

## **CONCLUSION**

This study on the nature of leadership, personality, image and functioning styles of world's three powerful women heads of government, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir was premised upon the hypothesis that politics is gender neutral, and once a woman assumes the highest political office, she makes no radical departure in her behaviour, attitude, and pattern of leadership from that of any of the male counterpart, as advanced by the liberal feminist theorists. For this purpose, the study has used historical events and policies selectively for the analysis of the leadership skills and functioning styles of the three Prime Ministers.

The objective of this study was to bring out a comparison in the leadership and functioning styles of these international figures, their personalities and their major sources of influences since their childhood years that helped to shape their behavioural attributes, relationship with their respective party colleagues as well as opposition members, and their beliefs and personal ideas on the national and international system.

The selection of the principal subjects of this study was guided by the fact that Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir are unanimously and universally regarded as powerful leaders. Although the appellation, 'Iron Lady' was attached only to Margaret Thatcher, it can easily be applicable to Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir as well. All three of them are often described as strong personalities, known for their determination, courage and dogmatic beliefs.

The present concluding chapter is divided into three sections: a summary, where a brief recapitulation of the subject content of the dissertation would be made, followed by conclusions drawn from the analyses and findings of the study. Before concluding, a note on the sibling

position and birth order studies is made to substantiate the primary hypothesis of this study, which is the third and final part of this chapter. A thorough study of the careers of these leaders was necessary for later comparison, therefore, the dissertation first focused on the political careers and functioning styles of the three Prime Ministers.

## **1. SUMMARY**

The political career of Indira Gandhi initially as the Congress President, later as the Prime Minister, after serving as the Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting under her immediate predecessor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, was marked by major successes with a short interregnum of failure due to her excesses she committed in the name of Emergency. Her biographical records as a shy, sickly and introvert child got a personality that completely reversed after her entry into politics, where she gradually mastered the art of occupying the saddle and led the nation with firmness and determination.

An aspect of Mrs. Gandhi's childhood days, her sense of insecurity, however, remained ingrained in her mental setup. This was manifested with respect to her relationship with the Congress veterans. To these old members of the party, Mrs. Gandhi was merely a pawn, who would easily be dictated and dominated for the subservience of the wishes of these senior colleagues on the one hand, and the only potential vote-catcher for the party, given her family background, on the other hand. This was one of their underlying motives behind their bid for Mrs. Gandhi's candidacy as the Prime Minister in 1966 and 1967.

As a dexterous and ambitious player of politics, Mrs. Gandhi soon understood the hidden objective of party's senior colleagues. She decided to secede from their clutches as this was the only viable alternative for the fulfillment and consolidation of power as well as for the preservation and

maintenance of her position as the Premier of the country. This desire for maintain her independence became more of a *fait accompli* when she was unable to form the Cabinet of her choice as most of the significant portfolios were conceded to the Syndicate members and also latter's urge to sideline her in most of the major decisions of the party and the nation.

As a consequence, there was an intensification of intra-party hostility between the Rightist (old guards) and Leftist (Mrs. Gandhi's supporters) over the party guidelines on the account that the Congress had lost a major chunk of seats in the 1967 general election. Mrs. Gandhi urged for the incorporation of socialist principals as a possible measure to win back party's lost bases, which ended with the historic split of the Congress Party and expulsion of Mrs. Gandhi from the party membership in 1969.

This split, in fact, was necessary for Mrs. Gandhi's independent functioning and maintenance of her autonomy in the domestic decision-making. It restored her prestige as the Prime Minister by her own right and marked the abrupt end of the era of the domination of old party bosses, (most of them had already suffered electoral defeat in the 1967 election, and this split marked the virtual termination of their active participation within the party mantle). For Mrs. Gandhi, this split acted as a stepping stone for her consolidation of power as the unchallenged leader of the country. The general election of 1971, further confirmed her authority as the most popular leader till date. She resurrected and enhanced her party's prestige firstly, as an indispensable political organisation by capturing most of the Parliamentary seats and secondly, as the vehicle of fulfilling political aspirations of people who had chosen politics as their source of livelihood, which was evident from the numerous floor-crossings and joining of politicians from other political parties into the Indira faction of the Congress Party.

Her landslide victory in this general election also acted as a moral boost for Mrs. Gandhi in initiating policy measures which were ingenious and people-friendly in practice and socialist in origin that fostered a new direction in the very identity of the Congress structure. Thus, the termination of the Privy Purse and social control of commercial banks, along with Mrs. Gandhi's urge for the 'elimination of poverty' had a wider appeal to the general public. Her emergence as the leader of the masses was manifested in her capability of pulling large crowds during her public meetings and was confirmed in the state Legislative Assembly elections held in 1972. In so doing she proved the primacy of Congress as the national political party and eclipsed the regional political organisations that started playing significant roles in state politics since 1967.

However, this populist attribute of Mrs. Gandhi soon began to disappear because of the series of Constitutional Amendment Acts that virtually transformed the democratic civilian character of the Indian State. Further, the imposition of national Emergency in June 1975 worsened the condition of the general public. Many opposition leaders, including leaders from her own party were detained for raising their voice against the authoritarian nature of the Prime Minister. All democratic means, such as freedom of press, public protests and demonstrations were curbed and the enjoyment of the right to freedom was withheld. The discontent of the people was manifested in their support for the anti-Indira camp- the Janata Party, which emerged as an amalgam of anti-Indira dissidents, promised to restore democracy in the next general election of 1977, in the immediate aftermath of the termination of the Emergency.

Mrs. Gandhi, nevertheless, returned to power in the next general election of 1980 with a sizeable victory. During her second innings, she religion as a means to consolidate her position in various states. She even appeared to have favoured illegal Bengali migrants against the Indian

citizens for allegedly increasing her vote-banks in Assam, played with the sentiments of Akalis in Punjab by appointing rival leaders in her Cabinet and in state governments, favoured Jarnail Singh Bhindrenwale, whose emergence as a secessionist leader, caused communal tension between Hindus and Sikhs, which resulted in the sending of the Army into the Golden Temple that killed innocent worshippers along with the Sikh terrorists including Bhindrenwale. This action thereby terminated their claim for an independent state of 'Khalistan' and freed Punjab from communal fanaticism. Temporarily, Mrs. Gandhi seemed to emerge as the vanguard of the Indian people.

It was a tough decision for the Prime Minister to send the Army into a religious shrine and make it free from the terrorists, however, the Operation Blue Star, as it was codenamed, took innocent lives along with the target people. The fallout of the carnage at the Golden Temple was witnessed in the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi by her own Sikh bodyguards, which in turn, instigated communal hatred and flaring of violence against the Sikhs in Delhi and other parts of India by the Hindus.

Mrs. Gandhi's increasingly authoritarian tendencies were also noticeable in her selection of Cabinet colleagues, Chief Ministers and party members of states and frequent reshuffling of Cabinet portfolios that was purely based on the single criterion of bestowing their ultimate loyalty to Mrs. Gandhi. At the same time, her reliance on personal advisors, close associates and confidantes in the decision-making process, rather than her Cabinet colleagues, revealed her inclination towards small coterie of close associates in the decision making rather than a large gathering of people, where difference of opinions could subjugate her own independent posture.

The case of Margaret Thatcher, on the other hand, was different from that of Mrs. Gandhi. As a grocer's daughter, her entry into politics was a

path laid out by her father for her. Her father's keen interest in the Conservative ideological beliefs moulded her ideas, which she implemented later as the Premier. Unlike Mrs. Gandhi, who had a strong familial connection with the Congress and Indian politics, which eased her entry into politics as the Congress President and later as the Prime Minister after Shastri's death, (she was nominated for the post, hence it was selection), Mrs. Thatcher from the onset, had to prove herself as the suitable candidate for contesting Parliamentary seats (she faced elections for getting entry into politics) before getting a Cabinet position under the Premiership of Edward Heath (1970-1974).

It was her courage, determination and disposition that led Mrs. Thatcher to promote herself as a candidate for the Conservative leadership after Heath's electoral defeat in the general election of 1974, knowing fully well about her lack of expertise and experiences in leading governmental departments – Home, Foreign Ministry, and Chancellor of Exchequer (serving these three departments are considered to be prerequisite criterion before becoming Prime Minister and Mrs. Thatcher had served none of them). Also, her colleagues were apprehensive of her capability as the leader of the party. She not only proved herself as the unanimous choice of the country by winning record-breaking votes for her party that had suffered severe loss in past elections, she remained in power for three consecutive terms, again breaking Britain's all-time record.

With new responsibility on her shoulders, Mrs. Thatcher was determined to introduce novel kind of economic radicalism by replacing the post-War consensus, which had dominated the British economy since the post Second World War. Like Mrs. Gandhi, Mrs. Thatcher, too, suffered a similar setback from her party colleagues while forming her first Cabinet as she had to distribute Ministries to the supporters of Heath in her initial years as the Prime Minister. In spite of that, she was determined to reserve

economic posts for those who believed in Thatcherite policies. As a consequence, she embarked upon new rightist economic policies that promoted for denationalisation of industries, coalmines, and other unprofitable and sick industries. Her primary intention was to make England self-reliant and self-dependent by reducing government spending on welfare activities, which would enhance citizens' responsibilities as individuals, together with the privatisation of industries. He hoped to create a new atmosphere of private take-over by rolling back the state from delivering public goods and services.

Although these measures were welcomed by the people initially, but given the rising inflation coupled with unemployment due to closure of unprofitable mines and industries, her popularity began to fall. The victory in the Falklands War of 1982, however, reinstated Thatcher's lost prestige and her capability as a national leader.

As the leader of the country, Mrs. Thatcher was a determined person, with strong conviction in her beliefs. for which she seemed to remain uncompromising. This confrontational attitude of the Premier was evident from her non-cooperation with the coalminers who went for strikes against the government policy of the closure of sick and unprofitable coal pits that laid off several thousands of miners from their jobs. Similarly, she refused to grant special status to the prisoners of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), even after the death of eleven hunger-strikers in a row.

Mrs. Thatcher's rigid attitude originated from her consideration of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom, which explains her favouring of Unionism and appointment of Unionist Ministers who were Unionists, such as Airey Neave, her Secretary of Northern Ireland, and Enoch Powell, her pillar behind the materialisation of economic policies. This also explains her sending of troops to Belfast to counter Protestant-Catholic riots and violence. However, she was the first Prime Minister to conclude

peace Accord with the Republic of Ireland on the issue of Northern Ireland, in which, she promised decentralisation of power, which was denounced by both the Unionists and Nationalists of Northern Ireland.

Thatcher's ideology, which has been called 'Thatcherism' changed the socio-political atmosphere not only of Britain, but also in the continental Europe as well. Thatcherism was not merely a set of ideologies and principals pursued by Thatcher in the form of her reforms in the economic sector, but also incorporate her style of functioning, relationship party colleagues and decision making process. Like Mrs. Gandhi, Mrs. Thatcher was also ruled by her instinct that kept on questioning "Is he with us", that is, whether her Ministers were loyal to her decisions. Moreover, like Mrs. Gandhi, she was also guided by a deep sense of insecurity which made her suspicious of the possibility of any alternative power base. This explains her inclination towards frequent reshuffling of Cabinet posts, which eventually cost her loss of important supporters. Most of her loyalists resigned one after the other because of their dissatisfaction towards her authoritative style of functioning. This was also one of the causes of her downfall in 1990.

Golda Meir was a different person altogether. As a survivor of the Pogroms of Kiev, she emigrated to Milwaukee in the US during her early childhood, in search of security and a persecution-free atmosphere, and eventually to Palestine with an intention of creating a homeland for the Jews. Since her early years, she was heavily influenced by Zionist ideology, which became the prime motive for her involvement into politics later. As a direct victim of Jewish persecution in Russia, she was determined to dedicate her life fully to the cause of the Jewish people. She became one of the signatories to the creation of Israel in May 1948.

Meir's involvement into the Labour-Zionist movement led her to execute significant functions as a Zionist leader. She was skilful enough to



organise funds for the Jewish cause from abroad. It was due to her enormous responsibilities that she accomplished as a Zionist leader led her quick ascendance to the Secretariat, the inner core of the Labour- Zionist organisation in Palestine, which later known as the *Mapai* later. Similarly she was the principal negotiator from the Zionist side and the British authority on the other hand, as most of the Zionist leaders were put behind bars by the latter. She also risked her life negotiating with King Abdullah of Transjordan, for persuading him not to join the anti-Israeli camp organised by the Arabs.

After the creation of Israel, Mrs. Meir became the first Ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1948, a task that no other Mapai leader was found suitable for the post. Later in her capacity as the Minister of Labour and Housing, she sanctioned more government housing projects to accommodate the immigrating Jews.

However, no matter how dedicated she was a protector of the Jewish cause, as the Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir remained indifferent to the Palestinian Arabs, who were forcefully evicted from their land for the materialisation of Jewish nationalism. In fact, she was a staunch critic of the Palestinians and withheld their incorporation within the Jewish land. In fact, her housing projects were meant exclusively for the migrating Jews.

On the other hand, Israel was pitted against the intra-Jewish hostility between the Western and the Eastern Jews, in which, one could witness partial nature of Mrs. Meir in favouring the 'advanced' Western Ashkenazi against the relatively 'backward' Oriental Jews in allocating houses, distributing government funds and the Ashkenazi's filling of government posts than the Sephardic-Oriental Jews.

Despite these incidents, Mrs. Meir was one of the most indispensable Mapai leaders since the days of '*Kibbutz*' system of the pre-Jewish state. From the time of her participation of the state formation in Palestine, she was

considered to be the representative of the *Kibbutz* which played a major role in the action of these Jewish immigrants in converting Palestine as the land of the resident Arabs into a national homeland for the Jews. She had a pioneering role in raising funds from abroad in making Palestine into the Jewish state of Israel, buying weapons to counter repeated threats from the neighbouring Arab states, which used to have strong connection with Palestine.

Mrs. Meir's contribution to the Jewish state was immense. She was the first woman to be responsible for so many significant assignments under her capacity as a Labour-Zionist leader. She was also the first woman Ambassador to Soviet Union (there was a relative absence of suitable Zionist leader to represent a powerful heavy-weight Soviet state other than Mrs. Meir). She was also the first woman to fold the Foreign Ministry and Chairperson of the Labour party before becoming the woman Prime Minister of not only in Israel, but also in the Middle East. Her grandmotherly image was often sought after to rescue the Mapai from being split into myriad groups. By assuming the post of party Chairperson, she unified rival factions under the banner of the Labour Alignment.

Like their domestic fronts, where they had to respond to crisis situations with firmness, the three women Prime Ministers had to assume combative role in their response to international threats. All three of them had to confront their aggressors that posed major security threat to their respective countries. Mrs. Meir had to counter the repeated Arab aggression which took a final shape in the form of Yom Kippur War of October 1973. Both Egypt and Syria were silently preparing themselves to reverse the fate of the June War of 1967, when Israel came to possess sizeable sections of Arab lands within her dominance. Although Mrs. Meir had the full information regarding the possible Arab attack, she rejected the proposals for

preemptive strikes from Israel advanced by her military advisers and waited for Israel's absorption of the 'first strike'. After initial setbacks, the Israeli Defence Force reversed the balance of power in their favour.

The 1973 War was a watershed in the history of Israeli politics, for although it confirmed Israel's military superiority, it was a political defeat for Tel Aviv. The diplomatic manoeuvres the Arab states had embarked upon by increasing the price of the crude oil had adverse repercussions in the international market. The oil embargo was imposed on supporting countries of Israel in latter's war effort against the Arabs. However, with the mediation of the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the stalemate between Israel and Arab states was broken through the conclusion of disengagement agreements.

Here also Mrs. Meir played a leading role. Given the nationwide tumultuous protests against the central leadership for not responding to the Arab threat, which resulted in the record number of casualties of the IDF, Mrs. Meir was forced to resign from her leadership, in spite of her winning the general election held in the immediate aftermath of the war. However, she was requested by the President of the country to continue her position until the peace agreements with the Arabs were concluded on the ground of the absence of any suitable leader to face the issue. Once more, Mrs. Meir acted as the vanguard of Israel's security while bargaining for territorial adjustments with Egypt and Syria.

Margaret Thatcher's leadership was put to test in Britain during the Falklands War that broke out in April 1982. She was also unaware of the Argentine intrusion in the island, situated eight thousand miles away in the South Atlantic Ocean. Like Mrs. Meir, she also faced severe criticism from the Parliament, which questioned her leadership and wanted her resignation for her apparent failure to address the issue. Mrs. Thatcher, on the other

hand, took a tough stand by sending a naval Task Force to the Islands, equipped with nuclear powered weapons along with the conventional ones. Above all, she also ordered the sinking of the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano* to inflict a blow to the Argentine military Junta and pressurise them to surrender.

Nobody in Britain or in abroad had ever predicted Britain's quick political-military-economic and diplomatic superiority centering the Islands. She not only used the United Nations to impose economic sanctions of Buenos Aires, but also used her force to compel the enemy into submission by sinking one of Argentina's important weapons, in spite of the fact that *General Belgrano* was situated far away from the attacking zone. This sudden attack on the cruiser led to a crushing blow to the Argentine navy, although it incurred cynosure from the international community.

At the same time, Mrs. Thatcher also received support from the major powers regarding Britain's continuation of possessing the Islands, keeping in mind, England's territorial non-contiguity with Falklands and other islands. It also increased her popularity at home at the time when the support of the people in her favour was dwindling. The War rejuvenated Britain's lost prestige as one of the naval superpowers, as the Falklands War was the first naval battle to have fought since the post Second World War.

So far as Indira Gandhi was concerned, the Indo-Pak War of 1971 was a significant one for it altered the South Asian cartography permanently through the cessation of Bangladesh from the eastern wing of Pakistan. The latter's domination and exploitation of its eastern sector following Islamabad's refusal to allow the Awami League of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of form the central government after its winning of majority seats in the National Assembly led to public protests and demonstration of the eastern part against the leaders of the western half. The fallout was the imposition of

military rule in the eastern sector that resulted in killing of Awami League supporters and general public by the Pakistani soldiers. It led to the massive influx of Bengali refugees into India's border states, which threatened to alter the demographic balance in addition to an imposition of a huge economic burden over the country.

Keeping these developments in mind, Indira Gandhi accepted Awami League's demand for territorial sovereignty from Pakistan, which would automatically terminate the pouring of refugees in India. Also by waging war against Pakistan would force her to accept the demand for the emergence of Bangladesh.

Before the embarkation of this project, the Indian government put pressure on the international community to coax General Yahya Khan to accept the Awami League's demand. When this failed, the central leadership mobilised the military resources on both sides of India's borders to counter Pakistani aggression from these sides. Also, fearing of Chinese involvement in the region, because of Islamabad's close ties with Beijing, Mrs. Gandhi also sought to neutralise latter's influence in her war effort by taking the advantage of the ongoing Sino-Soviet rapprochement and concluded a twenty year peace treaty with the Soviet Union to deter the American threat, because of Pakistan's strong connection with the latter that might induce Washington to interfere in the regional politics of South Asia.

Like Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi also led her country from the front with her courage to the challenge the Pakistani leadership and her strong determination to end the plight of the Bangladeshis. She also undertook foreign trips to persuade the Western powers to pressurise Islamabad. Latter's apparent reluctance or inability, however, led the Indian Prime Minister to march ahead with her troops to liberate the Bangladeshis from Pakistan, thereby dismembering the latter from her eastern flank.

The emergence of Bangladesh on December 1971 ushered a new beginning in the geo-political context of the Indian Subcontinent. The War not only proved India's primacy as the regional power in South Asia, it also demonstrated the power of Mrs. Gandhi in delineating new borders of the region, along with her emergence as one of the most successful leaders in the post Independence India. Her overwhelming victory in the general election of January 1971 gave her the moral boost and the required mandate to take the responsibility of East Pakistan on her shoulders. She enhanced and elevated the position of India as one of the potential powers in international politics.

What emerges from the study of the political careers and functioning styles of the three leaders is that while the circumstances were different and the backgrounds were diverse, the three women Prime Ministers emerged as strong leaders. Each of them showed an authoritarian trait and a propensity to bypass the Cabinet and work with the selected members of the Cabinet and the bureaucrats who were loyal to them. Each one faced criticism for their style of functioning and while one lost an election but was returned to power and was then assassinated, the others had to step down from their posts. However, the positive feature of three of them was that they were able to face challenges successfully, both within the country and from outside.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

This study on the leadership patterns of the three world famous women Prime Ministers is based on a few interrelated premises. The foremost premise that can be associated with this study is that patriarchal society has largely restricted women from playing a dominant role in politics and governance. Unless blessed with inordinate power, authority and personal

stature, along with a favourable environment, both in the domestic and the international settings, very few women get the chance to lead their nations.

From this assumption follows the second premise that gender and biological differences between male and female leaders are not inextricably intertwined in their respective leadership roles. It is assumed that once a leader reaches the apex of power, the significance and effectiveness of his or her gender becomes irrelevant and is largely remained obscured by the exigencies of both the domestic and international situations. Gender rarely affects political and personal judgments of leaders in their response to national and international circumstances.

As a logical corollary, another area of investigation for this study was to see whether woman leaders are viewed as a leader *per se*, or whether their gender play a significant factor in determining their modes of functioning, foreign policy behaviour and decision-making techniques from the perspectives of male leaders.

A concomitant attribute is that childhood influence help in shaping identities, images and personalities of leaders and their understanding of and reaction to political exigencies. Their childhood influence has a lasting impression in their behavioural attributes as well. This is perhaps true to both male and female leaders.

As seen from the study, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir are considered as world's strong and tough leaders. The comparative examination of their leadership styles and functioning mechanisms conducted in this study reveals that these three heads of state were driven and motivated by their desire to assume and exhibit power and its associated features. The consequence was their renunciation of personal judgments, emotions and sentiments for the achievement of their personal goals.

## **I. First Hypothesis**

It can be revealed from the political careers of the three Prime Ministers that each of them as the victim of gender prejudice advanced by their male colleagues. Mrs. Thatcher was not given membership to the Conservative Party initially on the account of her gender. Similarly, her ascendance to the Tory leadership as the leader of the party in 1975 and subsequently, as the Prime Minister, cast a profound impact on the party structure, partly because Thatcher was a woman. Resistance from male colleagues could be expected on this account.

By the same token, Mrs. Meir was denied the Mayorship of Tel Aviv because of being woman. On the other hand, David Ben-Gurion considered her as a symbol of women's emancipation and hence included her in his Cabinet to attract women voters. Similarly, the appellation *goongi gudiya* or the dumb doll given to Mrs. Gandhi was an aberration on her personality, as her senior colleagues thought that, being woman, she easily be controlled and dominated and her lacking of personal ambition.

It can also be added here that the confrontation of international crises by these world leaders was also coloured by their gender prejudices. Neither General Yahya Khan of Pakistan and President Nixon of the US, nor General Galtieri of Argentina believed that they would be threatened and defeated by female powers. Their derogatory statements on the gender of these women leaders are sufficient to prove this.

Moreover, each of them had to fight hard and assert their dominance over their party. Their struggle to reach the pinnacle of power in a male-dominated political hierarchy was motivated and guided by their determination, courage and uni-directional mindset- to reach the supreme position of the political leadership. Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Meir were chosen by their respective political parties to assume leadership on an interim basis,



while the Conservative members grudgingly accepted Mrs. Thatcher's leadership, due to the dearth of a suitable candidate at that crucial moment.

Similarly, these three leaders were blessed with inordinate strength and power for reaching the top. Although Mrs. Gandhi had the dynastic support for making a natural entry into politics as the Congress President, without having adequate political internship, she had to fight against the 'old guards' to impose her authority and will over the rest. With the Congress split in 1969, these Syndicate members became virtually obscured from the political atmosphere in order to pave the way for the rise of Mrs. Gandhi as one of India's powerful leaders.

On the other hand, unlike Mrs. Gandhi, neither Mrs. Meir, nor Mrs. Thatcher had any such dynastic backing for making their headway into politics. It was due to their sheer determination and self confidence that drew them closer to politics. At the same time, Mrs. Thatcher had not served in key governmental posts (Home Ministry, Foreign Ministry and Chancellor of Exchequer), which are considered to be mandatory of any leader before becoming the British Premier. On the other hand, Mrs. Meir assumed the Premiership at the age of seventy five. Nevertheless, her age did not pose a crucial factor in making policy decisions.

Another notable feature was the fearlessness of the three women leaders. They were not fearful of initiating bold measures. Mrs. Thatcher survived twin bomb attacks inside her hotel; Mrs. Gandhi was personally attacked by stones and other missiles, still she continued her speeches to the masses during her election campaigns. Mrs. Meir disguised herself as a burqha-clad Arab woman, travelled the Transjordan to make peace arrangements regarding the impending Arab-Israeli war in 1948.

It may also be added in this connection that all three woman Prime Ministers had male mentors in their respective political spheres, whom they looked up to as their moral guides. However, these leaders rejected them

after their consolidation of power. As such, these mentors became their staunch critics.

Mrs. Gandhi's mentor was Kamaraj Nadar, the former Chief Minister of Madras, whose unfailing support of her candidacy as the Prime Minister led her assume the highest political office in 1966 following the sudden death of Shastri. It was also on his request that the Congress backed her candidacy in the next year's Prime Ministerial candidature to be selected in the fourth general election of 1967. However, wary of his overarching presence and dictatorial tendencies, which precluded her from taking individual decisions, Mrs. Gandhi abandoned Kamaraj by instigating a split within the Congress mantle, through which she freed herself from being these 'old guards' and espoused her individual pathway.

Similarly, Mrs. Thatcher got attention and support from her predecessor Edward Heath, who appointed her in different shadow Ministries and enhanced her responsibilities by allowing her to function in different departments. During his Premiership (1970-1974), she was appointed as the Education Secretary, where she dropped the government's supply of milk to school children, an action that stormed the British political atmosphere from her own party colleagues to general public. Heath's unconditional support led her to remain in the office. However, his defeat in the 1974 general elections, made her contest for the post of of the party leader in 1975, Thatcher's first open challenge to her mentor. After her assuming the role as the Conservative leader, she abandoned her. During her formation of the first Cabinet after becoming the Premier in 1979, she distributed many important portfolios among the ex-Heathites, or the Conservative 'wets', but dropped them one by one in her policy of reshuffling of the Cabinet. By 1981, her Cabinet gradually came under the grip of the Thatcherites by the replacement of the Heathites.

By the same token, Mrs. Meir looked up to David Ben-Gurion as her mentor and political adviser since her early days in Milwaukee. It was due to his undue support that she was included into the Cabinet and was given myriad political assignments, which she accomplished at ease. However, problem erupted when the former wanted to introduce young members in important governmental departments by removing old ones, such as Mrs. Meir, Pinchas Sapir and others, induced her to be his staunch critique.

It may be argued that patriarchy had a profound impact in the ascendance of these three women into highest political offices, but once they reached the position of Prime Minister, patriarchy was relegated to the remotest corner.

## **II. Second Hypothesis**

The first chapter of the study sought to analyse various facets of feminist understanding of the positions and responsibilities of women in public and private spheres, along with the nature and behavioural attributes of women in relation to men. Each of these discourses has individual way of understanding women's role. The dominant discourse is the liberal tradition of the feminist reading. It proposes denial of difference between men and women and prioratisation of women's active participation in politics and their wielding of and accession to various channels of power, including defence, national security, equal rights and opportunities for women.

Its rival group, the radical approach, pioneered by Carol Pateman and Christine di Stefano, emphasises the significance and maintenance of 'difference' by nurturing sisterhood, and bringing out gender exclusiveness among women to promote peace, trust, cooperation etc.

However, an analysis of the leadership roles of the three Premiers shows an affinity with the liberal approach to feminism. Going back to the propositions of Mary Wollstonecraft, it may be argued that the three world

leaders, chosen for this study, demonstrated similar behavioural traits prioritised by the liberal scholars in order to wither the inherent differentiation between men and women. Mrs. Gandhi, Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Meir were not declared feminists. Also the policies they undertook and advanced did not show any inclination towards the success and promotion of peace, both at the domestic and international settings, rather, they preferred to play one faction against the other and sowed seeds of dissention within their respective parties, which in turn, gave rise to internal fragmentation and bred mutual hatred and lack of trust.

The manner these three heads of state's response to domestic issues reveals their lack of sympathy and inclination to solve issues through peaceful means. Instead, they demonstrated their determination to stick to their decisions and demonstrated their uncompromising attitudes in addressing their domestic turbulences in their own ways. Both Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Thatcher deployed army to deal with internal crises disturbances.

At the same time these leaders also fostered internal fragmentation of their respective parties. Their frequent question "Is he with us" demonstrate their dominant behavioural trait, in which, they were often suspicious about the possibility of alternative source of power, and were doubtful on the loyalty of their party colleagues. Hence they invented a novel way of sustaining their position- reshuffling and rearranging Cabinet posts of their colleagues.

Another interesting facet of the functioning style of these leaders is that they tried to represent and portray themselves as the symbol of the strength to the common people, rather than as the symbol of female power. They were not declared feminists, and hence advanced and implemented no women-oriented policies. Neither did they support women's movement and favour their involvement in politics, nor did they uphold women's rights and stood for their emancipation. None of them had female Cabinet Ministers.

Although Mrs. Thatcher had Janet Young in her Cabinet, she dropped her in her next reshuffling. Similarly, Mrs. Gandhi had Nandini Satpathy as her close ally from the state of Orissa, but because of former's authoritarian style of functioning, the latter seceded from the Congress. Mrs. Meir had personal clash with her only woman Member of the Knesset in her Labour Alignment, Shulamit Aloni, who left the party and formed her own political organisation, the Citizens' List. In fact, the relationship between the two ladies was so severe that Mrs. Meir did not even include her in her next government of 1974, in spite of Mrs. Aloni's getting of three Knesset seats. This action was contrary to the Israeli political structure in which each party requires at least one seat to become a Member of the Knesset.

By the same token, none of these leaders spoke on behalf of women. Instead, they prioritised women's role and responsibility in the family and in rearing their at home.

Another notable trait of these woman leaders was their fighting abilities against their adversaries. All three of them demonstrated their inclination to crush their enemies before calling for unilateral ceasefire. They were so determined to achieve their goals that they remained indifferent to international pressure and challenge from superpowers. Mrs. Gandhi ignored the American pressure and latter's dispatch of the Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal along with nuclear-powered submarines, along with the advices of her party colleagues, who were apprehensive of American presence in the Subcontinent. Instead, she went ahead to dismember Pakistan from her eastern wing.

Similarly, the decision to sink *General Belgrano* was one of the most decisive one for Mrs. Thatcher that killed several Argentine soldiers without prior warning. The incident invited severe criticism from the international community, including the British Parliament. To Mrs. Thatcher, this action

was intended to put a decisive blow on her opponents and force them into submission.

With the same tune, Mrs. Meir refused to release the Egyptian Third Army, who was encircled by the Israeli Defence Force, until the joint American-Soviet pressure that threatened to consider nuclear option and the opening of another corridor to release this Egyptian battalion.

The authoritarian style of functioning of these heads of state also displays their enormous power and strength. They are a kind of leaders, who set their agendas and priorities according to their own preferences, by sidelining their Cabinets and concerned Ministers. Through their closed door meeting with a handful of chosen members and associates, they made their decisions to meet their goals.

This leads to another indispensable facet of the personal traits of these Prime Ministers is their love for power, its consolidation and manifestation. Mrs. Gandhi split the age-old Congress Party to consolidate her position as the Prime Minister. Likewise, the series of Constitutional Amendments, and her call for national Emergency in 1975, demonstrate her invoking of extra-constitutional means to restore her position. Side by side, Mrs. Thatcher's dissociation between the 'wets' and the 'dries' marked a radical departure from the Conservative tradition. She was enough to control a whole group of men in the House and upheld her ideas above everything. In fact, her new economic approaches also posed a sharp break-through in the politico-economic tradition since the post Second World War.

All these qualities mentioned above, give testimony to the war-like attitudes of Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir and their natural inclination to take up challenges. Their actions, therefore, reveal no difference with any of the male counterparts. It may even be said that few

male leaders have acted with the same strength of conviction and courage as these women leaders.

However, a passing reference can be made on the personal lives of these Prime Minister, following the analysis pointed out by the Marxian feminist scholars, who raise questions regarding the genuine liberation of women in their private spheres, after making success in the public domain. Accordingly, it would be seen that except Margaret Thatcher, both Golda Meir and Indira Gandhi had a tragic marital relationship. Both of their husbands were found to be against their wives' public roles and their long term absence from home. In fact, Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Meir used to live separately from their husbands, and both the leaders were deeply saddened by the early death of their spouses. On the contrary, Dennis Thatcher was quite content with his wife's politically established role and stood by her side throughout.

### **III. Third Hypothesis**

Following the third and final hypothesis of this study it can be argued that childhood influence leave a lasting impression on the personalities of these international figures. As her parents were involved in freedom struggle along with her mother's terminal disease, Mrs. Gandhi grew up with a deep sense of insecurity and loneliness, which continued to linger her even in her adult phase. This behavioural attribute may be traced to her relationship with her party colleagues. She largely remained as a silent spectator in her initial days at the Parliament for which, she was taken for granted by her senior colleagues even when she assumed Prime Ministerial role in 1966. Hence her innate desire to prove herself came strongly from within, which is manifested in her decisions in support of devaluation of the Indian currency, and selection of the Presidential candidate against the wishes of the Congress Parliamentary Party in 1969.

From her childhood, Mrs. Thatcher was moulded into the Conservative ideology, the fruits of thriftiness and the sense of discipline and method that were manifested in her policies she introduced during her capacity as the Prime Minister.

Similarly, being one of the survivors of the Russian Pogrom, Mrs. Meir's primary focus since her childhood was to work for the causes of the Jews. Accordingly, she dedicated her life completely for this larger cause. After her becoming the Minister of Labour and Housing, she sought to make arrangements for more Jewish immigration into Israel and persuaded Polish and Soviet governments to take necessary measures for Jewish migration into Israel. She also sanctioned government houses for them, much against the wishes of the central government. Throughout her life, she was guided by the twin goals of maintaining and preserving Israel's security and national interest and upholding Jewish rights.

To substantiate the hypotheses, the basic tenets of birth order studies are being discussed to highlight the unique position of these three Prime Ministers.

### **3. BIRTH ORDER STUDIES AND SIBLING POSITION**

According to birth order theory, personal characteristics and policy outlooks of world leaders correlate with their birth order in their families.<sup>1</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, "Birth Order of World Leaders: An Exploratory Analysis of Effects on Personality and Behaviour", *Political Psychology* (Mains), Vol. 11, No. 3, September 1990, pp. 583-601; Blema S. Steinberg, "The Making of Female Presidents and Prime Ministers: The Impact of Birth Order, Sex of Siblings, and Father-Daughter Dynamics", *Political Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2001, pp. 89-110; Rita Mae Kelly and Mary A. Boutilier, "Mothers, Daughters, and the Socialisation of Political Women", *Sex Roles* (Germany) Vol. 4, No. 3, June 1978, pp. 415-443.



postulates that every individual acquires a unique position and distinctive behavioural attribute by virtue of his or her birth order in a family, which determines his or her public role later. Accordingly, first-born and middle-born children are more likely to assume an office of power than the single born and last-born ones; last-born and single child are considered least worthy of being leaders; first-borns are more self-confident, intelligent and aggressive than their younger siblings and more direct, authoritarian and aggressive in achieving their policy goals; while the last born ones are more rebellious towards anti-establishment, and tend to display more distrust towards their fellow partners and colleagues.<sup>2</sup> Another literature on the subject notes that girls with older brothers are more likely to be masculine in their behavioural traits and are less emotional and more modern in their outlook.<sup>3</sup>

If the above mentioned hypotheses are applied to the behavioural patterns of the three lady Prime Ministers, it may be noted that both Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir were last borns (Golda Meir also had a younger brother who could not survive after his birth) having older female siblings, while Indira Gandhi was the only child of her parents. Irrespective of their birth order they demonstrated their dominating, aggressive and authoritarian attributes after assuming leadership. None of them had older male siblings to imitate. Both Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher manifested their skepticism towards the established order of their respective nations, and as a consequence, their administrations became milestones in breaking away from the past heritage and usher in a new era. Nevertheless, all three leaders developed acute distrust towards their fellow colleagues and officers, for which they had to frequently reshuffle their Cabinets to

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<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *Ibid*, pp. 588, 597.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Kammeyer, "Sibling Position and the Feminine Role", *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 29, No. 3, August 1967, pp. 494-499.

forestall any counter power centre that might pose a challenge to their respective leadership.

The three woman Prime Ministers therefore, disproves the birth order thesis. No matter in which position they were born, they developed their natural inclination to rule, dictate and guide their nations in accordance with their own respective perceptions and judgments. Since they struggled hard to arrive at the supreme position, they refused to budge an inch from that position and orchestrated their policies accordingly for strengthening their base. Although both Thatcher and Meir had to resign from their offices only when situation became out of their control, the three leaders till today remain world's most powerful women politicians.

At the end it can be said that the findings of this study may lead to other interrelated questions about the female leaders of the present day. Possibilities are there to make a comparative study between the early female politicians with that of the present. It may be observed that the time period when Gandhi, Meir and Thatcher came to power was crucial. Given the relatively low participation of women in politics at that period of time and the exigencies of international and domestic politics, these leaders resorted to extreme authoritarian measures to become more assertive, competitive, and personal traits that were considered "masculine".

The question that can be raised as whether the present female heads of government would resort to same measures like their predecessors to satisfy their personal desires. The present Argentine President, Ms. Christina Fernandez has set forth a fresh demand for the peaceful return of Falklands from the British Prime Minister, David Cameron.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Cameron has rejected

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<sup>444</sup> Peter Weber, "Are Argentina and Britain headed towards a second Falklands War?", *The Week*, January 3, 2013.

the Argentine proposal and Ms. Fernandez would never use force against Britain, given the present day of inter-dependent world.

Nevertheless, the research may act as an analogy to conduct comparative analysis of the present day women leaders with that of the past. There are possibilities to find out whether the present leaders are more conciliatory in their responses to domestic and international threats, or resort to coercive means to fulfill their objectives. At the same time, the study may also help in finding comparative characteristics of other women leaders who assumed highest political office in the 1980s, 1990s and in the post Cold War.

However, it may be concluded that Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir were leaders having international reputations. They were the path-breakers and trendsetters in their styles of functioning and leadership skills. They overshadowed previous analyses on women leaders that connected peace and conciliation as inherent qualities of women. Instead these leaders demonstrated the extent of their power in crushing enemies, both at the domestic sphere as well as in the international fields.