharashtra	2064	693	5189	1750		
11	Punjab	290	97	1591	609	385	150
12	Tamil Nadu	474	159	4358	1453		
13	Tripura			16	6	114	39
14	Uttaranchal	46	18	397	144	190	82
15	Uttar Pradesh	865	291	4833	1734	4823	1802
16	West Bengal	364	123	2414	845		

Notes: 1. Status of information provided in the table is based on data collected over a period of time and may therefore not tally with the latest position in the different states of the country.

Source: NIUA(2006).

12.6.2 Profile and Quality of Participation of Women Elected Representatives

Reservation for women in urban local bodies was made to encourage women to participate in local governance, yet the 'women elected representatives seem to be reluctant to come forward and take initiatives. In a study (NIUA, 2006) conducted in various States, the 'women elected representatives' said that they were often influenced by the opinion of the male members. Women participants are yet to display the required level of self-confidence. Therefore, there is a need to impart training to 'women elected representatives' to empower them and help them in

participating in municipal affairs. The results of the study indicate that nearly 87 percent of women representatives got elected to 'urban local bodies' for the first time and about 12 percent got elected for the second time. About one percent 'women elected representatives' were elected for the third or even the fourth time. This indicates that their performance as a counselor is appreciated and people want them to continue as a member in the local body. This also shows that women can enter politics and also get re-elected if the family background is favorable. The study results also indicate that women are interested in politics and can have an equal footing with men in local bodies.

Almost 30 percent of 'women elected representatives' were found not even educated upto 10th class while about 7 percent were completely uneducated. Over 37 percent of 'women elected representatives' were educated up to 10th-12th class level. Nearly one-fifth of them had done their graduation while about 6 percent had post-graduate qualifications. More than half of them were in the age group of 36-50 years while about one-fifth were older and one-fifth was younger. Almost 95 percent of the 'women elected representatives' were found to be married and so had family responsibilities. Most of the newly elected women counselor needed training to orient them to their roles and responsibilities. The 'women elected representatives', after receiving training, were able to identify and prioritize problems in their wards. Drinking water emerged as one of the most severe problem in many areas followed by drainage, solid waste and roads. They were also in a position to identify problems in their areas, which needed improvement such as mosquitoes, stray animals, street dogs etc. In some areas, they stated that there were electricity related problems like low voltage, power shortage, insufficient street lighting and so on. Some 'women elected representatives' also mentioned hawkers and encroachment on streets by commercial activities that lead to disruption in traffic flow. The state-wise data shows that over three-fifths of 'women elected representatives' from Maharashtra and more than fifty percent from Karnataka, Kerala and Tripura could identify water as main problem in their areas. Drainage and garbage was put as second priority.

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While some 'women elected representatives' felt that they could participate better in the decision-making process after undergoing training, some others were also able to take initiatives in municipal meetings and get resolutions passed for the development of their areas. The survey found that the 'women elected representatives' got support from other elected members on some issues, while on some issues they got very little or no support at all. They were united in dealing with the problems of their areas even if they belonged to different political parties. Help from officials was, however, lacking in many 'urban local bodies'. After getting training 78 percent of 'women elected representatives' were able to take initiatives in municipal meetings and get resolutions passed for the development of their areas. The training these 'women elected representatives' received gave them the required knowledge and confidence to take part in meetings and get resolutions passed. State-wise analyses indicates that more than half the 'women elected representatives' from Haryana and more than two-fifths of 'women elected representatives from Maharashtra and Uttaranchal were able to take initiative for implementing new development programs in their areas but failed to get it passed. Among many reasons for this, non-cooperation of the other counselor was cited as one of the important reasons. Over four-fifths of 'women elected representatives from Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Karnataka and Kerala were able to successfully get development resolutions passed. It shows that in these states women counselor are quite dynamic. Most of the 'women elected representatives', after receiving training, were are also able to do development works in their wards such as construction of roads, solving drinking water problems, making parks and recreation centers, etc. under some schemes being implemented in their area.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1. Discuss Women Representatives in Panchayat Raj.

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2. Discuss the Women in Urban Local Governance.

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3. Do you think women contestant face problems/ barriers in election?
Justify your answer.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

Analyses of trends of women’s participation to contest elections to the State legislatures indicate that there is a gender discrimination which is responsible for poor representation of women in India. Women’s role in decision-making is one of the most important questions for consideration in the movement for their empowerment. Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies cannot be strengthened without empowering the elected representatives with necessary knowledge and skills to discharge their constitutional obligations. Reservation of seats for women will not lead to effective participation unless the elected representatives acquire the required skills and are given appropriate orientation. With their limited exposure and lack of experience in local governance, the need for

training assumes added significance in terms of both content and methodology.

12.8 KEY WORDS

Election: a formal and organized choice by vote of a person for a political office or other position.

Panchayat Raj: In India, the Panchayati Raj generally refers to the system of local self-government in India introduced by a constitutional amendment in 1992, although it is based upon the traditional panchayat system of the Indian subcontinent.

12.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss the role of women in regional parties. Give a suitable example to substantiate your arguments.
2. Critically analysis the Panchayat Raj and women elected representatives in India.
3. Discuss Women and Regional Elections.
4. Give the description Profiles of Women Leaders.
5. Discuss Women Representatives in Panchayat Raj.
7. Discuss the Women in Urban Local Governance.
8. Do you think women contestant face problems/ barriers in election? Justify your answer.

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12.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 12.3
2. See Section 12.4

Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 12.5
2. See Section 12.6
3. See Section 12.7

UNIT 13: ISSUES AND REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNANCE

STRUCTURE

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Governance: Meaning
- 13.3 Women in Governance
- 13.4 Constraints in Participation
- 13.5 Participation and Representation
- 13.6 Policy Measures
- 13.7 Women: Agency of Change
 - 13.7.1 Feminization of Leadership
 - 13.7.2 Private and Public Patriarchy
 - 13.7.3 Institutional Inadequacies
- 13.8 Women's Representation: Theories, Critique and Limitations
 - 13.8.1 Critical Mass Theory
 - 13.8.2 The Politics of Presence
 - 13.8.3 Critique
- 13.9 Let us sum up
- 13.10 Key Words
- 13.11 Questions for Review
- 13.12 Suggested readings and references
- 13.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the Unit, you should be able to:

- Know new discourse of representation and governance;
- Identify the issues in the engendering of governance ;

- Explain the factors constraining participation of women in governance;
- Comprehend the concerns for women's participation and representation in governance and
- Critique the relevance of 'quota' in addressing issues of women's representation in governance.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In the former Unit you have read various trends of women's representation in State, Panchayat and Municipal elections. It helps us understand how the legal framework for women's representation in Panchayat and Municipal elections help us to empower women and also analyse the barriers for women in contesting elections at the local level. The discourses, procedures, structures and functions of governance are, in general, heavily skewed in favour of men. Limited access to resources and weaker capabilities constrain women's power to influence resource allocation and decisions at home and in their community. They remain underrepresented in national, regional and local government. Missing women in governance processes is indicative of the fact that public decision-making processes have not actually addressed women's strategic needs. Women need to be seen as agents of change; as a member of the public and participant in economic, social and political action. In this Unit, we shall address the issues in engendering governance. We begin with unravelling the concept of governance. We shall explore the issues in engendering governance; draw attention to the factors responsible for non-participation of women in the decision-making processes; track the concerns to mainstream gender and highlight the policy measures towards engendering governance institutionally in the domain of state. We shall analyse the effectiveness of reserved seats in enabling agency of women elected representatives in local self-governance institutions and the issues in the agency of women leadership therein. Finally, we shall assess critically the relevance of 'quota' in addressing issues of women's representation in governance. The major

arguments of this Unit are drawn from the chapter 'Gender and Governance: Empowering Women Leadership', written by Mandakini Pant and Martha Farrell in the edited book by Rajesh Tandon and Mohini Kak.

13.2 GOVERNANCE: MEANING

The term, 'Governance' refers to the act of governing. It describes the mechanisms an organisation uses to ensure that its constituents follow its established processes and policies. The term is used more abstractly as a synonym for government as a geo-political government (nation-state), a corporate government (business entity), a socio-political government (tribe, family etc.), or any other type of government. This Unit focuses on political government—the state. Historically, particularly after the Second World War, governance was assumed to be the responsibility of government i.e., the state. Democratic political frameworks of governments suggested three independent and inter related functions of state viz., legislative, executive and judiciary to ensure growth and equity to its citizens. The state in its role as provider, protector and regulator entitled all its citizens a universal set of formal rights and equality in rights and obligations; promoted economic growth, generated employment for its citizens; ensured social justice by drawing policies in favour of socially backward communities and protected all its citizens against the violation of their rights. The provisioning of universal rights and equality, however, did not translate itself in substantive equality. They have not guaranteed equality of voice, access or influence particularly for the poor and the marginalised citizens who are extremely heterogeneous, fluid and have a diverse range of needs. They have, in fact, to a large extent not benefited much from the citizenship rights and in many cases, the special constitutional legal provisions given to them. With liberalisation and corporate capitalism, the welfare function of the state is further getting deteriorated. People are increasingly disenchanted with existing oppressive socio-politico-economic conditions. The deprivation and inequality and gaps between what has been enshrined in the Constitutions of nation-states and ensured through legislations and policy provisions and actualisation of those provisions reflects

unresponsiveness of the state towards its citizens. The gulf is invariably the result of poor governance. See box below for understanding governance crisis in India.

The governance crisis world over has necessitated new sets of economic and political reforms. A new paradigm of governance has emerged. In its elementary meaning, governance in a society is not just responsibility of state; it is the joint obligation of citizens and all institutions in a given society, including institutions of the state in the legislative, executive and judiciary functions. (Mohanty and Tandon, 2002) The World Bank first introduced the concept 'good governance' into development discourse. The bank's experience of failure of its economic policies in African countries led the Bank to attribute the failure to 'bad governance' i.e. administrative inefficiency, corruption, lack of transparency, etc. in these countries. The conceptualization of 'bad governance' then led to the conceptualisation of 'good governance' which includes parameters like administrative efficiency, rule of law, accountability, and transparency. The Bank, however, did not associate 'good governance' with any particular political regime (Mohanty and Tandon, 2002). The association between 'good governance' and democracy has been vigorously pushed into the development discourse by the United Nations Development Programme, human rights groups, and bilateral agencies or official aid agencies.

The UNDP Human Development Report, for instance, premised on a rights-based approach to the development process, sets upon enlarging choices of each person in a society to be an active and productive participant in development process. The public participation in influencing decision-making, transparency, and accountability became the hallmarks of good governance (Pant and Farrell, 2007). Three underlying assumptions in the concept of governance are clearly evident. Firstly, Governance is about the structures and processes of public decision-making on mobilisation and use of public resources for common public good. Secondly, governance recognises plurality of domains and actors viz., the state, markets and the corporate and civil

society, in influencing the participation of citizens in the systems and processes of deliberation and decision-making at all levels and also to build their capacities for sustaining human development. State creates conducive politico-legal environment for all citizens. Private sector generates jobs and income. Civil society facilitates political and social interactions through mobilisations of groups to participate in economic, social and political activities. Thirdly, Governance is intricately woven around the active agency and participation of citizens in their social, economic and political development. Governance entails not only the efficient and cost effective public agencies for responsive public services but also an active and meaningful participation of all citizens including the poor, marginalised and the underrepresented people (Pant and Farrell, 2007). Plurality of actors come together to coordinate and network with each other through horizontal linkages which are both non-hierarchical and nonbureaucratic and influence governance and development at various levels (Shylendra, 2009).

Table 13.1: Plurality of Actors under the new Discourse of Governance

Level	State	Market	Civil Society
Global	Multilateral Agencies (UN, WB, WTO etc.)	Multinational Companies (MNCs)	International CSOs/NGOs
National	National/Regional Governments	Domestic Companies/MNC branches	National/Regional CSOs and NGOs
Local	Local Self Governments	Local Traders/businessmen	Local NGOs/CBOs/Citizens

(Source: H.S. Shylendra (Ed) 2009. New Governance and Development. Challenges of Addressing Poverty and Inequality. New Delhi. Academic Foundation. P.31).

13.3 WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE

Engendered governance implies explicit acknowledgement of gender equality goals. Equal participation by both men and women in

governance is essential for a number of reasons, viz., Influence the allocation of scarce resources;

Improve living conditions and promote the interests of women; Shift the political focus towards issues affecting the quality of life of both men & women by ensuring equitable distribution of productive resources and opportunities for growth, giving visibility to reproductive roles of women in policymaking and increasing women’s participation in the political process (Commonwealth Foundation, 2004). Women and men do not have equal social, economic and legal rights. Women still lack independent rights to own land, manage property, conduct business or even travel without their husband’ consent. Women continue to have poor command over a range of productive resources including education, land, information and financial resources. They remain vastly underrepresented in national and local government (World Bank, 2001). Amartya Sen urges to look at women as agents of change and not as passive beneficiaries. Agency is the ability to define & articulate needs and priorities and to act upon them. Female agency implies the role of women as a member of the public and participant in economic, social and political action (Sen, 1999). Let us read which are the limitations women faces in governance in the next section.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What is the meaning of Governance?

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2) Discuss Women in Governance.

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13.4 CONSTRAINTS IN PARTICIPATION

A noteworthy factor responsible for non-participation of women in decisionmaking and governance is unequal gender relations. Gender relations and power distribution between the sexes in both the private (personal) and public spheres create gender inequalities. Unequal gender relations, reproduced across the range of inter-related institutions as household, community, market and state, mediate the construction of gender identities and synergistically determine the capacities to exercise independent agency. Such relationships determine and influence the ways resources, roles and responsibilities are allocated; values are assigned and power is mobilised. Without any sense of power whatsoever, their participation in decisionmaking is generally minimal not only in political sphere but also at home and within the community. You have already read about private-public concepts in. It divides women and men have always hindered women to negotiate in the public domain. The private domain is associated with the household, reproductive work and femininity, whereas, the public domain is associated with political authority, public decision-making, productive work and masculinity. Women are either being criticised for their inadequacies or patronised by men. Autonomy of women in family/household also influences their status and ability to participate in governance. Development policies often conceptualise altruist, conflict free, harmonious households where production, income, consumption are equally shared. Empirical studies, on the contrary, have shown that far from being a unit where all resources and benefits are pooled and shared equitably, the use of resources and labour, distribution and output have to be constantly negotiated within the households. Intra household relations are often conflictive. The bargaining power is derived from options available to household members, the perceptions of contributions by

members to the household prosperity and the degree to which members identify their self-interests within their personal well-being. Although, the private domain of household is typically associated with women, men are held responsible for the welfare and safety of all members. Women's bargaining power at the household is restricted typically due to lack of access and control over resources, no autonomy in decisionmaking, low self-esteem, low skills and education, restricted physical mobility and eventually less power as compared to men. Other intersecting hierarchies such as class, caste, ethnicity, religion, and rural/urban locations further complicate gender inequality in governance. In India, for example, women face hurdles posed by patriarchy, caste and class when they enter the political domain. Women from low caste groups, despite reservations, seldom wielded any real political power due to the strongly entrenched notions of caste and gender hierarchy. (Anandhi S, 2002) Studies have also shown that women elected representatives with no economic entitlements were often under the control of those who owned and controlled resources.

Consequently, dependency curbed their independent decision-making powers (Niranjana, 2002). The electoral systems affect women's participation in decision-making bodies. The majoritarian system allows for the nomination of only one candidate per district, and parties overwhelmingly in this situation choose a male candidate. Political parties also play a critical role in advancing or impeding women's participation in decision-making bodies. Party leaders tend to treat their female members instrumentally, to secure women's votes and to involve them in the party's lobbying and organisational activities. Through the process of candidate selection (where candidates are taken on by the party for election), women face a number of obstacles. Men are often viewed as more viable and better candidates and are given preference to female candidates. Additionally, the pool from which political parties search for candidates generally tend to be dominated by men, such as trade union officials and local councillors. Even when women possess the characteristics that make for good candidates, they often are not encouraged to step forward to become candidates. Women are also less

likely to present themselves as candidates, often seeing themselves as lacking the skills necessary to perform well in politics. Sometimes women hesitate to become involved in party politics and show preference for participating in social movements which are less structured and more goal-oriented. Even after selection as candidates, women seeking decision-making positions can be constrained by different factors. This can include a lack of financial support and time for campaigning because of difficulties in balancing family and public life, of confidence about relevant skills, of fewer connections to politically relevant networks. Additionally, the environment of political institutions is not 'gender-friendly' and deters some women from considering entering political life, for example, sitting times in parliaments, meeting schedules of political parties and lack of childcare facilities. (DAW, 2005) Stereotypes affect individual perceptions of the effectiveness of women as leaders. Pre-existing social norms that associate leadership with men make it harder for women to enter the political arena. The lack of exposure to female leaders perpetuates biased perceptions of female leader effectiveness. Regardless of competence, if women leaders are presumed to be ineffective then it hinders their political participation.

13.5 PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Women's underrepresentation in development processes clearly underscores the need for promoting gender equality in governance. Mainstreaming is not just about adding a 'women's' component into an existing activity. Mainstreaming goes beyond increasing women's participation... bringing together the experience, knowledge and interests of men and women to build upon the development agenda. Gender mainstreaming requires that all policy, planning, implementation and resource allocation reflect the interests and the views of both women as well as men(Alkazi et al, 2004). Before the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-85), development essentially had a welfare approach, addressing the practical needs of women surrounding their reproductive role through delivery of food, family planning, health care, etc. The Women in Development (WID) approach, ushered in during the Decade

for Women, was initially conceived as an equity approach. This approach recognised women's active role in the 'development process as reproductive, productive and community workers, and emphasised the fulfillment of their strategic needs through direct state intervention. However, due to its political nature, this approach was not very acceptable to governments, and was soon replaced by an anti-poverty approach. The efficiency approach sought to enhance women's contribution to the development process in order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of project interventions, albeit it tended to assume that women's time and energy are elastic. The empowerment approach considered women's improved condition and position to be the ends in themselves. It focused on meeting women's strategic needs focusing on a bottom-up, self-reliant approach. The equity and empowerment approaches together labelled as Gender and Development (GAD) approaches because of their emphasis on strategic needs. Gender and Development changed the focus and interventions from women as a target group to gender analysis of women and men's roles and relations as part of all development interventions, and to gender equality as a goal of development (Alkazi et al, 2004) . More recently, a rights-based approach sets the achievement of human rights and the creation of an enabling environment in which human rights 'can be enjoyed as the main objectives of people-centred sustainable development, as well as the means to achieve it. In this way, a rights-based approach transcends sectoral concerns, and encompasses the concepts of welfare, anti-poverty, equity and empowerment as facets of the rights of all people(Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2000). The United Nations summits on environment, social development, human rights and population brought the issue of women's rights to the forefront of international development debates. A major breakthrough was in getting women's rights on to the mainstream human rights agenda. Women's movements across the world mobilised and organised in the build up to the Vienna Human Rights Conference in 1993. The recommendations made by women's rights groups were included in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The mobilisation on rights continued in Cairo's Conference on Population and Development in 1994. The

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Beijing conference saw major advances in pursuing women's rights commitment. It took forward the Cairo agenda and crystallised the core rights issues: equal rights in law, entitlement to productive resources, right to education and health, equal right to representation in decision-making, security and freedom from violence. The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, provides the comprehensive mandate for governments to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are actively addressed as core development concerns. It clearly mentions that without the active participation of women and incorporation of the perspectives of women in all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality and development cannot be achieved. The Beijing Platform for Action became the basis for civil society advocacy. Many Non-Governmental Organizations and civil society groups used the policy recommendations and agreements to lobby their own governments. Complementing the Beijing Platform for Action is the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is one of the most important international human rights instruments having a legal binding. These two mandates have informed the most recently proposed Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) that resolves to promote gender equality and women's empowerment to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to stimulate sustainable development. Achieving equal participation in decision-making and governance is a high priority according to the recommendations of World Summit on Social Development. Addressing gender in governance requires states to create space for women to participate at all levels. Its recommendations are consistent with other International agreements such as Agenda 21. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the United Nations System, Governments, and major groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment. It represents a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on socio-economic development and environmental cooperation. One of its commitments is allowing people to participate in decision making at all levels; particularly empowering women and increasing their participation in decision-making (Commonwealth Foundation, 2004).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the Constraints in Participation of women in Governance?

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2) Discuss the Participation and Representation.

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13.6 POLICY MEASURES

The under-representation of women in political decision-making has important consequences for the public policy agenda and for the articulation of women’s interests, as well as for the legitimacy of democratic bodies. In the debate on how to make women’s right to equality a reality, the terms positive discrimination, affirmative action, quotas, and reservations are used somewhat interchangeably. These terms refer to policy measures that are intended to redress discriminatory practices or inequitable structures, both in the economy and the political system. Positive discrimination is the broadest of these terms, used to describe measures that enable those who have faced discrimination in the past. It could mean differential entrance requirements or reserved seats. It differs from affirmative action which encourages disadvantaged groups to enter the mainstream by mandating equal opportunity and equal

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consideration. 'Affirmative action' means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded. Affirmative action does not usually involve quotas. Reservation is the Indian term for quota systems, which work in different ways to set aside or assure a minimum availability of access to disadvantaged groups. Reservation of seats in politics guarantees a minimum number of women in elected office. It needs to be seen as a vital measure which ensures women become part of the mainstream of politics and development (InfoChange News and Features, 2010). Women represent half the population, therefore have the right to half the seats. Women have different experiences (biological or socially constructed) that ought to be represented. Women should enter into positions of power because they would engage in politics differently, thereby, improving the nature of the public sphere. Women are able to achieve solidarity of purpose to represent women's interests when they achieve certain levels of representation. 'More women must be nominated, because a few women in politics, a small minority of less than about 30 percent, is unable to make a real difference'. Women are attracted to political life if they have role models in the arena. Women and men have partly conflicting interests and thus men cannot represent women. Feminist theorists suggest that the women in elected office are not just 'standing as' women but also 'acting for' women as a group. Finally, the equal representation of women and men enhances democratisation of governance (DAW, 2005). Almost 60 countries around the world have experimented with quotas. The circumstances of their adoption vary. In the Scandinavian countries, which have long been the exemplars for women's participation in public affairs, quotas were adopted voluntarily following political work by women's organisations that wanted to consolidate a growing presence of women in public life. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 in India, by mandating 33 percent representations of women in Panchayats and Municipalities, ensured their entry in the domain of politics at the local level. While Article 243G and 243W of the Constitution empowered State Legislatures to endow Panchayats/municipalities with such powers

and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, the provision of reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women (Article 243D and 243T) gave an opportunity to them to hold formal positions of power and, in turn, participate in the decision making process. Women not only have one-third membership, they also head as chairpersons in one third of the Panchayats and urban local bodies. The impetus for empowerment came from the State to 'enable women to make strategic life choices, organise and participate in and influence the process of decision-making as per their needs and priorities' (DeshmukhRanadive,2005). Since Indian women by and large experience marginalisation, deprivation and oppression vis-à-vis the existing power structures, it is assumed that affirmative action will build a critical mass of local leadership who will be active participants in the strategic decision-making process. The political representation will give them the voice and a solidarity base to change initial gender-based preferences and help in formulating democratic policies. The constitutionally mandated Panchayats and constitutionally mandated participation of women will change the power concentration. The affirmative action adopted by the government of India providing for reservation of not less than one-third seats in local self-governing bodies has facilitated more number of women to participate in the decision-making arena equally with men in these institutions. There is, however, no affirmative legislation to enable women to participate in the higher levels of political governance at the State and Central levels.

13.7 WOMEN: AGENCY OF CHANGE

In the last Unit, you have read about women's representatives. Let us revisit on the same idea from governance point of view. Women elected representatives are being exposed to processes of governance and consequently getting a sense of intimacy with and control over governance process. Exposure to the ways of governance has instilled in them a sense of power and an independent identity. This may be seen as gains in terms of the consolidation of the gender equality, though the gain has not expanded over the years. A careful reading of the data, however, alerts us to the limitations of the gender mainstreaming in

governance. An analysis of issues in the context of 'Women Elected Representative's; (WERs) in local selfgovernance in India explains ways in which women are constrained from exercising their leadership.

13.7.1 Feminization of Leadership

Mandatory one-third reservation for women has increased their presence in governance but their voices are silent. Many studies and findings show that most of the 'women elected representatives' did not have previous experience in politics. They lacked technical expertise, organisational and communication skill. A small minority received training. They had little awareness about rural and urban development/ administration affairs. New entrants faced unfriendly environment in carrying out their duties attached to their office. Vice-presidents, husbands, sons and male family members or others dominated them for planning and executing the powers of local self-governance. The responsibilities to meet the household subsistence requirements, mobility restrictions and limited support structures restricted their social interaction and participation in local self-governance (Pant and Farrell, 2007). Domestication and seclusion ethics undermined their potential for holding public office. Having no formal educational qualifications, being deficient in information, skills and experience, they were dependent on men both within household and the institutions of local self-governance in matters relating to governance. Men exploited their naivety to their advantage. The social image of women as housewives rendered the work of many women elected representatives are invisible. Organisational resources are steered toward quantitative targets i.e. increasing the number of women in leadership positions. The engendering process has become 'add women' process without questioning the basic assumptions, strategic objectives, or ways of working towards institutional change for gender equality. Women's cognitive experiences about themselves and their role as elected representatives reflect a given structural situation. Internalisation of dominating ideologies and stereotypes about gender roles, values and behaviour deterred women to take on active leadership roles. Many women elected representatives described themselves as

housewives with no sense of independent identity. Low self-esteem has made them passive, dependent on men in matters relating to governance(Pant and Farrell, 2007).

13.7.2 Private and Public Patriarchy

Women elected representatives are not looked as independent political agents. Their participation is tokenistic. Study findings clearly indicate that systemic patriarchy perpetuated the gender bias and powerlessness.. Constraints within households directly influenced their capacity for public engagements. Mobility constraints have prompted the men in their lives (husbands, brothers, fathers, and fathers-in-law) to take up their job such as visiting Panchayat Samiti offices at block headquarters. They became de-facto head or members of panchayats and municipalities when ‘their’ women were elected. Ambivalence about their public role as elected representatives and dependency on male family members rendered their participation in governance meaningless. They functioned as ‘add on’ who came to politics only because of policy imperatives(Pant and Farrell, 2007). Every day practices of Male Elected Representatives (MERs), Government officials, as the study findings have indicated, construe men as the only real political actors, thereby excluding WERs from actual exercise of power.

(Pant and Farrell, 2007) When women make an effort to assert themselves, local government functionaries (like panchayat secretary) prefer to deal with the men-folk, instead of women elected representatives. The patriarchal nature of local administration reinforces a sense of worthlessness among these women. The masculinity of political processes, the adversarial proceedings, subtle forms of coercion to conform to the central interests of male elected representatives the timing of meetings and sessions, the pervasiveness of patronage etc. curb and control women leaders’ selfdetermining behaviour. One common expression of ‘significant others’ in the study has been women are unfit for public life because it is essentially male in character. Public-private divide perpetuated by local governance bodies prevent women from

being full participants in these organisations. The relegation of women to the private world of the household is so deeply embedded in the institutions of local self-governance that even though they have become elected representatives, political office continues to be the preserve of men. Deeply ingrained gender relations construct women as those whose voice is unreliable. Mostly cast as wives, daughters and sisters under the care of men, they are not taken seriously as political agents. (Pant and Farrell, 2007). Through caste associations, membership to various groups and political parties eased their entry into politics, such forms of civil society, however, did not actually support their independent agency. They co-opted WERs for their vested interests and created in them the feelings of being obliged to them for their positions. Pro-active engagement of CBOs like women collectives, on the contrary, enabled WERs to work confidently. Pant and Farrell's study findings have revealed that WERs associated with them were more confident, articulate about their concerns and constraints. Continuous interaction with them enabled them to deal with issues of women's empowerment, corruption and generating unity amongst people. (Pant & Farrell, 2007).

13.7.3 Institutional Inadequacies

Women's representation in local government structures does not automatically result in their informed and effective participation in these structures. The simplistic appeals for increased participation of women generally overlook the institutional inadequacies such as the timings of meetings, problems of quorum and procedures adopted for finalizing development plans and projects, articulations of their priorities and issues in the meetings, the quality of deliberations and manipulation of discussions by dominant groups, rules for filing nominations and travel allowances, etc. Consequently, women including the elected representatives rarely attend local body meetings and hardly ever articulate their priorities.

Knowledge, training, and education as resources enable women to act their agency. Empowerment as the processes of learning and action

strengthens self-esteem, analytical skills, competencies and political consciousness. The marginalised and excluded citizens gain a sense of their rights and join together to transform inequitable power relations of power and develop societies that are more democratic. Women elected representatives need to be politically enlightened, not only about their rights and duties but also about the nature of our constitution, democratic process and values, working of democratic institutions, concept and the relevance of local body administration—particularly the message of 73rd and 74th and reservation of one third seats for women and various poverty alleviation programmes and policies for women and weaker sections. Pant and Farrell's study findings reveal that those who received training were able to exercise their leadership effectively. However, systematic orientation and capacity enhancement of elected women has been largely ignored.

13.8 WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION: THEORIES, CRITIQUE AND LIMITATIONS

There are four distinct but interconnected dimensions of representation viz., formal representation, referring to the institutional rules and procedures through which representatives are chosen; descriptive representation, referring to the compositional similarity between representatives and the represented; substantive representation or responsiveness, referring to the congruence between representatives' actions and the interests of the represented; and symbolic representation, referring to the represented feelings of being fairly and effectively represented. While there are important differences among the four dimensions, they are integral parts of a coherent whole. Political theorists have, however, tended to overlook this conceptual unity, treating the different dimensions of representation as separate concepts (Pitkin, 1967). In the context of representation of women in political arenas, we shall explore two theoretical strands viz., the theory of critical mass and the theory of politics of presence.

13.8.1 Critical Mass Theory

The critical mass theory, based on descriptive representation, underscores the importance of women's presence in public/political/decision-making bodies in a 'critical mass' in order to mobilise elected females to take into account female interests and priorities. The expression 'critical mass' stems from nuclear physics. It presupposes that a certain quantity is needed to start an irreversible chain reaction to change a process. In political science literature, the concept of critical mass is based on the belief that the form of a public body will shape the processes and policies of that organisation; that the election of an adequate number of female politicians will result in governance more responsive to women.

The origins of the critical mass proportions can be traced to the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Drude Dahlerup. Kanter argued that when women are tokens they have 'little choice about accepting the culture of dominants', in this case men and are unable to 'act for' women (Kanter, 1977). The implication is that when the ratios of women to men change, these dynamics will also change, purportedly for the better, thereby enabling women to act for women. Drude Dahlerup applied Kanter's theory of 'tokenism' to political settings and thus became the first researcher to introduce 'critical mass' concept into political science thinking and general discourse. Feminist researchers have made the case rather that whenever women are inadequately represented, society as whole is denied the unique voice that women may bring to public decision-making process. (Tandoh-Offin Patrick, 2011) Quotas quickly bring a lot of women into the political arena for whom there may have been no space earlier. With the introduction of the 33.3% quota in India's panchayats many of the women gained confidence and that social relationships within the village began shifting as a result. Even if women came in as token women, they still made a difference simply because they formed a critical mass.

13.8.2 The Politics of Presence

The theory of 'politics of presence' is based on an argumentation that for substantive representation to occur there is a need for descriptive representation to begin with, at least concerning female interests. Anne Phillips argues in her well-known book *The Politics of Presence* that it does in fact matter who is a representative, and not only what is represented. In most liberal democracies, representative democracy is mainly a matter of what ideas are represented, without any concerns on who the representative is. But Phillips argues that this does not then deal with the exclusion that many groups today face, for example the exclusion of women in politics. There are certain experiences that do affect certain groups, and for the interests based on these experiences to be taken into account, there is need of representation from these groups. Policies worked out for one group will not be sufficient if there is no presence of this group during the deliberation of the policies (Phillips, 1998). Phillips argues for a combination of politics of presence and politics of ideas, and gives four main reasons for the need of female representatives. The first is the symbolic representation, in which the inclusion of formerly excluded groups is important by showing these groups that they are considered as equals, regardless of the outcomes. The second is that there are many issues that have not been discussed before the election of representatives, which makes the personal characteristics of the representative an important factor to the choices the representative will make on these issues once they are discussed. The third argument is that in order to change the pattern of representation, there is a need for aggressive spokespersons for the formerly excluded groups in the public arena to be able to change the existing power hierarchies. The last argument is that there is a need for formerly excluded groups to be a part of setting the agenda and changing the existing norms to ensure that their interests will be included to begin with. Phillips claims that there should be more female representatives due to the fact that women have had a history of exclusion and discrimination, and that they have to be included in order to change the ruling structures of representation. Phillips also argues that there are certain issues where women share experiences, and even though women do not have the same opinion on each issue and that there is no certainty

that a female representative will act on behalf of all women, it is still more likely that she will act for women better than a male representative would due to her shared experiences with women as a group (Phillips, 1998). Phillips does not argue that female representation is a guarantee of change, but rather increases the probability.

13.8.3 Critique

During later years, there has been extensive critique on both the theory of politics of presence and critical mass theory. One of them is balkanisation i.e. increased number of women will create coalitions among women. Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook, for instance, argue that such a stand neglects the possibilities that when the number of women increases, they become more and more individualised and differentiated from each other. This will only increase the division between groups and turn them against each other. An increase in number of women might lead to men trying to obstruct the women's initiatives; that a lower percentage of women might be more effective due to specialisation; and that an increase might lead to electing women who might not feel interested in working for women's issues. They suggest that the research on substantive representation should change focus from when women make a difference, to how the substantive representation occurs, and from focusing on women on a macro level, to focusing on the acts of specific women (Childs and Krook, 2006).

Institutional sites are more conducive to women's substantive representation than the presence of women's bodies in elected bodies. Individual representatives may constitute one medium of representation, but other sites, like women's movements and women's policy agencies, offer alternative—and perhaps more effective—sites of representation. Because 'women's interests' are best defined through collective processes of interest articulation, the women's group perspective is at best inadequately captured within a single representative. In order to substantively represent women, Women's policy agencies must have resources and authority and 'a degree of independence' and women's

movements must not be coterminous with the state so that they may criticise government policy(Weldon, 2002). Quotas are limited in impact unless the incumbent women lawmakers have the capacity to carry out their functions. Where training programmes and support services have been available to new political entrants, the investment has paid off both in the political and social spheres. In India, for instance, several Non Governmental Organizations have invested time and resources to work with panchayat leaders and the results have been positive. Civil society institutions and structures play an important role in placing pressure on politicians and institutions to support women's entry into decision-making positions and, once in office supporting their advancement of a gender equality agenda in policymaking arenas. Civil society also contributes greatly to developing a cultural environment that is favorable to gender equality.

The possibilities for women to participate in this way increase when there is executive support for civil society involvement in politics (DAW, 2005). Women politicians also need to have the support of powerful individuals, groups, agencies and networks to forward their political careers and to establish and widen their power bases once in positions of power. Without both financial and socio-political capital, women will not be able to achieve real political power. Thus, together with the understanding of the structural impediments to their participation in decision-making, the emphasis should be on how women strategise, struggle for and succeed in mobilizing these assets to access and function in political arenas effectively. Such an approach would allow women to focus on the challenge of creatively building their asset base by harnessing and leveraging non-financial forms of resources (DAW 2005). The quotas for women in politics, in the absence of good social infrastructure, livelihood security and a no-tolerance mindset for gender violence, remain cosmetic. Treating quotas as a panacea in the absence of other enabling social investments leads to quota addiction, not empowerment or access.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

3) What is meant by Policy Measures?

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4) Discuss Women: Agency of Change.

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5) Write about the Criticism of this theory.

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13.9 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we learnt about the concept of governance. We identified the issues in engendering governance; understood the factors responsible for non-participation of women in the decision-making processes; comprehended the concerns to gender mainstreaming and examined the policy measures towards engendering governance institutionally in the domain of state. We analysed the effectiveness of reserved seats in enabling agency of women elected representatives in local self-governance institutions in India and the issues in the agency of women

leadership therein. Finally, we critiqued the theoretical debates on women's political representation.

13.10 KEY WORDS

Governance: Governance is the exercise of power or authority—political, economic, administrative or otherwise—to manage a country's resources and affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Good governance: The term good governance refers to administrative efficiency, rule of law, accountability, transparency and public participation in influencing decision making, transparency, and accountability.

Private-public domain: The private domain associated with household, reproductive work and femininity, whereas, the public domain is associated with political authority, public decision-making, productive work and masculinity.

Women in Development: Ushered in during the Decade for Women, it was (WID) approach initially conceived as an equity approach. This approach recognised women's active role in the 'development process as reproductive, productive and community workers, and emphasized the fulfilment of their strategic needs through direct state intervention.

Gender and Development: This approach focuses on gender analysis of (GAD) approach women and men's roles and relations as part of all development interventions, and to gender equality as a goal of development.

Gender Sensitive: The term Gender Sensitive Governance implies Governance (a) increased participation of women in governance institutions and decision-making processes, freedom of association and space for an active women's movement (b) transparent and accountable gender equity in the allocation of resources and power (c) legislation of gender equality and the promotion and protection of women's rights and (d) gender sensitive policies and institutional structures.

Right based approach: This approach sets the achievement of human rights and the creation of an enabling environment in which human rights ‘can be enjoyed as the main objectives of people-centered sustainable development, as well as the means to achieve it. It transcends sectoral concerns, and encompasses the concepts of welfare, antipoverty, equity and empowerment as facets of the rights of all people.

The Beijing Platform: It provides the comprehensive mandate for Action, 1995 (BFPA) governments to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are actively addressed as core development concerns.

Positive discrimination: The term describes measures that enable those who have faced discrimination in the past. It could mean differential entrance requirements or reserved seats.

Affirmative action: The term refers to positive steps taken to increase the representation of disadvantaged groups in mainstream by mandating equal opportunity and equal consideration in the areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded.

Reservation: It is the Indian term for quota systems, which work in different ways to set aside or assure a minimum availability of access to disadvantaged groups.

The critical mass theory: It underscores the importance of women’s presence in public/political/decision-making bodies in a ‘critical mass’ in order to mobilise elected females to take into account female interests and priorities.

The theory of politics: It is based on the argument that for substantive of presence representation to occur there is a need for descriptive representation to begin with, at least concerning female interests.

13.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Why is the new discourse of governance more inclusive? Why should women participate in governance processes?

2. Discuss the effectiveness of reserved seats enable the agency of Women Elected Representatives in panchayats in India.
3. Explain the term positive discrimination. How is it different from the term affirmative action?
4. What is the meaning of Governance?
5. Discuss Women in Governance.
6. What are the Constraints in Participation of women in Governance?
7. Discuss the Participation and Representation.
8. What is meant by Policy Measures?
9. Discuss Women: Agency of Change
10. Write about the Criticism of this theory.

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13.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

3. See Section 13.2
4. See Section 13.3

Check Your Progress 2

3. See Section 13.4
4. See Section 13.5

Check Your Progress 3

1. See Section 13.6
2. See Section 13.7
3. See Section 13.8

UNIT 14: WOMEN LEADERS

STRUCTURE

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 What is Leadership?
- 14.3 Characteristics and importance of Women Leadership
- 14.4 Representation of Women in Different Sectors
- 14.5 Indian Women's Leadership
- 14.6 Nature of leadership within political parties
- 14.7 Women leaders in Action
- 14.8 Let us sum up
- 14.9 Key Words
- 14.10 Questions for Review
- 14.11 Suggested readings and references
- 14.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit we can able to know:

- What is Leadership?
- To discuss about the Characteristics and importance of Women Leadership
- To know about the Representation of Women in Different Sectors
- To discuss about Indian Women's Leadership
- To describe the Nature of leadership within political parties
- To know about the Women leaders in Action

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Women are gradually making their leadership presence felt in entrepreneurship, administration, education, engineering, health, etc. at regional, national, and global levels. Women are now resolved to break the traditional glass ceiling that barred them from entering leadership

positions even if they possessed requisite skills and talent to occupy them.

Women are constantly evolving and reaching new milestones across a wide spectrum of human activities in modern times. The world has witnessed the advent of women leaders such as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Indra Nooyi, Oprah Winfrey, Theresa May, Christine Lagarde, to name a few.

14.2 WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Every organization needs a leader, irrespective of its size and functions. A leaderless organization is a "muddle of men and machine"; a country without leadership is anarchy; a society without leadership is a violent and dangerous place to live. Then, what is the meaning of leadership? What constitutes leadership?

A leader is a person who influences and encourages a group of people to work towards the realization of goals. The hallmark of leadership is the capacity to influence others towards accomplishing goals and towards betterment. As Chester Barnard sums it up, "Leadership is the ability of a superior to influence the behavior of a subordinates or group and persuades them to follow a particular course of action."

Leadership is not gender-specific. It is a set of leadership qualities inherent or cultivated in person or persons who develop themselves into great leaders with mass following. Leaders can be either men or women.

Although leadership skills are acquired and shown by both men and women, there exists certain differences in the basic traits and qualities possessed by men and women leaders. Men and women mostly show distinctly different styles of leadership.

14.3 CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP

14.3.1 In this section, we have highlighted some of the common characteristic features of women leaders –

1. Transformational Leadership Style

Women leaders are more transformational than men leaders. They function as a role model for their subordinates. They inspire their team and spend a lot of time coaching their team. They care a lot about their personal development. Women leaders emphasize teamwork and authentic communication as a key to success. For most women leaders, leadership is not meant only for accomplishing organizational goals but for transforming their followers into better people.

2. Task-Focused

Women leaders are invariably focused on completion of tasks assigned within deadlines. From an operational point, completing day-to-day tasks are necessary to ensure smooth functioning of the company.

3. Prefer to Work in Collegial Atmosphere

Women leaders generally prefer leading and creating flat organizational structures that enables all to work in a collegial atmosphere interpedently. Flat organizational structure overlooks the experience and knowledge of seasoned employees and the manager. Women leaders usually are critical of hierarchical structure of organization.

4. Promote Cooperation and Collaboration

To work in collaboration with others is a typical feminine characteristic. Women leaders always promote cooperation and collaboration amongst the team members. In this case, all the members of the team need to be clear of their roles and responsibilities, otherwise, it results in redundant work.

5. Communication Style

Women leaders tend to be participatory and possess a democratic style of leading people. They seem to abhor ‘command and control style’ practiced by male leaders. Women often times indirectly communicate their expectations of a given task and allow more space in accomplishing a goal. It sometimes helps the team members use their skills and expertise to complete the task, however, at other times it can be a drawback if the assigned task requires a leader to have direct communication with the members.

6. Self-Branding

Unlike their male counterparts, women leaders often appear to be modest or silent about their own accomplishments. They are seldom good at branding themselves. However, it is necessary that women leaders learn how to brand themselves by sharing their achievements and skills with others. Unless people know or notice what they are capable of, they cannot recognize the leadership qualities of a women leader.

14.3.2 Women in Leadership — Importance

Any institution, whether it is society or organization, in the present century cannot function effectively without women’s equal participation in leadership activities. Women create a perspective that brings to competition and collaboration to organizations and teams.

In today’s world, organizations that are led by inclusive leadership teams make effective decisions that deliver better result. In the twenty-first

century, the essential qualities required to lead include the ability to collaborate, connect, empathize and communicate. All these qualities are feminine in nature and can help build a more sustainable future.

Many statistics show that companies led by women have better financial results. Leadership by women is vital to increase the pace of societal transformation at home and in the workplace. Women leaders are likely to provide an integrated view of work and family, resulting in an engaged and promising personal and professional future.

Gender parity in leadership is important because true progress cannot happen without a diversity of perspective in leadership roles.

Let's start with the basics: women leaders have a measurable impact on the bottom line.

In a 2015 report, McKinsey and co found that “In the UK, greater gender diversity on the senior executive team corresponded to the highest performance uplift in our data set: for every 10% increase in gender diversity, earnings before interest and taxes rose by 3.5%”

And yet, when it comes to representation of women in senior positions, the stats show we still have a long way to go. In 2018, Goldman Sachs undertook a report into gender diversity and – whilst noting the limitations on available data – reported that “Women make up about 40% of all employees – but just 6% of CEOs.”

So why is this – and what can we do about it?

Why do we see fewer women in leadership positions?

Well, it won't surprise you to know that the answer to this is complicated. As we all know, women are a diverse bunch and the individual decisions and choices we make – or have made for us – about stepping up to more senior roles are as unique as we are.

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Still, there are some threads that emerge. One of them is the cultural paradigm – the social context most of us have been raised in, which continues to promote certain gender stereotypes.

At the start of BePowerful, our 12 week online coaching program that connects women to their power, we invite the women taking part to spend some time thinking about what traits they associate with being “female”. It’s always so fascinating to see what gets shared in our virtual forum in response to this question.

If you haven’t done this exercise before, have a quick think now about what you’d list out as “feminine” attributes.

Often, women share that they’ve been surprised to uncover some very negative entrenched views of being called “girly” or “like a woman”. Being told you “throw like a girl” or comments like “typical woman driver” spring to mind.

We’re rightly outraged when we hear these comments being made, and yet however hard we try to resist them, they have an impact.

We internalize a certain set of associations with being a woman compared to being a man, and that has a real impact on our confidence when it comes to stepping into leadership roles.

This phenomenon is something the Goldman Sachs report picked up on.

“Women may be uncomfortable exhibiting more stereotypically “masculine” traits such as ambition and self-promotion in the workplace. They may fear a backlash if their behavior is at odds with prevailing gender stereotypes.

In fact, traits and behavior that are often rewarded in men may be seen as inappropriate, discomfoting and perhaps ultimately counter-productive when demonstrated by women.

In colloquial terms, aggressive men may be perceived as being “go-getters,” while similarly aggressive women may be perceived as having “sharp elbows.” Closing the Gender Gap: Advancing Women in Corporate America, Goldman Sachs

The playing field when it comes to male and female leadership then, is clearly not a level one. And the very leadership characteristics that accelerate the advancement of our male colleagues can actually be seen as negative when applied to women.

So what’s the solution?

What can we do about it?

Changing our culture when it comes to the stereotypes we have of each gender would be a great place to start. As a parent, I’m passionate about ensuring the next generation isn’t raised with these outdated ideas of women and men’s roles and characteristics.

But I think this also offers us a real opportunity to change things right now when it comes to modelling what effective leadership looks like. With courage and confidence, it’s time to change not only the diversity among our leadership teams but to create a new form of leadership.

Instead of trying to squeeze ourselves into old-fashioned ways of working, here is an opportunity to radically shift our organizations, and evolve a more balanced, diverse, and ultimately resilient way of leading.

Stephanie S Mead, author of *The Art of Strategic Leadership: How Leaders at All Levels Prepare Themselves, Their Teams, and Organizations for the Future*, sees this ability to change as being fundamental to successful business.

“If you want to be relevant in the future, you have no choice but to change and evolve...”

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Leaders have a responsibility to build and support a culture where breaking down ingrained habits and old standards is recognized as an important part of rebuilding and creating a stronger, more successful organization.

They not only see the need for change, they work hard to identify and manage resistance in order to push the needed change forward.” – Stephanie S Mead

When we are given the support we need to become unique leaders, rather than doing things “the way they’ve always been”, we actually strengthen our organizations.

Change starts with you

You might not be in a corporate setting right now – but I believe you are absolutely a leader, whether for your family, your community, in the public or not-for-profit sectors. All of us are role models for the upcoming generations; as citizens each of us has responsibility for changing our corner of the world.

So, I invite you to connect to this inspiration in whatever form your leadership takes. To recognise that while the world we are living in is often unfair, if we connect and support each other we have the power to create an entirely different system.

And if you’re wondering where to start, the seeds of that change can be planted in the simplest possible way: starting with you.

“Whether you are a leader or not, I think you have to pay attention to thought patterns and processes so you start to recognize when resistance is emerging, either in yourself or in others.... You can also coach yourself and others to get out of the routine and try new things that will encourage you and them to work outside your comfort zones and look at the change as an opportunity to grow.” Stephanie Mead

Getting more comfortable with change is something that can start in the smallest possible way.

Take a different route on a well-worn commute

Speak up when you might stay silent

Reach out to someone you don't know that well, and invite them for a virtual coffee

Apply for a role that's slightly outside your comfort zone

Show up in a way that's more authentically you instead of "fitting in" to the expectations of others

I'm sure you can think of more ideas when it comes to beginning to get more comfortable with the idea of change. Whatever it looks like for you, I would love you to share somewhere you're overcoming resistance or trying something new in the comments. Together, we can create a ripple of change that goes far beyond our individual impact – and adds up to a wave that could change the world.

For years, business schools have been trying their best to attract more women to their programs. During the early 2000s, many top business schools stalled at 25%. Whenever they reached 25 or 30%, they celebrated. The thought of ever having a class composed of 50/50 men and women did not even seem possible.

Now, it's not nearly as much of a pipedream. In November 2017, the Forté Foundation announced promising new statistics about the enrollment of women in MBA programs. In the last five years, its member schools have been showing signs of progress.

In fact, 17 of these schools have reported 40% or more women in their MBA class. In 2013, only two schools had accomplished that feat. In addition, two schools – the George Washington University School of Business and University of Pennsylvania Wharton School – reported 45% or more in 2017.

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This data prompted Elissa Sangster, executive director of Forté Foundation, to predict the possibility of reaching 40% enrollment of women at all top business schools in less than five years, and 50% by 2030.

“Why is this significant? There is evidence that an MBA can provide both career advancement and significant pay gains for women, giving them greater economic mobility,” said Sangster in the press release for this revelation. “And efforts to support women to pursue an MBA can contribute to a more diverse leadership pipeline at companies.”

There’s no time to rest on our laurels, however, says Sangster in an interview with QS. Schools must capitalize on the momentum they have been building. The question becomes how. Sangster says the most successful programs attract women by making the whole community come together to address the issue.

Paying attention to the needs of female students and recognizing that lip service alone is not enough are fine ways to start. Data points show that seeing women in leadership is good for business, good for everyone, she adds.

“You can’t just appoint women to positions of power,” says Sangster. “You must have a shift in corporate culture. You must change minds.”

Before you can expect such changes, you have to get more women into positions of power. That effort begins with preparing women for such roles at MBA programs. The Wharton School says it, “admits more women than any business school in the United States.”

Wharton utilizes outreach efforts to attract more women. For one, it partners with the Forté Foundation of which it was a founding member. With the organization, Wharton connects with women in high school, college, MBA programs, and diverse kinds of businesses.

Another way the school reaches women is through the Wharton Women in Business (WWIB) student organization. It organizes numerous events, including the Annual WWIB Conference and the WWIB Career Fair. Through the group's coffee chats, students meet with alumnae all over the world.

Turning to organizations is an effective tool for the George Washington University School of Business (GW), too. It also works with the Forté Foundation to reach out to women. And it has an active chapter of the National Association of Women MBAs on campus.

GW also offers executive education for women. For example, it is working with Women in Bio to prepare women in the life sciences for executive roles, says Susan L Kulp, associate professor at GW School of Business. And, importantly, women discover role models and mentors on campus.

“GW walks the walk, rather than simply talking the talk,” says Kulp. “When you visit GW, you see women throughout the business school and university at all levels. This includes deans, senior faculty, and administrative leaders.”

That is one initiative Sangster wishes would become more popular at other business schools. She is surprised that while the PhD Project exists to recruit more minorities into faculty, no organization has popped up to do the same to achieve gender parity. This might be the next logical step for the movement, she adds.

Sangster, however, is pleased with the progress being made when it comes to attracting more women to business school. Undergraduate business programs have long been able to attract classes with about 40 to 45% female enrollment. Now, MBA programs are catching up.

Demonstrating the financial benefits of a career in business has long helped undergraduate programs convince women to sign up. In

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particular, accounting attracts parents of undergraduate women because it is seen as providing a secure, well-paying job. Thus, they encourage sons and daughters alike to pursue this career, says Sangster.

What educators must do now is demonstrate the financial and job security benefits of other sectors within graduate business circles. They are also considering the timing of business school. When programs were asking for five years of work experience, women were turned off, for example. They were reluctant to sign up because it was around the same time they wanted to start families.

Attending an intense MBA program and being pregnant, or raising young children, simultaneously seemed downright crazy. Nowadays, schools are asking for a more reasonable two to three years of work experience, which brings women back in the fold, says Sangster. They don't feel like they have to choose between the career and the family.

Much of the progress is a result of educating women about their options. Forté Foundation and the schools themselves talk to women about what an MBA program can do for them. The organization also provides a 10-month program, MBA Launch, which helps women put their best foot forward and prepare for a graduate business school curriculum. During this time, they also get to know the schools and see whether the programs are a right fit for their needs and goals.

Forté Foundation says its efforts are paying off. Its database has grown from 1,800 in its early days to 100,000 today. The momentum will continue as schools evaluate their efforts to ensure more balanced representation of genders among students and faculty, more diverse teams, and inclusivity in courses, such as case studies that feature women protagonists, says Sangster.

“The thing that will change the boys’ club culture,” she adds, “is more women.”

It is commonly acknowledged that women are vastly underrepresented at the highest level of businesses. Of Fortune 500 companies, only 21 are led by women. That's only 4% representation; even the Senate has around 20% women. But the question is, why does this matter? Is the issue of gender parity in the workplace really an issue?

There are several reasons why it does matter.

Americans Want to See More Women in Leadership Positions

According to the study from the Rockefeller Foundation linked above, 4 out of 5 Americans believe that men and women should be equally represented in the upper echelons of businesses, but just a third believe that their companies prioritize helping women achieve leadership roles in their companies. One in four say that there are no women in leadership positions throughout their business.

Leading Women Would Help with Pay Equity

Women fall dramatically behind men in pay equity very quickly, with the problem being noticeably worse for Black women and other women of color. One reason that experts believe improving gender equality in the workplace is important is that it would help to balance out pay equity.

With more women in decision making roles, women are less likely to be passed over for promotions or receive unfair raises relative to their male counterparts.

More Voices Means Better Solutions

It has been demonstrated over and over that diversity of thought is critical to a creative, vibrant, thriving workplace. When we are surrounded by people who are just like us, then we're likely to have the same sort of thoughts together. When we have diverse voices at the table

and honor and acknowledge different perspectives during decision making, better choices are made.

This is an argument not just for bringing more women into leadership positions, but also breaking down the barriers that keep people of color, LGBT folks, disabled people, and other marginalized workers from having a voice at the highest levels of business.

14.4 REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT SECTORS

Representation of women in different sectors refer to the percentage of women employees working in various sectors. In the past, women were grossly underrepresented in politics, businesses, education, manufacturing, science and technology, etc. However, this situation is changing steadily.

In the US, women are 50.8 percent of the total population. They earn almost 60 percent of undergraduate degrees and 60 percent of all master's degrees. They do fairly well in law, medical degrees, business administration and management. Women account for 47 percent of the US labor force and 49 percent of the college-educated workforce.

Women in the US account for 52 percent of the professional-level and middle-management jobs. However, they lag substantially behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership positions. While 45 percent of the overall S&P (Standard and Poor's) and 37 percent of first or middle level officials and managers in those companies, they are only 25 percent of executive and senior-level official manager.

In the legal field, they are 45 percent of associates but only 20 percent of partners and 17 percent of equity partners. In the medicine sector, women comprise 35.5 percent of all physicians and 26 percent of permanent medical school deans. In case of academia, women are only 30 percent of full professors and 26 percent of college presidents. In politics, women represent only 6.2 percent of the total members of Congress, whereas in

the UK 19.4 percent of Members of Parliament are women. They are only 12 percent of governors and only 17 percent of the mayors of the 100 largest American cities. In the UK, 30.8 percent of local councilors are women.

The above-mentioned facts and figures, though indicate a rise in women representation in different sectors, it shows that women representation in decision-making positions is far from being satisfactory. Much remains to be done to increase the number of women at strategic and decision-making positions.

In the United States, gender differences persist across industries. An industry sector encompasses all employees of a firm or organization, whether they work as a janitor, secretary, accountant, or information technology specialist. Employment in services such as health care, nongovernmental education, leisure, and other services account for more than four in ten women's jobs (nationally 43.2 percent), but only one in four men's jobs (24.8 percent). The construction industry (1.3 percent of women and 11.1 percent of men), manufacturing (6.6 percent of women and 14.4 percent of men), and transportation and communications (3.0 percent of women and 7.8 percent of men) together account for the jobs held by only one in nine employed women but almost one-third of those held by employed men.

The different industries in which women and men work affect their economic status. During the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009, for example, job losses were particularly high in construction and manufacturing while jobs in the health and education sector grew, resulting in differences in the size and timing of job losses and gains experienced by women and men (Hartmann and English 2010). In the five years after the official end of the Great Recession in June 2009, jobs in health care and education grew by almost two million, benefitting mainly women, while jobs in construction grew by only 7,000 (with net growth only for men; Hartmann, Shaw, and O'Connor 2014).

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Median annual earnings and the gender earnings ratio for full-time, year-round work differ substantially across industries. Women in government (which includes federal government as well as state and local services such as police and education) have the highest median earnings (\$45,000) and a narrower gender earnings ratio than the one for all women and men (83.3 compared with 79.2 percent;). Among the industries shown in Table 2.6, the gender earnings ratio is widest in finance, insurance, and real estate (61.8 percent) and narrowest in mining and construction (95.2 percent), an industry that employs proportionately far fewer women than men. Manufacturing provides middle income jobs to women, with median annual earnings of \$37,000, but median earnings for men in these jobs are substantially higher at \$50,000 (resulting in a gender wage ratio of 74.0 percent).

- The share of employed women who work in government, the best paying industry for women, is highest in Wyoming (29.2 percent) and lowest in Pennsylvania (11.9 percent).
- Employed women are the most likely to work in finance, insurance, and real estate—the industry with the widest gender earnings ratio—in Delaware (11.5 percent), and least likely to work in this industry in Alaska (4.0 percent).
- In four states—Indiana and Wisconsin (11.4 percent each), Iowa (10.4 percent), and Michigan (10.1 percent)—at least one in ten employed women work in manufacturing.

Gender Differences across Occupations

Nationally, 39.9 percent of employed women and 33.0 percent of employed men work in professional or managerial occupations. This category encompasses a range of occupations—from management, lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, and accountants to engineers and software developers—that mostly require at least a college degree. The percentage of employed women working in these occupations has increased since the *2004 Status of Women in the States* report, when 33.2 of working women held professional or managerial jobs. These jobs offer

opportunities for higher earnings for women, although typically even more so for men; women who work in managerial or professional occupations often earn substantially less than men. The three jurisdictions with the highest shares of women working in professional or managerial occupations—the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Massachusetts—also have the highest median annual earnings for women.

Women are much more likely than men to work in professional and related occupations (26.2 compared with 17.5 percent, respectively) but slightly less likely than men to work in management, business, and financial occupations (13.7 compared with 15.4 percent;). Women are also much more likely than men to work in service occupations, which include personal care aides, home health aides, nursing assistants, cooks, and food service staff—occupations that are projected to see high growth in the coming years, but which have median annual earnings for women of less than \$25,000 per year (Table 2.7). According to IWPR analysis of 2013 American Community Survey microdata, one-third of employed Hispanic women (32.2 percent) and more than one in four employed black (28.2 percent) and Native American (27.4 percent) women work in service occupations, compared with 20.6 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander women and 18.3 percent of white women.

Women in STEM Occupations

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations have experienced much faster growth than other occupations in the last decade and play a key role in the sustained growth and stability of the U.S. economy (U.S. Department of Commerce 2011). These fields are among the higher paid; IWPR analysis of 2013 American Community Survey microdata indicates that in 2013, median annual earnings in STEM occupations requiring a university degree were \$64,000 for women and \$78,000 for men. Yet, women are less likely to go into STEM fields than men; only 4.6 percent of women work in STEM occupations, compared with 10.3 percent of men.

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The percentage of women working in STEM occupations varies across the largest racial and ethnic groups. IWPR analysis of American Community Survey microdata finds that Asian/Pacific Islander women are the most likely to work in these occupations (11.3 percent of employed Asian/Pacific Islander women), followed by white women (4.9 percent), black women (2.8 percent), and Native American and Hispanic women (2.3 percent each).

- Women are most likely to work in STEM occupations in the District of Columbia (10.6 percent), Maryland (7.5 percent), and Massachusetts (7.0 percent), the three states with the highest median annual earnings for women.
- Women are least likely to work in STEM occupations in South Dakota (2.6 percent), Mississippi (3.1 percent), and Louisiana (3.2 percent).
- Nationally, women are 28.8 percent of STEM workers. Women are less likely than men to work in STEM occupations in every state, but their shares of STEM occupations vary considerably (Table B2.9).
- Women make up the highest share of STEM workers in the District of Columbia (44.2 percent), followed by Maryland (34.4 percent), Vermont (33.6 percent), and Wyoming (33.0 percent).
- Women are less than one-quarter of STEM workers in two states: Utah (23.5 percent) and New Hampshire (24.6 percent).
- The differences in occupations in which women and men work are just one factor indicating that much more progress needs to be made before women can achieve equality in the workforce. Occupational segregation continues to be a persistent feature of the U.S. labor force, with the occupations in which women are concentrated paying less than those in which men are concentrated. Women's participation in the labor force has declined since 2002, and women in all states across the nation continue to earn less than men. In addition, despite signs of progress, the gender wage gap is not expected to close nationally

until 2058 if progress continues at the current rate since 1960 (and not until a full century later in Wyoming, the last state expected to close the gap). These findings point to the need for policies and practices that can accelerate the pace of change for women and improve their status in the area of employment and earnings in all states and the nation overall.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1. What is Leadership?

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2. Discuss about the Characteristics and importance of Women Leadership.

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3. How do you about the Representation of Women in Different Sectors?

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14.5 INDIAN WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

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According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (2009), India ranks 24th out of 135 countries in regards to women's political participation. In the world's largest democracy, women still hold a mere 10% of seats in India's Parliament.

Yet at the same time, the struggle to enact the Women's Reservation Bill, which would allot 33% of seats in state legislatures and parliament for women, continues. As of today, the passage of this bill is close to becoming a reality. Although women politicians will continue to face different barriers and certain disadvantages before and after taking political office, it is imperative that they are able to receive sufficient training and knowledge with which to prepare them for greater political involvement.

Women who aspire towards becoming effective politicians in India must acquire specialised knowledge and experience in order to win elections and pursue inclusive policies at the local, state and national levels. The India-Women in Leadership (i-WIL) programme provides women with the knowledge, skills and tools essential for becoming a leader in India's shifting political landscape.

The Centre for Public Policy (CPP) in collaboration with New Delhi-based Centre for Social Research (CSR) launched India's first certificate course in political leadership for women—the India-Women in Leadership (i-WIL) Programme. The i-WIL Programme is an endeavour to strengthen the capabilities and leadership skills of aspiring women politicians to contest elections and participate in governance.

The i-WIL programme was inaugurated on 16 July, 2012 by Her Excellency, Smt. Margaret Alva, Governor of Rajasthan. 26 women (see Annexure 1) from different walks of life representing 10 states across India enrolled for this programme. United Nations Women (UN Women), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Government of Karnataka, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Jawaharlal Nehru

University (JNU), Global Studies Programme and Takshashila Institute extended their support in different ways. The course was spread over three months and included lectures, field visits, and exposure visits to Delhi and Singapore.

In today's politically charged atmosphere, representation matters. Yet, as we know, politics is largely a male-dominated sphere. Despite there being a one-third seat reservation for women, equality is still not a reality. Yet these eight incredible Indian women are exemplars of strength, intelligence, and resilience. They have risen to the top in their fields and are not only reminders of the legacy that they leave behind, but also beacons of hope for future generations.

14.6 NATURE OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES

One of the primary characteristics of a political party is its endeavour to control the exercise of governmental powers by placing its own members in the public offices through which the policies of government are determined. Among these offices are those endowed with law-making authority and those invested with the power to direct and supervise the execution of laws. The technique for attaining the aforesaid objective of a party depends on the methods by which such offices are filled under a given system of government. A party strives to capture elective positions by placing its members in nomination and by campaigning for their election; in the case of appointive posts, its efforts are directed toward persuading the appointing authority to make selections from its membership. A second characteristic of a political party is its intention to use governmental powers for purposes which meet with the general approval of its leaders and the rank and file of its membership. Usually it maintains that certain principles and policies should be adhered to in the operation of a government. Theoretically, the ultimate objective of a party is to secure adoption of its programmes for governmental action, whereas the placement of its members in key governmental positions is

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merely an essential means to this end. In practice it sometimes seems as if the programme is the secondary rather than the primary objective. Generally speaking, however, one of the factors accounting for the origin and survival of a party is some degree of consensus among its members concerning the general way in which the powers of government ought to be exercised. As might be expected, parties differ in regard to the unity of purpose within their convictions on questions of principle and policy. Some parties are far doctrinaire than others. Since political parties strive to attain control of the machinery of government, their programmes usually are broad enough to cover the entire area of governmental activity. A party which confines its policy proposals to but one or two matters, such as the farm problem and/or management-labour relations, is unlikely to be entrusted with governmental responsibilities. Even a party which is primarily interested in one objective, e.g., a Prohibition Party, finds it expedient to devise some sort of a programme for dealing with other issues of concern to the general public. Two other common characteristics of political parties are organization and durability. Organized effort is necessary to the attainment of both the immediate and the ultimate objectives of a party. Without some sort of organization, parties stand little chance of winning control of the government and of directing its activities along desired lines. As for durability, the founders of parties intend that they will continue in existence indefinitely. Contrary to the expectations of their original sponsors, some of them may perish after a comparatively a short lapse of time, but many of them cling tenaciously to life and survive for many years, often for a generation or longer. An association may fall outside the "political parties" category even though the sole reason for its existence is the exertion of influence in the field of government. Examples are the many taxpayers' leagues and the League of Women Voters in the United States of America. An association of this type may provide its members with information concerning governmental problems, conduct discussion groups, endorse the candidates of various persons for elective offices, take a definite stand on some or all of the issues of the day, and bring pressure to bear on public officials in behalf of some policy or some change in governmental practice. But until it regularly engages in a

concerted effort to attain mastery of the government by installation of its members in key positions, it falls short of being a political party. The same observation holds true for many other associations, among them labour unions, manufacturers' associations, and associations of veterans, which refrain from nominating their own members as candidates for public office but commonly press for the enactment of legislation favourable to their interests and often openly support or oppose the candidates and programmes of particular political parties.

1 Parties contest elections. In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties. Parties select their candidates in different ways. In some countries, such as the USA, members and supporters of a party choose its candidates. Now more and more countries are following this method. In other countries like India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.

2 Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them. Each of us may have different opinions and views on what policies are suitable for the society. But no government can handle such a large variety of views. In a democracy, a large number of similar opinions have to be grouped together to provide a direction in which policies can be formulated by the governments. This is what the parties do. A party reduces a vast multitude of opinions into a few basic positions which it supports. A government is expected to base its policies on the line taken by the RULING PARTY.

3. Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country. Formally, laws are debated and passed in the legislature. But since most of the members belong to a party, they go by the direction of the party leadership, irrespective of their personal opinions.

4 Parties form and run governments. As we noted last year, the big policy decisions are taken by political executive that comes from the political parties. Parties recruit leaders, train them and then make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.

5 Those parties that lose in the elections play the role of opposition to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticising government for its failures or wrong policies. Opposition parties also mobilise opposition to the government.

6 Parties shape public opinion. They raise and highlight issues. Parties have lakhs of members and activists spread all over the country. Many of the pressure groups are the extensions of political parties among different sections of society. Parties sometimes also launch movements for the resolution of problems faced by people. Often opinions in the society crystallise on the lines parties take.

7 Parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by governments. For an ordinary citizen it is easy to approach a local party leader than a government officer. That is why, they feel close to parties even when they do not fully trust them. Parties have to be responsive to people's needs and demands. Otherwise people can reject those parties in the next elections.

14.7 WOMEN LEADERS IN ACTION

1. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy (1886-1968)

Dr. Reddy was one of the most multifaceted women of her time. Apart from being one of the first female doctors of the country, and the first woman to be elected as alderman of the Madras Corporation, she was also the first woman member of the Madras Legislative Council. She was concerned about the plight of women and endeavored to liberate them. In this regard, she introduced a bill in the Madras Legislative Council on the "prevention of the dedication of women in Hindu temples" in the Madras Presidency. This was the bill that became the Devadasi Abolition Act, a landmark in the protection of women, especially those of the subaltern. Despite facing multiple hurdles on the path of making this bill

an act, Dr. Reddy remained passionate about her stance and persevered, which led her to earn several laurels from progressive intellectuals at the time, including Mahatma Gandhi.

2. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1889-1964)

Despite having all the luxuries a royal title can offer, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was not a complacent woman. She was a freedom fighter and an ardent supporter of women's rights. She co-founded the All India Women's Conference in 1927 and became president of the organization in 1933. She was one of the first to speak out against child marriage and the purdah system for women.

She became the first woman to hold Cabinet rank in India when she took charge of the Ministry of Health during Nehru's tenure. She was also one of two Indian Christians in the Cabinet. In 1950, she was elected as the president of the World Health Assembly, the first woman to hold this position. She molded a path for many other women to excel in this field.

3. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (1900-1990)

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was the first Indian woman to hold a Cabinet post. She served as the president of the Indian National Congress twice. She was also India's ambassador to Russia during the late forties, and the governor of Maharashtra later. Pandit is best known for being the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly. As politics is not known for giving women a platform, in this light Dr. Lakshmi helped break the bonds and shape the path for many others.

4. Indira Gandhi (1917-1984)

This list would be incomplete without having India's first, and to-date only, female prime minister. As controversial her actions and stances may have been, there is no denying the impact she left on Indian politics. Her role stands out during the Bangladesh Liberation War and the

Emergency, as does her decisiveness during Operation Blue Star. Going from the position of 'Goongi Gudia' to leader of parliament is a remarkable path and one that is inspirational for all.

In 1999, Indira Gandhi was named "Woman of the Millennium" in an online poll organized by the BBC.

5. Sushma Swaraj (b. 1952)

An Indian politician, former Supreme Court lawyer and the current minister of External Affairs of India, Sushma Swaraj has held many positions of high acclaim. She has many firsts to her credit: BJP's first female chief minister, Union Cabinet minister, general secretary, spokesperson, leader of Opposition and minister of External Affairs. She is the Indian Parliament's first and only female MP honoured with the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award. Moreover, being the youngest Indian cabinet minister, at the age of 25, she remains an inspiration for all young female aspirants in the field of politics.

She was called India's "best-loved politician" by the *Wall Street Journal*.

6. Sarojini Naidu (1879 –1949)

Sarojini Naidu was an activist and a poet. She was also the first governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh for two years, pre-independence, and was also the first female governor of an Indian state, post-independence. Adding to that, she was the first Indian woman to become the president of the Indian National Congress, which was unheard of at that time. She was also one of the only women to take part in the Satyagraha movement and participated in the Round Table Conference with Mahatma Gandhi. She is an exemplar of women achieving great heights across multiple fields and achieving what women set their mind to.

7. Irom Chanu Sharmila (b. 1972)

Also known as the 'Iron Lady', Irom Sharmila is a civil rights activist, political activist, and poet. From very early on in her life, she was involved in local peace movements against human right abuses in Manipur. However, after the atrocious Malom Massacre (November 2000) which brought to the forefront the unchecked power of the Indian Paramilitary Forces in the state, she began a sixteen-year hunger strike which she ended in August 2016. For this great resilience, she has been called the world's "longest hunger striker."

She has been instrumental in leading the fight against repealing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which would curb the power and corruption of the armed forces. Despite facing several hurdles, such as being placed in judicial custody and strike-related health issues, her strength and her dedication cuts across like a flame, making the world a safer place.

On International Women's Day (2014), she was voted the top woman icon of India by MSN Poll.

8. Jayaram Jayalalithaa (1948-2016)

Jayalalithaa was an Indian actress and politician who served six terms as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu for over fourteen years between 1991 and 2016. As the general secretary of the AIADMK, she was known for fostering a cult personality of 'Amma' amongst her followers. As the chief minister of Tamil Nadu, she was known for her work ethic and centralizing state power amongst a syndicate of ministers. In terms of policies, she was known for the successful cradle-baby scheme, which enabled mothers to anonymously offer their new-borns for adoption. In 2011, her government received attention for its extensive social welfare agenda, which included several subsidized 'Amma'-branded goods such as canteens, bottled water, and salt. The biggest indicator of the impact that she has left on the Indian political structure was the headlines that emerged when news spread of her cardiac arrest—it was as if this vacuum had emerged and Indian politics seem to have halted.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

4. Discuss about Indian Women’s Leadership.

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5. Describe the Nature of leadership within political parties.

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6. How do you know about the Women leaders in Action?

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14.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit provides intriguing insights into the development of highly qualified women leaders in diverse Indian contexts and their role at national and organizational levels. While India has made enormous economic strides in the past few decades, gender inequality and underutilization of female talent remain deeply rooted and widely spread in many parts of Indian society. This book addresses an urgent need to stop treating Indian women as under-developed human capital and begin realizing their potential as leaders of quality work. This book will fill the gap of research on international leadership for students, academics, and multinational organizations.

14.9 KEY WORDS

Leadership: Leadership is both a research area and a practical skill encompassing the ability of an individual or organization to "lead" or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations.

Action: the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim.

14.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

7. What is Leadership?
8. Discuss about the Characteristics and importance of Women Leadership.
9. How do you about the Representation of Women in Different Sectors?
10. Discuss about Indian Women's Leadership.
11. Describe the Nature of leadership within political parties.
12. How do you know about the Women leaders in Action?

14.11 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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14.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 14.2
2. See Section 14.3
3. See Section 14.4

Check Your Progress 2

4. See Section 14.5
5. See Section 14.6
6. See Section 14.7