

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

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This study is mainly concerned with the political orientation of women in the zone of South Kolkata – a district in West Bengal. It explores the impact of socio-economic variables on their political interest and hence their participation in political activities and also the impact of these variables on their partisan preference and voting behaviour. An attempt has also been made to look at the picture not only through survey data, but in a wider context, on the basis of official data as well. The main focus here has been on the gender differences in the sphere of political participation. Some of the hypotheses formulated by the researcher were fully supported by the survey data, some were only partially supported and some others were not supported at all.

LEVEL OF COGNITIVE ORIENTATION :

The hypotheses was framed that variables like age, caste, religion, marital status, education and income and political knowledge is independent of each other. In most cases the hypotheses have been proved to be correct except for some categories of women. In case of age, it has been significantly proved where it was observed, that women falling in the young age group of 25 to 40 years have more political knowledge than women who are old except for the category of domestic workers where both young and old lack political knowledge. Thus, experience of life has not been a significant factor in enhancing the level of political knowledge. Similarly, in case of caste Null Hypothesis have been partially accepted. Among the four categories, women in the formal sector are well placed in terms of other factors like income and education. Hence caste considerations have not been able to make any significant mark on their way to acquire political knowledge, but within the informal sector caste have played a significant role in terms of the occupation that a person is associated with. Here the women working as domestic workers are found to be more apolitical than that of the street vendors and among both the categories the scheduled caste have secured less scores than the others.

The present research shows that political knowledge is not dependent on a woman's religion and marital status. The Chi-square test shows that political knowledge has neither advanced nor regressed back with respect to change in the marital status of the respondents except in the case of domestic workers where early marriage has stalled the process of education among respondents. Also the nature of job and attitude of family members have

acted as an impediment in acquiring knowledge in general and political knowledge in particular.

Religion and acquiring political knowledge are independent of each other. This hypothesis has been significantly proved. All the respondents irrespective of belonging to the formal and informal sector have scored well and religion has not played an important part on the question of acquiring knowledge.

A significant association between education and political knowledge and income and political knowledge also could not be observed among the respondents of the four categories covered by the study. The Null Hypothesis have been retained in both these variables. As regards cognitive orientation to politics is concerned, education and income have not been a major factor of influence for women both in the formal and informal sector. Exposure to mass media and interaction with people have definitely played a major role in shaping the orientation of women especially in the informal sector towards politics.

LEVEL OF AFFECTIVE ORIENTATION BASED ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND INDEPENDENT CHOICE OF DECISION-MAKING ROLE IN THE FAMILY :

An attempt has been made to measure the affective orientation of the women through analysing the relationship between such socio-economic attributes and variables like age, caste, religion, education, level of family income, and occupational status with her sense of social security and her level of independent decision making within the family. It has been observed that women are not keen to be politically informed like their male counterparts and still not interested to get involved in political activities even at the local level. In most cases it has been observed that they have been barred by the male members of the family from getting involved in political activities thereby resulting in low level of participation. It is observed that within the informal sector there is a vast difference on the extent of social security enjoyed by the two categories namely the domestic workers and street vendors on the question of harassment by police or municipal authorities and also political party leaders. This also includes eviction from their trading places and even their home. The domestic workers and their family members belonging to both the age groups face more harassment and eviction. Age plays a definite role in relation to the harassment that women face in the society. The young women are the easy target of physical and mental harassment in the society than the older generation especially in the informal sector. Majority of women in the informal sector are the main bread earners of the family yet they are victims of domestic

violence not only in the hands of their husbands but also other family members including their mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law.

So far as religion is concerned minority groups have sometimes faced harassment from local party leaders, or authorities but the overall percentage is low. In case of both religion and caste domestic workers have faced more harassment compared to other three occupational groups

The scheduled caste and OBCs in both categories in the informal sector namely street vendors and domestic workers are targets of harassment and their grievances have not been redressed properly. The women from informal sector belonging to these castes are not free from such mental trauma. Caste therefore plays a definite role in their lives.

As regards marital status we find that within the informal sector the domestic workers (100 women i.e. 55.25%) who are married faced more harassment than the street vendors (62 women i.e. 38.01% out of 101). The situation is different for unmarried, divorced and widowed women. Data shows that these strata of women have been less harassed. The condition of divorced or separated women is also precarious. Among street vendors out of 23 women, 17 (73.91%) women have been misbehaved by the police authorities. The condition of domestic workers is also not good. Out of 17 women, 8 (47.06%) reported of such harassment. They have also faced eviction from house several times and also did not get any redressal from the police authorities who even refused to lodge a complaint.

Knowledge helps to be aware of one's rights. However, it must be kept in mind that education alone cannot provide protection from rape, sexual assault or mental harassment. It can happen irrespective of whether or not a person is educated or uneducated. Also, it is observed that within the informal sector there is not much of a difference between the illiterate and the literate on the question of harassment. Even the street vendors possessing higher secondary and graduation degree have not been able to free themselves from attack as evident in the data. 22 women (34.38%) out of 64 women having higher secondary degree and 15 women (32.61%) out of 46 having graduate degree have faced such harassment. The domestic workers having secondary level of education are found to be more harassed (86 women out of 252 i.e. 34.13%) by the political party goons and cadres. In the formal sector surprisingly even the women holding graduate and post-graduate degrees have faced harassment though on a small scale. The women working in the formal sector are more secured in terms of social status and prestige. However, there are instances of violence and even eviction from home. In spite of economic security it is observed that the women are not free from domestic violence. Many of their grievances were not properly addressed by the

police and other administrative authorities. Thus, spread of knowledge may elevate a person's self-esteem and infuse confidence and may also help her to have a clear knowledge about her rights and laws of the land but education alone cannot be a prerequisite factor to enhance her social position and security. Thus, education and higher income alone cannot provide protection from rape, sexual assault or mental harassment.

In order to analyse women's choice over independent decision making, the researcher has attempted to study the control of women over her monthly savings and investment, her control over family expenditure and also her contribution to the family expenditure. As far as independent decision-making over self-expenditure is concerned younger women in the formal sector are better placed than in the informal sector. However, in the informal sector among street vendors younger women are more independent in terms of taking decisions on their own savings and investments than the domestic workers where more than half of the younger women are controlled by the male members of the family.

On the question of taking independent decision on their monthly savings and investment plans it is observed that in the informal sector religion has not played a deciding factor on women's rights over investment and savings except in the case of Muslim women. This is applicable in both the sectors. Here women of different religious community have wider freedom. However, it is pertinent to note that women belonging to the Muslim community have much less independence. They are guided not only by male members but also by female members. The women belonging to other communities are slightly in a more advantageous position in terms of decision-making and they play a major role in taking major and minor decisions within the family. Contrary to this the Muslim women have had to struggle to get such rights. They are guided in every aspect of decision-making.

So far as caste consideration are concerned, it is found that in the informal sector among street vendors, the women of general caste are slightly in a more advantageous position (58.15%) than that of domestic workers (56.84%) over matters of individual choice. As far as other castes are concerned, male members of the family hold a significant place in deciding investment plans of the women in their family. The women in the formal sector irrespective of castes are significantly independent in matters of individual choice.

It is generally believed that income level decides the social and economic position of a person on the society. The higher the income the greater is the social prestige. Income is a variable which indicates the economic status of a person. In the present research we observe that with the rise of level of income the instances of harassment by family have become less but control of over their income have increased in manifold. The young women are guided

by their family members to spend according to their wish. More than half of the younger women are controlled by the male members of the family on the question of independent choice on monthly savings. The women in the formal sector take decisions on their own but even they had to face obstacles in taking major or minor decisions in the family and many women complained that they had to struggle with their family members to achieve such rights. Thus, it can be inferred that in some cases higher the income slab greater is the level of control by the members of the family especially the male members irrespective of being in the formal and informal categories.

EVALUATIVE ORIENTATION BASED ON POLITICAL INTEREST, VOTING BEHAVIOUR AND PARTISAN PREFERENCE:

The case of a comparison between women in formal and informal sectors regarding political interest show that young women are more prone towards acquiring political knowledge partly because of education, the work environment that they are in, exposure to mass media and membership in hawkers union, but when it comes to interest and engaging in political activities the data shows a total change. As observed in Chapter 5, majority of the women in the informal sector are more interested in participating in local puja committees and local fairs organised by clubs but not so much in direct political involvement in meetings or campaigns. The formal workers on the other hand are indifferent to both non-political and political activities. Thus they are more pathetic to political activism than the informal sector. Most of the women show a low interest irrespective of age. This is applicable both in the formal and informal sector.

Religion or issues related to it could not act as a deciding factor in enhancing political opinion of the respondents as here in both the sectors it is observed 50% of women from all religious communities adopt a middle path or is not involved at all in political and think a lot before taking decisions. The presence of high involvement in politics is not seen in either the Hindu or Muslim or Christian communities irrespective of the sectors they are placed in.

In case of impact of caste on interest in political activities, the present study reveals that caste status did not have any significant impact on the turnout figure of any of the four groups. The data, however, revealed that in the informal sector, the highest turnout was found among the general caste than that of the reserved castes. Among street vendors, in terms of interest we observe that most of these women are either not involved or partially involved with the presence of high score significantly low especially in case for domestic workers. Here the percentage of women having low level of political activism is prevalent among all

women especially reserved categories of SCs, STs and OBCs. Thus, inspite of reservation of seats in legislative bodies, caste has not been able to increase the level of political ambition and activism among women. The same trend is also observed among women in the formal sector where they are involved based on preference of personal choices and not out of any need to contribute in the political development of the country.

This study reveals that education did not influence the turnout rate of the women. In both the formal and the informal sectors women possessing a certain degree of education women seem to be less active. The percentage of high involvement in political activity is not seen even in case of teachers. More specifically it can be inferred that more the level of education political apathy among the number of women have increased and they have preferred to abstain from being politically active. Infact, it is observed that the teachers have found to be least involved in participating on direct political activities like processions, demonstrations, subscribing to political parties etc.

In studies on political behaviour, it has been noted that women are considerably influenced by the wishes of their husbands and family members in political matters. For married women, the important male influential are their husbands, while for single and unmarried, fathers play an important role in changing their political opinion. However, widowed women are seen to be far less involved than the other three categories. It is observed that women irrespective of their marital status are not active in political matters both in the selected groups of formal and informal sectors. Thus, change in status does not increase or decrease a person's involvement in political and other activities.

It is held that citizens who have higher incomes or have higher family incomes are more likely to live and work in environments that stimulate interest in politics, create social pressures for political participation, and provide opportunities for political participation. Here both among street vendors and domestic workers women respondents have shown a low level of political interest and activities. This can be attributed to their low level of income but surprisingly this trend is also observed in the formal sectors where with the rise in the level of income women have tend to become more cautious before taking part in political activities as the number of women having high scores have decreased. This is more significant in the case of teaching group. The educators are viewed as the influential members of the society and they play a fruitful part in shaping the policy formulations of the country but here they show least involvement in political matters.

It was observed that the percentage of positive attitude towards independent decision-making by women in the sphere of partisan choice was also not distinguishing. Partisan

preference level was also lower among women. The influence of the socio-economic variables on partisan preference of respondents was explored. The present study indicates that age had no impact on the participation rate in political activities. It was found that there was no steady growth, nor was there any steady decline in the attitude towards independent decision-making in the field of partisan choice associated with age. In the informal sector age has not been able to improve women rights. This is applicable both for street vendors and domestic workers. Women in general of both age groups seem to lack independent choice of decision making in the sphere of partisan choice. In the formal sector, it is, however, noticed that the respondents belonging to the age group of 40–60 years have a more positive attitude than that of the younger age group. This may be attributed to the control of family members over the voting behaviour of younger generation. In terms of percentage teachers are found to have more high scores than bank employees but still it is not significant. If all the 4 groups are studied together then the percentage of women lacking the power of decision-making choice is high among all groups irrespective of their occupational status.

The study reveals that neither in the informal nor in the formal sector, no positive association between partisan preference and caste status could be established. It was observed that in the informal sector women belonging to the scheduled castes and OBCs have scored much higher in terms of independent decision making than the upper castes. In the formal sector also high scores which reveals a positive attitude towards decision making is higher among the SCs and STs than that of the general castes. Thus, the hypothesis that depending on caste level of women their independent choice of decision-making increases also could not be established.

At the outset it is to be observed that throughout the survey religion has not played an important part in influencing political knowledge or political activism among the members of the group. Religion has not been able to establish a positive correlation in the sphere of voting behaviour or partisan choice both in the formal and informal sectors.

It is observed that marital status has not influenced woman's independent decision-making power. All women irrespective of marital status lack the power of independent decision-making in the field of partisan choice. Rather it is pertinent to mention that more than unmarried and married women in all the four groups, divorced and separated women have at least scored a little better in following her independent will. Widowed, married and unmarried women have scored lowest in terms of having an independent choice over her voting turnout and political participation. Thus, change in marital status has not led to the increase of a person's involvement in political and other activities.

The study also reveals that among both the sectors a higher level of education was not followed by a more liberal attitude towards independent decision making in the sphere of partisan choice. It is expected that the better-educated people are the ones who read more books and magazines and listen more frequently to radio and T.V. programmes, and forums which deal with the world of current affairs. The interests which are stimulated by better education, and the perspectives which are gained, surely operate to encourage the better educated women to participate more independently in political affairs but here women with graduate and post-graduate degree have scored low in terms of having an independent attitude in voting behaviour and partisan choice. Most of them have been influenced by their family members and other influential persons of the locality.

The hypothesis was framed that economic status of the respondent does not influence the power of independent choice of decision making. The hypothesis has been retained in all the groups. The survey data did not establish any significant association between income and the attitude of decision-making in the pattern of voting behaviour and partisan preference. The present survey did not cover various occupational groups. In the informal sector among street vendors the data show that high attitude scores increase up to a particular level of family income and then begin to decrease. It also shows that low attitude score is maximum in the Rs. 15001–30000 group (31.81%) followed by the higher income group level of Rs. 30001–50000 (30.51%). The data of domestic workers shows that low attitude score is maximum in the Rs. 0–15001-group (34.89%) followed by the higher income group level of Rs. 15001–3000 (25%). Thus rise in the income level of women does not necessarily commensurate with her power of independent decision making as here the percentage of low scores are far more than the high scores. In the formal sector the data reveals the same pattern as here both among bank employees and teachers with the highest scale of income are influenced by family decisions and there is lack of decision-making power over her choice of voting and partisan preference.

It is also observed by the researcher that women's voting behaviour is also influenced by their family and they lack the power as well as the right of individual decision-making.

FORMAL SECTOR :

In the formal sector about 260 (49.52%) women said that they vote in favour of the same political party supported by their parents, husbands or in-laws. They are thus guided by them or are forced to vote in favour of the party they choose. 65 (12.38%) women said they do not vote as they feel that whoever comes to power would not address political and

other issues gripping the country and hence they are apathetic to politics in general. Thus only 38.09% of women interviewed had a mind of their own while voting. Out of 460 women who vote, 180 (39.13%) were found to be loyal to the same political party and have been voting in favour of them for at least last ten years or more but here also family influence works because 108 (60%) out of them said they follow their family loyalty while only 72 (40%) vote by their own will without any outside pressure. In 2011 there was a major change in the political scenario of West Bengal. The Left Front Govt lost power after 34 years of rule and was replaced by Trinamul Congress led by Hon'ble Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee. So there was a noticeable shift in the partisan preference of voters and women were not out of this change. Out of 460 women who actually voted at least 250 (54.35%) women responded to this change and altered their preference in favour of the present political party in power after 2011 under family pressure or otherwise. 110 (23.91%) women did not change. A significant number of women (100 i.e.21.74%) refused to answer this question especially debarred by their family members because of fear of harassment by local party goons.

Table – 6.1

Pattern of Voting Behaviour in Formal Sector

Pattern of Voting Behaviour	Influenced by Family	Not influenced by Family	Do not Vote
Vote in Favour of the same party as family supports	260	200	65
Loyal to the same party for 10 yrs or more.(180)	108	72	
Change of partisan preference after 2011	250	110	
Total Number of Women		525	

It is pertinent to mention that during elections most of these women consult with their family members and other influential members of the locality and also changed their voting pattern after consultation with them. Out of 460 women, 240 (52.17%) women said that they consult their family members before going out to vote. However, by virtue of their status and position, 220 (47.82%) women have been able to carve out a decision out of their own choice. Apart from consultation with family members 160 (34.78%) women said that they also consult their friends and colleagues in their workplace and other respectable persons in the locality or watch media reports before going to vote. Out of these 240 women who vote only after consultation, 150 (62.50%) said that they have changed their voting pattern after consultation. 90 (37.50%) women were not influenced.

Table – 6.2
Voting Pattern in Formal Sector

Voting Pattern	Number of Women	
Consult with family members	240	
Consult with outside members along with family members.	160	
Changed their preference after consultation	Influenced	Not Influenced
	150	90

INFORMAL SECTOR :

In the informal sector about 285 (54.29%) followed the footsteps of their family members while voting and only 160 (30.48%) voted individually. Out of 445 women who cast their votes, 230 women were loyal to the same political party for at least last ten years or more but here also family decisions have played a major role. Out of them 161 (70%) out of them said they follow their family loyalty while only 69 (30%) vote by their own will without any outside pressure. The survey results show that in 2011 after Trinamul Congress came to power there was a major shift in the partisan preference of informal workers partly because of the election manifesto published by the party and its ability to influence mass participation through their slogan “Ma, Mati, Manush” and thus 300 (67.41%) women changed their earlier preferences and joined the new party in power mainly at the insistence of the family members.

Table – 6.3
Pattern of Voting Behaviour in Informal Sector

Pattern of Voting Behaviour	Influenced by Family	Not Influenced by Family	Do not Vote
Vote in favour of the same party as family supports	285	160	80
Loyal to the same party for 10 years or more	161	69	
Change of partisan preference after 2011	300	145	
Total Number of Women		525	

Moreover, it has been observed that women in general have not only consulted their family members but also influenced by other members be it in the neighbourhood or political leaders, experienced elders etc. as evident from the following table. In many cases they have changed their preferences based on such consultation. In case of informal sector it is observed

that out of 445 women who exercise their voting rights. 200 women said that they also consult other educated and respectable persons in their locality and workplace before casting their vote. 360 (80.90%) consult with family member and only 85 (19.10%) truly vote based on their own individual preferences. Out of these 360 women who vote only after consultation, 250 (69.44%) said that they have changed their voting pattern after consultation. 110 (30.55%) women were not influenced.

Table – 6.4
Voting Pattern in Informal Sector

Voting Pattern	Number of Women	
	Consult with family members	360
Consult with outside members along with family members.	200	
Changed their preference after consultation	Influenced	Not Influenced
	250	110

However it is pertinent to mention that the change in partisan preference has been both positive and negative. The influence exercised by outside persons have sometimes helped the respondents in creating their own opinion while there are number of respondents who have changed their preference out of fear from political cadres and local goons. Again, the reasons of changing the voting preference have been varied. The following table shows the reasons for the change of partisan preference of the respondents.

Table – 6.5
Reasons for change of Partisan Preference in Informal Sector

Reasons for Change of Partisan Preference	Number of Women	
	Formal	Informal
Family will have some advantages.	20	50
She or her family members might face some difficulties if voting is not done in favour of that political party.	30	50
The political party will be able to solve local problems.	20	45
The political party will be able to solve economic and other issues as well at the state or national level.	20	25
Members of the family hold important party positions.	30	20
Other reasons (please specify).	30	60
Total Number of Women	150	250

In case of informal sector, 50 women (20%) have mainly changed their preference for getting some advantages for example getting licence for their craft, getting ration/voter card, for getting admissions for their children in primary schools, getting a place in the pavement for business, for receiving different governmental grants like 100 days work for the family etc., 50 women (20%) out of fear of eviction from home or place of stay or harassment in the hands of party goons. Since these women are mostly involved in local club and local party politics 45 women (18%) voted for the party that promised to solve their local problem like shelter, drinking water, sewage etc and only 25 women (10%) were interested in state or national level issues. In case of formal sector, on the other hand the main reason for the change in preference has been family loyalty (20% women said that their members of her family hold important positions in the party either at the local, state or national level) and also due to fear of harassment from local party cadres or local party leaders (20% women). It is noteworthy to mention that the greatest reason for their change of partisan preference (24% in case of informal sector and 20% in case of formal sector) has been the change in leadership and emergence of Mamata Banerjee, the first woman Chief Minister of West Bengal and also nomination of large number of women as candidates. It not only marked a shift from the hitherto patriarchal rule in political arena but this was viewed as emancipation from their bondage of patriarchal control and the formation of independent public opinion as well. This willingness to change the political scenario was a positive change witnessed among women voters.

In case of both formal and informal sectors it has been observed that certain members outside the family influence the choice of preference and voting behaviour of women. The following table shows the list of persons who are consulted.

Table – 6.6

Consultation with other Persons except Family in Informal Sector

Consultation with other Persons except Family	Informal Sector	Formal Sector
Respectable persons in the locality	104	71
Respectable persons at the workplace	40	57
Political leaders or workers of the locality	51	12
Any Other	05	10
Refused to answer	25	26
Total	225	176

The researcher data and corresponding analysis of the study therefore indicates that women's participation in the electoral process has shown a steady increase, but their ability to produce an impact on the political process has been negligible. The present study once again establishes the point that was stressed by the Committee on the Status of Women that "all the indicators of participation, attitudes and impact come up with the same results – the resolution in political status of women for which constitutional equality was the only instrument, still remains a very distant objective". The large masses of women continue to lack spokesmen who understand their social problems and are committed to their removal in the representative bodies of the state. In spite of some changes, it is still evident that there is a difference in the level of political participation between men and women both quantitatively and qualitatively. Throughout this study, the researcher has sought to examine the degree of political participation of women of West Bengal, Such, a study cannot, obviously, establish a general theory of political behaviour of women. Still, it may be hoped that it will contribute, at least to some extent, to the establishment of a theory which may have extensive application.

Reference may be made once again to the major findings. Both from survey data and official data, the researcher finds that women's political mobilization is increasing but their participation in politics as compared to that of men is still less. The gap, however, is diminishing. The large masses of women still continue to lack spokesmen, some of the researcher's findings regarding the association between some political factors and socio-economic variables are contrary to some common assumptions. For example, age, caste, status, religion, education, marital status and income are found not to have any significant impact on political participation or in increasing the level of independent choice over decision-making either in the family or in their voting pattern. These findings may reveal new areas for further investigations. It has been found over and over again that a person who feels efficacious participates at a higher level than those who lack such a feeling. Citizens who feel that public officials are responsible to the electorate, who think that individual political activity is worthwhile and capable of influencing public policy, and who, see that the private citizens channels of access to governmental decision-makers are not confined to the ballot box, are much more likely to be positively active than those citizens who feel largely overwhelmed by the political process. The researcher's data show that involvement in political participation did increase with an increase in such a positive attitude. In most studies, including the present one, women have been found to feel less efficacious than men.

Studies show that women who are entering public life have the capability of supporting their own cause. This has been the case in South Africa, where civic groups and women organisations have been able to repeal laws regarding sanitation and water transport system, war stricken Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2006 where women came together and worked collectively and became leaders in their own right developing, coordinating and launching advocacy initiatives at the local level including a successful effort to amend municipal laws to better female workers. In Europe and in countries formed after the breakdown of Soviet Union, women have played an important part in civil society movements though after the post-socialist revolution there has been a decline in their presence in the parliaments. In India, this kind of experiment has taken place for example, for the rehabilitation of 3000 pavement dwellers in Mumbai an agreement was signed in June 2000, between a landowner, construction company, the slum rehabilitation authority (SRA), the Mumbai municipal corporation and a consortium of NGO's and community based organisations like 'Mahila Milan' to compile a list of households and help them to relocate and register their societies and cooperatives. This World Bank survey demonstrates that the greater women participate in public life, the less is public sector corruption. (Advancing Gender Equality: World Bank since Beijing, 2000). The research project undertaken by Chattopadhyay and Duflo in 2004 over 495 villages in Birbhum district show that women elected as leaders under the reservation policy invest a lot of time in public projects closely connected to women's issues inspite of the fact that most female Pradhans are not only less educated but they also come from a more disadvantaged background. In West Bengal, drinking water and roads were by far the issues most frequently raised by women as they have to travel long distances to get that. The other important issues were women welfare programs, housing and electricity. In West Bengal the Panchayat Constitution Rule was modified in 1998 to introduce reservation for the positions of Ward Councillors and Pradhans for women and from two disadvantaged minorities, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). The study also showed that with the spread of literacy programme the women panchayat members participate more effectively in village matters. However, women must be in a position to access, interpret and comment upon local government performances. Decentralisation does not necessarily facilitate women's participation in public office. Increasing the power of the local government involves increasing its access to and control over local resources. Such access and control renders local government more important to local economic and political elites and interest groups who are unwilling to relinquish control (Beall,1996). In this case, women

in government may be useful in delivering women's needs without succumbing to political pressures and able to represent or respond to the interests of women.

Budgeting at present is normally done by technocrats oblivious to women's needs. 'Gender Budgeting' therefore should be included in policy and planning at all levels. Policy needs to find ways to redirect resources to areas and groups previously under-resourced as well as to take into account the principle of affordability. It is paternalistic and regressive practices -- not their lack of effort that stops Indian women from being equal counterparts to men. Moreover, by specializing on the idea of strength, there is a rhetorical shift within the political agenda for reform where women are asked to be stronger and bear the burden of their own empowerment. Even after all legislations and new thinking in policy commitments and planning, women still remain a vulnerable group. If we want to transform the policy document of Women's Empowerment in to a reality we would have to transcend the present on gender budgeting that excludes many dimensions of the problem. (Goyal,2005) There is a need for a broad-based approach that addresses planning, adequate resource allocation, programme design and formulation, targeted intervention and implementation based upon the requirement of women residing at the field level and institutional level with their participation.

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