

CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

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From the dawn of human civilization women have been sidelined and discriminated by the male dominated society being justified in the name of tradition, history, culture, religious faith and other factors of their convenience. Consequently, throughout history women had to undergo a lot of sufferings. However, the beginning of the emergence of constitutional egalitarian state created some confidence and new hope on the educated women emphasizing gender equality. The beginning of feminist movements and emergence of multiparty democracy and electoral politics based on numerical majority created a lot of opportunities to the women of developed world. The beginning of the advent of universal adult franchise and the demand for gender equality among the women activists further strengthened the demand for women empowerment. The activists emphasized the need for holistic growth of women though implementing policies and programs in the forms of social, economic and political empowerment of women to achieve gender equality.

As accepted by most of the scholars, political empowerment of women is one of the ways to achieve women empowerment. The ways to achieve political equality is through guaranteeing voting rights, rights to contest elections and to hold public office along with men in equal footing. However, various studies show that throughout the world, in spite of constitutional guarantees the role of women in politics is very negligible. It has been well understood that without achieving political empowerment women cannot achieve gender equality. India is one of the greatest constitutional multiparty democratic states which guarantees gender equality to women from the dawn of its independence. However, the plight of majority women in India is continued to be in a miserable condition. The percentage of women occupying prominent political positions in India is meager in all areas of politics. In this context, studying the political participation and attitude of women towards political empowerment is one of the important areas of research. Keeping this in mind, the researcher has made an attempt to study the attitude of Puducherry women towards political participation and political empowerment as a case study. The thesis is divided into six main chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction of the study which deals with the research design. It mainly discusses the statement of the problem, significance of the study, review of literature, objectives and hypothesis of the study, methodology adopted, method followed for the collection of data, limitation, delimitation of the study and Chapterisation. After rigorous reading of the related literature on women political empowerment, the researcher has formulated the following objectives for the present study:

- To critically analyze the political status of women in a global historical perspective
- To analyze the political status of women in Indian Perspective
- To analyze the political status of women in Puducherry Region,
- To study the socio- economic and political status of women in Puducherry,
- To study the attitude of Puducherry women voters belonging to different Age, Religious, Caste, Educational and Income Groups towards women empowerment.
- To study the attitude of women from Puducherry belonging to different groups towards Political Participation
- To give some problem solving suggestions and solutions.

Based on the above objectives, the researcher has formulated the hypotheses.

The second chapter enumerates a brief profile of Puducherry Union Territory, for the background knowledge is necessary to have a better understanding of the area of research. The first part of the second chapter discusses the geographical location and significance of the territory. As mentioned, the four territories – Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam are located in the three important Southern states – Tamilnadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The history of Puducherry is as old as Tamil ancient history and it had connections with historical civilization like Roman Empire and Egyptian from 1st B.C. Like most of the other areas of India, Puducherry became the victim of colonial forces starting from Portuguese and finally became the colonial territory of French and involved in many colonial wars with its English colonial rulers. The bond with France is continuing even after independence, for nearly 14,000 French nationals are living in Puducherry. Though majority of the people are speaking Tamil, the region is multi ethnic

in nature. For instance, people living in different regions speak different languages like – Malayalam (Mahe), Telugu (Yanam) apart from English and French. However, majority of the people speak Tamil as their mother tongue.

Since the area is limited and not conducive for industrial growth, it has failed to attract huge direct investment from MNCs. However, there are so many small and medium type industries coming up in Puducherry. The uninterrupted power supply, availability of cheap labour and industrial friendly atmosphere are the additional advantages of Puducherry Union Territory. However, regular political instability and the indecisiveness of the political leadership are preventing heavy direct investment from foreign investors. Consequently, Puducherry continues to depend on agriculture rather than industrial growth. Puducherry is a thickly populated area when compared with other regions and the sex ratio is unique, for the number of women is more than men when compared with other Union territories. Puducherry is highly literate when compared to other parts of India. There are 13 Medical colleges including Dental, 15 Engineering colleges, 20 Arts and Science colleges, 52 B. Ed colleges and Teacher Training Institutes apart from a Central University. The special quota system available in all the higher educational institutions including the Central University and JIMPER (Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research) helps so many middle class people to enter higher educational institutions including medical professions.

As per the political profile Puducherry is a Centrally Governed Union Territory through the Lieutenant Governor. The territory is sending one Lok Sabha and one Rajya Sabha member and there are 30 MLA constituencies spread in four regions. The total number of eligible voters are 4, 86,598 as per the latest report from the Election Commission. Further it shows that there are more number of women voters (2, 52,712) than men (2, 33,880) in Puducherry. It is interesting to note that though the number of women voters is more than men there is no reserved constituency for women in Puducherry as in Delhi Union Territory. Denial of adequate women representations in the form of Political activity is continuing in Puducherry in spite of higher level of women education and more number of voters.

The third chapter has analyzed the origin and development of women political participation at the national and international level. In the first part of this chapter the scholar has discussed what women political participation is and how it is related to women empowerment. The second part of the chapter has analyzed political the status of women over the period of history in different civilizations. It has been inferred that though women comprise over 50 percent of the world's population, women continue to be under-represented as voters, political leaders and elected officials. The findings clearly reveal that even popular and well established Western democracies have failed to deliver political equality to women who are continuously underrepresented in most of the countries. The overall analysis on women in political power at the global level further show that very rarely women hold prominent positions like Presidents, Prime-Ministers, Vice Premier Ministers and other important portfolios like Foreign Ministers, Defense Ministers and Finance Ministers. An overall comparative analysis of women's share in political power shows that most of the states, except Liberia and Bhutan, are not ready to give a second chance to women to hold the important portfolios like Defense, and Finance. Further, out of 190 countries in the world, from 1953 to 2013, only 7%, of the women had the opportunity to hold the position of the Presidents or Prime Ministers. (Totally 125 women from 1953 to 2013). Even in the International Organizations like League of Nations and United Nations, the opportunities to serve as permanent representatives or Ambassadors have been given for only 9% of women during the period 1924 to 2013 (Totally 111 women from 1924 to 2013). The above data reveal that so far only 7% of the world's Cabinet Ministers and 8% of world mayors have been women (156 women from 1887 to 2013).¹ It shows that women are cautiously underrepresented in almost all the political power centres from International organizations to regional levels.

It has been proved with empirical data that Indian scenario is reflecting international trends. India is well known for treating women as political non-entity throughout history though there had been some queens, princesses, and prominent poets who played prominent role. The overall historical analysis of the position of women in

¹ Pamela Paxton and Melanie M.Hughes, "Women Politics and Power A Global Perspective" Pine Forge Press, London, 2007, p. 1.

ancient India shows that women did not share an equal position with men except in Vedic India. Women were recognized only as wives and mothers. Their position was as subordinate to men. The later movements like Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavaism, Veerashaivism and Sikhism made certain efforts to improve the status of women. Further, The Bakthi movement allowed women to undertake spiritual activities independently. However, 18th century was considered as the darkest period for women, where women were subjected to male superiority in all fields.

The advent of colonialism, Western education and Independence struggle helped a large number of women to participate in the freedom struggle. But gender equity was nowhere in the agenda of Indian national movement for it was not the main thrust of the Indian national movement. However, the contribution of women in getting freedom for India is noteworthy. Moreover, though without important political positions, many educated women got the opportunity to participate in political activities. Further, participation of women in freedom struggle inspired other low class women positively. In general, the participation of women in freedom struggle had its long term impact on the Indian society and family and on women themselves.

In the independent India, it is interesting to note that Delhi is the only Union Territory having a woman Chief Minister for two terms. Other Union Territories like Puducherry have not elected any woman as Chief Minister during the period of analysis. It is interesting to note that Indian National Congress, the main National party and the three important regional parties like UP centric Bahujan Samaj Party, Tamilnadu centric All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Trinamool Congress of West Bengal are headed by three powerful women leaders, they too are not showing their genuineness in allotting equal representations to the women folk while allocating party tickets, which is a million dollar question.

However, there is a demand for more political representation for women in all political bodies. The first successful attempt was made through the Panchayat elections providing 33% reservation to women in all local bodies which is considered as a great first mile stone for women political empowerment. But with regard to the demand for

33% reservation for women in Central and State Legislatures, the Bill had been delayed because of conflicting arguments by political parties. Consequently, the main political parties failed to reach a consensus and the bill was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice, and Personnel. However, citing some formalities and procedural techniques the Union Legislature has failed to pass the historical Bill². If the Bill is passed it may create a great impact on Indian women. However, democracies are well known for its slow decision making, which is applicable to Indian democracy also. The expectation is that sooner or in near future Indian women will enjoy equal political rights with their counter parts. Most of the political pundits argue that Indian democracy is in a transitional stage which should be liberated from dynasty and feudalistic democracy. The only way to break the traditional mind set is empowering women in all areas of power politics.

The first part of fourth chapter has given some insight of the political history of Puducherry region starting from ancient to the modern period. The second part of this chapter has analyzed the historical perspective of political participation of women in Puducherry Union Territory. The study reveals that, historically only a few women participated in political activities. However, during freedom struggle there were women activists like Saraswati Subbiah who played an important role in freedom struggle and for empowering women in French India. The political role of women in Puducherry is continuously negligible even after independence. The overall election based analysis from the first election held in 1963 to the latest election held in 2011 clearly reveals that majority women in Puducherry are known for their political apathy and accept the domination of men in politics. The male dominated Puducherry political parties are not ready to share the cake of political power with their counter parts in almost all types of elections except the local Panchayat elections in which 33% reservation is a must as per the Constitutional Amendment. As explained, no political party with significant popularity and winning chance is ready to allocate the seat to women in any of the Parliamentary elections. Similarly, the prominent political parties are not allocating seats to women to contest the state Assembly elections also. Consequently, the number of

² Accessed from <http://www.rediff.com/news/special/whats-the-womens-reservation-bill-all-about/20100308.htm>, 8th July 2012.

women elected for the state Assembly is very few. The data show that from the first election held in 1964 to the latest Assembly election held in 2011 only eleven women got the opportunity to enter the state Assembly in which nine were elected and the other two were nominated.

However, the new Panchayat Raj election introduced during the year 2006 created new political opportunities to Puducherry women along with other women in other parts of India. The historical Constitutional Amendment for popular democracy which guaranteed 33% reservation for women in all the states indirectly compelled more and more women to participate in electoral politics and power politics along with men. But Puducherry Union territory has failed to conduct local body elections after the first election which further denied the women the political opportunity. The researcher strongly realizes that regular election for Local bodies should be conducted to empower women politically. At present, the only opportunity for women to take part in power politics is through local body elections. Denial of contesting the election further alienates Puducherry women. It is the responsibility of the government of Puducherry to take the necessary initiatives to conduct the local body elections immediately.

As mentioned elsewhere, one of the main objectives of this thesis is to study the attitude of Puducherry women towards women empowerment and political participation because there is a positive correlation between the attitude of women and the level of participation. To achieve the objective, the researcher has made an attempt to study the factors of influence for political participation of women. For this purpose, respondents have been identified from different income, caste, religious, educational and age groups by adopting Stratified Random Sampling technique. To infer the data the researcher has conducted a survey based on a questionnaire among 460 respondents who represented twenty three MLA constituencies located in and around Puducherry. The first part of the chapter explains the socio-economic profile of the respondents. It shows that 2.4% of the respondents who participated in this study are in the age group of 23-24; 94.5% of the respondents are educated; 69.1% belongs to Hindu religion, 19.6% belongs to Christianity and 9.1% respondents are Muslims; 40% respondents live below poverty line and only 3.5% respondents belong to the income group above Rs. 24,001/- p.m.

The first part of the analysis deals with the attitude of women towards women empowerment. It reveals that majority of the respondents (25.9%) opined that social empowerment is women empowerment and 22% respondents had the view that economic empowerment is women empowerment and only 15.2% women opined that political empowerment is women empowerment. It shows that majority women have indifferent attitude towards political empowerment and participation. Majority of the respondents opined that social and economic empowerment is more important than political empowerment. To them social and economic empowerment is real empowerment of women. On the question of political participation, majority respondents viewed that voting in election itself is political participation than contesting and taking part in party related activities. The analysis reveals that majority women are satisfied with exercising their franchise than participating in elections and other political activities. On the question of motivational factors towards women political participation, as mentioned in the table no 5.9, majority respondents opined that political empowerment is not a factor of motivation and majority women are known for their political apathy and indifference towards political development.

On the question of political awareness majority of the respondents had the opinion that politics is dominated by male politicians and even intelligent women who are in politics are systematically sidelined by the male leaders who are always in driver's seat in almost all the political parties. Further, majority of the women are indifferent towards political affairs and political empowerment.

On the question of factors of political motivation, majority of the women in Puducherry are not motivated by the factors like political parties, social welfare measures, women welfare measures, legally guaranteed gender rights, women reservation policies and political parties. The overall analysis reveals that majority respondents are apolitical and opinionated as politics is meant for men, in Puducherry. Therefore, they are indifferent about the political parties or government or the so called women empowerment initiatives. However, majority respondents are satisfied with the role of NGOs and Higher educational institutions. They expressed their readiness to accept the suggestions and guidelines given by these two agencies related to politics. From the

analysis, it has been inferred that committed NGOs and Higher Educational institutions alone can create political awareness among Puducherry women about their political participation.

Political attitude of women in Puducherry is reflected in almost all areas of politics. For instance, 50.7 per cent of the respondents viewed that they are not interested in politics for they do not have any trust on the male political leaders. The non-voters opined that they do not have any faith in the present electoral system. Further, majority of the women opined that they are not interested in attending any political meetings even during election times, and donating money for political parties and the candidates. However, majority of the respondents expressed their interest to meet their political leaders to address their grievances. It is surprising to note that 49.8 per cent respondents said that they receive money for voting during election. It shows that the political parties are corrupting ordinary people during the time of election. Consequently 77.4% of the respondents viewed that elections are not held on the basis of democratic principles. Majority of the respondents (78.9%) also viewed that election propaganda has no impact on the decision of the voters. On the question of achieving social development through women political representation, a sizable majority of women (74.8%) opined negatively. Further, the respondents are not happy with the performance of the women representatives.

There is a close relationship between political parties and women empowerment, for the political leaders of every party are allocating election tickets for their party members during elections. In Puducherry majority political parties are ignoring the numerical majority of the women from the first election to the last. However, a question was posed before the respondents about the political parties which are giving importance to women candidates. Among the respondents majority of the women felt that NR Congress, the present ruling party is giving importance to women than any other political party in Puducherry, though the party has not allotted any ticket to women during the last and only election it contested. Majority of the respondents viewed that more women participation in election automatically affects the interest of men political aspirants and hence, they are not ready to allocate seats to women. The study reveals that Election

Commission is creating more political awareness than Political parties and educational institutions.

On the question of what is political participation majority of the respondents opined that having a membership in political party, influencing decision making and other related activities are the important political activities. However, to them, other activities like electoral campaigning, attending party meetings, organizing demonstrations, communication with leaders, holding party positions, contesting elections, membership in representative bodies, exercising their right to vote, power sharing, taking part in decision making and policy making at all levels of governance of the states are not related to political participation.

The survey done among different groups of women reflected the overall view of their attitude towards women empowerment. Majority age groups in Puducherry have negative opinion towards entering politics for they feel that political involvement does not empower women in Puducherry. This trend is reflected in the percentage of women contestants in state Assembly as well as Lok Sabha elections also. Regarding the religious based analysis, except the Muslim respondents all the other religious groups like Hindus, Christians and even the Buddhists expressed the opinion that social empowerment is the real empowerment followed by economic empowerment. No major religious groups are ready to accept the view that political empowerment is women empowerment.

An analysis has been done by the researcher based on different caste groups also. The table 5.33 shows that the economically and socially weaker groups, the Scheduled Caste women opined that women empowerment is economic and social empowerment than political empowerment. The table 5.34 depicts the educational background of the respondents and their attitude towards women empowerment. The analysis shows that majority of the women (25.9%) irrespective of their educational qualification opined that social empowerment is women empowerment than any other empowerment.

On the question of the attitude of different income groups towards women empowerment as depicted in table no. 5.35, except the middle income group all the other

income groups women give priority to social and economic empowerment than political empowerment. However the middle income group women (Rs. 12001 to Rs. 15000/-) give equal importance to Political empowerment along with social and economic empowerment.

On the question political participation among different age groups as explained in the table 5.36 majority of the age groups (27.8%) view that voting in election is the main political activity and contesting election (24.6%) is the next level of political participation. Similarly table 5.37 depicts the details about the attitude of different religious groups on political participation. Invariably almost all the religious groups (Hindus 20.2% and Christians 5.7%) view that voting in election is the main way of political participation than contesting. However, more number of Muslims prefers to be members of political parties than other religious groups.

On the question of political participation among different caste groups, table 5.38 shows that almost all the other caste groups women viewed that voting election is the primary political participation (S.C. 7.2% , MBC 11.7% and BC 6.1% respectively) than contesting elections (S.C. 6.7%,MBC 8% and BC 5.4% respectively). However, majority of the forward caste women (4.3% to 2.8%) viewed that contesting election is the primary political activity than voting.

An in-depth analysis has been done on the question of political participation among different educational groups also. As depicted in Table 5.39 majority of the women voters (27.8%) irrespective of their educational qualification opined that voting in election is the primary political activity followed by contesting elections (24.6%) and Membership in political parties (17.8%) However, the women groups belonging to Std. 11-12 viewed that contesting election is the primary political activity than voting and having membership in political parties.

On the question of political participation based on different income groups the table 5.40 reveals that like all the other groups this group also expressed the same opinion about political participation. The overall analysis shows that majority of the women (27.8%) viewed that voting in election is the main political activity followed by

contesting elections (24.6%) and membership in political parties (17.8%). However, women belonging to the income group below Rs. 3000/- per month viewed that voting in elections (10.9%), contesting elections (9.6%) and membership in political parties (7.2%) are almost equally important political activities. Similarly, the income groups belonging to Rs. 18,001/- to Rs. 21,000/- opined that contesting elections, membership in political parties and voting in election are equally important political activities than criticizing government/political parties.

The overall analysis done by quantitative technique reveals that women in Puducherry do not have positive opinion about political empowerment of women. To them social and economic empowerment is more important than political empowerment. Moreover, majority of the women considered that voting in election is the primary political activity and they are satisfied with that. This attitude is reflected in their level of participation in political activities.

6.1 Suggestions and Recommendations:

- The 85th Constitutional Amendment Bill pending in the Parliament can be enacted, providing reservations for women, thereby involving women in the political and decision making arenas.
- It can be ensured that PRI elections are conducted regularly in Puducherry region.
- An enabling environment can be provided for women in the elected bodies and it can be ensured that their positions are not always threatened with premature removal for their posts.
- Regular and sufficient funding can be incurred for election campaign expenses so that more women candidates can be encouraged.
- Special mechanisms can be introduced to induct women at all levels of decision making so that they can involve themselves in administrative planning and policy measures.
- Amendment can be made in Representation of Peoples Act that it is mandatory for every political party to have one third of its cadre to be

women.

- It can be ensured that women are involved in trade unions, cooperative societies and other such registered institutions of Puducherry.
- Training can be made compulsory, involving higher educational institutions, for all elected representatives including women elected in rural as well as urban governance.
- Women can be made aware of the electoral processes and the candidates contesting for elections, through mass media.
- Efforts can be made to set up a decentralized mechanism of a Women's Rights Commission with representation of the enforcement agencies, judiciary, bureaucracy, women's movement/NGOs and the media beginning at the local, state and federal level, instead of a single commissioner for Puducherry to check the growing violence against women.
- An awareness can be created among women on the importance and need for women to enter politics by spreading information about the 85th Constitutional Amendment Bill.
- Electoral reforms can be introduced so that the political parties ensure their political manifesto promise of reserving 33% seats for women in the state Assemblies and parliament be fulfilled.
- Efforts can be taken to have atleast a minimum of 33% women in all levels of decision making within the political party hierarchy.
- Special funding can be given for women to contest elections, as they have no control over their earnings and form the low- waged or non- waged state of society.
- The existing training for elected women representatives in terms of content, the package of which may address the gender representatives and issues affecting the lives of women can be enhanced.
- Awareness about the importance of Gram Sabha can be created so that transparency and accountability of the local governing unit can be ensured.

- Women constituency can be strengthened involving NGOs and higher educational institutions.
- Women's political participation can be supported and strengthened by the formations of women's associations' collectives and cooperatives.
- Success stories of elected women who perform their duties overcoming the challenges of male dominated society can be screened by the media.

BIBLIOGRAPHY