

**WOMEN, POLITICAL POWER AND THE STATE IN GOA**

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POLITICAL SCIENCE**

BY

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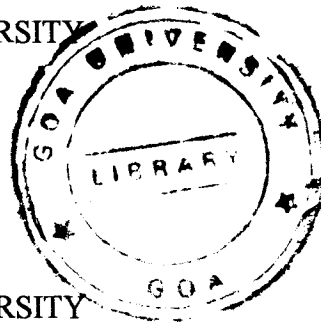
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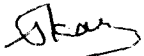
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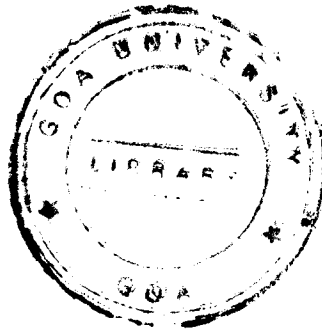
  
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## CERTIFICATE

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Date: 10 April 2000



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## PREFACE

There is growing consciousness to recognize women's autonomy, and their capacity to act as full citizens. They have to be looked as change agents and important contributors to the national development. Their role in social, political and economic context has to be understood in right earnest. The forces operating in the society which ghettoized women need to be recognized and refuted, and not camouflaged.

This study is an attempt to understand the role played by women in political arena in Goa. It is observed that there are inter-regional as well as intra-regional variations in the position and role of women. Various factors such as class, caste, religious affiliations, cultural milieu, the existing patriarchal practices and their diverse histories play crucial role in determining the position of women in a given region. It is therefore necessary to have specific studies on women in different regions in order to build up an adequate theoretical basis. Such an attempt would also assist in developing strategies for combating the forces operating against participation of women.

The political and social life in Goa has given rise to various questions regarding the existence and nature of patriarchal system in a post-colonial society. The pervasive influence of Portuguese rule which by and large showed a positive attitude towards women is noteworthy. Further, the small size of the state has reduced the asymmetries between the representatives and represented, compelling the former to heed the needs of women. This has improved the standard of living of women in Goa, especially in the fields of health and education. However a puzzling paradox is observed where the lot of women is changed due to the welfare provisions and progressive legislation, yet the things have remained the same. This is because the traditional institutions, family, community and the state, are entrapped into the hierarchy of power relations.

Though patriarchy has to be deconstructed, it should not be viewed as a ghost that cannot be fought back. Much depends on the forces operating against patriarchy in a given society. These forces include education, legal safeguards, development of scientific outlook, enlightenment of men, and awareness of their own potentials and capacities by women. Has the Goan society progressed in this terms and to what extent women are benefited by this progress, what role they ascribe for themselves, are they able to play effective role at different levels and actively participate in

different spheres of life, these and such other questions forms the major concern of this study. It looks at women as freedom fighters, voters, leaders and activists. It also studies the role played by the state to promote the well-being of women in Goa. Does the state strive to fight back the forces of patriarchy, does it extend its role beyond merely removing the barriers of equality, and comply to provide 'special' treatment to women, forms an important part of this study.

The completion of this work is made possible only through the help and inspiration of various people. I express my heartfelt gratitude to my Guide, Dr. Peter Ronald de Souza, who time and again gave critical comments on my work. His attitude was encouraging, and he always made me believe that I could do better. Without his co-operation, encouragement and supervision, it would have been impossible on my part to complete this work.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff members of Goa University Library, Central Library - Panaji, Secretariat Library- Panaji, Jawaharlal Nehru University - Delhi, and ~~Ten~~ Murti Nehru Momorial- Delhi. I am also thankful to the staff of B.D.O Office of Bardez and Tiswadi Taluka, staff of Mamlatdar Office-Quepem, staff of Directorate of Women and Child Development - Panaji, State Social Welfare Advisory Board, Provedoria, Rural Development Agency, and State Commission for Women. I also extend sincere thanks to Ms Kiran Saxena- Associate Professor, JNU, Dr Adi Doctor, and Dr. D.K. Singh, who helped me with their invaluable suggestions.

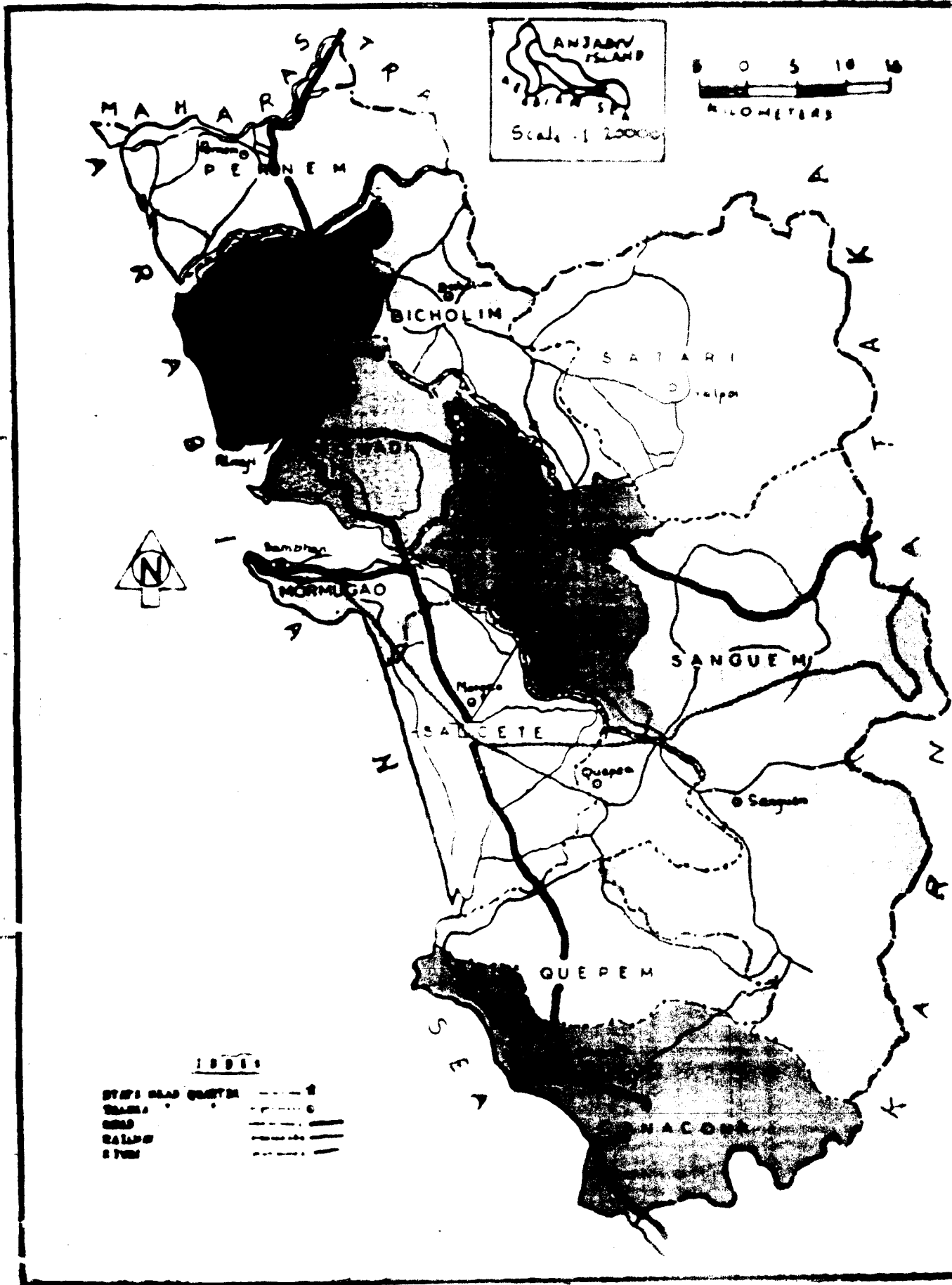
My special thanks goes to my respondents, the women freedom fighters, women voters from Quepem Taluka, women Panchas and Sarpanches in Bardez Taluka, members of *Bailancho Saad*, and the beneficiaries of the Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme from Tiswadi Taluka, who were co-operative and helpful.

I am indebted to my Appa, who kept me alert with constant inquiry about my work. It is not possible to name all, but I am grateful to all those who directly or indirectly, assisted me in completing this work.

This work could not have seen the light of the day, if Pradeep was not next to me in all my odd times. He blended in him the role of a friend, a staunch critic, and an emotional supporter. I dedicate my work to Pradeep.

Sèema P. Salgaonkar

# GOA



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

**‘Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the very minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. This ought to be the natural condition of things.’**

**M. GANDHI**

Recent decades have witnessed a critical emphasis on increasing role of women in the socio-economic development of the country. The changing political discourse has contributed to the recognition that women must play a greater role in political affairs. This has led to significant repercussions in social, economic and political domains, and has also altered the parameters of political practices. Today a strong opinion is building up in favour of increasing women’s involvement in the decision making processes of the Government. They need to be involved in the problems of national development. They should achieve the desired goals of equality and opportunity with men and participation in developmental programmes in order to make their full contribution in the larger areas of peace and development.

It is observed that there are inter-regional as well as intra-regional variances in the position and role played by women. It is the outcome of interplay of large number of factors in any given society. These include the level of development, flow of modernization, access to education, impact of colonial legacy, class and caste variations, and the existing cultural milieu. However in any society women suffer discrimination, in varying degrees. The major cause for the unequal treatment is the existence of patriarchy, which is intrinsic in the formation and changes in the various factors that influences women’s position. Patriarchal system is characterized by three conditions.<sup>1</sup> They are:

(i) It is a social and political order in which women are thought to be naturally, automatically, inevitably best suited to certain tasks, like listening, caring, taking shorthand, etc. While men are thought to be naturally inclined to perform other tasks

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<sup>1</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, ‘Gender and Politics,’ (1993) in Joel, Krieger (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, New York: Oxford University, p.337.

like talking, exploring, planning, ploughing, welding, fighting, etc. Thus a patriarchal society rests on a sexual division of labour.

(ii) It is a social and political order in which the things that males do are deemed of greater social value, more 'productive' more 'serious' and more 'skilled', than the things that females do.

(iii) In a society that has remained patriarchal, the people who perform the allegedly more valued, masculine tasks are deemed to have the responsibility of looking after, protecting and controlling the people who perform the less valued, feminine tasks!

Thus patriarchy is more than a sexual division of labour arranged hierarchically. It is a system of control of one sector of society over another, and this control is exercised in all fields - educational, employment or with regard to distribution of benefits of science and technology. Maithreyi Krishna Raj gives five different ways of how this control is reflected in the society<sup>2</sup>:

1. Women workers are treated unequally. Thus there is sexual segregation, wage discrimination and unequal burden of reproduction.
2. There is less endowment for women, in terms of education, technology and health facilities.
3. There is subordination of women through violence.
4. It includes media's negative portrayal of women
5. The support systems for women prove traps for them. Thus the family or state functions within patriarchy.

To bring about positive change, there is a need of transformative perspective on any question that women and men must take by looking specifically at how something affects women and challenging how gender is socially constructed. Thus, it is not fight against men, but against patriarchy. The problem is not really one about bodies, but about the identities or rather how the relationship between the two is conceived. Thus women's Question should occupy the focal position.

To understand women's Question there is a need to have a deeper insight into certain contradictions. These finer debates have time and again drawn the attention of the feminists and the scholars alike. One of the major paradoxes involved is, should woman be treated as similar to man or should she be differentiated from him? Also,

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<sup>2</sup> Maithreyi Krishna Raj (1988), **Women and Development - The Indian Experience**, Pune: Shubhada Saraswati Prakashan, p. 82.

are women to be categorized as disadvantaged group, or are there power relations between women? These and such other contradictions are centered around two major dimensions<sup>3</sup>: the first refers to the way in which different factors such as wealth, occupation, education, power, skills etc are distributed in the population. The second refers to the way in which individuals differentiated by these criteria are related to each other within a system of groups and categories. Thus 'difference' becomes a relational concept experienced relationally in terms of political discrimination, inequalities of power and forms of domination. These paradoxes need to be given due recognition.

### ✔ Similarity v/s Difference

There is an increasing demand that women should be treated on an equal footing with men. They should be given equal opportunities, and equal share in possession of various power resources, such as personal wealth, assets, land, skills, education, information, knowledge, social status, positions, leadership, etc. However, women also require to be differentiated from men so as to correct the historical wrongs. They have been denied and deprived of opportunities for ages. Even though, now they are provided with legal and constitutional safeguards, little else have changed. There are no alterations in social institutions, in division of labour, in the ideologies that support the division of labour, and the existing power structures. Thus equal treatment and equal access to opportunities actually may lead to inequalities as it is undifferentiated by sex. Thus the concept of equality becomes problematic. The procedural equality has to be differentiated from material equality.<sup>4</sup> Procedural equality involves the requirement that 'likes be treated alike' and the idea that women are not fundamentally different from men. While material equality is realizable only by recognizing, when it is appropriate to do so, that there are differences between men and women. The material notion of equality emphasizes that the present material circumstances arise from a history of past discrimination. There is a need to acknowledge that despite the removal of barriers, women are still not at an equal starting point and that some 'affirmative action' is necessary.<sup>5</sup> Thus equal

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<sup>3</sup> Betaille, Andre quoted in Sirima Kiribamune & Vidyamali Samarasinghe. (ed.), (1990), **Women at the Crossroads - A Sri Lankan Perspective**, New Delhi: Vikas, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Meehan, E. & Sevenhuijsen, S. (ed.), (1991), **Equality Politics and Gender**, London, Newbury Park, New Delhi: Sage, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

opportunity is necessary but not a sufficient condition for equality. There is a need to create the prerequisites to help women to assert themselves. Formal equality can be brought in through a stroke of legislation, but for equality to be substantial, women need to be positively discriminated from men. To be similar they need to be treated differently. Thus two very different sets of conceptions with respect to women have to be reconciled. The first is, women are intrinsically 'similar' to men, and therefore the two genders have to be treated in the same way. The second concept emphasizes that women are 'different' from men and that this difference necessitates separate treatment for the two genders. Thus protective approach constructs the woman as 'different' and the equal opportunities approach emphasizes on the woman to be equal to a man.

- **Individual v/s Role as mother, wife and daughter**

Women are more looked upon as members of the family rather than as individuals. They are expected to combine in themselves roles of mother, wife and daughter. This has resulted in strengthening of the existing sexual division of labour due to such hegemonic ideologies, concepts and behaviour produced about women. Women are confined to the home bound activities and domesticity is seen as the natural role for them. Their responsibilities and interests remain limited only to their family and friends. As it is rightly pointed out, 'Housewifization of women steals from women their own resources, which they need for their sustenance. It destroys the social networks and thus atomizes them.'<sup>6</sup>

The division of labour leads to gender typing and compartmentalization. This differentiation results in discrimination and institutionalization of such discriminatory behaviour. 'There takes place progressive elaboration of an ideology which rationalizes the shift from differentiation to discrimination and institutionalizes it by means of customs, rituals and religious perceptions.'<sup>7</sup> These roles of wife/mother/daughter, assigned to woman, progressively tie her down to the home, which reduces her chances of wider participation in the economic, political or religious arenas. With the gender difference, women's lesser participation is taken for granted.

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<sup>6</sup> Mies Maria, Veronika Bennholt Thomsen & Clandia Von Welhof (ed.) (1988), **Women: The Last Colony**, New Delhi: Kali for Women, p.9.

<sup>7</sup> Suryakumari, A (1990), 'Women in India - Beyond Inequality and Exploitation,' in Devasia, Leelamma & Devasia, V.V(ed.), **Women in India**, New Delhi: Indian Social Science Institute, p. 22.

This results in reducing employment opportunities for women, and their employment is accorded low payment and low status. Even within the family they are often accorded low status. They are central to the family because they bear children, they take care of the household, provide the basic services to the family besides cooking. Yet majority of women are under-fed, overworked, under-estimated and least cared for.<sup>8</sup> In these roles, most of their work goes 'invisible'. Besides, a gender bias is observed where even the policy documents on education, income, and employment argue that women are not autonomous decision-makers and their decisions are influenced by their husband/father or son. Therefore the policies are made taking family into consideration, assuming that the benefit will trickle down to women from the family. There is a need of 'role definition' at the individual as well as societal level. It is necessary to challenge and not confirm these notions. Woman also requires to be recognized as an individual and not merely as wife or daughter or mother.

- **As a Subaltern Group v/s Not a Monolithic Bloc**

Women form a marginalized group. However women's experiences are structured by caste, class, race/ethnicity, age, etc., and so on, and it is therefore necessary to deconstruct the category. It is necessary to acknowledge that there are relations of power between women. However while accepting that 'women' is not an uniting category, it is suggested that it is a nonetheless the unifying force. Thus the heterogeneity of conditions of being a women results in differences but not necessarily in divisions. There are commonalties of experiences. Women belonging to different groups may have individual experiences, however these experiences are the result of patriarchies, which are intrinsic to the very formation of the categories of class or caste. 'Thus despite caste, class experiences that exist among them at individual levels, women can be identified as also subjected to subordination by common culturally defined and culturally enforced patterns of restrictions.'<sup>9</sup> Thus to understand women's Question it is necessary to understand and synthesize both these strands - the importance of individual experiences and the commonalties of experiences. There is a need to argue for both the universal and the particular - universal particularity, and

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<sup>8</sup> Mayur, Rashmi (1997), 'Women continue to lag behind,' *The Navhind Times*, 8 (March), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Selvy Thiruchandran, (1997), *Ideology, Caste, Class and Gender*, Bangalore, New Delhi: Vikas, p. XI.

visualize women as collective singularity.<sup>10</sup> 'Life may be shaped by multiplicity of differences, differences which may be perceived categorically but lived relationally.'<sup>11</sup>

- **Beneficiaries v/s Human Resource**

Women are often looked upon as targets for development. There is a need to look at them as important participants as well. A difference has to be drawn between practical needs and strategic needs of women. They may be looked upon as beneficiaries in matter of practical needs, like food, clothing, etc. However they also have 'felt needs'. The capacities and potentials of women need to be properly tapped. The strategic needs of women are important as they question the existing gender division of labour, the ideological biases and the patriarchal functioning of the society at large. Women should be seen not as 'outside' the model but should be considered as an 'integral' part of development. Thus welfare state should not be just a set of services, it has also to be a set of ideas about society, about family and about women who have a centrally important role to play in it.<sup>12</sup>

## **Approaches to Understand Status of Women**

The status of women in a society is the true index of its cultural, social and political levels. It is one of the most important criteria for assessing the progress attained by a particular society. The status of women is co-related to the participating rights and obligations of women in managing society. The status of women in a given society can be understood with the help of four different approaches.

### **1) Demographic Indicators**

It can be assessed with the help of demographic indicators. The variables such as sex ratio, fertility and mortality rates, life expectancy, educational level, health, female work participation can give the overall picture of women's relative standing vis-a-vis men. This is a traditional approach of assessing status of women and is useful when used in combination with other approaches.

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<sup>10</sup> Moore, Henrietta (1994), 'Divided we stand: Sex Gender and Sexual Difference,' *Feminist Review*, No. 47, Summer, p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Desai, Neera & Krishna Raj, Maithreyi (1990), *Women and Society in India*, Delhi: Ajanta Publication, p. 5.



## 2) Level of Political Participation

The status of women can be examined by the level of their political participation, their representation and share in decision-making bodies. Higher the level of participation, more are the possibilities of initiation and implementation of policies in favour of women, thus further raising their status. It is observed that political participation of women is dismally low in decision-making bodies world over. An international study shows that women hold just 11.7% of all the seats in Parliaments around the world, and only 7.1% are headed by women.<sup>13</sup>

There are various reasons for low participation of women:

- The existence of gender division of labour which *limits* women role to the domestic sphere, while *extends* men's role to the public world.
- The cultural socialization which views women as being socialized into feminine and non-competitive roles that do not accord with political activity. It upholds the notion that politics is a competitive activity and hence it is meant for men. Thus while understanding gender in politics it is necessary to realize the politics of gender.
- Women usually lack resources like education, employment, social class, political experience, lack of skills, which reduces the bargaining power of women.
- The reluctance of political parties to field women candidates on winnable seats, and failure to mobilize women also affects women's entry in politics.
- A broad-base political participation of women has been severely limited due to various traditional factors such as caste, religion, feudal attitudes and family status. The behavioral code imposed on women by these factors adversely affect women's movements, restricting their role within the four walls of the house. As a result women have been left on the periphery of political life.
- Increasing violence in society has also impaired women from contesting elections. Women cannot compete effectively with men in crimes and gangsterism.<sup>14</sup> The sexual abuse and fear of character assassination also hampers women's participation in politics.

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<sup>13</sup> 'Only 7% parliamentarians world-wide headed by women,' (1997), **Herald**, 14 (Feb).

<sup>14</sup> Kishwar, Madhu (1996), 'Women and Politics Beyond Quotas,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 26 (October), p.2874.

### 3) Impact of Developmental Programmes

The status of women can be measured by studying their involvement in development. This approach has been widely used in developing countries. It emphasizes on the extent to which women have been assimilated in the nation's developmental programmes and the impact of developmental policies on women. With globalization most of the developing countries have gone for Structural Adjustment Programme. This has resulted in rise in prices, the substantial cuts in public expenditure, privatization of state enterprise, devaluation of currency which has worst hit the women.(refer Table 1.1) It has pushed back the already marginalized groups which include poor women. The purchasing power of the households have declined while the economic burden on women has increased. Thus development is viewed by some feminists as a new project of western patriarchy and is called '*mal-development*'. 'While gender subordination and patriarchy are the oldest forms of oppression, they have taken new and more violent forms through the project of development.'<sup>15</sup> Jill Cottrell views that women, in addition to fighting against age old discriminatory practices inflicted upon them by male dominated societies, now find

TABLE 1.1  
IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMME ON WOMEN

1. Cut in food subsidy and increased food price	This has decreased consumption of family, lead to deprivation of nutrition to women and children.
2. Cut in social expenditure	More work hours for compensation, which increases pressure on women.
3. Retrenchment of workers in formal/organized sector	Pressure on unorganized sector displacing women
4. Efficiency mechanization, upgradation of technology.	Retrenchment of unskilled and casual workers - women workers.
5. Privatization	Women are not preferred as they have to be given additional benefits
6. Surplus supply of women labour	Fall in women's wages
7. Increased productivity	More working hours for women
8. Incentives on assets (land, capital etc.)	No benefit to women as they do not own assets

(Source: Dr. Manjula Chakravarty (1998), 'Economic reforms: For or Against Women', **Social Welfare**, Vol.45, No. 1, ( April), p. 4.)

<sup>15</sup> Vandhana Shiva (1988), **Staying Alive**, New Delhi: Kali for Women, p. 2.

themselves pitted against new challenges posed by economic and development forces. They are likely to be subjected to even harsher conditions of survival under the structural adjustment programmes imitated by many developing countries.<sup>16</sup> Thus women have lost ground relative to men as development has proceeded.

#### **4) Directly confronting the issues that affect women**

The status of women in a given society can also be assessed by directly confronting the issues affecting women. Women suffer from violence, though the degree may differ from society to society. This violence may take the form of rape, sexual abuse, prostitution, trafficking, wife battering, sexual harassment at work place, violence in the family, obscenity, female circumcision, etc. The increasing violence against women has led women to organize themselves. Thus the research interest in studying women has extended from the concern with women in decision-making to the women's struggle in other arenas. Two trends have emerged regarding question of women's problem<sup>17</sup>: (i) One which locates the definition of the problem in the experiences of women involved in organizations and groups, mainly urban based, drawing their support from middle class segment of the society. It looks at issues which are specific to women. (ii) The second trend draws from the experiences of women in mass struggle where the thrust of struggle has been towards issues concerning both male as well as female of the society. The study of the degree of violence, number of issues, and quality and intensity of women's struggle can reflect on status of women in the society.

### **Empowerment of Women**

The above approaches not only reflect on the status of women in a given society, but also suggest strategies to empower women. Empowerment of women is defined in various ways. Moore defines it as power to make decision or resist decisions made by others which affect them.<sup>18</sup> According to Margaret Stacey and

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<sup>16</sup> Cottrell, Jill (1994), 'Women, Human Rights and Environment,' **The Administrator**, (April-June), Vol. XXXIX, p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Patel, Sujata (1991), 'Women's Spaces within Mass Struggle,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 5-12 (January), p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Moore, Henrietta op. cit. , 85.

Marion Price the notion undoubtedly has to do with the ability of an individual or group to influence the course of events in the direction they desire even against resistance by others.<sup>19</sup> Empowerment thus refers to development of skills and abilities in women to decide upon, and undertake actions which they believe are essential for their well-being. There are four components to empowerment:<sup>20</sup> (i) economic independence, (ii) possession of knowledge, (iii) self image and (iv) autonomy. The two important dimensions involved are (a) the extent of control they have over their personal lives and (b) what role they perform in the economic and political arenas, and how effectively they play it.

Empowerment of women demands:

- Affirmative action for women's equal participation at all levels of decision making
- Mainstreaming women's perspectives and women's issues in all policies, and plans.
- Identifying women's needs and priorities while framing development programmes and encouraging direct involvement of women in such programmes.
- Effective utilization of human capital potential of women.
- Support to women NGOs in addressing women's issues and rights.
- Sensitization and advocacy for gender just society.

Thus empowerment of women emphasizes on creation of environment which will promote equality between women and men.

### **Beijing Conference: A Move Towards Women's Empowerment**

The fourth United Nations World Conference of women held at Beijing in 1995 lobbied actively on several macro issues of concern to women all over the world. The decision to hold the conference flowed primarily from the momentum generated by the three earlier women's conferences and the United Nations Decade for women(1976-1985), which gave international expression to and support for

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<sup>19</sup> Margaret Stacey & Marion Price (1981), *Women, Power and Politics*, London & New York: Tavistock, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Pinto, Marina (1995), 'Development through Empowerment of Women in India,' *Kurukshetra*, August), Vol. XLIII, No. 11, p. 9.

national women's movement around the globe. These movements had a profound effect on the recent cycle of world conferences, from the children's Summit in New York, where the special needs of the girl-child were emphasized; to Rio, where the Earth Summit articulated the pressing need for recognition of women's central role in sustainable development; to Vienna, where special emphasis was put on the equal rights of women; to Copenhagen, which underscored the central role that women have to play in combating poverty; to Cairo and, later, Istanbul, where women's right to control over decisions affecting their health, families and homes was affirmed. All of these conferences prepared the way for the Beijing Conference, helping to break new ground in the struggle for equal rights and a central role for women in decision-making at all levels of society. The Beijing Declaration embodied the commitment of the international community to the advancement of women and implementation of the Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. The action plan set time-specific targets, committing nations to carry out concrete actions in such areas as health, education, decision-making and legal reforms with the ultimate goal of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in both public and private life. It emphasized on enhancement of social, economic and political empowerment of women, improvement of their health and their access to relevant education and promote their reproductive rights.

Beijing conference was of strategic importance:-

- Firstly, it emphasized the crucial link between the advancement of women and the progress of society as a whole. It clearly reaffirmed that societal issues must be addressed from a gender perspective in order to ensure sustainable development.
- Secondly, it passed on the message that the issues affecting women were global and universal.
- Thirdly, it drew the attention and sought commitment of the governments to promote women's issues. Governments and UN agreed to promote the 'mainstreaming' of a gender perspective in policies and programmes.
- Fourthly, and more importantly, it strengthened the belief that women of the world can reach to consensus on major issues affecting women, keeping aside their 'differences'.

## **National Scenario**

The Constitution of India assures the women in India, the right to equality, freedom, dignity and justice. Art. 14. guarantees justice - social, economic and political as well as equality before law, and ensures non discrimination on the basis of sex. Art. 15(3) empowers the State to make special provisions for the promotion of the welfare and development of women. The directive principles of state policy also strive to give equality to women, emphasizing equal pay for equal work, uniform civil code, etc. Various laws are made to protect women from exploitation, there are anti-rape laws and anti-dowry laws. The state has assumed for itself the welfare function and has provided various schemes for women. In spite of all these efforts, there remains a glaring difference between rhetoric and reality.

The demographic variables indicates that women is the most disadvantaged group in India. As per the all India Census 1991, the female sex ratio is 927, the literacy rate is 39.29% and work participation of women is 22.3%. Women constitute only 14.8% of the total workforce in the organized sector, and 7.5% jobs in the central government. Besides, a large amount of work of women is regarded as 'invisible'. The work carried out by a housewife is never considered by the statisticians. Thus equality in professional sphere is a myth. Only 2.3% of women are in administrative and managerial positions. Poor working conditions, low wages, lack of unionism, and dismissal on flimsy grounds such as marriage and childbirth, have further worsened the conditions of women workers. However the policy makers as well as social analysts have neglected to examine the implications of the demographic trends.

The political participation of women in India is very low. On an average, women's representation in Lok Sabha, from 1952 to 1996, has been 6% and in Rajya Sabha is 10.3 %. The representation of women at state legislative assemblies is also very poor. Thus there exists a large gap between symbolism and actuality. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments, which have enforced 33% reservation for women in local government, has been a major attempt to fill in this gaps. However whether women will be able to avail of this opportunity would largely depend on the availability of other enabling structures in the society.

TABLE 1.2

## WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT 1952-1996

YEAR	LOK SABHA			RAJYASABHA		
	SEATS	WOMEN MPs	%OF WOMEN MPs	SEATS	WOMEN MPs	%OF WOMEN MPs
1952	499	22	4.4	219	16	7.3
1957	500	27	5.4	237	18	7.5
1962	503	34	6.8	238	18	7.6
1967	523	31	5.9	240	20	8.3
1971	521	22	4.2	243	17	7.0
1977	544	19	3.4	244	25	10.2
1980	544	28	7.9	244	24	9.8
1984	544	44	8.1	244	28	11.4
1989	517	27	5.3	245	24	9.7
1991	544	39	7.2	245	38	15.5
1996	543	39	7.2	223	20	9.0
Average	526	30	6.0	238	23	10.3

(Source: Fact File; Sep. 1997; Seminar; 457; pg. 51)

TABLE 1.3

## Women Representation in State Legislatures 1952-1997( % of women MLAs )

State	1952	1957	1960- 65	1967- 69	1970- 75	1977- 78	1979- 83	1984- 88	1989- 92	1993- 97	State Avg.
Andhra Pradesh	2.9	3.7	3.3	3.8	9.1	3.4	4.1	3.4	3.7	2.7	4.0
Arunachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	3.3	6.7	3.3	3.3	3.3
Assam	0.5	4.6	3.8	4.0	7.0	0.8	0.8	4.0	4.0	4.8	3.2
Bihar	3.6	9.4	7.9	2.2	3.8	4.0	3.7	4.6	2.8	3.4	4.3
Goa	-	-	-	6.7	3.3	3.3	0.0	0.0*	5.0	10.0	4.3
Gujarat	-	-	8.4	4.8	3.2	NE	2.7	8.8	2.2	1.1	4.2
Haryana	-	-	-	7.4	6.2	4.4	7.8	5.6	6.7	4.4	6.2
Himachal Pradesh	0.0	-	-	0.0	5.9	1.5	4.4	4.4	5.9	4.4	3.6
Jammu & Kashmir	-	NE	0.0	0.0	5.3	1.3	0.0	1.3	NE	2.3	1.5
Karnataka	2.0	8.7	8.7	3.2	5.1	4.0	0.9	3.6	4.5	3.1	4.5
Kerala	0.0	4.8	3.9	0.8	1.5	0.7	3.2	5.7	5.7	9.3	3.6
Madhya Pradesh	2.1	10.8	4.9	3.4	5.4	3.1	5.6	9.7	3.4	3.8	5.1
Maharashtra	1.9	6.3	4.9	3.3	9.3	2.8	6.6	5.6	2.1	3.8	4.7
Manipur	-	NE	NE	0.0	0.0	NE	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.3
Meghalaya	-	-	-	-	1.7	1.7	0.0	3.3	NE	1.7	1.7
Mizoram	-	-	-	-	0.0	3.3	3.3	2.5	0.0	0.0	1.4
Nagaland	-	-	0.0	0.0	NE	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.5
Orissa	9.6	3.6	1.4	3.6	1.4	4.8	3.4	6.1	4.8	5.4	4.0
Punjab	2.2	5.8	5.2	1.0	5.8	2.6	5.1	3.4	5.1	6.0	4.0
Rajasthan	0.0	5.1	4.5	3.3	7.1	4.0	5.0	8.0	5.5	4.5	4.8
Sikkim	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	0.0	6.3	3.1	2.3
Tamil Nadu	0.3	5.9	3.9	1.7	2.1	0.9	2.1	3.4	9.0	3.8	3.6
Tripura	-	NE	NE	0.0	3.3	1.7	6.7	3.3	NE	1.7	3.0
Uttar Pradesh	1.2	5.8	4.4	2.8	5.9	2.6	5.6	7.3	3.3	4.0	4.1
West Bengal	0.8	3.6	4.8	2.9	1.6	1.4	2.4	4.4	7.1	6.8	3.4
Delhi	4.2	-	NE	NE	7.1	7.1	7.1	NE	NE	4.3	5.9
	-	-	6.7	3.3	0.0	0.0	3.3	3.3	1.7	3.3	2.6
	1.8	6.3	4.9	2.9	4.4	2.8	3.8	5.3	4.5	4.0	4.0

(Source: Fact File; Sep. 1997; Seminar; 457; pg. 51)

'The policy of economic development which relies heavily on high technology, multinational collaborations, export promotion and encouragement to private sector has led to higher degree of concentration of capital and extremely exploitative relations of production having serious implications for women.'<sup>21</sup> In order to effect the advancement and empowerment of women and bring about improvement in their status the government has floated various schemes for women like, Indira Mahila Yojna, Development of Women and children in Rural Areas, Mahilla Samriddhi Yojna, etc. However, these superfluous attempts cannot hide the drudgery of women in India. The lack of access to land, capital and technology has further worsen the position of women in India. These resources are crucial because they can enhance one's potentials to contribute to the development of society. They can also improve the quality of life. Land is crucial determinant of economic well-being, social status and political power. Therefore when titles are distributed by the government, they should also be given in the name of women. 'There is substantial evidence that economic resources in the hands of male household members often do not benefit female members in equal degree. Independent ownership of such resources, particularly land, can be of crucial importance in promoting the well-being and empowerment of women.'<sup>22</sup> There is need of improvement of de jure access to land by women and access to credit.

There is evidence of increasing violence against women in India. Violence erupts in the form of Sati, rape, dowry, alcoholism, sexual exploitation at workplace, the derogatory treatment in media, etc. According to the study of National Commission for Women about 50% working women in the country have faced mental or physical harassment and discrimination. According to another survey a woman is harassed by her husband and in-laws every 50 minutes and 17 dowry deaths are reported everyday.<sup>23</sup> A report stated that from January to April 1998, 3,832 women were raped in different parts of the country and 5,923 were molested.(these are the cases registered, a large number of cases go unregistered).<sup>24</sup> The Union Home Minister, Lal Khrishna Advani revealed in Lok Sabha that 1,95, 436 people were arrested for committing offences against women in 1996. From these, only 32,362

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<sup>21</sup> Desai, Neera & Krishna Raj, Maithreyi. *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Agarwal, B. (1994), *A Field of One's Own Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 572.

<sup>23</sup> 'Dowry Deaths,' (1999), *The Navhind Times*, 22(April), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Bhatnagar, Rakesh (1998), 'Violence against women,' *The Times of India*, 4 (August).



were convicted by the court of law, 1,63,074 of the accused were left off for any reason including benefit of doubt or want of evidence against them.<sup>25</sup> These problems of women have given rise to women's struggle and growth of various autonomous women's groups. These groups like Saheli, Maitrini, Manushi, Vimochana, Chingari, have the nomenclatures which suggests women's solidarity. They take up various issues and follow varied strategies. The role played by these groups is important as they can hold the government, and society at large, accountable for the commitments made for the betterment of women. They have credentials to be heard as women's voice for better society.

Thus women form the disadvantaged group in India, in all areas, social, economic or political. They continue to remain almost invisible in the power structures. Various reasons can be attributed to the neglect of women's question in India:<sup>26</sup>

- The urban middle class bias among the planners, academics, political parties, and trade unions alike.
- Ignorance of the diversity and plurality that characterizes woman's roles.
- Problems and priorities across classes, communities and religions.
- Influence of theories of social change and development and intellectual tools borrowed from west which are inappropriate for an understanding of a complex society like India's.
- Failure of women's movement to articulate the problems of all classes of women.

There is a need of implementing drastic measures to improve women's position in India. There is need of involving women in playing a significant role in the affairs of the state. They should participate in decision-making and contribute to solving the problems of national development.

A striking feature which requires to be noted is that though overall status of women in India is low, it varies from state to state. Within the Indian sub-continent there are variations in the status of women, diverging according to cultural milieu, family structures, class, caste, property rights and morals.<sup>27</sup> Also different picture of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Mazumdar, Vina (1985), 'Emergence of Women's Question in India and Role of Women's Studies,' Occasional paper, No. 7, New Delhi: Centre for Women's Study.

<sup>27</sup> Thapper, Romila, quoted in Desai, Neera & Krishna Raj Maithreyi, op. cit., p. 24.

women may emerge from its prescriptive section and the core section and there may be dichotomy between the two in the same region.<sup>28</sup> For example, the overall literacy rate in Kerala is 90% with 86% female literacy and has a matrilineal tradition, yet the representation of women in state legislative assembly is much lower than in Rajasthan where women live far more restricted lives in aggressively patriarchal families.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, in the state of Manipur, which has a tradition of women playing a dominant role in family and community, the political participation of women is very low. For that matter, even the caste hierarchies influence the status of women. The upper caste women are more likely to be restricted within the private realm, mainly because the patriarchal hold is more strong in upper caste families, while on the other hand the schedule caste women are more prone to societal violence. Studies need to be conducted to understand the variance in the position of women and to explore ways and means to bring women in the mainstream of political helm. More of such studies will help in comparative evaluation and building up strategies for increasing participation of women. The present study looks at women's participation through the case study of Goa.

### **Women, Political Power And The State In Goa**

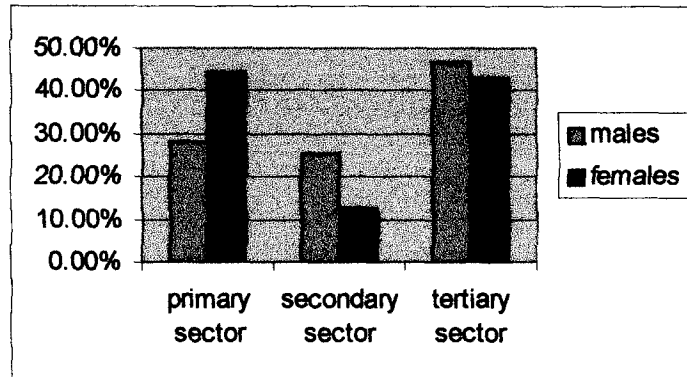
Goa was liberated from Portuguese rule in 1961 and became the 25<sup>th</sup> state of India in 1987. It has an area of 3701 sq. km. It is divided into two Districts, North Goa and South Goa, and has 11 Talukas. The total population of the state, as per the census 1991, was 1169793. The sex ratio is 967 females for 1000 males. The total literacy in the state is 75.5%, male literacy is 83.64% while female literacy is 67.09%. The urban literacy for females is 73.38%, while the rural literacy is 62.87%. Goa has one primary school for every 2.9 sq. km, one secondary school for every 9.36 sq. Km, and one higher secondary school for every 60.68 sq. Km, the highest for any state in India. The life expectancy in Goa is 66.6% as against 54.7% for all India. Goa has good transport system and communication network. The villages in Goa have sufficient supply of electricity and water, and even telephones have reached to these villages. Work participation of women reflects that they are more employed in

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<sup>28</sup> Desai Neera & Krishna Raj, Maithereyi, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Kishwar, M. (1998), 'Women's Marginal Role in Politics,' in Subrata Mukherjee (ed.) **Political Science Annual 1997, Special Volume on India** at 50, New Delhi: Deep and Deep, p. 361.

**TABLE 1.4**  
**WORK PARTICIPATION IN GOA**



primary sector, as agricultural labourers, and in tertiary sector which refers to food processing, pig rearing, fishing, cashew industry etc. Goa is a coastal area, and one of the main occupations of Goans is fishing. Women are employed in this sector which remains largely unorganized.

The position of women in Goa is better than their counterparts in the neighbouring states of Karnataka or Maharashtra. The literacy ratio of women in Goa is comparatively high, 67.09%. While there is lot of discussion and debates going on to introduce Uniform Civil Code in the country, in Goa the Uniform Civil Code that already exists, has placed Goan women in a far better position than their counterparts elsewhere in India. Since Goa is small there are wider employment opportunities for women. Today women in Goa are proud of the fact that they have achieved some degree of equality with men. They receive a better treatment in the society and have access to higher education. The right to inheritance granted to women, on par with men, ensures them a greater measure of social security.

However very few women have appeared on political scene in Goa. Only 8 women have so far been elected to the Goa's legislative assembly ever since the first elections in 1963. Ms Urminda Mascarenhas was the first women elected to the legislative assembly in the elections held in 1963. She was fielded by United Goans Party. The other women elected to various elections to legislative assembly were Ms L Miranda, Ms Shashikala Kakodkar, Ms Farrel Furtado, Ms Fatima D'Sa, Ms Sangita Porob, Ms Victoria Fernandes and Nirmala Sawant. Ms Sanyogita Rane is the only woman to have represented Goa in Parliament. Ms Shashikala Kakodkar, has achievements which requires mention. She is the only women candidate of MGP

TABLE 1.5

## Representation of women in the Goa Legislative Assembly (1963-1999)

Years/terms of Assembly	Total seats	Males	Females	Percentage of Females of Total
1963-67	30	29	1	3.33
1967-72	30	28	2	6.66
1972-77	30	29	1	3.33
1977-80	30	29	1	3.33
1980-84	30	30	-	Nil
1984-89	30	27	3(nominated)	10
1989-94	40	38	2	5
1994-99	40	36	4	10

(Source: Compiled from the Goa Legislative Assembly records)

(Maharastrawadi Gomantak Party), who has been elected to the legislative assembly. She has represented three different constituencies, and has been elected to the assembly for six times. She was the first women minister and later the first women chief minister of Goa. The highest number of women candidates were elected in 1994 elections. They were four women, three of whom had short tenure as ministers.

The most important cause for low political representation of women in Goa is the failure of the political parties in motivating them to take active part in politics. Political parties routinely exclude women from decision-making positions, resist nominating them as candidates, and deny them adequate campaign support. A close look at the membership of political parties reflects that Congress party has been able to attract more women towards it. It has its separate wing for women. It has been fielding more than one woman candidate in elections. The regional party, Maharastrawadi Gomantak Party, though dominated by a woman leader, Ms Shashikala Kakodkar, for six consecutive years, has been gender blind.

On the social front, women in Goa enjoy more social mobility. The trend of late marriages give ample opportunities to a woman to have access to higher education, go for a job(which gives some economic independence), and develop her extra curricular interests. Further, the trend of nuclear families, with two to three children (in 1996 the birth rate was only 17.82%) has reduced drudgery of household responsibilities. Also, women in the family are consulted on important matters.

Though violence against women is less as compared to other parts of the country, women in Goa are victims of violence. On an average 8 to 13 rapes per annum are reported to the police in Goa.<sup>30</sup> The major crime against women committed is domestic torture, and the causes for this is greed for dowry and the scourge of alcoholism.

TABLE 1.6  
REGISTERED CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN GOA

Year	Rape	Molestation	Eve teasing	Dowry deaths	Torture of married women	Kidnapping	Abatement to commit suicide	Total
1999	18	27	3	3	10	6	5	72

(Source: As recorded by Readers Branch, Police Head Quarters, Panaji: Goa)

TABLE 1.7  
CASES REGISTERED UNDER SECTION 498(a) IN GOA

Year	Cases reported	Charge sheeted	Pending trial	Closed	Convicted	Person arrested
1994	16	8	4	8	1	17
1995	13	6	4	7	-	16
1996	13	10	8	3	1	28
1997	8	6	6	2	-	19
1998	10	6	6	4	-	15

(Note: Section 498 (a) deals with the cases of harassment of a married woman either by her husband, or husband's relatives with an intention to get financial or other benefit from her.)

{Source: 'Goa needs Women's Cell,' (1999), **Herald (Insight)**, 24 (July) p. I}

While assessing the status of women in Goa, it is also necessary to understand the intra-regional variance, which results due to differences in the level of education, the caste and religious affiliations and the degree of impact of Portuguese rule. Thus women in areas like villages of Pernem taluka are likely to be less assertive, as they have low access to education, have less developed transport and communication systems, and patriarchal hold in the villages of this taluka is more. However women in Bardez taluka, which is though in neighbourhood of Pernem, are better placed in this regard. The colonial impact also has influenced the status of women in Goa. Women in *Velha Conquistas* are well placed as they could benefit from various reforms introduced by the colonial rule. The *Nova Conquistas* continued to be

<sup>30</sup> As per the Statistics available with the Readers Branch, Police Head Quarters, Panaji: Goa.

governed by their traditions and customs, which adversely affected position of women in these areas. Thus the study of position of women in Goa assumes major significance. The present study analyzes the position of women in Goa by looking at their participation at various levels.

## **Reasons for Study**

The state of Goa has been chosen for the study because of the following reasons:-

### **1. Impact of the colonial legacy**

Goa has had a long colonial history. While the British ruled India for barely 200 years, Portuguese ruled Goa for nearly 450 years. Thus the impact of the Portuguese domination, in political and socio-cultural terms, has been deeper as compared with the impact of the British domination in India. Portuguese introduced various reforms like ban on Sati and child marriage, promoted widow remarriage and education for women. Goa, unlike the rest of India, has a Uniform Civil Code. The laws with regards to property, inheritance, marriage and divorce have given women legal equality on par with men. This has had a significant impact on the social status of women in Goa. Goan culture is a synthesis of traditional and western values. It has absorbed elements of various cultures, from Satvahanas to Kadambas, from Muslim rulers and was tremendously influenced by the Portuguese rule. Different class, caste and creed groups have mixed and mingled together.

### **2. Economic transformation of Goan society:**

Goan society is undergoing an economic transformation from agriculture and fishing to industry. The extractive industry is major development that has taken place in the post colonial period. The Fourth Economic Census (EC-98), was conducted in Goa from May to June 1998, covering both agricultural (excluding crop production and plantation) and non agricultural activities. The total number of enterprises in all the eleven talukas of the state is 72,577 of which 42,729 are in North Goa, and 29,848 are in South Goa.<sup>31</sup> The total number of workers employed are 2.42 lakhs, out of which 1.80 lakhs are adult males while 0.59 are females. Industrialization has resulted

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<sup>31</sup> '72,577 enterprises in Goa, says the Fourth Economic Census,' **The Navhind Times**, 31(October), p.5.

in both positive as well as negative impact on women in Goa. It has created more employment opportunities, though it has adversely affected primary and tertiary sector, where women are employed on a larger scale. Also, it has affected the ecosystem, damaging paddy fields, and increasing shortage of water and electricity, which have resulted in increasing burden of development on women.

### 3. Fast growing Tourism:

The cultural contact with the West is significant because of tourism. However the increasing visit of tourists to Goa has resulted in increasing the cost of living in Goa. Furthermore, the image of women in Goa has taken a beating at the hands of advertisers. Also growing industrialization and tourism have resulted in an increase in crimes committed against women in Goa.

### 4. Migration:

Migration is another factor which has influenced women's position in Goa, especially of Catholic women. Before liberation, quite a sizable number of men migrated to other Portuguese colonies, specially South Africa. The present trend is, most of them have migrated to Gulf Countries. According to a conservative estimate there are over 80,000 Goans working in Gulf countries who remit over Rs. 250 crores a year to their families in Goa.<sup>32</sup> The migration of male members in the family has led to tremendous influence and change in life of female family members. The male members send a significant portion of their earnings to their families, which has helped in social, economic, educational and health aspects of the family members. This has also led to female dominated families, where women control the spending and investment of the valuables, and decides how to manage their property, their children's education and their family consumption. It has led to confidence building in these women.

Migration of Goan men for higher studies or in search of jobs in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay has also influenced position of women, though subtly, in Goa. The

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<sup>32</sup> Keni, Chandrakant (1999), 'Policy of Arabisation, a threat to Goa,' *The Navhind Times*, 8 (October), p.5.

social mobility enjoyed by the women in these cities, has had positive impact on the minds of people, which has resulted in granting larger space and scope for women in Goa.

#### 5. Active participation of women in different arenas:

A general look at the various major events and women's participation in it, right from the liberation struggle to date, women have been very vocal in Goa. Thus they actively participated in freedom struggle and the opinion poll, have raised their voice against mechanization of fishing industry, setting up of golf courses, denial of licenses to shacks, or in medium of language issue which would jeopardize their children's future.

Study of women's participation in decision making and development in Goa, thus is an issue of major concern, which has so far remain totally unexplored.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- The study looks at the impact of the colonial legacy, the legal system, the cultural synthesis and the forces of economic transformation on sex and gender role of women in Goan politics.
- It investigates the political role of women by using certain statistical indicators like education, income, occupational status, parental status and age which influence participation. It studies participation of women at different levels, it looks at women as political agents/participants in the political process.
- It critically evaluates the role carried out by women as activists. It looks at the functioning of women NGOs in Goa in attending to women in distress and analyzes the extent to which they are successful in mounting campaigns for reforms or redress.
- It looks at the impact of the State policies of development on women in Goa. Have these policies benefited women, or have led to their further victimization is an area of concern.



## **Chapter Classification**

The study is divided into five chapters. **Chapter II : Women as Freedom Fighters**, studies the role played by women in Goa's Liberation Struggle. Women in Goa vigorously participated in the liberation struggle. They attended morchas, meetings, and even went to jail for the cause of liberation. The Portuguese colonialism while it benefited women also sow the seeds for its own demise in that it awakened women to the goal of liberation. The participation of women in the liberation created a tradition of female involvement in politics in Goa.

**Chapter III : Women as Voters**, analyzes voting behaviour of women in Goa. Voting is an important component of political participation. A simple act of voting can lead to the replacement of governments. This chapter studies the influence of factors like socio-economic status, religious affiliation, educational standards, occupation, age, family influence on the voting behaviour of women.

**Chapter IV : Women as Grassroots Leaders**, deals with role played by women at Panchayat level. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments which made 33% reservation for women mandatory at the grassroots level have given an opportunity to women to occupy important leadership positions. This chapter draws the socio-economic profile of the women panchas. Further, it probes into various questions such as:- Has the entry of woman in grassroots politics made her more assertive? Have they been able to bring about significant changes in grassroots politics? Has it resulted in bringing about qualitative change in the lives of these women? These and other questions are studied in detail in this chapter.

**Chapter V : Women as Activists**, deals with the role of women NGOs in Goa. The discrimination against women, both in private as well as in public, the patriarchal domination, and increasing violence in the society has led women to organize themselves to bring about desired change. A sizable number of women NGOs has made their headway in Goa. This chapter looks at the functioning of one of the major organizations in Goa, *Bailancho Saad*. It critically evaluates its structures, decision-making process, mode of functioning and examines various strategies adopted by it from time to time.

**Chapter VI : Women as Welfare Beneficiaries**, looks at the impact of the State policies of development on women in Goa. The welfare role of the state has compelled it to take the initiative towards uplift of the marginalized groups. Thus

state has implemented some programmes for women's development. Have the women benefited from such policies and programmes is the main purpose of study in this chapter. It deals in length with the implementation of Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme in Goa.

## **Methodology**

The emphasis in data collection for the study was mainly on field work, though secondary sources have also been explored. The method of interaction and observation has been of immense assistance in the field work. The data for chapter II, is mainly composed of the narration of women freedom fighters. It was a difficult task to trace their whereabouts, as some of them are dead while most of them are forgotten.

Data for Chapter III and IV is based on Survey analysis. For chapter III- Women as Voters, survey was conducted in Quepem Taluka in South Goa, while for Chapter IV- Women as Grassroots Leaders, survey was conducted in Bardez Taluka of North Goa. Quepem is situated in *Nova Conquistas* while Bardez comes in *Velha Conquistas*. It is generally observed that the women from *Velha Conquistas* are better placed than those in the *Nova Conquistas*, as the impact of Portuguese rule was felt more by the former. Thus the study of two different talukas in two districts and in two different *Conquistas* was expected to throw deeper insight in political participation of women in Goa.

Chapter V is mainly based on the observations made in the meetings of Bailancho Saad, and interviews held with its members. The leaflets of the organization have been used in assessing the role of the NGO.

Data for Chapter VI was collected through the technique of personal interviews with officials of different departments of the State. Tiswadi Taluka was chosen through the random method of drawing a lot to study the Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme. The Case Study of the Beneficiaries was the method used in this chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### WOMEN AS FREEDOM FIGHTERS

**‘Most recognized Freedom Fighters may be male, but the story of the other half is no less stirring.’ Manohar Rai Sardessai<sup>1</sup>**

The growth of political involvement of women in Goa can be traced back to Goa’s liberation struggle. Women played a laudable role in this struggle. They came out in sizable numbers to fight against Portuguese colonial rule. They offered *satyagraha*, were beaten up by the Portuguese police, and were jailed. But this could not deter them from fighting for liberation. It is interesting to note, and this is paradoxical, that before the Portuguese rule in Goa the position of women in Goa was more unequal than it became as a result of Portuguese rule. Portuguese brought in remarkable changes in the position of women such as abolition of Sati, ban on child marriage, encouragement of widow-remarriage, etc. This progress led to an awakening in Goan women who rose against Portuguese rule. Thus Portuguese colonialism while benefiting women, also sowed the seeds of its own demise in that it awakened women to the goal of liberation.

#### **Status of Women in Goa before the Portuguese rule**

The position of women in Goa before the advent of the Portuguese was the same as that of their counterparts elsewhere in India. The Goan society was essentially Indian and it practiced almost all the customs and traditions of the Hindu society as in other parts of India.<sup>2</sup> A glance at the ancient literature reflects the inferior treatment given to women by men. Women were considered as fickle by nature and given to sensual enjoyment only. The emphasis was laid on *stridharma* - which referred to fidelity and loyalty with which a married woman served her husband and her family. There was prevalence of polygamy, Sati, and child marriage. Women in Goa had a grossly inferior position before the coming of the Portuguese. ‘They were exploited, taken for granted, suppressed and subjected to cruel rules and

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<sup>1</sup> Sardesai, Manohar Rai (1997), ‘Remembering Freedom’s Her Story,’ *Goa Today*, (August), p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Xavier, P.D (1993), *Goa-A Social History*, Goa: Prabhakar Bhide Prakashan, p. 159.

unreasonable customs.<sup>3</sup> Society was patriarchal. Women lacked individuality in the male dominated family. They were considered as property that could be disposed off. There was a bias against women right from the time of birth. The birth of a girl child was unwelcome while the birth of a boy was a case for rejoicing. A girl was a burden on the family. Her contribution to the household work and to family income was ignored. The dowry system was prevalent.<sup>4</sup> However the girl hardly got the benefit of this dowry. It was taken away by her husband's family. They demanded much more beyond the capacities of the girl's family. Further, since the girl was married with the giving of dowry, she could not henceforth claim her share in her parental property. Child marriages were popular and this led to early maternity which affected the health of the women. *Sati pratha*<sup>5</sup> was existent. From the accounts of a traveler, the Italian Pietro Della Valle, who visited Goa in 1623, from Tome Pires's *Suma Oriental*, and the Jesuit Account of 1548, it is evident that Sati was practiced in Goa.<sup>6</sup> The archaeological findings also reports a large number of Sati-stones of different designs in many places in Goa.<sup>7</sup> Widow remarriage was not permitted. Women lacked education which further exacerbated their inferior position. Neither the Kadambas nor the Vijaynagar rulers who ruled Goa for a considerable period, did anything to alleviate the suffering of women.<sup>8</sup> With the coming of the Muslim rulers, the status of women suffered a further setback. They were confined to the four walls of the house. *Purdah* affected women from receiving education, curtailed their movement outside the home and hampered their social participation. However the observance of practice of *purdah* was largely influenced by the socio-economic background and social context. The Hindu women also observed *purdah*. It was a part of Indian culture to separate the two sexes so as to restrict the sexual relationships within the approvals of the society. Thus women had a secondary position vis-a-vis to men. They were burdened with duties without any rights. Child marriages, female

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<sup>3</sup> Silva Gracias, Fatima da (1996), *Kaleidoscope of Women in Goa*, New Delhi: Concept, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> According to Jacky Goody and S.J. Tambiah, Dowry referred to wealth given with the daughter at her marriage for the couple to use as the nucleus of their conjugal estate. It stressed the notion of female property, *Stridhanam*, and female rights to property. It meant transfer of property at a marriage as a sort of pre-mortem inheritance.

(Source: Goody, Jacky & Tambiah, S.J. (1973), *Bridewealth and Dowry*, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 63)

<sup>5</sup> Sati Pratha referred to the practice of burning of the wife in the pry of her dead husband.

<sup>6</sup> Xavier, P.D (1993), op. cit. pp. 164-165.

<sup>7</sup> Gune, V.T(ed.) (1979), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory, Part I, Goa, Daman & Diu*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Xavier, P.D (1993), op. cit., p.160.

infanticide, polygamy, purdah, Sati, strict widow-hood and the denial of education, and of ownership of property, confined the women to the four walls of the house.

### **Advent and Expansion of Portuguese rule in Goa**

Portuguese established their rule in Goa in 1510. Goa was then under the rule of Adil Shah of Bijapur, who was at war with the Hindu King of Vijaynagar. A Governor of the King of Vijaynagar sought the help of Albuquerque, the Portuguese sea Captain, to conquer Goa from Bijapur. In 1510, the Island of Goa or Ilhas was captured from Adil Shah of Bijapur. In 1543 Salcete and Bardez were conquered. Ilhas, Salcete and Bardez, together comprising of 113 sq. miles, were known as '*Velha Conquistas*'. These three parts of current day Goa came into contact with the Portuguese much before the rest of Goa, and, as a result were strongly influenced by Portuguese institutions and culture. The rest of Goa, known as '*Novas Conquistas*', came into Portuguese hands only at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Portuguese captured Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona in 1763 from chief of Sounda and secured Pernem, Sanquelim, Sattari from the Bhonsles of Sawantwadi during 1781-1788.

The Portuguese colonial rule and its impact was felt more in the *Velha Conquistas*. Having gained a foothold, the Portuguese conquerors concentrated on stabilizing their domination, and decided upon *denationalization*<sup>9</sup> of Goans as the best method of achieving it by separation of Goans from the rest of the people of India.

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<sup>9</sup> Denationalization referred to the process of robbing the inhabitants of their customs and traditions. There were various restrictions led down by Portuguese rulers like:

- The neo converts were not to make use of musical instruments during wedding ceremonies
- They were not to recite *ovios* during any ceremony.
- Males were not allowed to wear dhoti at home or in public places and women were not to wear cholies.
- No feasts were to be arranged in ceremony of deceased relations
- *The tulsi shrub was not allowed to be planted near the house and if one was found, it was uprooted.*
- All the posts in the government were assigned to people who were Christian convert.
- There was ban imposed on the idols even in the private homes.
- Tax was imposed on *Xendi*, the hairstyle that was prevalent among men in those days.

(Source:- Angle, P. S (1994), *Goa-Concepts and Misconcepts*, Bombay: The Goa Hindu Association)

During the period from 1560 to 1812, Portuguese rule was very autocratic. The *inquisition*<sup>10</sup> in Goa began in 1560 and Aleixo Dias was sent to Goa as the first inquisitor.<sup>11</sup> There was mass conversion by force of Hindus and Muslims to Christianity. Temples and Mosques were burnt down and wealth was confiscated. There was persecution of the local Goan language. All books and scriptures were destroyed. The Portuguese rule was imposed on the Goan people in a tyrannical manner with brutalities, with physical and mental coercion. 'It murdered personality, national pride and dignity. It created a slavish mentality, brought about cultural, political, and economic bankruptcy.'<sup>12</sup> During this period, Portuguese did not invest any capital in Goa. They did not set up any big or small industry except developing manganese and iron, which ore was exported to foreign countries which turned it into iron and steel, for their own needs.<sup>13</sup> There was no means of employment, except agriculture which was grown at subsistence level.<sup>14</sup> The forced conversions also led to migration out of fear, as a result the villages were deserted and the fields were abandoned.<sup>15</sup> It reduced the land revenue and led to decline in trade and commerce. Portuguese drained away wealth of Goa to Portugal. There was the imposition and collection of an exorbitant land revenue. They led to disintegration of the traditional village communities and reduced their self-sufficiency. They promoted forced labour and large scale domestic slavery. At this time Portugal was a poor country and the Royal Exchequer was usually broke.<sup>16</sup> In post-industrial era Portuguese took from India raw materials and dumped finished goods in Goa which affected the art and craft of the region, and further impoverished the people.<sup>17</sup> 'Thus there was mental slavery, religious onslaught, racial prejudice, mass conversions, the inquisition,

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<sup>10</sup> *Inquisition* referred to the establishment of Holy Tribunal to check the tendency of the new converts to Christianity to revert to the practices of their old religion. The Inquisition in Goa punished not only Christians who were suspected of heresy but also Hindus and other non-Christians who were accused of obstructing conversion or infringing some of the laws directed against their religions. The punishment meted out included torture, sentenced to banishment, corporal corrections or the galleys, confiscation of property, subjection to lashes, deportation etc.

(Source: Priolkar, A. K. (1961), *The Goa Inquisition*, Bombay: A. K. Priolkar, pp. 61 & 159 )

<sup>11</sup> Angle, P. S (1994), *Goa-Concepts and Misconcepts*, Bombay: The Goa Hindu Association, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> Menezes Braganca, Berta (1992), *Landmarks in My Time*, Goa: Costa Carvalho House, pp. 27-28.

<sup>13</sup> Telkar, S (1962), *Goa, Yesterday and Today*, Bombay: Telkar Feature service, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Menezes Braganca, Berta (1992), *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>15</sup> Danvers, F.C (1991), *Report on the Portuguese Records Related to the east Indies*, New Delhi, Madras: Asian Educational Services, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Boxer, C.R (1980), *Portuguese India-In the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Sheik, Ali (ed.), (1986), *Goa Wins Freedom, Reflections and Reminiscences*, Goa: Goa University, p. 3.

unnatural manners, cultural bankruptcy, physical degeneration and economic ruins'<sup>18</sup> that is what T.B.Cunha called as denationalization of Goans.

However Portuguese adopted a policy of tolerance as far as the *Novas Conquistas* were concerned. Various factors might have been responsible for the change in the attitude of the Portuguese rulers:

- The policy of inquisition resulted in migration. The desertion of villages and abandonment of fields resulted in decline in land revenue, in trade and commerce.
- In the early years Portuguese followed the policy of persecution, as it wanted to stabilize its powers in an alien land, and it would be easy to do it if the population of the land was of their religion and culture. Once they had stabilized their power, they relaxed their rules.
- There was change in Portuguese leadership, there was decline in the ecclesiastical power, and leaders now came up with new orientation of non-interference in the Hindu religious practices. They decided to follow policy of tolerance.
- There were also some local revolts launched by the natives, which warned the Portuguese of possible unrest.

Thus the *Novas Conquistas* were allowed to follow their own customs and usage. The Republican Government which came in power in Portugal in 1910, and though it was in power only for a short period (1910 to 1920), it brought in most desirable changes in Goa. It guaranteed individual liberty and equality and was secular in nature. Now, for the first time Christians and Hindus were treated on an equal footing. It removed the censorship on press and promoted education. However in 1926 Portugal came under the grip of a fascist dictatorship and its impact was felt in Goa. The fundamental freedoms and civil liberties were suppressed. There was no freedom of press and association. Severe restrictions were laid on the publication of newspapers. This autocratic rule led to the growth of political consciousness in the Goans to fight for their motherland.

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<sup>18</sup> Cunha, T.B, *Denationalization of Goans*, Goa: Goa Gazetteer Department, pp. 32-33.

## **Portuguese rule and its Influence on the Status of Women in Goa**

Though Portuguese rule was non-democratic and fostered inequality, it had positive impact on the status of women in Goa. It brought forth remarkable changes in the position of women. The Conquest of Goa by the Portuguese in 1510, gave a gentle push to womanhood along the path of social justice.<sup>19</sup> The following reforms were brought in by the Portuguese rule:

### **a) Ban on Sati**

In 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque, through a Government decree banned Sati in the island. The motive behind this move of Albuquerque is however questioned.<sup>20</sup> There was stiff reaction from the locals, specially the Brahmins, who pressurized the subsequent governors to revoke the ban on Sati. In Bardez and Salcete Sati was banned in 1560 by Governor Constantino de Braganca. The prohibition stated that one who abetted the crime would be sent to gallows and his properties would be confiscated. However Sati practice continued in other parts of Goa. Sati practice in the *Novas Conquistas* was abolished as late as 1884, as these areas were governed by *Codigo dos Usos e Costumes* (laws of Land) till 1880.

### **b) Right to Inheritance**

In the early centuries of Portuguese rule in Goa, the wives and the daughters of the deceased person were enabled to inherit some portion of movable property. If the daughter or widow was converted to Christianity, she was permitted to enjoy full proprietary rights. Thus to the dark cloud of forced conversions was attached the silver lining of ownership of property to the female converts.<sup>21</sup> However these rights were not extended to Hindu widows or daughters. Though there were *alvaras* (laws)

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<sup>19</sup> Kamat P. (1987), 'Some Legal Aspects of the Socio-economic life of Women in Portuguese Goa,' in Shastri, B. S. (ed.) *Goan Society through Ages*, New Delhi: Asian Publication Services, p.93.

<sup>20</sup> According to some scholars, Albuquerque's supposed 'tolerance towards the Hindu' is a myth and he banned sati to encourage mixed marriages which was an imperative necessity to tie down his people to the conquered land and to ensure the continuation of their predominance through these strong unions. This view is supported by T.B. Cunha. While writers like Jose Nicholau Da Fonseca opined that Albuquerque was a politic, a statesman and a skillful general. He tolerated all forms of religious belief, and he aimed at cementing the union of the rulers and the ruled and therefore encouraged intermarriages between them. (Source: Cunha, T.B *Denationalization of Goans, Goa, Goa Gazetteer Department & Nicolau Da Fonseca* (1994), Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa, New Delhi, Madras: Asian Education Services)

<sup>21</sup> Kamat, P. (1987), op. cit. 94.



made from time to time to promote these rights to Hindu women, such efforts were thwarted due to the divide in the Hindus.<sup>22</sup>

### c) Abolition of Polygamy

The viceregal decree of 1567 decreed monogamy for all irrespective of their religion. The State tried to control polygamy through a Carta Regia dated 1614, as per which non Christians desiring to have another wife, had to seek permission from State. Those who violated this law were to be enslaved.<sup>23</sup>

### d) The Civil Code of 1867

The Civil Code of 1867 was very important as it gave protection to the woman at the time of marriage and the property she owned at that time. It gave half of the husband's property to his widow. Daughters were also entitled to their rightful share in their father's property. The civil code decreed that women below age of 12 years, could not marry. Under the Republic, the age of marriage was further increased to 16 years for girls. This led to decline in child marriage. Civil marriage now came to be regarded as the only valid marriage for all purposes. It guaranteed equality to women on par with men. Widow re-marriage promoted in 1684, was further encouraged by this Civil Code. The Republican regime further improvised the Civil Code. It gave the Goan women various rights. Thus on the death of the husband, wife could now have the right to half of her husband's property. Introduction of Civil Marriage checked polygamy, gave a wife a share in the husband's property, and gave legal protection to the children. Besides, the wife could sue without the prior consent of the husband. It provided various grounds for Separation, Annulment or Divorce to the

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<sup>22</sup> A Royal *alvara* of 1695 gave the widows the right to the property of their husbands and the equal share with their brothers to their father's property for Hindus of Goa (city of Goa), Salcete and Bardez which were governed by the Portuguese law. However the Hindus were divided and wanted to follow their *Usos e Costumes*. The *alvara* of 1739 stated that the Hindus of *Velha Conquistas* should be governed by Portuguese Laws, while their counterparts in *Nova Conquistas* would be governed by their *Usos e Costumes*. Though the Hindus requested the State to extend the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 to whole of Goa, they wanted to protect some provisions of *Usos e Costumes*. In 1880 the Hindus were given option as to follow either *Usos e Costumes* or the Uniform Civil Code. Thus the insistence of the Hindus to follow their traditional practices denied women the opportunity to avail the benefits of the laws passed by the Portuguese Government.  
(Source: Silva Gracias, Fatima da (1996), *Kaleidoscope of Women in Goa*, New Delhi: Concept, p. 94 )

<sup>23</sup> Silva Gracias, Fatima da (1996), op. cit. 97-98.

women in Goa. Now women could seek divorce and claim maintenance from her husband if she was ill-treated. She could also seek divorce if her husband had illicit relationship.

However the impact of this progressive legislation was felt more in the *Velha Conquistas*. The *Novas Conquistas* continued to follow the *Codigo dos Usos e Costumes dos habitantes das Novas Conquistas*. In these areas people continued to follow their own customs and traditions. Child marriage continued and women did not have the legal protection. The people were not bound to follow the above reforms. Though some revision was brought in 1880, the traditional customs and practices continued to be an obstacle to the progress of Hindu women in these areas.

#### **e) Education of Women**

It was only in 1841 the Portuguese took the initiative for women's education. In 1846 a girl's school was opened in Panjim. In 1854 two more such schools were opened, one in Mapusa and other in Margao. By the decree of 1869, education was made compulsory for the children of the age group of 9-12. Large number of primary schools were started. However the education imparted in this schools was in Portuguese and a large number of them were situated in *Velha Conquistas*. The first school to provide education for girls was started in 1887. It was latter replaced by *Escola Nacional de Sexo Feminino* in 1911. But in both these, the teaching was confined, besides learning languages of Portuguese, French, and English, to singing, playing, and home science, i.e. house keeping, needle work etc.<sup>24</sup> *The Liceu Nacional*, the Higher Secondary Schools were set up in Panaji, Margao and Mapusa. However attendance was not very encouraging. The establishment of the Republican regime in Portugal in 1910 led to the Hindu community setting up schools catering specially to the needs of primary education through the medium of Marathi. The growing national consciousness in India and its struggle for freedom influenced the Goan people, and during the last years of the 19th century English schools were set up by

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<sup>24</sup> Azevedo, Carmo (1990), 'Pioneering Women,' *Goa Today*, (June), p.25.

private initiative.<sup>25</sup> Although in earlier years, the Hindu woman in Goa was restricted, by traditions, from acquiring education, however due to modernization, the progressive legislation such as the uniform civil code, share in property rights etc, and access to education helped in her emancipation.

The colonial rule effected the status of women in a subtle and less direct way as well. The Christian missionaries, Portuguese traders and colonial administrators, all sought to deal with Goan men. Over a period of four centuries this conferred advantages on the men involved, and communicated the unsuitability of women for conducting affairs of substance. Missionaries consciously or unconsciously sought to alter marriage patterns from polygamous to monogamous, nuclear family. Furthermore as Goans became educated and aspired for acceptance by Portuguese as their equals, they themselves began to modify traditional customs and conventions. It brought in change in their ideology, values and beliefs. The '*Westernisation*' of the elite, brought in change, however, marginal in their personal lives. As a part of modern group, they introduced measures such as sending their daughters to schools, delaying their marriage by a year or two, allowing them to be present at formal social events etc. The new identity was expected to distinguish the elite from the colonial government and its institutions as well as from the orthodox milieu of their society.<sup>26</sup> They encouraged women from their families to acquire education and participate in public activities.

Thus abolition of Sati, grant of the rights of inheritance and ownership of property by women, provision for widow remarriage, and introduction of certain other measures to improve the socio-economic status of widows, were some of the important steps in the direction of modernity where women were introduced to the ideas of rationalism, humanism, liberalism and secularism.<sup>27</sup> 'The progressive legislation of the 19th and the 20th century built, for all Goan women, from daughter

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<sup>25</sup> There was the Mustifund Sauntha set up in Panaji, Saraswat Vidhalaya and Gnyana Prassarak Mandal in Mapusa, Gomant Vidya Niketan in Margao, Goa Vidya Prassarak Mandal and Antonio Jose da Almeida High School in Ponda, Sharada Vidhalaya in Cumbarjui and Atmodhar Sanghet at Sanquelim. (Source: Varde, P. S (1977), *History of Education in Goa, From 1510 to the Present Day*, Goa: Goa Vidya Prathisthan, p. 91.)

<sup>26</sup> M.N. Srinivas gave the concept of *westernisation* to describe the changes brought in the Indians, in their ideology, values and belief as a result of prolonged British rule. The *westernisation* of elite Hindu male was significant as it created an awareness to the need to modify traditional customs and conventions concerning women. (Source: Srinivas, M. N (1972), *Social Change in Modern India*, Bombay: Orient Longman's, p. 6.)

<sup>27</sup> Shastry, B.S (1988), '*The Church and Women in Portuguese Goa - A Social View*,' in Shirodkar, P. P (ed.), *Goa's Cultural Trends*, Goa: Directorate of Archives, Archaeology and Museum, p. 121.

to the grand-mother, a brighter legal future based on the twin pillars of equality and liberty.’<sup>28</sup> The Civil Code and other social legislation opened the doors of bright future for the women in Goa. The Christian women were first to make use of the legal infrastructure provided by Government. This had a demonstration effect on Hindu women, who followed suit, although at a slower pace.<sup>29</sup>

### **Women’s Role in the Goa’s Liberation Struggle**

The political consciousness of Goans and their determination to free themselves of foreign rule was noticeable from the very early years of Portuguese rule. The first revolt was in 1654 led by Fr. Martin de Castro, followed in 1787 by the Pinto conspiracy. There were a series of revolts led by the Ranes of Sattari. For the lack of sufficient documentation, it is difficult to define exactly what role women played in the revolts against the Portuguese during the first four centuries of Portuguese colonialism. The desire for liberation of Goa was given concrete shape from the 1930’s. In 1926, Portugal came under the grip of a fascist dictatorship and its impact was felt in Goa. The fundamental freedoms and civil liberties were suppressed. There was no freedom of press and association. Several restrictions were placed on publication of newspapers and other publications. Thus all the rights given by the Republic regime (for more than a decade - from 1910 to 1926) were reversed by Salazar. However he could not stop the enlightened leadership that had emerged due to the liberal policies of the previous Government.<sup>30</sup> The autocratic rule of Salazar kindled the patriotic feeling in Goa. Besides, the people in the neighbouring areas of Pune, Kolhapur, Belgaum, Bombay etc. were involved in India’s freedom struggle. Goans who were studying there and the others who visited these places were very much influenced by these freedom fighters. The rise of Indian National Congress and India’s Freedom Struggle further flamed the people’s desire to throw away the Portuguese yolk.

The first significant confrontation the Goan women had with the Portuguese police, during the liberation movement, was on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1946, the day when Dr Ram Manohar Lohia addressed a public meeting in Margao without taking prior permission of the colonial Government. From then onwards women did not look

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<sup>28</sup> Kamat, P. (1987), *op. cit.*, p 99.

<sup>29</sup> Kamat, P. (1987), *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>30</sup> Sheik, Ali (ed.) *op. cit.*, p.7.

back. They were present at political meetings, debates, processions and even participated in *satyagrahas*.<sup>31</sup> Women freedom fighters in Goa can be grouped into four levels depending on the nature and extent of their participation.<sup>32</sup> The first group consisted of a very small number of women who were attracted to the movement in its entirety, and participated in various aspects of liberation activity. This was an elite group and they came from sound socio-economic background and possessed certain resources like education, leisure and support from family. The male family members were well educated, and involved in the liberation struggle and encouraged these women to pursue education and take active part in the liberation struggle. The second was a small group of women who were committed to one particular aspect of the liberation struggle. Their involvement was limited in terms of issue and geographical locale. The third was the large group of women who participated as a part of the general mass of people who, being influenced after 18th June 1946, participated in the political meetings and *prabhat pheries*<sup>33</sup>, or became *satyagrahis*. They opposed Portuguese rule publicly. They held the Indian tricolour and shouted slogans like 'Jai Hind', 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', 'Chodo Goa', 'Bharat Goa Ek Hai' and distributed anti-Portuguese pamphlets. A fourth category also requires to be given due recognition to. In fact, in any freedom struggle, while men find themselves in jail or carry on underground activities, the women who are left at home to manage the household and bring up children are no less freedom fighters. It is this group whose story does not get recorded in any history books, yet it is these who keep the struggle alive by their silent support and willingness to accept hardships.

#### **a) Factors that influenced women's entry in Goa's Liberation Struggle**

Various factors influenced women's entry into the freedom struggle. A large number of them entered freedom struggle mainly due to family influence. In families, men were more experienced in politics and their opinions influenced their sisters, wives and daughters. The patriotic atmosphere in the house, political meetings, discussions, the visits of leaders to their home, the political literature that was brought

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<sup>31</sup> *Satyagraha* refers to insistence on truth. It is a form of non-violent resistance, wherein demonstrators peacefully obstruct actions or resist laws which they consider unjust. The most powerful weapons of *satyagraha* are fasting and civil disobedience.

<sup>32</sup> Agnew, Vijay quoted in Kakodkar, A.A. (1986), 'Role of Women in Goan Freedom Struggle -I,' in Sheik, Ali (ed.), *Goa Wins Freedom, Reflections and Reminiscences*, Goa: Goa University, p.172.

<sup>33</sup> *Prabhat Pheries* referred to parades in the streets in the mornings carrying the national tricolour.

home all led to the growth of political consciousness and willingness to volunteer for the cause of freedom. Thus Shalini Phaldesai, Sharada Savaikar, Mogabai Naik, Prema N. Tendulkar were influenced by their brothers who were involved in the liberation struggle. Sharada Savaikar recalls how her brother was connected with the activities of *Azad Gomantak Dal*.<sup>34</sup> Berta Braganca De Menezes and Braganca (Dr) Beatris De Menezes were influenced by Dr T. B. Cunha, who was their uncle. There were also instances where women such as Harmalkar Kishoribai, Rajani Suryankant Naik, Shoba Prabhu Desai and others perceived their participation as being supportive of the activities of their husbands.

Persuasion by other women also played a role. A prominent persuader was Sindhutai Deshpande who went from one end to another and persuaded many young women to take part in the freedom struggle. Sindhutai was a Maharastrian. She had actively participated in the *Bharat Chodo Andolan* of 1942. She was imprisoned for the cause of freedom. She was persuaded by Peter Alvares, the president of *National Congress (Goa)*, a fighting organization which had taken steps to organize and intensify Goa's freedom struggle. Sindhutai created fearlessness in the minds of the Goan women against the Portuguese police. She stimulated political consciousness amongst women in various parts of Goa. She persuaded Hordarkar, Celina Moniz, Divkar, Shalini Lolienkar, Shanta Hede, Vilasini Mahale and others to offer *satyagraha* and actively contribute to Goa's liberation struggle. Hordarkar although, influenced by her brother who was involved in the struggle, participated in the *satyagraha* mainly due to the persuasion by Sindhutai.<sup>35</sup> Peter Alvares also influenced Subhavati Bhobe. Anthony De Souza persuaded Laxmi Paiguinkar while Vithal Lolienkar persuaded Shalini Lolienkar and Kumudini Paiguinkar. Efforts of Pramilitai Kant Zambaulikar also needs to be recognized. She was active member of *Goa Seva Sangh* started by Purushottam Kakodkar. She preached the use of Khadi. Many women joined this ashram. She persuaded them to join Goa's liberation struggle. Some women outside Goa were actively supporting the revolutionaries. These women were not Goans, nor had experienced Portuguese rule. They had enthusiastically participated in the Indian national struggle for independence. They took up the issue of Goa's liberation in right earnest and rushed to the aid of the

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<sup>34</sup> Sharadha Savaikar, Interview, May'97.

<sup>35</sup> Shashikala (Hodarkar) Almeida, Interview, May'97.

struggling Goans. They were Ambika Dandekar, Rai Sahodara Devi, Tulpule Malinibai, Mandakini Yaigi, Kamal Upasani, Prabha Sathe, Shanta Rao and others.

The major event that attracted people of Goa to its liberation struggle was the movement launched by Dr Ram Manohar Lohia on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1946 in Margao to demand civil liberties and to defy the ban on public meetings. Dr Lohia asked the young men and women not to fail in their duties. He challenged them to carry on with the struggle. 'Look not to Delhi nor to U.N.O for your deliverance; your freedom lies in you. Five lakhs of full democrats can shake Portuguese into submission. Get arrested, get beaten, suffer bullets, but take out your marches and demonstrations and refuse to pay taxes. Goa was the first gate for European in Asia. We shall smash in Goa, the supremacy of Europe over Asia.'<sup>36</sup> This stirred up the patriotic feelings of Goans. Hundreds of them came forward and offered satyagraha. Dr. Lohia was arrested. With many others one woman named Vatsala Kirtani was also arrested on the same day. This led to nearly forty women marching to the police station demanding that Vatsala Kirtani be freed. This event became the immediate cause for some women in Margao, like Jeevan Karapurkar, Shashi Bandodkar, Ratan Khaunte, Umabai Shirali, Lalita Kantak, to enter into liberation struggle. Dr. Lohia inspired confidence not only in women, but in their guardians, husbands, brothers and fathers who did not object to their women folk coming out of their sheltered homes to march on the streets. Thus Lohia was something like a Messiah to the Goan people. To quote George Vaz, '18<sup>th</sup> June was like a big Light House that guided many ships traveling in the sea.'<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note how Mitra Madhav Bir entered the freedom struggle. Her father was working for the Portuguese Government. After her S.S.C. she went to Dharwad for further studies. In the year 1954, the then Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, was addressing the students of Dharwad University. This created in Mitra the desire to listen and see the prime Minister, not in Dharwad, but in her free Goa. The very next day she left her studies and came down to Goa to enter the freedom struggle.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Lohia, R. M (1947), **Action in Goa**, Bombay: August Publication, p. 73.

<sup>37</sup> Vaz, George (1996), 'Tethem Kar Majhe Julati,' in **Nave Parve: A Special Issue**, Goa: Department of Information and Publicity, p 47.

<sup>38</sup> Bir, Madhav. Interview, May'97.

Most of the women freedom fighters were young women. They had in them a strong streak of idealism. They hated the Portuguese regime. They were inspired by patriotism and wanted to see Goa freed from foreign rule. Provision of educational facilities and encouragement for private educational institutions by Portuguese, thus paradoxically had a positive influence on women. They were also influenced by the literature that came from outside Goa. The writings of Mahatma Gandhi, T.B. Cunha, and Ram Manohar Lohia had tremendous influence on Goan women. Besides the underground press like *Jwala*, *Amchem Goem*, *Projecho Avaz*, *Resurge Goa*, *Azad Goa*, *Free Goa*, *Dipgraha*, *O Herald*, *Heraldo*, *Goa Tribune*, *The Hindu*, *Bharat*, etc kept the public informed of the activities related to the struggle inside and outside Goa.

The general environment also favoured women's participation in the struggle. The patriotic slogans and songs heard from the streets inspired women willingly to join processions, face the police and go to jail.

#### **b) Course of Struggle**

The beginning of the struggle was made by Sarubai Vaidya who started a Marathi-Portuguese monthly called '*Haladikumkum*' in 1910 for women. She wanted to awaken Goan women. Another women, Pramilatai Zambaulikar, was very active and her house at Margao was a centre of political activity. She installed a handloom spinning factory and charkhas at her residence. She mobilized other women for the cause of Goa's liberation. She gave shelter to the freedom fighters from the Portuguese police. She participated in satyagrahas and was imprisoned. Mahatma Gandhi was her greatest source of inspiration.

18<sup>th</sup> June 1946 was the golden day in the history of Goa's liberation struggle. Women came out on the streets in large numbers in the city of Margao, and willingly dedicate themselves to the cause of liberation. They joined *Prabhat-pheries* in great numbers. Many of them were badly beaten up and arrested. On 19<sup>th</sup> June 1946 a procession of women was led by Shrimati Shah. A little girl Shashi Bandodkar, was hit on the face for shouting 'Jai Hind' and she started to bleed through the nose. Another girl of 14, Ratan Khauwate was similarly hit.<sup>39</sup> On July 21<sup>st</sup> 1946, in the

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<sup>39</sup> Menezes, Juliao (1947), *Goa's Liberation struggle*, Bombay, p. 57.



*Prabhat phery* in Margao, Lalita Kantak, Krishna Hegde and Vitha Hegde were beaten up. Premilatai was taken to the police station and subjected to third-degree methods. She was told that if the women of Margao took out a procession the police would strip them naked. 'This was another proof of the superior Portuguese civilization and training of Patriarch Jose.'<sup>40</sup> On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1946 Berta Braganca offered a satyagraha in Margao. In 1954 Sindhutai offered a satyagraha in Panjim. On 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1955, Shashikala Hordarkar, Vilasini Prabhu, Suryakanti Dessai and Lakshmi Paiguinkar offered a satyagraha in Margao notwithstanding their awareness of the cruelty and inhuman behaviour of the Portuguese police. They were arrested and after court marshal they were imprisoned. Kumud Paiguinkar offered a satyagraha under leadership of Sudhatai Joshi at Mapusa on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1955. Phadke Ashatai and Lila Sawant offered satyagraha at Shirgao Zatra day on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1955. Tulpule Malinibai offered satyagraha at Pernem on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1955.

The participation of women in Satyagraha Movement reflected the heroic personality and spiritual courage of Goan women of all castes, classes and ages. It brought into relief, the character and qualities of the Goan women who threw themselves into battle action with rare courage and braved brutalities of the Portuguese police and military.<sup>41</sup>

There were some of those who through their fearless speeches and writings gave inspiration to the liberation struggle. Berta Braganca addressed a huge rally organized in Margao on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1946. She appealed to the youth to freely carry out the civil disobedience movement. She asked the people to oppose the undemocratic laws of the Portuguese Government. The speech was powerful and courageous. She was the secretary of Goa Youth League-Goa branch. She along with her husband was the founder of a bulletin called *Free Goa* through which she wrote editorials, notes and other articles. Besides writing to promote the cause for Goa's Liberation, she also used other fora and platforms to advance the cause of Goa's Liberation. She undertook a tour of the Indian subcontinent on behalf of the national Campaign Committee for Goa to rouse the Indian masses to extend their help and wishes towards Goa's Liberation. 'Sometimes, in spite of poor health, she went from one part of India to another, from east to west, from north to south, and addressed

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

meetings from dawn to dusk or even late in the night calling on the national Government of India to complete the nation's independence by compelling the Portuguese to immediately vacate her aggression.<sup>42</sup> She was a member of the Indian Delegation to Afro-Asian Women's Conference in Cairo in 1961 where the liberation of Goa evoked a special interest. She was a member of the delegation to Moscow in the same year, where she highlighted the anti-colonial struggle of the people under the Portuguese regime and drew the attention towards liberation of Goa. Dr. Beatris De Menezes Braganca took active part in the anti-Portuguese propaganda activities, meetings and demonstrations held in Bombay. She was one of the youth leaders who led a large procession to the Portuguese Consulate in Bombay in 1946 to protest against the arrest of T.B. Cunha. She accompanied by Joachim Dias called upon the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in Delhi to apprise him of the Goa Problem. Laura De Souza gave up a lucrative medical practice to join Goa's freedom movement. She organized Goan's Residential club in Bombay in 1955 which had 50,000 members who strongly supported Goa's Liberation Movement.<sup>43</sup> She edited '*Konkan Life*' an English monthly in Bombay. She organized a huge rally of Goan's in Bombay on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1946, to demand that the Portuguese should quit Goa. In April 1961 she led a delegation to Africa to canvass the support of Goans living there.

Asha Phadke wrote patriotic poems. She used religious discourses (*Pravachanas* and *Kirtanas*) to spread the ideas of freedom. She also performed musical programmes and funded the activities of the satyagrahis. Libia Lobo, who was the secretary of Goa Youth League from 1948 to 1950, with her associate Vaman Sardessai, set up an underground radio station '*Voice of Freedom*' at Castlerock. Later it was shifted to Belguam. It broadcast daily from 1955-61. She gave the last ultimatum to Goa Governor-General to surrender or Liberation forces would enter the territory, every ten minutes from this clandestine radio. Subhavati Bhohe recollects how she provided medical help to the freedom fighters. She along with others served the badly injured freedom fighters at the camp set up at Dodamarg with the help of Red Cross.<sup>44</sup> Shanta N. Naik, Mitra Bir, Celina Moniz, Calista Aravejo, Divkar,

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<sup>42</sup> Da cruz, Antonio (1974), *Goa Men and Matters*, Goa: Vasco da Gama, p 122.

<sup>43</sup> Shirodkar, P.P (1986), *Who is Who of Freedom Fighters*, Goa: Government of Goa Publication, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> Bhohe, Subhavati. Interview, May'97.

Shanta Dessai, Vilasini Mahale visited different parts of Goa and enkindled the flames of patriotism among the people. They created political awareness among them. They mobilized the women to fight for the righteous cause of liberation.

Then there were those who though did not participate in *satyagraha*, but played an important role behind the scene. They provided food and shelter to the underground revolutionaries. They informed them about the activities of the Portuguese police. They circulated messages, prepared pamphlets and distributed them. They affixed posters at public places, houses, shops, electricity polls etc. A few of them worked for secret underground organizations. One such major organization was *Azad Gomantak Dal*. However it is difficult to analyze the role of women in violent activities from published sources. It can be assumed that they carried out supplementary activities like giving food and shelter to the underground activists, carrying messages and arms. There was no special programme to train women. In fact, Prema Tendulkar was hurt due to ambush fire while taking explosives to Tamdisurla.<sup>45</sup> She was young, only thirteen years old then. They were aware of the implications of their patriotism both for themselves and their families. Their families were exposed to harassment by the police to know their whereabouts, and some of them were even alienated from relatives and friends. They regretted the hardships their family members had to face due to their involvement, however they felt that such sacrifice was necessary for Goa's liberation.

It is proud to note that women went in jail for the cause of freedom.(See Table 2.1) They did not get any special consideration when they were in jail. They were jailed from six months to four years. They had to pay penalties for their 'crimes'. The treatment meted to them was very bad. The freedom fighters were first detained in the police custody, and then they were tried by TMT (Territorial Military Tribunal). The TMT often sentenced them to imprisonment. Many a times, they were detained in the custody for several days without any trial. The life in custody was miserable. They were mercilessly beaten up by the Portuguese Police Officers, and not provided food and water. There are instances where some women freedom fighters were harassed, both physically as well as mentally, by these officers. At other times, they were even abused, physically as well as mentally. The position of those who were arrested on the basis of doubt was still worse. The Portuguese used

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<sup>45</sup> Mahadeshwar, N (1986), *Goa Ladhayatil Virangana*, Goa: Government of Goa, p. 52.

hunters, batons, and *cavalmary* to torture them. They were often interrogated for hours to make them confess the names and whereabouts of their colleagues.

The imprisonment meted out by TMT to the freedom fighters, was not based on any clear criteria, but was rather based on the whims and fancy of the members of the TMT. It was arbitrary. Even those who participated in the peaceful *satyagraha* were sentenced from four to six years in jail. Those who were involved in underground activities like distributing nationalist literature, and carried anti-Portuguese propaganda were sentenced to jail for more than ten years. They had to go through RI (Rigorous Imprisonment). They were kept in a cage like cell which had a total watch. Only one glass of water was provided for 24 hours. There were no basic facilities provided. They were taken out only once a day. They had to lie down on the cemented bare floor, which turned chilly cold in the rainy season. It was a dark room, dirty and very humid. Some of them were badly hurt. Sharada Sawaiker and Lakshmi Paiguinkar had fractures while Prema Tendulkar's ear drum was badly affected. Some felt sick and suffered from dysentery, malaria etc. Laura Rodrigues was kept in solitary confinement abused and subjected to indignity.<sup>46</sup> These atrocities committed did not discourage the freedom fighters, but on the contrary strengthened their morale. In the jail they led a *satyagraha* under the leadership of Sindhutai Deshpande for demanding better conditions in the jail. Besides, they also had to pay fine or in lieu undergo imprisonment for some more years. Their political rights were suspended. Thus Shanta Hede was imprisonment for twelve years RI, while Shoba Desai was sentenced to three years, since both were involved in underground activities. While Shashikala Hodarkar was sentenced to four plus two years RI and Suryakanti Phal Desai was sentenced to three plus one year imprisonment, since both had offered *satyagraha* at the same place on the same day. Mogabai Naik was arrested and detained for two years, and was not even allowed to attend the funeral of her mother. Lilavati Naik was arrested as she offered *satyagraha* on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1955. She was severely beaten up and detained in jail. Her husband was also involved in

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<sup>46</sup> Shirodkar, P. P (1986), *op. cit.*, 297.

TABLE 2.1

Sr. No	NAME	YEAR OF IMPRISONMENT
1	Desai, Shanta Jaiwant Nee Hegde, Shanta V.	She was arrested in June 1955, and was tried by TMT on 26 <sup>th</sup> November, 1956. She was sentenced to twelve years RI and fine of ten Escudos per day for two years. Her political rights were suspended for twenty years. She was released on 19 <sup>th</sup> August, 1959.
2	Desai Shoba Manohar Prabhu	She was arrested in 1957 and detained at Panaji Police Station for six months.
3	Phaldesai, Suryakanti	She was arrested on 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 1955, and tried by TMT in June, 1955. She was sentenced to three years RI and one year simple imprisonment, and her political rights were suspended for fifteen years.
4	Deshpande, Sindhutai	She was arrested and detained from 25 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1954 to 14 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1955 and was pushed out of Goa border. Again she was arrested in Feb. 1956. She was sentenced to ten years RI and a fine of ten Escudos per day for two years with expulsion to the Indian border after her release.
5	Zambaulikar Pramilatai Kant	She was arrested on 21 <sup>st</sup> July, 1946, when she led a <i>Prabhat Phery</i> in Margao and was beaten up. She was rearrested on 6 <sup>th</sup> June, 1948 and sentenced to one month imprisonment.
6	Kavlekar Kumudini D Nee Kumud Painguinkar	Was arrested on 6 <sup>th</sup> April, 1955 and was tried by TMT and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. She was released in August, 1959.
7	Mahale Vilasini D Nee Prabhu Vilasini N.	Was arrested on 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb., 1955, tried by TMT and was sentenced to four years RI and two years simple imprisonment, and she had to pay a fine of Rs. 2,000/- or in lieu two years imprisonment. She was released in April, 1958.
8	Naik, Lilavati D	Was arrested on 15 <sup>th</sup> April, 1955 and was detained in jail for eight months.
9	Bir, Mitra Madhav Pai Nee Kakodkar, Mitra-Vrinda Vasant Sinai.	She was arrested on 28 <sup>th</sup> March, 1955, was tried by TMT and was sentenced to five years imprisonment. She was released in 1959.
10	Almeida Shashikala Nee Hodarkar Shashikala M.	Was arrested on 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 1955 and was sentenced to four years RI and two years simple imprisonment. She was released in

		March, 1958.
11	Araujo Maria Joaquina Calista	Was arrested on 30 <sup>th</sup> Jan.1947 and was imprisoned till 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb,1947. she was tried by TMT on 26 <sup>th</sup> Jan.,1951 and was sentenced to two and half month. She was released under General Amnesty on 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb.1951. she was re-arrested in March,1956, tried by TMT and sentenced to fourteen years RI. She was released in August 1959.
12	Monica, Celina Olga	Was arrested on 26 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1955 and released in Oct. 1955.
13	Naik, Mogabai	Was arrested in March 1956 and was <i>detained for two years.</i>
14	Painguinkar, Laxhmi B	Was arrested on 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb., 1955, and was sentenced to two years RI and four years simple imprisonment. She was released on 28 <sup>th</sup> March, 1958.
15	Patil Shubhada S, Nee Divkar Krishnabai S	Was arrested on 16 <sup>th</sup> August, 1955 and released on 26 <sup>th</sup> May,1956. She suffered <i>nine months and ten days of rigorous imprisonment.</i>
16	Joshi, Sudhatai	Was arrested on 6 <sup>th</sup> April,1955 and tried by TMT, and was sentenced to ten years imprisonment. She was released on 16 <sup>th</sup> May, 1959.
17	Lolienkar, Shalini V.	Was arrested on 6 <sup>th</sup> April,1955 and tried by TMT. She was sentenced to eight years rigorous imprisonment. She was released <i>after seven months of imprisonment.</i>
18	Sawaikar, Sharada P	Was arrested on 6 <sup>th</sup> August, 1955 and was detained in the Police Custody for several days. She was tried by TMT at Panaji and suffered imprisonment of two and half years. She was released by mistake as the authorities made confusion over her name as that of one Sharad Shirvaikar, later when <i>they realized their mistake, it was too late as by that time she had already crossed the border of Goa.</i>
19	Rodrigues, Laura souza De.	She was arrested in 1958 and detained for one month. She was arrested again, imprisoned, kept in solitary confinement, abused and subjected to indignity.
20	Naik, Shanti N	Was detained several times and suffered a total imprisonment of six and half years.

Goa's liberation struggle. To extract information of the whereabouts of the other freedom fighters, the Portuguese Police showed her a dead body and told her that it was of her husband. This led to her nervous breakdown from which she has still not recovered. The arrest and persecution of these women evoked protests from different parts of India. Representations were sent to the Government of India as well as to the UNO to take immediate action in this regard. Thanks to Amnesty International, the freedom fighters were set free before the completion of the imprisonment. However Portuguese Government showed a sympathetic attitude towards women satyagrahis who came from other states to show their solidarity with the liberation struggle. They were detained for few days and then pushed out of the borders of Goa. This may be because Portuguese did not want to annoy the Government of India. To escape further arrest and imprisonment many of freedom fighters left Goa and continued to work from outside.

Thus participation of women in peaceful activities as well as their association with underground activities reflected that women could be involved in the different political movements and strategies. They worked shoulder to shoulder with men. They worked with patience, endurance and were willing to undergo sufferings and sacrifice for the cause of liberation. They demonstrated skill, initiative and qualities of leadership.

### **Role of Women in Politics After Liberation**

The participation of women in the liberation movement was significant for two reasons<sup>47</sup>, (i) it created a tradition of female involvement in politics, and (ii) it enabled women to evolve from an oppressed and subordinate position to an enlightened and less unequal, if not equal, position in the social and political affairs of the territory. It offered them an opportunity to assume leadership. During the freedom struggle families could no longer observe the strict rules of seclusion. As a consequence the hold of patriarchal ideology was loosened. The bars against women participation in political activities were broken in various areas. They participated in public meetings and attended morchas. They wrote and published their poems and articles. 'Often we feel a kind of wonder at the whole complex of attitudes, ranging

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<sup>47</sup> Kakodkar, A.A (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 177-178.

from subordination to rebellion thrown up among women from time to time.<sup>48</sup> They felt that the movement would give them an opportunity to establish their credentials in the world in which they were previously powerless and invisible. They realized that the mechanism of power, which had held them back in the past, had been gradually transformed into a mode of social control.

In a given society in normal times, women are expected to shoulder the responsibility as the guardian and preserver of traditional culture. The very stability of given society is perceived as resting on the purity and orthodoxy of its women. There is strict surveillance and restrictions imposed on the activities of women. 'However, it is observed that women have achieved major gains during periods of social dysfunction, with the breakdown of constant surveillance and the mechanisms of discipline that normally objectify them. Women have rush forth to grasp the opportunities for response and growth that becomes possible.'<sup>49</sup> Thus it was recognized that women could participate in politics in an emergency or a situation like the liberation struggle. The liberation struggle not only meant liberation from Portuguese rule, but it promised a life to women where there would be greater equality both within and outside the home.

Therefore it is necessary to study to what extent were there changes brought about with respect to the status of women after liberation. Did the new role of women gave them credibility and an opportunity to participate in public and political activities after liberation? It was observed that the movement seemed to relate to the women only through the hierarchy of gender. This is not strange. Studies elsewhere have shown that such struggle has not brought any positive change in the lives of women. Rama Kundu recalling the 1971 Scenario of Bangladesh shows how 'she' remained ignored either in policy matters or in active behaviour and how the new State that was formed did not help at all in establishing or ensuring women's status

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<sup>48</sup> Kannabiran, V & Lalita, K (1989), 'That Magic Time: Women in the Telangana People's Struggle,' in Sangari, Kumkum & Vaid, Sudesh (ed.), **Recasting Women, Essays in Colonial History**, New Delhi: Kali for Women, p. 181

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



and rights.<sup>50</sup> This view is also supported by Esther Perica.<sup>51</sup> Thus the position of women did change during the revolution. Active participation in the revolution changed for a time the relationship within the family and specially with its male members. But soon after the revolution they were reversed back into a secondary and subordinate position. Kumari Jayawardina argues that controlling women's participation in nationalist movement did create an awareness among women in general for the need to organize themselves, although the momentum was somewhat lost after gaining independence or liberation through revolution.<sup>52</sup>

Thus four characteristics of the liberation movement can be clearly reflected, viz.; (i) the paradox of Portuguese rule, which was autocratic yet beneficial to women, which introduced various reforms that led to awakening in Goan women who rose against the Portuguese rule, (ii) though the women were awakened, there was male direction in the liberation movement, (iii) there was existence of concept of complementary sex roles, and (iv) the patriarchal basis of society was not challenged.

The gender specific issues, sexual division of labour, and the subordinate position of women were not sites of political struggle. It was observed that women freedom fighters felt proud that they could effectively carried out the tasks allotted to them. They appreciated their ability to travel alone, to travel at night, to transport guns, arrange shelters, travel through forests, address meetings etc. They did not resent the fact that they were expected to cook, provide food, take messages or nurse wounds. Thus though women's entry into the movement gave them an access to the public domain, however the code by which they were judged and assessed was still the code of the private domain. The liberation struggle did not move beyond the sphere of limited opportunities to women. It did not address the basic question of sexual division of labour or women's subordination within the family and in society. The questions like the differences made between male and female child, or public-private dichotomy and other related matters never surfaced. Therefore, it was not unexpected that their role was marginalized after the struggle. The patriarchal

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<sup>50</sup> Kundu, Rama (1997), 'Revolution and the Exile,' *Radical Humanist*, Vol. 16 (Oct.), No. 7, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Esther Perica views that though the American Revolution opened the door and for a brief time women enjoyed independence and individuality, but the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not open any new vistas for women as a sex. The statement 'all men are treated equal' was interpreted as referring to men, not women. Thus women had to regress to their formal status.

(Source: Perica, Esther (1981), *The American Women: Her role during Revolutionary War*, New York: Library Research Associates, p. 36.)

<sup>52</sup> Kumari Jayawardina (1986), *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, pp. 233-46.

attitude relegated women to the private domain. There was erection of the four walls of the household again. This was specially so with Hindu women. Men refused to extend the opportunities created by the Liberation Struggle, and were not willing to grant social sanctions for such activities which differed from the prevalent ideology of the position and role of women. Even when women participated in the struggle, their role was restricted in such a way as it would conform to the normal image of women. Thus to draw women to the liberation struggle and encourage them was more of a tactical necessity. Even women failed to develop a strategy for their own liberation and struggle for their own interests.

Only few women freedom fighters were seen in public life after liberation. Laura de Souza was the first Goan women to have contested the Lok Sabha elections. In 1963 she was given a ticket by the Congress (I) but she lost to MGP (Maharastrawadi Gomantak Party) candidate. She contested again in 1967 but lost from Panaji Constituency. Shashikala Hordarkar/Almeida worked as a member of Praja Socialist Party and Seva Dal for few years. She actively participated in Opinion Poll.<sup>53</sup> Later she got the government job in family planning department. Shoba Prabhu Desai, Kumudini Kavlekar, Mitra M. Bir and Rajni S Naik were the only four women freedom fighters who contested for the first Panchayat elections and were elected. However they did not contest again, except Kumudini Kavlekar who was elected for Nagarpalika elections in Margao in 1976. In an interview with the writer, two of them confessed that the family responsibilities restrained them from active participation in politics. Kumudini Kavlekar confessed that she could take part in politics only because of her supportive husband.

There were some who were interested in socio-economic activities. Mitra M. Bir was the first President of 'All India Women's Federation'-Goa Branch. She worked for Red Cross Society and was a member of Women's Coperative society. Prema Purav started the *Annapurna Mahila Mandal* in Bombay to help widows and divorcees. Libia Lobo Sardesai formed the first Women's Cooperative bank in Goa. She worked to bring in peace and was one of the delegates of India who attended World peace conference in 1983. She was also the chairperson of Consumer's Forum Association for some time. Rodriques, Laura Souza de was appointed a member of

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<sup>53</sup> *Opinion Poll* was held in Goa in 1967. It was a referendum to understand whether people wanted Goa to be merged with Maharashtra or to remain a separate political unit within the Indian Union.

the Consultative Committee of the Lt. Governor, and was also elected Secretary of the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee.

Few of them were absorbed in government service. A finer observation reflects that the freedom fighters who came from elite group were able to make a niche for themselves in one field or the others. However a majority of the others confined themselves to the household responsibilities once Goa was liberated. Two valuable lessons can be learned from the experience. Firstly, to make changes in the status of women, the changes have to be brought in at the primary institution of family. Women should negotiate changes in personal relationship on an individual basis with other members of the family. Secondly, when women form an important component of mass movements with its own specific aims, like liberation struggle, the interests of women as a group should be differentiated, respected and confronted, not conflated or submerged.

### **Conclusion:**

Reviewing the impact of Portuguese Colonialism the following points can be made:

- Portuguese colonialism benefited women in Goa. It brought in changes in the position of women through introducing reforms like ban on Sati and child marriage, promoted widow remarriage, education of girls and introduced Uniform Civil Code. The progress of women lead to an awakening in them and they rose against Portuguese rule.
- Access to education had a tremendous impact on women. It awakened in them an inner awareness of self and developed a sense of dignity. The freedom fighters were well educated. They read and wrote. It is observed that most of them were studying when they participated in the struggle.
- Age played a major role for entry of women in liberation struggle. The movement was more appealing to younger generation and the youth volunteered willingly. Most of the women freedom fighters were between the age of 18-30 years. It has to be noted that women even at tender age were conscious and wanted Goa to be freed from Portuguese rule. Two of them were only of age of 14 years. They were enthusiastic and dedicated themselves to the cause of liberation. However, old age was not a hurdle to women like Smt. Ambika Dandekar who

was a Maharastrian and came to support Goa liberation struggle by participating in satyagraha in Mapusa in 1955. She was in her sixties then.

- The changes brought about in the status of women by the Portuguese government were largely beneficial to Christian women. This had a demonstration effect on Hindu women who also followed suit, but it did not alter the submissive position of Hindu women in general. The patriarchal hold in the Hindu families resisted the interference of the Portuguese rule in Hindu customs and traditions. Yet a large number of the women freedom fighters were Hindu. Besides the fact that Hindus were in majority in Goa, other reasons can also be attributed. The Portuguese treatment towards Hindus was discriminatory. They followed the policy of mass conversion and inquisition. Through marriages and through exchanges of favours and privileges conversions were promoted. Many temples were destroyed. Till 1910 Hindus could not stand for election and become the members of the Portuguese Parliament. Properties of the Hindu orphans were left to Portuguese if they did not agree to get converted. Hindus were forbidden from renting state land. These laws were relaxed at later stages. But it led to constant growth of humiliation, anger and frustration in the Hindus. They wanted to get rid of the Portuguese rule. It was realized that besides physical strength there was need of moral courage and spiritual determination. These are the basic qualities which women possess. This led to breaking up of religious and social conventions which restricted the role of women. It was realized that political freedom was a desirable objective and women were to be mobilized to support the struggle. Such a motivation was well understood and appreciated by the Hindu society. Therefore respectability of women freedom fighters was not in question. Thus women's participation was drawn within an accepted framework. They were expected to play a complementary role. Their role was confined to that of 'sisters, mothers or wives'. In fact most of the women freedom fighters entered the struggle due to family influence, where their brothers, father or husband were involved in freedom struggle. Thus once the struggle was over the women freedom fighters were sent back to their traditional roles. Now the situation was 'normal' and hence the men in their family were capable in deciding what was best suited for the women in their family, and therefore there was no need for them to enter public arenas!

- Women contributed in the struggle in various ways. They offered satyagrahas, attended meetings and rallies, offered food, clothing, and shelter to the freedom fighters, nursed their wounds, and a few of them also participated in underground activities.
- The study of membership of women freedom fighters in the political party/organization during the liberation struggle clearly reflect that they strongly believed in peaceful means of bringing about required change. Many of them associated themselves with National Congress Goa. They believed in *Satyagraha* and civil disobedience as the best method to resist the colonial rulers. Very few of them were associated with *Azad Gomantak Dal*, (which was a revolutionary organization and believed in military craft and guerilla warfare to force the Portuguese out of Goa) and that too because the male members of their family were its members.
- There was lack of consistency and persistence in the freedom fighters. Most of them were involved in the struggle for a certain period only. Also those who were imprisoned and later freed due to Amnesty International, left Goa and settled in other parts of India. Some of them continued to work from there for the cause of liberation. They did so as they wanted to avoid arrest and further imprisonment. They then concentrated on pursuing further studies, or to seek jobs elsewhere in India.
- The Liberation Movement enabled women to get involved in extra-domestic activities. This participation, however, was not motivated by their desire to utilize the opportunity to secure an improved social, legal, economic or political position for themselves. They seldom resented the oppressive practices that prevailed. They accepted the male authority and guidance in their personal as well as political level. The role of women in the liberation struggle did not procure any benefits for them after liberation. They regressed to their earlier role. It did not give them opportunity or credibility to participate in public and political life.

## CHAPTER III

### WOMEN AS VOTERS

Women voters constitute an important component in any democracy. They comprise half of the population, and are enfranchised members of the political realm. Till recently their impact on politics was overlooked. Elections was the only time when women voters were taken seriously. The spotlight usually was turned on them only in the final phase of the campaign. However the strength of women voters is well realized today. An increase in the number of women voters, and their eager participation in voting, has made political parties pay special attention to organize them, campaign among them and select them to contest elections. This chapter looks at the impact of women voters on the political processes in Goa. It studies the role played by women voters in parliamentary elections held in 1998.

Elections are complex events. They are a device whereby popular preferences are aggregated to choose an officeholder. Choice by elections is now inseparable from representative democracy. Elections socialize political activity. 'They make how, when, where and which citizens take part in political life a matter of public policy rather than simply a matter of individual choice, transforming what might otherwise consist of sporadic, citizen initiated acts into a routine public function.'<sup>1</sup> Elections involve individual and complex decisions which directly affect and are affected by the total social and political process. They open up channels between the polity and society, between elite and masses and between individual and governments. They provide the occasion for the wider degree of popular participation.

#### Significance of Right to Vote

Voting is the commonest and yet most important act of political participation. It is a means of determining and measuring consensus in a democratic society. Citizens try to protect her/his interests through voting. It is an act which is surrounded by a lot of aura and secrecy, yet the voter is fully honest to herself/himself. However the decision to vote is seldom done in abstracto. There are various factors which influence the voting behaviour, viz. socio-economic status, religious affiliation, educational stan-

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Ginsberg (1993), 'Elections and Voting Behaviour,' in Joel Krieger (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 262.

dards, occupation, age, family influence etc. The most effective appeals are those based on the voter's class, religious or ethnic identifications and regional attachments. The relative significance of these factors depends in large measures on when, how, on what basis, and by whom, a group is electorally mobilized. The issues, parties and candidates further influence the voters. Thus the voters make their decision on a multitude of factors. They range from local village concern to state and even national level concerns. They may range from the cost of living to communal insecurity to a sense of being betrayed by the politicians and hence a desire to mete out punishment etc., all of which is counted into the final calculation of the vote.<sup>2</sup>

Votes are, almost necessarily, treated as expressions of support, even though a vote means different things to different people. To some it is a resounding statement of faith in a party or an individual, to others it is a marginal, almost random choice, a hesitant decision about the lesser evil.<sup>3</sup> To many, it is a means, an instrument to bring in desirable changes, while there are some who consider it as an end in itself. There are varied reasons why people vote: (i) the act of casting a vote is an important occasion for political activity as this act bring in some satisfaction since through voting one feels that one is a part of the political system. (ii) many people vote since they think that their contribution to the system is of vital significance. (iii) the act of voting may be merely an imitation of friends, neighbours or relatives (iv) people may vote as they may feel that it is their duty to vote, and may feel guilty if they do not vote (v) some may vote as it has social acceptance and (vi) some may vote because it is embarrassing to look stupid by not voting. Voting statistics does not have intensity measurements attached to it, 'yet, just as relationship can range from a passionate love-affair to a causal acquaintance, so a vote can signify powerful convictions or near apathy.'<sup>4</sup> However the voting intensity can be judged on the basis of degree of political activism. The political activity includes a gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political process, including voting, campaigning in elections, attending public meetings, convincing others to vote in a particular way, membership of organization or a party, contributing funds in elections, contesting elections, petitioning, participating in mass movements, agitation, support of political groups, communication with legislators,

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<sup>2</sup> Peter R. de Souza (1996), 'A Democratic Verdict,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, (January), p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, David; Lahiri, Ashok; Roy, Prannoy (1984), *A Compendium of Indian Elections*, New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorates and other related activities. Thus it refers to 'any organized and deliberate activity that seeks to influence or alter the character/function/structure/policies/assumption/behaviour of any institution or the power structure in any of the above spheres.'<sup>5</sup> Thus understanding voting behaviour forms an important part of the study on elections.

### **Importance of Women Voters**

Till recently, there were no serious efforts to study women voters as a bloc possessing the capacities to influence politics. They were looked at as an apathetic group, and their study constituted only of secondary importance. Most of the major works on the election studies outright considered women as a group who did not vote and were not interested in politics. They were considered as fickle minded, voted on basis of religion, and large number of reasons were attributed for lack of participation by women voters. These reasons were like illiteracy, preoccupation with household responsibilities, and looking after the children etc. Very few studies tried to get the deeper insight into the actual causes for their low participation. Thus illiteracy is considered as a major reason for low participation by women, but this is mainly because women are given less access to education. Similarly, when women are accused of not voting because they are occupied with the household chores, it is assumed that household work is the lone responsibility of a woman. Thus the patriarchal hold, gender discrimination, the public/private dichotomy is rarely questioned. However increasing awareness among women voters about their rights has begun to influence the political scene. In fact, the parties and politicians today cannot afford to oppose any move against women or against their empowerment, and annoy women voters. There are evidences where such candidates are disapproved and rejected. The Shiv Sena Chief, Bal Thackeray made some brazenly anti-women statement, suffered a major setback in the legislative elections that followed.<sup>6</sup> In Goa, the ex-speaker, Dayanand Narvekar, was forced to tender his resignation due to his involvement in the infamous sex scandal in the secretariat. The scandal continued to haunt the former speaker right up to the general assembly elections (November 1989) in which he lost in Aldona

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<sup>5</sup> 'National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 AD,' (1997), *Seminar*, (September), No. 457, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Kishwar, Madhu (1997), 'Women's Marginal Role in Politics,' in Mukherjee, Subrata (ed.) *Special Volume on India at 50*, Political Science Annual, New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication, p. 357.



constituency - once considered his stronghold, against a weak and less experienced candidate of Maharashtra Gomantak Party.<sup>7</sup> In that election the highest number of votes cast by women voters came from Aldona constituency which also had the largest female electorate.<sup>8</sup>

There are large scale efforts to woo the women voters. The chief-minister of Andhra Pradesh, for the Lok Sabha Elections 1999, declared various schemes for the women like *Sukhibhava*, which gave an incentive to pregnant women in rural areas for delivering in the hospital rather than homes. He also released around 10 lakh cooking gas connections.<sup>9</sup> The chief-minister of Rajasthan has declared to build four lakh houses to provide dwelling for widows.<sup>10</sup> Back home, in Goa, large number of schemes are announced for women, the latest being the widow pension scheme, release of cooking gas connections, etc., though these schemes hardly reach the needy women.(more in chapter VI). No doubt this is a piecemeal approach, a strategy to woo women voters, yet it reflects the increasing importance of women voters. The study of women voters is significant. Such study is important for various reasons:

- Success of the democratic form of government demands full participation of all its able citizens. Women form half of its citizens. Further more, group ignored, is a group negated. Therefore women voters require to be dealt in details.
- Such political participation of women helps in measuring their degree of political awareness and choices.
- It helps in understanding the impact women voters can have in influencing the policy decisions in their favour.
- It brings a women's perspective to the decision and policy making.
- Such participation can be the springboard for positions which are vital in contributing to decision making in the public sphere, as women can then reach such positions gracefully and easily, without having to struggle.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'Elections results 1989,' (1989), *Goa Today*, (December), Vol. 24, No. 5, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> The women voters registered from Aldona Constituency were 12,763. The women voters who actually voted were 8617, while the total voting for the Constituency was 16,546, thus women voters surpassed men voters in this Constituency.

<sup>9</sup> 'Wooing Women,' (1999), *The Navhind Times*, 21 (July), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> 'Four Lakh houses to widows,' (1999), *Ankhon Dekhi*, Dordharsan Telecast, 13 (October).

<sup>11</sup> Kaushik, Susheela (1993), 'Women and Political Participation,' in *Women and Politics, Forms and Processes*, Delhi: Har Anand, p. 36.

- It is necessary to understand the gender differences in voting behaviour. Most of the political scientists who explain the disparity in political participation of women, conclude that the fault lies with the excluded group who simply will not get organized and participate in ways open to them. Distortions also arise from the unquestioned assumptions that political attitudes, preferences and style of participation characteristic of men, are defined as mature political behaviour. However by 1980's it was realized that there were differentials between men's voting and women's voting. Men and women are likely to cast their ballots differently regardless of their variations in regional interests, their general experiences or economic circumstances. There is differentiation of women's electoral priorities from those of men. Other gender differences relate to voter's turnover, partisan identifications etc. It was also realized that women not always vote as a monolithic bloc. They are influenced by various factors and are likely to differ on certain issues. Thus opinions of a woman, who earns her livelihood, is likely to differ from a woman who is a housewife. Similarly the priorities of a married woman will differ from that of a single woman. The value and impact of women voters has to be understood in right earnest.

### **Recollecting Women's Struggle For Suffrage**

In the process of understanding the importance of women voters, it will be appropriate to recollect the women's struggle for suffrage. The Movement to demand the right to vote has been the most visible site of women's struggle. One of the major agendas of the feminist movements in late nineteenth century, was to gain the right to vote for women. The cause of women's suffrage was extended over more than a century and included most nations of the globe. The demand for suffrage first emerged in 1848 in France. Women were denied vote on the grounds that they were dependent on men, and men represented their dependents as well as themselves. Further, there was emphasis laid on sexual division of labour, where politics was defined as a masculine activity, and women's proper business was caring for her house, husband and her children. Women within the family were supposed to express themselves indirectly through their husbands, brothers and fathers. Women's suffrage movement challenged these notions. They demanded right to vote on the grounds that women form important citizens. They claimed that women's individuality was as fundamental

as that of men. The vote was claimed as a right within the concept of free, independent individuals. 'One person could not be included in the franchise of another for an individual could not be dependent on the will of another.'<sup>12</sup> It was also assumed that right to vote would end sex prejudice and speed up the passage of social welfare legislation. This was based on the assumption that female citizens by virtue of their sex would act as a cohesive force to bring about social change.

Thus the goal of the suffrage campaign was to liberate women so that they could join men as equals in the political and social institutions of the country. The fight was also waged on the premises that females have a special set of interests which distinguished them from males and made it necessary for them to have a separate voice. Each position thus represented a powerful segment of the women's movement, yet the two were mutually contradictory. Thus suffrage issue focused attention on the identity of women as women and generated a sense of sex solidarity. Women came out on streets, organized marches, parades, outdoor demonstrations, street-corner meetings, pressurized parties and lobbied. Beginning a little after 1850, the struggle by women for the right to vote got positive results. The first country to give this right to its women was Scandinavia, followed by others. The two world wars acted as a catalyst to provide enfranchisement to women who had worked hard during the war time. By 1950 to 1959 most of the countries in the world had enfranchised their women. With more countries, specially in Africa, gaining independence, this number went to 156 by 1980.<sup>13</sup> The last country to enfranchise women is Kuwait, where its women will exercise its vote only in 2000 AD. Today most of the countries, except few Islamic countries and dictatorships, have given women the right to vote.

## **Women and Right to Vote in India**

### **(a) A Historical Perspective**

During the Gandhian era (1920-1947) of India's freedom struggle, women began to come out in large numbers to contribute to India's freedom movement. They used this platform to voice the social plight of Indian women and demanded political rights to raise their status. Unlike in the West, women in India got the support from the organized political movement in the country in this regard. One of the earlier demand

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<sup>12</sup> Held, D. & Politt, C (1986), *New Forms of Democracy*, California, New Delhi: Sage, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Verma, S. (1997), *Women's Struggle for Political Space*, Jaipur, New Delhi: Pawat, p. 76.

made by women was right to vote. The first India-wide organization, Women's India Association (WIA) formed in 1917 had as one of its agenda, to secure for women the vote for Municipal and Legislative councils as it was or would be granted to men. This association led a small delegation demanding the right to vote to the Secretary of State, Edwin Montague, on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1917. However the British Government felt that this demand was quite preposterous, because women in most Western countries had still not been given the right to vote, despite a protracted struggle.<sup>14</sup> Women continued with their demands with added vigour. They lobbied the South Borough Committee on the franchise question and also impressed upon the political parties in India. The South Borough Committee stated 'extension of the vote to women would be premature in a society which continued to enforce purdah and prohibition against female education', thus 'instead of taking on themselves the onus of rejecting the demand outright, the British Government simply skirted the issue by leaving it up to each of the individual provincial legislatures that had been set up in India under the Government of India Act-1919, to grant or to refuse the franchise to women.'<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, legislative councils of most of the provinces gave women the right to vote. The princely states also enfranchised the women. Thus within a decade women in almost the whole of India, got the right to vote. However they got this right on the same terms as men. They were to possess certain amount of literacy, property, age, payment of taxes, length of residence etc. Hence the total number of women who could vote was hardly one per cent.

By 1930s there were more women's organizations like National Council of Women in India, All India Women's Conference etc, who networked together and campaigned for universal adult franchise. The Indian National Congress in Karachi Session (1931) upheld the cause of women and favoured universal adult franchise. The political parties passed a resolution in support of women's demand. Women's cause was also represented in the three Round Table Conferences (1930-1932). However the British Government refused to grant universal adult franchise. By the Act of 1935 all women possessing a property qualification in their own right, wives and widows of propertied men, wives of army men, pensioned widows and mothers of Indian officers, soldiers, and policemen and those with educational qualifications were enfranchised. In

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<sup>14</sup>Kishwar, Madhu (1997), *op. cit.* 78.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

1947, the objective resolution, known as the Indian Declaration of Independence, which was adopted by Constituent Assembly was of historic importance as it gave complete equality to men and women of India in every sphere. After independence, the Constitution of India granted equal voting rights to women in India.

**(b) Constitutional Provisions with regard right to vote:**

The Constitution of India has given franchise to all persons - men and women above the age of eighteen years. Art. 325 of the Indian Constitution provides for a single general electoral roll for a territorial constituency, and states that no person should be ineligible for inclusion in any such roll for any such constituency on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them. Art. 326 provides for adult suffrage. Under this system, every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than eighteen years on such date as may be fixed in that behalf by or under any law, and is not otherwise disqualified on the ground of non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or illegal practice, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter in any election to the Lok Sabha and to the State Assemblies, the Vidhan Sabha. Adult franchise is thus socially and politically the great leveller. 'It is par excellence the best institution of democracy which tend to bring about not only social and political equality and liberty of the citizens by removing shackles and barriers of caste, creed, community and religion, but also her/his economic self sufficiency and freedom',<sup>16</sup>

**(c) The Trends Observed:**

Certain trends are observed with regard to women's voting behaviour in India:

- Women have shown a gradual increase in the exercise of their franchise rights. The increase has been somewhat proportionate to the increase in the total turnout of voters.
- It is observed that the sex ratio (SR) has declined from 931 in 1981 to 929 in 1991, showing that there are far lesser women than men in India, and the number of women electorate compared to men is still lower. However the Electoral Sex Ratio differs from state to state.

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<sup>16</sup> *Report on the fifth General Elections in India 1971-72, (1972), New Delhi, Election Commission of India, p. 21.*

- There exist a gender gap in voting, and it has varied from 9.7% to 17.9% at the all India level. Again, gender gap has varied from state to state. It is maximum in states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan which are relatively less developed and the status of women in these states is poor.
- Studies conducted on voting behaviour of women has led to establishment of certain voting pattern of women in India. Such a pattern, though not consistent and uniform, brings out certain characteristics of women voters:<sup>17</sup>
  - (i) women are not enthusiastic about their right to vote.
  - (ii) women are not independent voters, they make their choice on the basis of suggestions from male members of the family, husbands, fathers or sons.
  - (iii) that majority of them are illiterate, and not able to exercise their vote effectively
  - (iv) they lacks information and political awareness.
  - (v) they are not politically conscious and lack political efficacy
  - (vi) the household burden leaves little or no time for women to involve themselves in political activities.
  - (vii) they do not vote out of fear of anti-social elements and anticipated violence
  - (viii) the men from their family do not encourage them to vote.

## **Study Of Women Voters In Goa**

### **(a) Political participation in pre-liberation period**

Goa was ruled by Portuguese for 450 years. Even during Portuguese rule representation of some sort was known to Goans. To understand Goan participation in elections in Pre-liberation period, it is necessary to divide the Portuguese rule in four phases corresponding to four forms of government which succeeded one after another

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<sup>17</sup> These trends are observed in the following works:

- a) Goel, Madan Lal (1974), **Political Participation in a Developing Nation: India**, Bombay: Asia Pub. House.
- b) Kini, N. G. S. (1969), 'Modernization in India: Women Voting Behaviour as Index,' **Political Science Review**, Vol 8, No. 1.
- c) Ganguly and Ganguly, (1975), **Voting Behaviour in a Developing Society West Bengal: A Case Study**, New Delhi: Sterling.
- d) Verma, Sudhir (1997), **Women's Struggle for Political Space**, Jaipur and New Delhi: Pawat Publications.
- e) Sheth, Pravin (1998), **Women Empowerment and Politics in India**, Ahmedabad, Karnavati Publication.
- f) Similar observations are also made by Kaushik, Susheela (1994), 'Women in Local Self Government in India: Strategies and Achievements,' Paper presented at the Regional Workshop on Strategies to Increase Women's Participation in Local Government, Bangkok, 26-27 (October).

in Portugal - absolutism, constitutional monarchy, democracy and dictatorship.<sup>18</sup> During the first phase(1510-1822) there was absolute monarchy in Portugal. There were no rights given to the people in Goa and there was no participation of any sort during this period. The second phase extended from 1822-1911. The French Revolution and advent of liberalism changed the situation in Portugal and subsequently in her colonies. Constitutionalism was established in Portugal in 1820, and elections were held to its Parliament-Cortes. Elections were also held in Goa in 1822, and three representatives were elected by the people to the Portuguese Parliament. From than onwards elections were held to the parliament, and also to *Junta Geral De Provincia*, (Colonial Parliament), *Fazenda* (Revenue and Accounts), *Camara* (Municipality), local bodies and even to *Communidades*(village bodies). However the elections were held with little franchise. The electorate was largely confined to a select group with certain educational and property qualifications and status and not on universal franchise.<sup>19</sup> However such elections did create political awareness among the people. Two political parties made their appearance in Goa, namely *Partido Indiano* and *Partido Ultramarino* and elections were largely a fight between these two parties. The Portuguese Government tried to discourage the natives, and on an occasion even declared a candidate as defeated, though he had won by majority. This was criticized as 'elections with Bayonets'.<sup>20</sup> This period also saw awakening in Goan women. Portuguese education and Uniform Civil Code enabled them to make a place for themselves. Two prominent women who needs to be mentioned are Figueiredo Properia C. de Afonso and Ermelinda Stuart Gomes. They were primary school teachers and much involved in social reformation. In fact Properia C. de Afonso even wanted that women should have voting rights as they had a right to vote in *comunidades* in earlier times.<sup>21</sup> The third phase, from 1910 to 1926, saw a major participation by the people as Portugal became a Republic and natives of the colonies became Portuguese citizens with the same rights and privileges of that as Portuguese citizens. However women could not get any benefit, as women in Portugal itself did

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<sup>18</sup> Robert de Souza. (1967), 'Political Conciousness among the Goans,' *The Navhind Times*, 2 (April), p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Esteves, Sarto (1983), 'Goa's earliest Parliamentarians and Polls,' *The Navhind Times*, 25 (November) p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Azevedo, Carmo (1972), 'First Goan Members of Portuguese Parliament,' *Goa Today*, Vol. VI, No. V, p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Afonso de, Propericia Correia Figueiredo (1933), *Mulher Na India Portuguesa*, La Nova Goa: Tip Branca, p. 4.

not enjoy the right to vote at that time. During the fourth phase (1926-1961) when Salazar assumed dictatorial powers he did away with the representation of colonies in the Portuguese parliament for nearly twenty years. He restored it back in 1946, but the election was a farce as only members of Salazar's own Party, *National Union* stood the chance of being elected.

**(b) Post-liberation scenario**

Goa was liberated in 1961, and the first elections to Goa Legislative Assembly in 1963 came as most awaited event for the people in Goa. In the first elections the voters were 30,000. The voting in Salcete, Bardez and Ilhas was keen. The voting percentage was 56%. Right from the first elections in 1963, women voters have voted with enthusiasm. They surpassed men in exercising franchise in the first election,<sup>22</sup> and similar trends were observed in subsequent elections. However a change in pattern was observed in 1991 Parliamentary elections. Till 1989, elections to Lok Sabha and to State Legislative Assembly were held together. However in 1991 the elections were held only to Lok Sabha. Also the elections to Lok Sabha were held within a period of two years. This election saw a drastic change in the voting percentage. The total voting percentage for 1984 or 1989 was more than 70%, while the percentage to 1991 election dropped down to only 42%. There was also drop in women voters. The following reasons may be attributed to this change (i) the voters in Goa turn up in larger numbers at the state Assembly elections, and since for the first time the elections were not held simultaneously, they were not keen to vote. (ii) the elections were too soon, within a period of two years (iii) It is also viewed that for the first time strict election code was applied in Goa, which impacted campaigning and resulted in less mobilization of voters.

The major handicap that exist in understanding the voting pattern on sex variable in Goa is lack of maintenance of such records by the Election Commission of Goa. There are no records available of women and men voters of the first two elections, in 1963 and 1967. In later elections also there are records with regard to the number of voters registered, but there is no record of men and women voters, who

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<sup>22</sup> The local daily '**The Navhind Times**' dated December, 10<sup>th</sup> 1963 had its front headline on first page, which read '**Women Surpass men in exercising Franchise**'. Women surpass men in first ever democratic elections based on adult suffrage held all over Goa - held to elect two representatives to Lok Sabha and 30 to the new Legislative Assembly. Women voters outnumbered their male counterparts at most of the 427 polling stations.



actually voted. As per the Goa Election Commission the records with regard to men and women voters (actually voted) recorded by the returning officers and the total figures of people voted did not tally, and hence no records were maintained. However through a thorough scrutiny of the local dailies, *The Navhind Times*, and *Herald*, efforts are made to get the sex ratios in different elections to Lok Sabha to understand the voting pattern.

TABLE 3.1

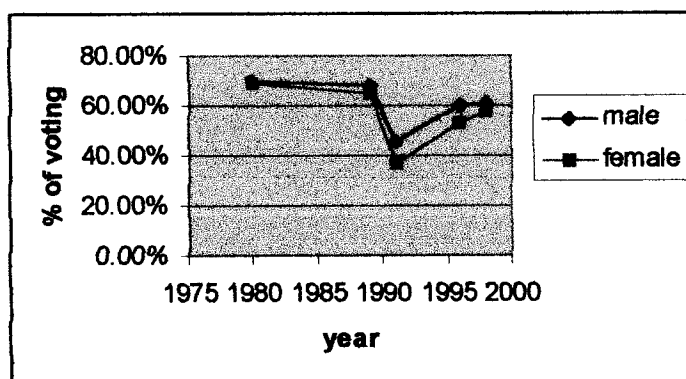
VOTING PATTERN AT THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GOA

Year	Male voters registered	Male voters actually voted	%	Female voters registered	Female voters actually voted	%
1963	NA	NA	-	NA	NA	-
1967	NA	NA	-	NA	NA	-
1972	2,23,084	NA	-	2,28,400	NA	-
1977	2,42,179	NA	-	2,43,632	NA	-
1980	2,61,253	1,82,562	69.8	2,60,899	1,79,658	68.9
1984	2,94,870	NA	-	2,91,736	NA	-
1989	3,70,989	2,53,804	68.4	3,63,248	2,36,006	64.9
1991	3,89,554	1,77,945	45.6	3,79,173	1,38,548	36.5
1996	4,35,375	2,60,573	59.8	4,32,760	2,27,332	52.5
1998	4,61,168	2,82,744	61.3	4,47,331	2,56,376	57.3

(Source: Compiled from the Statistics available of the Parliamentary Elections)

TABLE 3.2

THE GENDER DIFFERENCE IN VOTING IN GOA



(Source: Compiled from the Statistics available of the Parliamentary Elections)

**TABLE 3.3**  
**DIFFERENCE IN SEX RATIO AND ELECTORAL SEX RATIO, 1991**  
**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH NEIGHBOURING STATES**

STATE/UNION TERRITORY	SEX-RATIO	ELECTORAL SEX RATIO	DIFFERENCE
Goa	969	973	+ 4
Daman and Diu	972	976	+ 4
Karnataka	961	958	- 3
Maharashtra	935	913	- 22
Kerala	1040	1022	- 18

(Source: Verma, Sudhir (1997), *Women's Struggle for Political Space*, Jaipur and New Delhi: Pawat, p. 81)

Though there exist gender gap in voting turnout in Goa, it is very narrow. (Refer Table 3.2) In the first three elections women surpassed men in voting. However there was fall in turnover of women voters, from 1991. It requires to be noted that there was also fall in turnover of men voters. In 1998 elections to the Lok Sabha, for every man who did not vote, there were 1.46 men who voted, and for every woman who did not vote there were 1.74 women who voted. In fact, in seven constituencies women surpassed men in voting in 1998 elections. Women's participation in Goa is far better than states like Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan where the voting percent fluctuate between 44% to 49%. Thus factors like, the extent of presence of patriarchy in existing structures in the society, the economic development, political modernization and female literacy influence women's voting behaviour. This factors are directly proportionate to women's voting behaviour.<sup>23</sup> Also the Electoral Sex Ratio in Goa is much favourable compared to her neighbouring states. (Refer Table 3.3) However it is observed that there is declining trend in overall voting behaviour in Goa. The increasing population, the frequency in elections, low activities of mobilization, and the failure of the elected representatives to deliver, may be some of the causes for this decline. However different trends are reflected in different talukas. It was decided to study women voters in details in Quepem taluka in South Goa.

## **Study of Women Voters in Quepem Taluka**

### **(a) Reasons for choosing Quepem Taluka**

Women voters from Quepem taluka were chosen for study for various reasons:

<sup>23</sup> Sheth, Pravin (1998), *Women Empowerment and Politics in India*, Ahmedabad: Karnavati, p. 15.

- Quepem is situated in *Nova Conquistas*. The benefit which women could enjoy due to reforms brought in by Portuguese rule could not be availed by women from this area till 1880, as these places continued to follow their traditional customs. Thus the influence of Portuguese rule in this area was comparatively less.
- A rampant female illiteracy prevail in Quepem. As per the census of 1991, the female literacy was only 50%.
- This taluka consist of two constituencies, Quepem and Curchorem. The registered female voters in Quepem constituency are more than the male voters. Thus for the Lok Sabha elections in 1996, female voters were 11,608 and male voters were 11,298.
- Quepem has shown comparatively high percentage of voting in various elections. In 1977 it was 61.5%, in 1980 it was 66.72 %. In 1984 elections, actual voting in this taluka was 85% which was the highest in Goa.

**(b) Objectives of the study**

The study looks into the following objectives:

1. Are women conscious about their right to vote ?
2. Do they vote independently ?
3. Do they participate in other political activities which are likely to influence their voting behaviour ?
4. Are the women voters aware about various issues which influence their conscious choice as a voter ?
5. The study also analyzes the impact of socio-economic and demographic variables like religion, class, education, age, etc on women voters.

**(c) Methodology**

Quepem Taluka has two constituencies, Quepem and Curchorem. Quepem constituency was chosen for study. It consists of 33 polling stations. From this, by way of lots 6 polling stations were selected. This covered five villages and one town. The areas covered were Malkarnem, Bethul, Sirvoi, Bali, Cavrom and Quepem town. In all 120 women were interviewed. Each polling booth therefore had 20 women interviewed. The respondents were selected by the method of random sampling with the use of random number table. The survey was conducted in March-April, 1998 to study

the voting pattern to the Lok Sabha election of February,1998. Questionnaire was drafted and method of personal interview was adopted. (See Annexure)

The chances of sampling error cannot be ruled out as only a part of total population was designated for observation. There were certain difficulties in reaching the respondents. The village of Cavrom and Malkarnem are in the interiors of Quepem, and lacks proper and timely transport facilities. In some of the places, the male members resisted the woman from their house from being interviewed. Only when they were satisfied by the replies given by the writer they let them to be interviewed.

#### **d) Data Analysis**

The findings of the survey were tabulated and analyzed under the following headings:

- A) Voting Turnover
- B) Level of Dependency
- C) Participation in Campaign Activities
- D) Party affiliation
- E) Membership of Organization/Association
- F) Contact with elected representatives
- G) General Awareness
- H) Political efficacy.

#### **A) Voting Turnover**

The survey clearly revealed that women were conscious about their voting rights. 78.3% of the respondents had voted in the 1998 Lok Sabha election. However 21.6% did not cast their vote for various reasons given as below. (Refer Table 3.5) The following observations were made with regard to abstention from voting:

- The reasons given by the voters for abstention, though appeared to be of general nature, there were certain unique reasons for abstention which requires mention. In the 'not well' category, besides women who could not vote because they were sick or old, there were also those who were pregnant or who had delivered. They were

TABLE 3.4  
PERCENTAGE OF VOTING IN 1998 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN QUEPEM  
TALUKA IN GOA

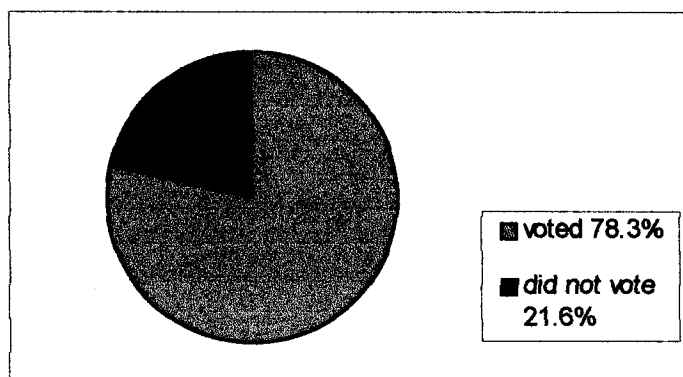


TABLE 3.5  
ABSTENTION FROM VOTING

Sr. No.	Reasons for Abstention from voting	Absolute Number	Percentage
1	Out of station	7	26.9
2	Not well	11	42.3
3	Did not know I was a voter	1	3.8
4	Lack of interest	3	11.5
5	Name was deleted from the election roll	1	3.8
6	Not registered as a voter	1	3.8
7	Distance factor	1	3.8
8	Male members in the family has represented me	1	3.8
	Total	26	99.7

not 'ill' but because of the situation they were in, they could not vote. Similarly the 'not registered as a voter' category consisted of a woman who was nineteen years old, was born and brought up in Bandha- Maharashtra, and had recently married in Goa. Her name was not registered as a voter in either of the two places. The 'distance factor' included woman whose parental home was in north Goa, and she is married in Quepem. Her voting right was at her parental place, and because of distance she could not exercise her vote. Thus the system of patrimonial marriage, where woman has to leave her parental place to settle down at husband's place, do effect voting behaviour in the initial years of marriage. It was observed that women are usually not aware of the formalities of registering their names in the voters list when they are 'transferred' to their husband's place. Also the formalities of getting

registered as a voter, like the name has to be included in the ration-card, the marriage certificate has to be attached, are time consuming.

- Study on impact of education on voting brought in interesting conclusions.

TABLE 3.6(A)

LITERATE AS WELL AS ILLITERATE WOMEN WHO ABSTAINED FROM VOTING

Total number of women who abstained from voting	Total number of literate women who abstained from voting	Total number of illiterate women who abstained from voting
26	14	12
	53.8%	46.1%

TABLE 3.6 (B)

LITERATE AS WELL AS ILLITERATE WOMEN WHO VOTED

Total number of women who voted	Total number of literate women who voted	Total number of illiterate women who voted
94	57	37
	60.6%	39.3 %

TABLE 3.6 (C)

LITERATE WOMEN WHO VOTED AND THOSE WHO ABSTAINED FROM VOTING

Total number of literate women in the sample	Total number of literate women who voted	Total number of literate women who abstained from voting
71	57	14
	80.2%	19.7%

TABLE 3.6 (D)

ILLITERATE WOMEN WHO VOTED AND THOSE WHO ABSTAINED FROM VOTING

Total number of illiterate women in the sample	Total number of illiterate women who voted	Total number of illiterate women who abstained from voting
49	37	12
	75.5%	24.4%

From among the women who abstained from voting, 46.1 % were illiterate, while 53.8% were literate. Among those who voted, 39.3% of the women were illiterate and 60.6% were literate. Also from among the total illiterate, only 24.4% did not vote and 75.5% voted, while among the literate 19.7% abstained from voting and 80.2% voted. Thus it can be observed that from among women who abstained from

voting literate women were more, and at the same time from among those who voted literate women were more. However a comparative analyses of voting behaviour of literate and illiterate women did not reflect a glaring difference. Therefore, though it can be said that literate women are more likely to cast their vote, however the illiterate women too vote in large numbers.

- Study of Age and degree of voting reflected that women from the age group of 45-60 are more likely to exercise their right to vote. It was observed that participation is lowest after 60 years of age and one of the main reasons for this is ill health. The voting is maximum in the age group of 46-60, as out of 29 women only 3 did not vote. This is period when the responsibilities attached to child bearing and rearing are less demanding, and also the domination from male members is reduced.

TABLE 3.7  
AGE AND VOTING

Age group	18-30	31-45	46-60	61 & above
Voted	28	30	26	10
Not voted	6	8	3	9
% of voting	82.3%	78.9%	89.6%	52.6%

- It was found that religious affiliations of respondents had a sizable impact on the political participation of women.

TABLE 3.8  
UNDERSTANDING RELIGION-WISE VOTING PATTERN

Religion	Total no. of Hindu women voters	Total no. of Hindu women voted	Total no. of Catholic women voters	Total no. of Catholic women voted	Total no. of Muslim women voters	Total no. of Muslim women voted
Absolute number	68	51	44	39	8	4
Percentage		75%		88.6%		50%

It was observed that catholic women were more likely to vote than Hindu or Muslim women. This is because Catholic women are more educated than the Hindus. In the sample, literacy among Hindus was 55.9%, while among Catholic it was 61.4%.

Also, from among 46% of the illiterates who did not vote, 58% were Hindus. The western influence has been more on Catholic women. The Uniform Civil Code, the access to education and such other reforms, benefited Catholic women in the earlier years of Portuguese rule. The same values were inculcated and due to the socialization effect were passed on to the generations. Also Catholic families are more based on democratic norms, thus culturally there are fewer impediments which have helped women to make and unmake important decisions in life.

- The occupational status of women also influences the voting pattern.

TABLE 3.9  
OCCUPATION AND VOTING

Occupation	Voted	Did not vote	Total
Agricultural and allied activities	27	6	33
Petty business	6	-	6
Skilled and semiskilled workers	4	-	4
White collar jobs	7	1	8
Housewives	46	19	65
Unemployed	2	-	2
Domestic maids	2	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>120</b>

It was observed that economic independence, exposure, and the social interaction played important role in influencing women's decision to vote or not to vote. It was observed that large number of non-voters were housewives, however it cannot be concluded that housewives do not vote.

- It was observed that single women are more likely to vote. Thus from among total unmarried women 84.6% exercised their right to vote. Also elderly widows are less likely to cast their vote.
- There were no incidences of bogus voting. There was only one respondent who said that she could not vote because her name was deleted from the electoral list.
- None of them said they were forced or pressured by male members, from home or otherwise, not to vote.



- It should also be noted that none of them said that they did not vote because they were occupied with household chores.
- Only one of them said that she did not vote as she felt that her son had represented her.
- None of them said that they did not vote because they were afraid of violence or teasing.

From the above observations, it can be implied that women in Goa enjoy a far better status than their counterparts in the neighbouring states. They are able to assert themselves, and are capable of making decisions for themselves. Women in Goa have realized the importance of their existence and they strive for equality with men. They are occupied with household work, but they are also aware of their rights, and know their priorities. Thus they keep aside their household work and prefer to exercise their right to vote. They know that their interests, and needs can be best represented by themselves and not by the male members in their family. They are outgoing and does not get trapped in the 'purdah', and are less afraid of teasing or violence. Thus the access to education, the socio-legal security and the economic backing due to their right to property has helped women in Goa in attaining a position on par with men.

It was found that the voting turn over was 78.3 % for the sample survey. Thus for every woman who did not vote, there were 4.6 women who voted. However the actual voting percentage for Quepem constituency in 1998 was 65.81 %, and that of women voters was around 64%. It is thus seen that the proportion of those who voted to the respondents was much higher than the actual proportion of voters to the total electorate. This discrepancy is noted in most surveys. There are two main reasons for such discrepancies.<sup>24</sup> Firstly, the proportions of non-voters in a survey are always given as percentages of the number of obtained interviews and these figures cannot be compared with the official turnout estimates without controls for the coverage of the sample and the non-response. It is pointed out that the citizens not reached by the sample surveys are exactly the citizens least likely to vote and this clearly biases the sample in the direction of higher turnout levels. Secondly, there may be a culturally determined reluctance to admit a failure to vote. The first reason is fully applicable in this case and could be largely responsible for the high turnover figure. The same thing

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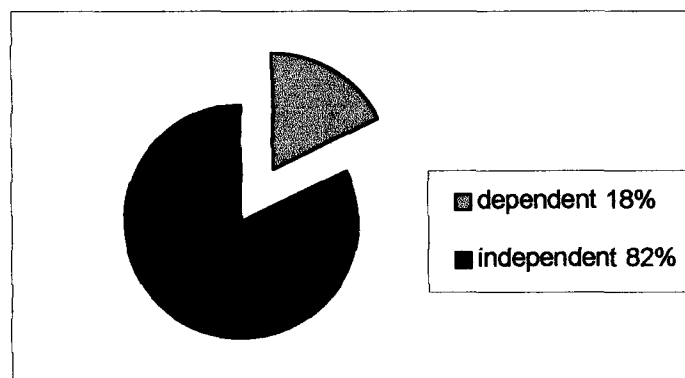
<sup>24</sup> Ganguly, B. & Ganguly, M. (1975), *Voting Behaviour in a Developing Society, West Bengal: A Case Study*, New Delhi: Sterling, p. 39.

cannot be said of the second reason. Though women in rural Goa, are aware of right to vote, it is doubtful that they considered voting as a definite duty, to be reluctant to admit their failure to vote.

### B) Level of Dependency

It is believed that men, due to their historically occupying dominant political roles, have control over decision-making. This dominance starts at basic primary level of community life-the family. Therefore it is felt that women often are dependent on male members in the house while deciding on whom to vote. D.M. Shukla, who conducted a survey on women voters in Kodarma Constituency in Bihar, views that India's conservative social set up expects from women their dependence on males in almost all kinds of decision-making. As such, they do not find themselves competent enough to think and act freely.<sup>25</sup> It was decided to test the degree of dependency of women voters in Quepem.

TABLE 3.10 (A)  
LEVEL OF DEPENDENCY



<sup>25</sup> Shukla, D.M (1987), **Political Socialization and Women Voters**, New Delhi: Janaki, p. 123.

TABLE 3.10(B)

## WHETHER WOMEN VOTED AS PER THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MALES

	Yes	No	did not vote at all
<b>Age</b>			
18-30	5	23	6
31-45	7	23	8
45-60	2	24	3
61 & above	3	7	9
<b>Education</b>			
Illiterate	4	33	12
Primary	2	11	5
Middle School	4	11	7
High School	7	18	1
College	nil	4	1
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu	13	38	17
Catholic	2	37	5
Muslim	2	2	4
<b>Economic Status</b>			
< 25000	8	38	12
25000-50000	3	22	6
51000-1 LAKH	4	12	3
> 1 LAKH	2	5	5
<b>Occupation</b>			
Agricultural and allied activities	1	26	6
Petty Business	-	6	-
Skilled and semiskilled workers	1	3	-
White collar Jobs	1	6	1
Housewives	14	32	19
Unemployed	-	2	-
Domestic maids	-	2	-

- An attempt to test the degree of dependency gave rise to some interesting conclusions. It was found that only 18% of the respondents were dependent on male members and solely cast their vote as per the instructions of male members of the family. From these 74.6 % were Hindus, therefore it can be concluded that Catholics are less dependent than the Hindus. However the occupation of women did influence the degree of dependency. Thus 82.3% of the women who were dependent on male members were housewives. (Refer Table 3.11)

TABLE 3.11

HOUSEWIVES AND PATTERN OF DEPENDENCY

Occupation	Total number of dependent voters who voted	No. of dependent housewives who voted	Total number of independent voters who voted	No. of independent housewives who voted
Absolute number	17	14	77	32
Percentage		82.3%		41.5%

Thus a large number of women voters are not guided by male members. This reveals that majority of the respondents are not influenced by their husbands/other male members in their family in their voting choice. The reasons may be due to democratic norms and political consciousness on the part of women that voting right is their personal right and they are competent enough to decide on whom to vote. However a finer observation was made when one of the respondents said that the decision to vote and whom to vote was decided by the family as a whole. She opined that family is a cohesive group and that political agreement is important for the smooth functioning of the group, so that the disagreement produces discussions and mutual influence. Therefore it is necessary to bring out the difference between total dependency, where women blindly vote as instructed by their male members, and voting after general discussion with family members as the latter is a case of mutual dependency.

### C) Participation in Campaign Activities

The voting act is a response to internal and external stimuli, the former in terms of preference and commitment and the latter in the context of pressures, campaigning and manipulation. It is generally assumed that the electorate which has been exposed to election campaigning in good measures would turn up for voting to a greater extent. Jan Leighley is of the opinion that 'participation in national problem-solving and

campaign activities enhances political conceptualization (individual's information about politics); as individuals are exposed to the conflict of ideas, through participation they develop more abstract understanding of the political system'<sup>26</sup> Campaign activities require more initiative and are more difficult than voting, but these activities have more collective effects upon the discussion-making process than voting. These also demand active, conscious and tactful participation. Verba & Nie includes various activities in campaign activity.<sup>27</sup>

Election meetings are one of the important media for approaching the electorate collectively which is used to inform the electorate about the party, its programmes and symbol, and also for introducing the candidate to the electorate. Efforts are made to mobilize as large number of people to attend public meeting as possible. In spite of this the attendance at public meetings has been not at all encouraging. Election procession as a technique of campaigning is to be treated as a close ally of election meetings in intent and purpose. In fact, they have to popularize the party, its symbol, and/or candidate and also to bring into bold relief the strength of each rival with a dramatic effect. Moreover, to some extent at least, association of the electorate with election procession may also be taken as an index of her interest, if not of involvement in election politics.

The technique of personal contact with the voters is superior in its effectiveness and precision to other techniques because it imparts a personal touch. It may be pointed out here that the participation of the electorate in political campaigning is an important index of political involvement and activism on the part of the electors. If the elector actually canvassed for a party or a candidate he/she can be said to be more involved politically than a person who has merely joined an election procession. The sample electors were therefore asked whether they participated in campaign activities. The picture was very depressing. The electorate was categorically asked whether they

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<sup>26</sup> Jan Leighley (1991), 'Participation as a stimulus of Political Conceptualization,' *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 207.

<sup>27</sup> Verba and Nie includes the following activities in the campaign activity:

- a. Persuade others how to vote
- b. Actively work for a party or a candidate.
- c. Attend political meeting or rally
- d. Contribute money to a party or candidate
- e. *Membership in political clubs*

(Source: Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie and Jae-On Kim (1971), *The Modes of Democratic Participation*, New York: The Sage Publishers, p. 8.)

attended any public meeting addressed by the candidates or their supporters and the answer provided was 'yes' or 'no'.

Participation in door-to-door campaigning is a more specific activity which perhaps indicates a higher degree of political involvement than mere canvassing on an ad hoc basis. The sample electorate was, therefore, asked whether they participated in door-to-door canvassing on behalf of any candidate or party. The extension of a helping hand in collection of funds for election campaign of a candidate or party is an important index of the commitment of the electorate. Similarly, the electorate could also be credited with active political involvement if it takes a leading part in organizing elections meetings. It may be pointed out that organization of the meetings, collection of finance, is usually left in the hands of professional party elite or professional supporters in the case of independent candidates and this may have been responsible for the negative reply.

To understand the degree of exposure of women voters to the campaigning they were asked as how much interested they were in the campaign activities for the elections held in 1998. On the basis of the replies given, relationship was established between campaigning and voting.(refer table 3.12) It was observed that 92.3% of the total non voters were not at all interested in campaign activities, while those who were interested were also the ones who voted. It was noted that even though the interest and involvement in campaign activity was low, the voting turnout was good.

TABLE 3.12  
INTEREST IN THE CAMPAIGN ACTIVITES

	Great deal		Some what		Not at all	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
Voted	14	93.33%	19	95%	61	71.76%
Did not vote	1	6.66%	1	5%	24	28.23%

**TABLE 3.13**  
**PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTORATE ENGAGED IN CAMPAIGN**  
**ACTIVITIES**

ACT	PERCENTAGE
Attended public meetings/rallies	6.66%
Organized meetings and rallies	1.66%
Participated in processions and demonstrations	0.83%
Engaged in house to house canvassing	1.60%
Helped to get voters to the polling station	0.83%
Distributed party literature	0.83%
Contributed any money	Nil

Political involvement in terms of participation in election campaigning has not yet percolated down to the common women voter.(see Table 3.13) Various reasons may be attributed for low involvement of women in campaign activities:

- Campaign profile at the village level is very low during Lok Sabha elections. In Goa, the area to be covered is small and it is possible for the candidate to reach the voters. However the campaign activities of these candidates have failed to mobilize women in Goa.
- The rallies and meetings are usually held in major towns. It is difficult for women from the rural areas to travel to the towns to attend them. Also places like Malkarnem and Cavorem where survey was conducted, do not have proper transport facilities. Thus distance also affect women's engagement.
- It is observed that in rural Goa, most of the election meetings are held at night, and in case of Hindu candidates the temple or some party member's house is chosen as venue. Neither the time nor the spot is convenient for women, as this is the time when they are preoccupied with their household chores.
- The social conventions and the taboos also affect women's participation. The restrictions on women's movement, and the strong hold of public/private divide of work looms large, leaving the women to the periphery of political processes. Campaigning is considered as men's work, and hence women are not supposed to do it. But many men also don't do it, then the counter argument is when men are not doing it, why should women do it ? So, either way women are the losers.

- The most important reason for low participation is lack of individual incentive which is the result of the cost factor. A voter has no time or money to attend meetings or rallies, unless it is going to benefit the voter. As far as getting the information is concerned, voters prefer short-cut methods of collecting and processing information about politics. As some of the respondents asked, what is the point in listening to the same promises every five years? ‘These people (politicians) come to us only during elections, once elections are over they forget their promises, only to recollect them when the next election approaches. We don’t have time to waste on them.’

#### D) Party Affiliation

Membership in political party is the co-operative mode of political participation. It is generally assumed that preference for one political party or abhorrence for it is one of the primary motivational forces determining voting behaviour. When a person very much wants a particular party to win she is almost certain to vote, also a person who wants a particular party to loose is likely to go to the polls. If this is true, turnout and intensity of party preferences would be positively related. It was decided to test this hypothesis.

##### i) Membership of the political party

The survey revealed that there was no relationship between membership of the party and voting. Only 2.5% of the respondents were members of political parties. This is a clear indication that political parties have failed to mobilise women voters.

##### ii) Did they felt close to any political party?

Interesting information was gathered in the efforts to understand whether the voters felt close to any political party and why.

TABLE 3.14 (A)  
PERCENTAGE OF PARTY PREFERENCES

Party preference	Yes	No
Absolute number	35	85
Percentage	29.16%	70.83%



TABLE 3.14(B)

Do you feel close to any political party ?

	YES	NO
<b>Age</b>		
18-30	7	27
31-45	9	29
46-60	16	13
61 & Above	3	16
<b>Education</b>		
Illiterate	8	41
Primary	3	15
Middle School	9	13
High School	13	13
College	2	3
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	16	52
Catholic	16	28
Muslim	3	5
<b>Occupation</b>		
Agricultural and allied activities	10	23
Petty Business	3	3
Skilled and semiskilled workers	1	3
White collar jobs	5	3
Unemployed	2	-
Domestic maid	-	2
Housewives	14	51

It was found that 29.16% of the respondents felt close to one party or another. People with some educational background were more able to associate with political party. Also it was observed that catholic women had more party affiliations. Women who

were employed in one form or another associated with political parties than the housewives.

TABLE 3.14(C)  
PARTIES PREFERED

Party preference	Congress	B.J.P	M.G.P.	U.G.D.P	Did not disclose	Total
Absolute number	20	7	1	1	6	35
Percentage	60.6%	21.2%	3.03%	3.03%	12.1%	99.9%

Various reasons were given for their support for the party. Those supporting Congress Party felt that it is the old party with a national character, it adores secular principle, it has good leadership, it has worked for the betterment of the people, has been ruling for years, had a women prime minister, and that it can protect Goan culture better than any other party. Some said that they supported Congress because of family loyalty towards it while one respondent felt that prices would come down if 'Hand' had to come to power. Those who preferred B.J.P, viewed that there was need for a 'change' in the political scenario, and B.J.P. should be given an opportunity to bring out the change. Religion played an important role in determining party preferences. All the Catholics and Muslim supported the Congress party, while Hindu vote was divided.

An interesting finding came up when the voters were asked on what grounds did they vote.

TABLE 3.15  
CONSIDERATIONS IN VOTING

Considerations in voting	Absolute number	Percentage
Party basis	54	45%
Merit of the candidate	54	45%
Local issues	3	2.5%
Don' know/no opinion	9	7.5%
Total	120	100%

Though only 29.16% voters felt close to a particular party, 45% of the total voters voted on the party basis. On the other hand, even those who felt close to a

particular party voted on the basis of merit of the candidate. Thus from the 29.16% of the women who were close to political party, 60.6 % voted on the merit of the candidate and not on party basis. Though this strengthens the belief that women are candidate oriented rather than issue oriented and personalize politics to a greater extent, however attention to personal qualities like integrity and reliability in the assessment of political leaders is not an apolitical concern.

**iii) Which political party could best solve the problems faced by the people?**

The respondents were asked as to which party they thought, would be able to solve the various problems better than others. 33.3% of them responded. From these, 16.6% favoured the Congress Party, while 5.8% supported BJP. It is interesting to note that 7.5% felt that none of the parties was capable of solving the problems faced by the nation, which reflects the dissatisfaction voters have towards functioning of the political parties. 1.6% felt that coalition would be best suited for India. It was also found that illiterates and poor felt less close to any political party. More than 80% of illiterates and poor did not associate with any political party. Also illiterate Hindu voters were less aware of importance of political parties.

TABLE 3.16

**WHICH PARTY CAN GIVE GOOD GOVERNANCE?**

Which party can give good governance	Absolute number	Percentage
Congress	20	16.6%
B.J.P	7	5.8%
Others	2	1.6%
Non	9	7.5%
Coalition	2	1.6%
No reply	80	66.6%
Total	120	99.7%

**E) Membership of other Organizations/Associations**

Organizations perform important function of interest articulation. A large number of organizations have made their appearance, and they play important role in influencing politics. They throw various issues from time to time which have its impact

on elections. Membership of an organization may make a person more political and thus influence her voting behaviour. However among the total respondents, only 6.6% were members of some organization. They were members of Dairy Cooperative, Teacher's Association, Gram Udhog Bhandar and one of them was member of women organization in Quepem.

#### F) Contact with MLA/MP

Voting behaviour is likely to be influenced by what type of relationship is shared between the elected and the elector. Voters expect the elected to be accessible, and to work for the benefit of the people. If the voters are satisfied with the elected, they are likely to vote to elect her/him again. On the other hand, if they are dissatisfied they are likely to vote to elect a new representative. Goa being small in size, provides ample opportunity for a healthy relationship. Contacts with the MLA or MP and reciprocated response is likely to increase the voting turnout. Therefore respondents were asked about their contact with the MLA/MP.

TABLE 3.17

HOW MUCH INTERESTED IS YOUR MLA/MP IN SOLVING YOUR PROBLEM ?

How much interested the MP/MLA is ?	Absolute number	Percentage
Very much	13	10.8%
Somewhat	26	21.6%
Not at all	78	65%
No reply	3	2.5%
Total	120	99.9%

The voters were asked as how much interested their MLA/MP was in solving their problems. 65% of the respondents clearly indicated their disapproval with the sitting MLA/MP. They were vocal about the various problems that they were facing. Then the respondents were asked whether they contact their representatives with regard to their problems. 29.1 % of the respondents replied positively. They approached their MLA with different problems. However these problems were more of 'personal' nature. These included asking for a job, getting a ration-card or a passport done, recommendation for good treatment in Government hospitals, settlement of property disputes, tenancy problems, settlement of police case, etc. It was found that a large

number of respondents who contacted the MLA came from illiterate and economically poor category. When asked about what made them go to MLA with these problems when there are proper procedures to solve them, they replied that the lack of cooperation on part of government officials, made them approach the '*powerful person*' who could get their work done.

### G) General Awareness of the Voter

Voting behaviour is largely influenced by the amount of information possessed by the voter. More the information, more would be the interest to cast the vote. Awareness on various issues influence the quality and degree of voting, though it is difficult to measure it. A probe was undertaken into the awareness of the respondents about national and local problems on the basis of the usually held assumption that the level of political information is directly linked with the knowledge of national and local problems. At the back of the assumption there was the idea that if a person is aware of problems, she tends to think in terms of both their causes and remedies and it is in that context that she reflects on the efficacy of the political system. Thus the respondents were asked questions regarding the problems at the national and local levels. The questions in this regard were open-ended and at no stage any suggestion to the respondents as to the nature of the problems was made. Later on, however, the problems and their corresponding answers were classified into economic, social, political, administrative and others while analyzing the data. Thus four precise problems have been analyzed and rest of the problems mentioned by the respondents were categorized as others. The problems belonging to the other category were largely local in character peculiar to individuals.

Economic problems seem to top the list as 56.6% of them were economic, 0.8% were political, 1.6% were administrative, 3.3 % were social, 22% were others. 15% of the respondent could not identify any problem. Thus 55.8 % identified one problem, 21.6% identified two problems, 5.8 % identified three problems and only 1.6% could identify four problems. The problems given by the respondents were like rising prices, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, increasing population, religious conflicts, political instability, increasing violence against women etc. However the immediate problems faced by the respondents were rising prices, lack of basic necessities like health,

transport, water, electricity, toilet facilities, the conflicts between the *Bhatkars* and *Mundkars*, and the burden of work they shouldered with very less recognition.

Even though individuals may exercise discretion over the networks and contacts they establish within various settings, the socio-economic composition of the surrounding is likely to create an impact on individual choices. In some instances individual choice may be swamped by these factors. They include caste, class, religion etc. Therefore the respondents were given some statements and asked to give their opinions.(refer table 3.18) The responses reflects their awareness about the functioning of the Goan society. The respondents were asked about the relationship between various castes in Goa. 45% of the women voters felt that relationship between various caste in Goa is harmonious. In Goa, the two major communities, Hindus and Catholic have been living in complete harmony for centuries. Thus 53.3% of the sample voters disagreed with the statement that tension between different communities have increased. One of the major problems in Goa has been the conflicts between the landlords and the tenants. Though there are tenancy laws passed to protect the tenants, a stark reality was reflected in the responses received. 47.5% of the respondents felt that the tension between land-owners and landless has not decreased. Most of these respondents were agricultural labourers.

TABLE 3.18

Sr. No	STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW/ NO OPINION
a.	Relationship between different castes has become harmonious	45%	30.8%	22.5%
b.	Tensions between different religious communities have increased	29.1%	53.3%	17.5%
c.	Tensions between land owners and landless have decreased.	42.5%	47.5%	10%
d.	Now there is more tension between rich and poor.	65.8%	25%	9.1%

The respondents were then given four statements and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with it. (Refer Table 3.19) These statements were directly or indirectly related to women. They were asked whether foreign companies should be allowed to be set up in Goa. 60.8 % of women responded against it. Women in Goa have strongly

opposed the projects like Nylon 6,6 project, Meta-Strip project which are foreign collaborations. The faster pace of development in Goa which has resulted in robbing these women from their lands, and created problems like lack of water, electricity, difficulty in collecting fire wood etc. Thus women are more in favour of indigenous technology and women friendly projects.

TABLE 3.19

Sr. No.	STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
1	Foreign companies should not be allowed to be set up in Goa	60.83%	31.66%	7.5%
2	Every community should be allowed to have its own laws to govern marriage and property rights	35%	51.66%	13.33%
3	Prohibition should be imposed in Goa	89.16%	7.50%	3.33%
4	Like Gram Panchayats there should be reservation for women at assembly and parliamentary level	83.33%	5.83%	10.83%

In India, the communities are governed by their personal code. This has been a biggest disadvantage for women. Thus a Muslim man can divorce his wife with 'ease', and a Hindu woman cannot claim a rightful share in her father's property. There is a growing debate whether there should be a Uniform Civil Code in India. Goa is the only state in India which has Uniform Civil Code which has placed Goan women better than their counterparts elsewhere. The respondents were therefore asked whether every community should have its own laws to govern marriage and property rights. 51.66% responded against it, while 13.33% did not reply. Thus women are not only aware, but are much in favour of continuation of Uniform Civil Code in Goa.

Goa is a cashew producing state. A large number of people are employed in this industry, which largely include female workers. Cashew collecting, threshing, and cashewnut processing gives seasonal employment to women. However the liquor that is produced from this fruit has also been a matter of concern for women. A large share of family income is spent on consumption of liquor by men in Goa. Thus alcoholism is a common problem. The respondents were therefore asked whether Prohibition should be imposed in Goa. Definite positions were taken on this issue by the voters. 89.16% responded in favour of prohibition. It is interesting to note that the 7.50% who were

against prohibition, were bar owners. However, there was a respondent who confessed that she made her living by selling liquor, yet was very much in favour of prohibition as she felt that alcohol was ruining life of people. The answer to this question was spontaneous which clearly reflected to what extent Goan women, irrespective of their socio-economic background are affected by alcoholism.

There is growing trend towards reservation for women in politics. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments have brought in major change in this direction. A large number of women have assumed the mantle of grassroots power. There is a demand for such reservation at parliamentary and assembly level. The respondents were asked whether there should be reservation for women at parliamentary and assembly level. 83.33% of the respondents favoured reservation for women, which clearly broke the myth that women prefer to be within the four walls of the house. They are willing to have a say in decision-making if given the opportunity. Thus women voters are well informed and have formed their opinions on issues affecting them.

## **H) Political Efficacy**

The sense of political efficacy on the part of the electorate constitutes the heart of a democratic political system. Political efficacy can be defined as the sense of worth the citizen feel about herself or himself. It refers to feeling of the individual as to the degree to which she/he can bring in the required changes in the polity by exercising her/his political rights. Campbell defines the sense of political efficacy as 'the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have an impact upon the political process'<sup>28</sup> The voting act is often influenced by the sense of political efficacy that citizens of a country have in their democratic polity. The more the citizens feel that they matter in the polity of their country, the more stake they develop in their political system and its survival. The sense of political efficacy in turn also becomes an index of political education that the citizens have had as also of the sense of involvement that they have develop.<sup>29</sup> It throws light, both on the characteristics of the individual voter and their role in, and attachment or lack of attachment to the political system as a whole. Political efficacy is positively related to political Participation. As Milbrath has

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<sup>28</sup> Campbell, A. Gurin, G. & Miller, W.E. (1972), 'Sense of Political Efficacy and Political Participation,' in Janowitz, M., Elderveld, S.J & Eulau, H (ed.) **Political Behaviour**, New Delhi: Amerind, p. 170.

<sup>29</sup> Varma, S.P & Iqbal Narain (1973), **Voting Behaviour in a Changing Society**, Delhi: National, p. 349.



pointed out, 'persons who feel efficacious politically are more likely to become actively involved in politics'<sup>30</sup>

It is difficult to measure the political efficacy of the citizens. However by asking few questions to the respondents conclusions were drawn. Political efficacy largely depend on the degree of satisfaction individuals derive from the political system. Larger the systemic institutions cater to the people's needs, more would be the political efficacy. Depending on the functionality and impartiality of the various institutions that exist in the country, people would relate themselves to them. More the utility and impartiality more would be the trust in them which would increase citizen's confidence in herself. Thus the functioning of institutions like election commission, judiciary, police, central and the state governments etc exercise a major influence on the voter. To understand the degree of satisfaction of the respondents with institutional and systemic performance they were specifically asked how much trust they have in different institutions of India.

TABLE 3.20

Sr. No	INSTITUTIONS	GREAT DEAL	NOT AT ALL	SOME-WHAT	DON'T KNOW
1	<i>How much trust/confidence do you have in the central Government</i>	28.3%	10%	16.6%	45%
2	<i>How much trust/confidence do you have in the state Government</i>	26.6%	30%	20.8%	22.5%
3	<i>How much trust do you have in the Judiciary</i>	17.5%	34.1%	15%	33.3%
4	<i>How much trust do you have in the Election Commission</i>	26.6%	5.8%	12.5%	55%
5	<i>How much trust do you have in the political parties</i>	9.1%	36.6%	14.1%	40%
6	<i>How much trust do you have in the Government officials</i>	31.6%	31.6%	16.6%	20%
7	<i>How much trust do you have in the elected representatives</i>	12.5%	48.3%	26.6%	12.5%
8	<i>How much trust do you have in police</i>	25%	52.5%	8.3%	14.1%

<sup>30</sup> Milbrath, Lester W (1965); **Political Participation**, Chicago: Rand McNally.

Large number of voters were not able to respond with regard to functioning of institutions which are of national nature, like the election commission, the central government etc.(Refer Table 3.20) This was mainly because large number of the respondents were illiterate and they did not come into contact with these institution directly. However they expressed opinions on institutions which they came in contact with and are aware of their existence. Voters were dissatisfied with the functioning of police, elected representatives and functioning of political parties. It is necessary to note that 52.5% of the respondents replied that they had no trust in police at all. And 48.3% said that they had no trust at all in elected representatives. The increasing gamble for power, corruption, defections, scandals, criminalisation has affected the efficacy of the voter.

Then the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought they understand politics. 56.6% said that they can't understand it at all, 40% felt that they understood it somewhat, while only 3.3% answered that they can really understand politics. However these replies need not be taken simply on their face value. Even a well educated and well informed person may reply that she/he cannot understand politics. However the people who abstained from voting were mainly the ones who could not understand politics at all. Thus 92.3% of the respondents who abstained from voting were from 'can't understand at all' category. However the awareness of women on the issues that affect them, their contacts with the elected, their awareness that elected representatives have failed to deliver, and the large voting turnout indicate that women voters are efficacious. Thus it can be concluded that women voters are efficacious, though the extent may differ from issues and circumstances.

## **Conclusion**

With respect to the foregoing the following observations can be made from the study of women voters:

- The gender difference in voting is very narrow in Goa. In fact in the first two elections women surpassed men voters. Also the Electoral Sex Ratio for Goa is much favourable compared to her neighbouring states of Maharastra or Karnataka.
- Considerable degree of awareness is observed among women with regard to the right to vote. They turnout at the polls in large numbers. They exercise their vote with lot of independence. The reasons for abstaining from voting as observed in

other states are not observed in Goa. From those of who did not vote, none of them was preoccupied with household chores or was forced by male members not to vote. There was no instance of abstention from voting out of fear of violence or teasing.

- There is lack of consistent impact of education on voting. Though literate women are more likely to cast their vote, illiterate women also do vote in large numbers.
- It was observed that the religion of the voter played a significant role. Thus Catholic women surpassed Hindu women in voting, were independent in voting and also possessed more amount of awareness.
- Higher turnout, however, did not lead to a greater participation in campaign activities. Also there was no significant relationship observed between participation in campaign activities and voting turnout. Large number of women voters did not participate in campaign activities.
- The political parties and the interest groups have failed to mobilize women. Only a negligible number of respondents were members of political parties or interest groups.
- While voting, the merit of the candidate is given priority by the women voters. Even those who were sympathetic to any political party gave preference to the merit of the candidate over the party.
- It was observed that there is contact between the sitting MLA and the voters. Though the major problems of the constituency were ignored by the elected representatives they did oblige to do 'personal' work of the voter who approached them.
- Women voters are aware of the various factors that play important role in rural politics. A larger number of them felt that caste and religion did not lead to any tension among people in Goa though they were vocal about the increasing gap between rich and poor. Women have formed their opinions with regard to various issues which affect them, i. e. they were against setting up of foreign companies in Goa, and were against alcoholism. They strongly supported continuation of Uniform Civil Code in Goa and reservation for women in Parliament and Assembly. This shows that women are interested to break the constraints faced by them, if an opportunity is provided. Further, when asked to identify the major problems, problems like rising prices, lack of basic facilities, unemployment etc

were given priority. These issues play important role in influencing the voting choice of women. They do perceive that their life and problems are affected by community politics.

- Women voters are less aware of functioning of all India institutions like the central government or Election Commission, specially the illiterate women. However they are aware of institutions which they come in contact with. They were dissatisfied with the functioning of police and the elected representatives.
- 56.6% of the respondents did understand politics in different degrees. Also 45% said that they were interested in politics. Thus it can be concluded that women voters are politically efficacious.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **WOMEN AS GRASS ROOTS LEADERS**

Panchayat Raj Institutions are the grassroot units of self-government. They are the instruments for participatory democracy and decentralization at the grassroots level. They carry back to the people the power that really belongs to them. Thus they have an immense potential for democratic decentralization and devolving power to the people. They are the vehicles of socio-economic transformation. It is therefore necessary that these bodies are effective and function meaningfully. This demands an active involvement, contribution and participation of the people. Participation refers to direct involvement of people, both women and men, in (i) decision making, (ii) implementation of development programmes, (iii) monitoring and evaluation of programmes and (iv) sharing the benefits of development. Thus there has to be a 'bottom up approach' rather than one where people are mere observers and total dependents. The people should operate and the government should co-operate.

#### **Significance of Women Leaders at the Grassroots Level**

The equality guaranteed by the Constitution of India, demands active political participation by women which is integral to the whole issue of the progress of women. Women constitute 50 per cent of the rural population. This gives them the legitimacy to play an important role at the grassroots level. Such participation is important primarily due to following reasons:

1. To initiate, formulate and implement policies and programmes which will benefit women. It has been observed that in most of the Panchayats the decision-making has been in favour of men, and the needs of rural women go unnoticed.
2. To bring in a feminine perspective to the process of planning, policy formulation and execution of rural development programmes. It is expected that more women would change the focus of rural administration towards important facets of life like health, nutrition, children's welfare, family care, drinking water etc.
3. Election of more women to Village Panchayats would play a major role to empower women. Empowering women refers to strengthening their innate capacities through acquiring knowledge, power and experience. Power here means not power to dominate but power to reduce helplessness and dependency.

Thus women's access to power structures would help them in overcoming inequality and subordination they have been experiencing for ages.

4. The entry of more and more women into the realm of grassroots politics suggest that their increased number will offer them equally increased opportunity to influence the local decision-making. Once a group reaches a certain 'critical mass' then its position, power and influence is likely to increase.<sup>1</sup> Thus increase in number will help women in becoming an effective pressure group through the instrument of collective bargaining.
5. Women are the active agents of socio-economic transformation in rural areas. They have the potentials for effective networking and pooling of resources. They can understand better their problems, identify them, give priorities and preferences, and are aware of strategies towards its solution. Hence their active participation will not only enhance the status of women in the village, but will also help in development of the village.
6. The elected women can act as an intermediary between the government and the women in rural areas. Their accessibility to other women in the village, their contacts at the grassroots, and their awareness of the needs and interests of women will improve the condition of women in rural areas.
7. Larger participation will provide women an exposure to outside world. Their participation would improve their status in society as well as at home. It would also give them an opportunity to work in groups on projects of common interest and associate with on-going programmes.
8. It will provide a platform for women to gain experience, overcome their fear and build in confidence, break the shackles of patriarchy and orthodoxy. It will create an access to women at state and national level politics.

'Thus women's entry in village political system would ensure change in the political system of the village, the familial and social perceptions of the role of women and development of grassroots leadership among women. At the Gram Sabha and Panchayat levels a new leadership would emerge which is expected to administer

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<sup>1</sup> Lyn, Kathlene (1994), 'Power and Influence in State Legislative Policy-making,' **American Political Science Review**, (September), Vol. 88, p. 560.

better financial resources and would provide constructive thinking in village administration and its development.<sup>2</sup>

### **Empowerment in Historical Perspective**

The Constitution of India has provision for village panchayat in the part IV, in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Art. 40 reads: 'The State should take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.'

Time and again concern has been expressed about the under-representation of women on local bodies. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee appointed to study the working of the Community Development Projects and the National Extension Service submitted its report in November 1957. This report revolutionized the entire thinking about the community development as well as the local government. It marked the beginning of new phase of democratic decentralization. It recommended that Panchayats should be composed of elected representatives and enjoy autonomy and freedom. One of the suggestions of this committee was of particular importance to women. It suggested that women should find representation in the rural political institutions. Hence it recommended that there should be two women 'who are interested in work among women and children' as co-opted members on the Panchayat Samiti. A similar provision was suggested with regard to the village Panchayat. However, such a provision led to co-option of women from dominant socio-economic class and political groups, and they could not contribute in any significant way towards the gender cause.

Ashok Mehta Committee was appointed in 1977 to inquire into the working of the Panchayat Raj Institution, and to suggest measures to strengthening them so as to enable a decentralized system of planning and development to be effective. The committee emphasized the importance of a system of decentralization of power and people's participation. It saw a wider developmental role for such bodies in spheres like agriculture, forestry, cottage industries and welfare activities. It recognized the value of women's contribution to these areas and suggested a greater representation of women in Panchayat bodies to influence both planning and its implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> Panda, Snehalata (1995), 'Women in Rural Local Government,' *Kurukshetra*, (April), Vol. 7, p. 103.

recommended that two women who get the highest number of votes in Zilla Parishad elections should be the members of Zilla Parishad. If no women came forward for elections, two women might be co-opted. This pattern was also to be followed at Panchayat level. In the light of this provisions certain reservations for women were made in states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

The National Perspective Plan for Women(1988) emphasized on two aspects:

- The economic development and integration of women into the mainstream of our economy.
- Equity and social justice to all women.

It suggested for 30 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The champions of the Panchayat Raj desired that rural women should not only become the beneficiaries of development, but more importantly be contributors to it. The committee on status of women drafted a plan for women from 1980-2000. This plan stressed on (i) reservation for women at the local level and (ii) establishment of All women Panchayats. The most desired change came up with the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment which came in force in 1993. It removed the obstacles in the way of smooth functioning of Panchayat Raj. It curbed tendencies like irregular elections, prolonged super sessions, inadequate representation to weaker sections, absence of administrative and financial autonomy etc. It endowed the Panchayats with constitutional status. Thus it was a move to reconstruct, reinforce and revitalize Panchayats as an integral part of democratic process.

The new Amendment emphasized on:

- Reviving Gram Sabha, and constitution of Panchayats at village level.
- Direct elections to all seats in Panchayats
- Devolving of power and responsibilities upon the Panchayats with respect to the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.
- Adopting measures for sound finance of Panchayats and setting up of Finance Commission in the states for periodical review of their financial position.
- Setting up superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral roll and conduct of all the elections to the Panchayat.
- The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment has the following provisions relating to women {Art. 243 (D)}:



- i) Not less than one-third of the seats will be reserved for women (including those for SCs/STs). These may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies of a Panchayat.
- ii) There would be reservation for women in the seats that have been allotted to SCs and STs. Not less than one-third of the SC and ST seats may be reserved for women.
- iii) Not less than one third of the total number of seats for the offices of the chairpersons at each level would be reserved for women. This would be rotated among different Panchayat at each level.

The Amendment also added the XI Schedule to the constitution which identified twenty- nine areas of development in which Panchayats will have a free hand in planning and disbursement of funds. These include land reforms, agriculture, small-scale industry, animal husbandry, education up to secondary level and health care. In these activities women can play a crucial role. 25<sup>th</sup> item of these 29 items deals with 'Women and Development'.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment came in force in April, 1993 and accordingly, all the states amended their laws relating to local self-government. This led to a large number of women leaders coming to power at the grassroots level. 'Thus 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment is a milestone in the way of women assuming leadership and decision-making positions as it makes such a role mandatory and universal for the whole of India.'<sup>3</sup>

### **Women in Panchayats - Post 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment - A Review**

Various research studies have been conducted to study the women leadership at Panchayat level in different states. The women's representation has been very encouraging in states like West Bengal, Haryana, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. In fact, in Kerala and Karnataka Gram Panchayat elections, not only 33 percent seats but over 43 percent have been captured by women. Even in state of Orissa a large number of women have come to power at grassroots level, and this achievement becomes all the more spectacular when it is seen against the backdrop of a low literacy level of

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<sup>3</sup> Mishra, Sweta (1997), 'Women and Constitutional Amendment Act,' *Social Action*, (Jan-March), Vol. 47, p. 21.

women in the State, which is 29.1 per cent only.<sup>4</sup> The outcome of these studies is of mixed nature.

The studies in different states reflect that women were used as proxies.<sup>5</sup> The proxies suffer from certain characteristics:<sup>6</sup> (i)They display a lower level of political awareness. (ii)They owe their primary loyalty to their family. (iii)Their role of an elected representative is merely an extension of their role as a housewife. (iv)They serve the patriarchal interests of the family. (v)They enter the political arena for protecting the constituency of their male relatives and are prepared to vacate the same, once de-reserved. Illiteracy is considered as the major cause for women to be used as sheer proxies. A study of the role of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh found that a majority of women panchas were housewives and were either illiterate or educated up to the primary level. In large number of cases the decision to participate in the election was not their own. If a seat was reserved for a woman, the men who were politically active convinced their wife, mother, sister-in-law to contest the election, in order to keep the family's presence alive in local politics. And it is the men who are exercising the power by proxy today. 'The institution of "Sarpanch-Pati" or "Adhyaksha-Pati" might not have any legal sanction, but it is thriving in many Panchayats in the state of Madhya Pradesh'.<sup>7</sup> Similar observation was made by another study in Uttar Pradesh, where female illiteracy, and lack of independent voting rights did not allow women to play active role in the village politics. The Pradhanis played an almost insignificant role in the functioning

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<sup>4</sup> Mathew, George (1994), **Panchayati Raj : From Legislation to Movement**, New Delhi, Concept, p.130.

<sup>5</sup> a) Arun, Rashmi (1996), 'Role of Women in Panchayati Raj,' **The Administrator**, (April-June), Vol. XLI, pp.115-126.

b) Pai, Sudha (1998), 'Pradhanis in New Panchayats; Field Notes from Meerut District,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 2(May), pp.1010-1011

c) Dr. P. Jeyapal & K. Dravidamani (1997), 'Women Panchayat Presidents,' **Social Welfare**, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 29-31

d) Dr. George Mathew (1995), 'Will Reservation Ensure Participation,' **Social Welfare**, (Aug-September), Vol. 42, No. 5-6, p. 34.

e) Sukla Deb Kanango, 1996, 'Panchayat Raj and Emerging Women Leadership,' **Social Welfare**, (Jan.- March), Vol. 46, pp. 77-91

f) Mahi Pal (1998), 'women in Panchayats,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, (January), p. 150.

g) Jhamtani, Amita.(1995), 'Rural Women: The Powerless Partners in Development,' **Kurukshetra**, (August), Vol. XLIII, No. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Nanivadekar, Medha (1998), 'Reservation for Women,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, (July), Vol. XXXIII, No. 28, pp.1815-1816

<sup>7</sup> Arun, Rashmi (1996), 'Role of Women in Panchayati Raj,' **The Administrator**, (April-June), Vol. XLI, p.115.

of the gram and block panchayat level bodies. They have never attended any meeting or made any decision about allocation of funds to individual and schemes.<sup>8</sup>

It was also observed that the male members in the family often dominated the women panchas. It has been found that male relatives usually coach women to speak at meetings, or actually do the necessary paper work when the women are illiterate.<sup>9</sup> A survey in Rajasthan showed that women panchas were not interested to contest again as they felt that the male members in their family did not allow them to function independently.<sup>10</sup> A study of women elected representatives to Karnataka Panchayati Raj institutions between 1987 to 1990, conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences at a time when the Zilla Parishads had just come into being, revealed that majority of the women elected members had no experience of active politics: usually a male member of the family had been instrumental in persuading the women to contest, and in many cases women continued to have all their time for household chores as usual, because the men in their families were involved in discharging the political responsibilities on their behalf. However, it has been reported after two years when the same Zilla Parishads were studied, changes were evident.<sup>11</sup>

Another important observation made by these studies is that, unlike the trends at national and state politics, there is predominance of younger women in grassroots politics. A study of the women elected representatives of Lalgudi Panchayat, Tamil Nadu reveals that there is predominance of the younger members among women Panchayat Presidents.<sup>12</sup> UMA study group also noticed the same trend, that women in the child bearing age group are coming forward to join politics in spite of the domestic responsibilities.<sup>13</sup> The experience of Maharashtra revealed similar features in one of the micro studies of the state. Alvalthe studies of Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka have shown that the effective female participants are those from the age group of 25-40.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Pai, Sudha (1998), *op. cit.*, p.1010.

<sup>9</sup> Nair, Janaki (1997), 'An Important Springboard,' *Seminar*, (September), 475, p.44.

<sup>10</sup> *Ankho Dekhi*, Afternoon Telecast, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1999, DD-I.

<sup>11</sup> Mathew, George (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Jayapal, P and Dravidmani, K (1997), 'Women Panchayat Presidents,' *Social Welfare*, (April), Vol. 44, No. 1, p.31.

<sup>13</sup> Mohanty, Bidyut (1995), 'Panchayati Raj, 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment and Women,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30(December), p.3348.

<sup>14</sup> Nair, Janaki (1997), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Caste play an important role at grassroots politics. The work of UMA and of Indira Hirway on Gujarat's Panchayat Raj institutions has revealed the enhanced role of women from dominant castes such as the Vokkaligas and Lingayats, while Dalit and tribal participation has been muted.<sup>15</sup> A similar picture emerged from the primary survey conducted in Orissa. Around 66% of the women elected members in the state are from Karans (Kayasthas) and Khandaits (cultivating caste).<sup>16</sup> A study conducted in Kerala on women Panchayat members found that only about 30 per cent of the members belonged to the forward caste/communities, while the bulk of them were from the backward caste/communities.<sup>17</sup> The Panchayat elections that took place in the state of Madhya Pradesh in 1994 brought forward a large number of women, many of whom belong to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.<sup>18</sup>

In some States, it was revealed that Panchayat Raj has made women more vulnerable than before due to increasing atrocities towards them. There are hundreds of cases where women Panchayat members are humiliated and even killed. The cases of stripping a women Panchayat member of Salheona village and gang rape of an OBC woman Sarpanch of Gujjarkhedi gram Panchayat in Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh are well documented. In Kachranli village near Panipat in Haryana, an incumbent Dalit women member was beaten up and abused by the police, while inquiring about a land deal. In Madhya Pradesh, in the village of Harpura, both the hands of a woman were broken. Tapati Sarkar, a member of Chandpara Panchayat in the Gaighata Thana area in West Bengal was assaulted with an iron rod. Besides there are various cases of sexual harassment registered.<sup>19</sup>

However, a ray of hope emerges, as the studies shows that these women have a development agenda for their village. Sweta Mishra has quoted a large number of instances to show how women were keen in development of their village. Thus one Sarpanch of Rewari block in Madhya Pradesh, removed the wine shop from her area, another told the SDO that if he did not get the water supply to the village she would drag him to the village. Elected women in some states have taken part in protest and rallies against wages and for drinking water. Some are reported to have participated in

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Mohanty, Bidyut (1995), op. cit., 3348.

<sup>17</sup> Bhaskar, Manu (1997), 'Women Panchayat Members in Kerala,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 26(April) p. ws 15.

<sup>18</sup> Arun, Rashmi ((1996), op. cit., p.115.

<sup>19</sup> Mathew, George and Nayak, Ramesh (1998), 'Panchayat at Work: What it means for the Oppressed,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 6(July), p.1765.

demanding better implementation of Government schemes and have communicated information of Government schemes to the people for whom they were meant. In Arunachal Pradesh some of the newly elected Panchayat leaders have even faced imprisonment in the process of persuading the Government to build a twelve-bed hospital for women. Women have raised many issues like alcoholism, lotteries, drinking water, health facilities, etc. Panchayat women in Karnataka paved the way for the economy of women to flourish by arranging to impart floriculture training to women. In west Godawari district of Andhra Pradesh, Panchayat women were successful in stopping the employers from hiring labour for less than the minimum wages from outside their village depriving the women of their work and wages.<sup>20</sup> 'Thus women in local government have made a difference through their sincere, dedicated and mature approach to issues that significantly affect the daily lives of the people such as supply of drinking water, firewood, literacy projects, access to credit, etc.'<sup>21</sup>

The research studies conducted on functioning of All-women Panchayats have also revealed some interesting findings. Such all-women Panchayats are functioning in Maharashtra, in Tripura, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. Medha Kotwal and Sinorcita Gopal Singh who looked at all-women Panchayats in Maharashtra for *Aalochana* felt that women here are working more effectively than the women Sarpanches of other Panchayats because the former could get encouragement and strength from the fellow women.<sup>22</sup> The members of all-women Panchayats have shifted the developmental priorities of the village. The Sarpanch, a tribal, an old woman of eighty, has set eradication of illiteracy from the village as her top priority in the all-women Panchayat in Tripura. In the Kultikri Gram Panchayat of West Bengal, all eleven women members of the Panchayat are young(30) and have not passed even high school. Yet, they have managed government projects involving Rs six lakh. They have tried to utilise the waste land resources by setting up shrimp farms and mango orchards. In this way they have been able to create employment opportunities.<sup>23</sup> According to the study, each and every girl child is attending the

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<sup>20</sup> Mishra, S. ((1997), op. cit. p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Narayanan, Usha (1998), 'Conditions of Women Over the Last Fifty Years,' **Mainstream**, 11(April), p.12.

<sup>22</sup> Mohanty, Bidyut op. cit., p. 3349.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

school in this village. In an all-women Panchayat of Vitner in Maharashtra the Panchayat implemented 'Laxmi Mukta Scheme' whereby women have been given land. However Bhandari opines that even though the women have been elected and have formed Panchayats, they have not been empowered except in a few cases. In those cases the personality of the women mattered a lot. **The Indian Express** study has confirmed Bhandari's observation.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Problem**

Women's entry in grassroots politics has given rise to various questions which requires detailed analysis.

1. Have the women become mere puppets in the power play of men and politically vested interests ? Are these women mere proxies, and if so, would this be an everlasting phenomenon, or in a span of time, will they be able to assert themselves?
2. Has the burden of woman increased, as now she has to carry the household work and also attend the Panchayat work. Would this over burden woman ?
3. Has woman's entry in politics brought about qualitative change in her life? Does she now enjoy larger share in family's decision-making ? Has it altered the public-private dichotomy with regard to household responsibilities ?
4. Has the empowerment of women brought in qualitative changes in local politics ? Can they check, and are they willing to check, the increasing corruption at grassroots level? Do they have different leadership styles or do they imbibe the "masculine ethos" as survival instinct overpowers them?
5. Are they capable of espousing the cause of women? Do they try to understand the problems faced by women and take initiative towards solving them ?
6. The increasing money and muscle power is well known. Are the women likely to become target of attacks of social elements when they move out of their homes ?
7. Would the bureaucracy cooperate with the women panchas or will they become the hapless victims of officialdom ?

This chapter analyzes the above questions with a study of women panchas in Goa.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## Women Leadership at Grassroots Politics in Goa

### I) Origin of Panchayats in Goa

The historical origin of the modern Panchayats in Goa can be traced back to the local self-governing institutions called *comunidades*. They were also known as *Gaunkari*. The origin and development of Goa is interlaced with that of the *comunidades*. In spite of the fact that Goa was ruled by various dynasties, from the Kadambas to the Vijaynagar rulers, the Adil Shahis, and the Portuguese rule, these institutions have survived through the generations. The origin of *comunidades* is still obscure. Some thinkers believe that they were formed by the *Kunbis* also known as *gauddis* or *Zolmis*, who are regarded as the first settlers.<sup>25</sup> According to The Report of the Goa Land Reform Commission a large number of families from across the Western Ghats, abandoning their original homesteads on accounts of wars, epidemic or finances, came over and settled in Goa. They formed themselves into cooperative associations governed by heads of the families who were known at that time as 'gaunkars'. The *gaunkars* reclaimed and brought under cultivation worthy and other lands lying waste in villages with the assistance of their dependents and the servants they had brought with them. They appropriated the land collectively and divided the produce amongst themselves.<sup>26</sup>

The *comunidades* carried out large number of functions. They build the network of public roadways, the aqueducts of rain waters to those for irrigation of fields and area groves, the top draining by marshy land, catchment of waters, the public security and other works carried out today by the Municipalities and Panchayats. They also looked after the institutions like temples and carried out activities of literary, scientific, artistic and religious nature. The *Gaunkars* also tried criminal cases. They settled all types of disputes and punished offences committed within the village. They collected some professional, commercial and industrial taxes. The *comunidades* also set up primary schools, regular health services in respective villages, and created additional emergency cell in cases of epidemics for all the inhabitants. Thus they were considered as bodies of public utility and were called upon to execute social works.

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<sup>25</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira (1986), *Goa Gaunkari - The Old Village Association*, Goa: A. Gomes Periera, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Goa Land Reform Commission, (1964), Goa, Government Printing Press, p.22.

The membership of *comunidades* consisted of the *Joneiros* and *Actoes*. *Joneiros* were the male descendent of the original *Gaunkars* and they received some amount of annual income known as *Jone*. The Hindu women never had any right to the ancestral property but only the right to alimony. As a result women remained alien to the village *comunidades*.<sup>27</sup> The *Actoes* were the shareholders. Some *comunidades*, specially the *comunidades* of *Velha Conquistas* instituted alimony, of the surplus per capita in favour of widow and children of deceased members. The *comunidades* were administered on the pattern of Hindu Joint family.<sup>28</sup> The *Vodil* (elders) who were experienced and had knowledge of village affairs were chosen to fill in higher positions. The voting was by the *vangods* (aggregate of families) and not on individual bases. Every decision had to be unanimous in its legislative and administrative body called *Gaumpona* and even one negative vote '*Naca*' (no) would lead to rejection of the proposal.

With the advent and establishment of Portuguese rule in Goa, there was a slow decline in the functioning of *comunidades*. The Portuguese appointed *Camara Agrarias* which began to exercise tremendous pressure on the *comunidades*. They acted as a link between government and the *comunidades*. They were set up in every taluka and enjoyed the powers to decide upon common *comunidades* matters. Overload of taxes, and economic depression further led to decline in *comunidades*.

The liberation of Goa in 1961, and the Goa, Daman and Diu Village Panchayat Regulation Act, 1962, gave an opportunity to the people in Goa to elect their representatives to the village bodies on the basis of adult franchise. The first elections to the Panchayats were held on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1962. Thus in Goa democracy had its roots right at the base. The elections to the first Legislative Assembly in the state, and Lok Sabha were held on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1963, that is a year later. All these years Goa had a single tier system of Panchayati Raj, which was located at the gram Panchayat level. ( The elections to the second tier - Zilla Panchayats were held recently that is on 6<sup>th</sup> Febuary, 2000). In addition there is also a gramsabha at the village Panchayat level. As per The Goa Panchayat Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 1999 there shall be four ordinary meetings of the Gram Sabha every year.<sup>29</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira (1986), op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 100-101.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Goa Panchayat Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 1999,' (1999), **Official Gazette (Extraordinary)**, 27(September), Series I, No. 26, Government of Goa, p. 403.



strength of membership of the gram Panchayats varies according to the population covered. Before the implementation of 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, one seat in each gram Panchayat was statutorily reserved for women. All the village Panchayats were grouped into taluka-wise blocks. Each of these blocks had a block advisory committee. These committees comprised the local M.P, the local M.L.A.s, Sarpanches of all the gram Panchayats within the taluka, representatives of the local institutions like the cooperative societies, government appointed representatives of S.C. and S.T and government officials. In Goa there has been timely elections to the Panchayats. In accordance with the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, the Goa Legislative Assembly has enacted Goa Panchayat Raj Act, 1994. The same was subsequently amended twice, in 1996 and August, 1999. These amendments have provided for establishment of Taluka Panchayats at the taluka level and Zilla Panchayat at the District level. Thus, for each taluka there will be a Taluka Panchayat having jurisdiction over the entire Taluka excluding such portions of the Taluka as are included in a Municipal Council. It will consist of one member each elected by the voters from each village Panchayat, members of Council of States and Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assembly who are registered as electors within the Taluka, Sarpanch of Panchayats elected by the Sarpanches in that Taluka, and the B.D.O. The Taluka Panchayat will overall supervise developmental works undertaken by Village Panchayats. There will be two Zilla Panchayats in Goa, one in North Goa and the other in South Goa. Its main function will be to overall supervise, coordinate and integrate the development schemes and prepare the plan for the development of the District.<sup>30</sup>

## **II) Study of Women Panchas in Goa**

With the increasing emphasis on rural participation, Panchayats are expected to play an important role in planning and development, social welfare, education and in the cultural field. The January 1997 elections to Panchayats in Goa, under the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, saw a sizable number of women coming to power at grassroots politics. The cumulative representation of women in Sarpanches and Deputy Sarpanches positions came to 40%. The total representation of women in the Panchayats is 34 %.

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<sup>30</sup> More details in **Official Gazette**, dated 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1999, series I, No. 26 & **Official Gazette**, dated 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1999, Series I, No. 28, Government of Goa Publication.

As per the Goa Village Panchayats Regulation Act, 1994 the seats for Sarpanches post are reserved for women on the alphabetical order of the names of the villages. Thus from 1997 till the next elections to the Panchayats, the villages whose names begin with alphabet A or B or C will have women Sarpanches. Thus from the 185 villages in Goa, 64 villages are having women Sarpanches.

TABLE 4.1  
TALUKA-WISE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN PANCHAS

TALUKA	VILLAGES	WOMEN MEMBERS	TOTAL MEMBERS
PERNEM	17	37+2	119
BARDEZ	33	80+10	255
TISWADI	18	46+2	142
BICHOLIM	17	39+2	123
SATARI	12	24	84
PONDA	19	51+3	157
SALCETE	30	72+9	223
MORMUGAO	9	27+2	79
QUEPEM	11	24+2	86
SANGUEM	12	28+1	79
CANACONA	7	17	55
11	185	445+33	1402

[445 women members are elected from the reserved ward while 33 have won from the general category. (Source: Compiled from the records from the Official Gazette, (1997), 17(January), Series II, No. 42, Government of Goa)]

### Study Design

Bardez taluka in North Goa was selected for the study of leadership of women panchas. It is the largest taluka in Goa. It is among the *Velha Conquistas* and was ruled by the Portuguese for a longer period of time compared to other parts of Goa. The Uniform Civil Code which gave socio-legal equality to women was first implemented in Bardez Taluka. Today, it is a well developed taluka and has a high female literacy ratio. This taluka has 33 village Panchayats, with 90 women panchas. To study women leadership in this taluka, a sample of 33 women panchas, each from one Panchayat, was chosen through lots. The survey was conducted in the month of September- October, 1998. 10 women Sarpanches were also interviewed. These

interviews were taken in the month of September, 1999. Data was also collected through observations made during the meetings of the Panchayats, and at the meeting of Sarpanches at the B.D.O office, Mapusa. The data collected was tabulated and analyzed under the following headings:

- A) Socio-economic Profile of Women Panchas
- B) Political Background
- C) Influence of Woman's entry in Politics on Quality of her life
- D) Has Women's entry brought in Qualitative changes in Local Politics ?
- E) Assessment of Work Undertaken by Women Panchas

### **A) Study of Socio-Economic Profile of the Women Panchas**

#### **a) Age**

Age by itself can be a significant variable for the structural analysis of political leadership of women. The studies conducted on the entry of women at the national and state level politics have shown that women enter politics in later years of life. This late entry rigidifies the existing male-dominated structures. However there is a positive shift observed in women's entry in Panchayats. In the survey conducted, 51.5 percent of the women panchas came from the age group of 31-40 and 21.2 percent came from the age group of 25-30. Such trend is also observed in some other states. The youngest among the panchas interviewed, was Ashwini Bhonsle, from Camurlim. She is from Mumbai, and married to a Goan. She is twenty five years old. She has studied upto S.S.C and they run a small business of making iron window frames. She belongs to Kharvi community. When the ward was declared reserved, people from the ward approached her and requested her to contest, and assured her full support as she belongs to their own community, is well educated, and is well known to them. She gives credit to her education, her husband's persuasion and the support from the villagers which gave her the confidence to win this elections. She is also the Sarpanch of the village. Similarly Anita Pereira, from Marra, Siolim, who is also of 25 years, felt that it was the people's confidence which made her win the elections. Anita's husband is working abroad. She has studied up to S.S.C. People from the village know her from her childhood. Both these cases reveals that the male members in the village have reposed confidence in this young women. They believe that the younger persons are more educated and mobile than older women. Thus the

relationship is one of cooperation and not of competition. Lack of experience, has often led these women to look at the male members for their guidance and advice. Besides, being from the same village, they are respected and have less fear of character assassination. They have the backing of family members, neighbours and friends. They are looked upon as '*Dhu*' (daughters) or '*Sun*' (Daughter-in-laws) of the village.

#### **b) Marital status**

Data on marital status of women panchas shows that a majority of them are married. 93.9 percent of them are married. Most of the women panchas felt that, hadn't their husband taken the initiative and given the support, they would not have entered politics. However, though there is high female literacy in Goa and the trend of late marriages, there are very few unmarried women in politics. Only two of the women panchas were unmarried, one is a beautician and the other is a lecturer. This may be because unmarried girls are busy pursuing higher education, or making their carriers, and since politics is looked upon as a 'dirty game', they are not attracted towards it. Also there is no remuneration paid to the panchas, thus it cannot give the economic independence which is one of the primary desires of unmarried women in Goa. There were also three women panchas who were widows, and one of them is a Sarpanch. The presence of widows is a positive sign as it reflects the loosening of the patriarchal holds over the Goan society.

#### **c) Caste**

Political dynamism in Goa is rooted in caste politics. The *sudir* caste has come to play a very important role in local politics. This include the artisans, masons, potters, carpenters, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, boatmen, washermen, milkmen, agricultural labourers, toddy tappers, fishermen, weavers, labourers, all belong to this group.<sup>31</sup> These castes are also clubbed under 'Bahujan Samaj'. It is a general observation that the socio-economic and political privileges are enjoyed by the high caste people. Earlier the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins were the elders or the *Gaunkars* who dominated the village administration. They jointly owned the rice fields of the

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<sup>31</sup> Xavier, P.D (1993), *Goa- A Social History*, Goa: Prabhakar Bhide Prakashan, p. 36.

village and enjoyed certain special privileges in the village by virtue of their traditional authority. There is evidence that the Portuguese administrators regarded them as intelligent and gave them very high positions in the early period of their rule.<sup>32</sup> However with changing times the other caste people have been able to overthrow the yoke of the upper caste, and have asserted themselves in political positions. This is also true in case of women panchas. 24.2 percent of the respondents came from castes such as Karvi, Randor, and Naik. The Bhandaris form the dominant caste federation in Goa. This is also reflected in local politics. 36.6 percent of the women representatives came from the Bhandari Samaj. Women from these castes have been major contributors to their family income. The economic independence has resulted in less discrimination, giving them an opportunity to be on an almost equal footing with men. It was also observed that very few women came from higher caste. This is mainly because there is patriarchal hold and rigid value system still existent in these families. Some of the respondents were not aware of what caste they belonged to, while one of them refused to state the caste to which she belongs.

#### **d) Occupation**

The analysis of occupational status shows that 63.6 percent of the women panchas were house-wives. Here household work comprised of cooking, washing and cleaning, and taking care of the family members. These women did not have to go to distant places to fetch water, fodder and fuel. None of them had cattle. 21.2 percent had fields and they work in the fields during monsoons. Thus the women could manage to get free time which could be utilized for other social activities. This has enabled them to blend the household work with the Panchayat work. The small size of the territory of Goa, has also helped in yet another way. The panchayat office is not far away from the village, and as a result, women can manage on their own to attend the panchayat meetings. 18.18 percent of the respondents supplemented their family income. They worked in fields, did tailoring, helped male members in business and one of them gave tuition. 3.03 percent were self employed while 15.1 percent have full time job. In spite of being occupied with jobs, and the household chores, these women were able to devote time to the Panchayat work. In fact, the sense of

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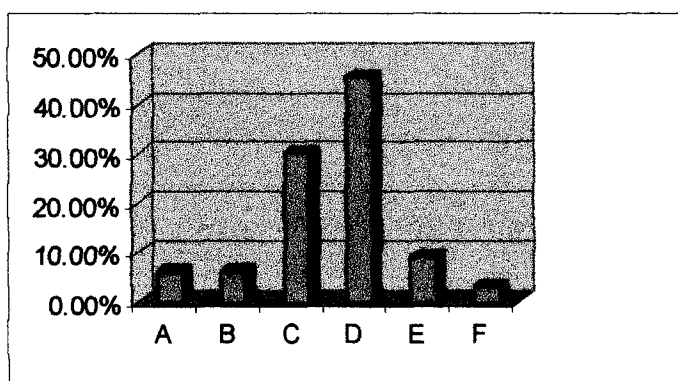
<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

economic independence, and the socializing impact, have equipped them better to carry out their work.

### e) Education

A positive trend was observed with regard to the educational status of women panchas. 75 percent of them have completed middle or high school which enables them to carry out the paper work of the Panchayat. Thus compared to some other states, women panchas in Goa are better educated. In fact, an analysis of relationship vis-a-vis education and men in Panchayats reflected that women panchas are almost on an equal footing with men. In some Panchayats women panchas are more educated than men. Those who are graduates and post-graduates have edge over others, even over male Panchayat members, as they can understand the functioning of the Panchayat in fullest term. Their relationship with the Secretary and Talathi of the Panchayat, and other male Panchayat members is one of equality and co-operation. They are better aware of the various schemes, are members on the committees of the Panchayat, and can analyze the financial position of the Panchayat. Pancha with

TABLE 4.2  
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE WOMEN PANCHAS



(A-illiterate, B-primary, C- middle School, D-High school, E- Graduate, F- post graduate)

middle school education, however expressed their dependency on the administrative staff in certain matters. However they are aware of the problems of their village and initiate proposals for its development. While the others with less or no education had to depend on others, specially males members in the family to get acquainted to the rules and procedures of the Panchayat. A point requires to be noted that education is

not the sole criterion to equip the women to carry out the work of the Panchayat efficiently, though it can act as a support pillar. The procedures of Panchayat are simple to be understood. Thus it is more a matter of experience and determination. The study revealed that a woman Sarpanch from Moira, who has studied up to middle school, and who has worked as an anganwadi worker, took her job confidently from the beginning. While, woman Sarpanch from Penha da Franca, who has studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> std., and who is a house-wife, took time to assert herself.

## **B) Political Background**

### **a) Reasons for entry in politics**

It is commonly believed that women's increased presence in local politics will lead to their greater power and influence in policy-making. It was decided to examine women's participation in policy making and leadership experiences. 90.9 percent of them had contested and won for the first time. Being new entrants in politics, they were less aware and informed about the processes of local politics. This acted as a major obstacle to their effective share in decision-making. When asked about the reason for their entry in politics, 51.5 percent replied that the male members in their family influenced them to do so. In this 9.09 percent were the wives of the Sarpanches. Their Sarpanch husbands wanted them to contest as this would strengthen their panels. 15.1 percent contested from the ward because now it was reserved for women. This was necessary to continue the hold of the family on the ward. 6.06 percent of them, literally admitted that they contested because men told them that they would not have to do anything. A woman pancha from Nerul Village Panchayat, who is illiterate and works in fields, narrated how her husband forced her to contest, though she was not interested as she had lost her mother few days before. She has not been attending the meetings and is neither aware of functioning of the Panchayat. Her husband was reluctant even to allow her to be interviewed. Thus, reservation, which is instrument for empowerment of women, can also be used for their exploitation. It was observed that the main reason for entry of young women in local politics was the support from the ward people. (ref. Table 4.3). Similarly most of the Hindu women panchas entered politics as the family members influenced them.

(ref. Table 4.4) It was also observed that women from lower income group contested as they got the support from their ward people.

TABLE 4.3  
AGE AND REASON FOR ENTRY IN GRASSROOTS POLITICS

Age group	A	B	C	D	Total
25-35	2	5	7	-	14 (42.42%)
36-45	4	9	1	-	14 (42.42%)
46& above	2	3	-	-	5 (15.15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b> (24.24%)	<b>17</b> (51.51%)	<b>8</b> (24.24%)	<b>-</b>	<b>33</b> (100%)

( A- I was interested, B- Family influenced me, C- Ward People requested me, D-Party asked me)

TABLE 4.4  
RELIGION AND REASON FOR ENTRY IN POLITICS

Religion	A	B	C	D	Total
Hindu	3	12	6	-	21 (63.63%)
Catholic	5	5	2	-	12 (36.36%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b> (24.24%)	<b>17</b> (51.51%)	<b>8</b> (24.24%)	<b>-</b>	<b>33</b> (100%)

( A- I was interested, B- Family influenced me, C- Ward People requested me, D-Party asked me)  
(Note: The women panchas from the sample were chosen by system of lots, as a result the Catholic respondents were 12 in number. Otherwise for total Bardez Taluka out of 90 women panchas there are 39 catholic women panchas)

TABLE 4.5  
INCOME AND REASON FOR ENTRY IN POLITICS

Income group	A	B	C	D	Total
> 25000	-	1	5	-	6 (18.1%)
26000-50000	2	2	1	-	5 (15.15%)
51000-1 lakh	2	5	2	-	9 (27.2%)
Above one lakh	4	9	-	-	13 (39.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b> (24.24%)	<b>17</b> (51.51%)	<b>8</b> (24.24%)	<b>-</b>	<b>33</b> (100%)

( A- I was interested, B- Family influenced me, C- Ward People requested me, D-Party asked me)



TABLE 4.6  
EDUCATION AND REASON FOR ENTRY IN POLITICS

Education	A	B	C	D	Total
Illiterate	-	2	-	-	2 (6.06%)
Primary	1	-	1	-	2 (6.06%)
Middle School	1	7	2	-	10 (30.03%)
High School	4	6	5	-	15 (45.45%)
Graduation	1	2	-	-	3 (9.09%)
Post Graduation	1	-	-	-	1 (3.03%)
Total	8 (24.24%)	17 (51.51%)	8 (24.24%)	-	33 (100%)

( A- I was interested, B- Family influenced me, C- Ward People requested me, D-Party asked me)

**b) Are women proxies ?**

Interesting picture arose when the study looked into these women 'proxies'. Proxies here refer to women who had contested as the ward was now reserved, and all these years the male members from their family were contesting. There were four such cases in the sample. It was heartening to note that some of them have already been able to tow an independent line. Women Pancha from Assagao, contested elections because all this years her husband contested from the ward which was now reserved. She is S.S.C. pass and is working as U.D.C in a well known school in Mapusa. Now that she is elected she takes deep interest in the functioning of the Panchayat. So is in the case of pancha from Guirim. All this years her younger brother in law use to win from this ward. She has passed her S.S.C. and is teaching in school. She was highly aware of Panchayat functioning and of the various schemes of the Panchayat. Both of these women panchas agreed that it was the male family members who persuaded them to contest, and they did the campaigning for them, but now both of them were interested in grassroots politics. Another women pancha studied up to the primary level, contested as her brother in law could not contest as the ward was reserved. She said that she was dependent on him on matters related to the Panchayat. Yet she was vocal about how the Panchayat does not have sufficient finances to implement various schemes. She also indirectly hinted how the Sarpanch

was not keeping them informed about various schemes. She could not attend all the meetings of the Panchayat as she runs a general stores shop in Mapusa. She was enthusiastic to show how she has given water connections and put street lights in her ward. A pancha from Parra contested as her husband could not contest as the ward was reserved. They own a liquor shop. She was not able to answer any thing as her husband is doing all the paper work for her.

A look at the women panchas, who contested because their husband Sarpanches wanted them to do so, showed that these women were more docile, not willing to annoy their husbands. This is exactly where the fear of women as proxy comes in. However the trends show that this is a transitional stage, which will subsume as more and more educated and employed women will come in politics, and this is not far as 24.2 percent said that they contested because they were really interested in politics.

### **c) Role in decision making**

It is interesting to study, how these women participate in decision-making. Statistics revealed that for 21.2 percent, the decisions were made by the male family members. This reflect the disparity between shadow and substance of female power. It is necessary to bring about a qualitative change with women's participation in grassroots politics, rather than bring it down further with women simply joining as puppets in this enterprise. 33.3 percent were influenced by the male members in the family in decision-making. They were influenced by their husbands or by their brother-in-laws. Thus it is necessary to look at two questions; (i) Do women want to remain in a male dominated political set-up, or (ii) Do they really want to participate in Panchayat functioning? However 45.4 percent answered that they took their independent decisions. It is heartening to note that they can make a distinction between the decision-making process and the ultimate decision making. In the decision making process they took the help of their neighbours, friends and family members, asked for more information and discussed the pros and cons on various Panchayat related matters. The advise given helped them in making decisions. However when they took the decisions they did what they felt was the right thing for them to do. As some of them said that they did discuss the matter with the family members, but the ultimate decisions with regard Panchayat matters were taken by them (implying that it could not lie with anybody else). A positive trend emerged

which reflected that women from the age group of 25-35 are more likely to take independent decisions. The education they possess, and the confidence reposed in them by the villagers have been the major reasons for young women to take independent decisions.(refer Table 4.7) Also catholic women are better than Hindu panchas in making independent decisions. (refer Table 4.8)

TABLE 4.7  
AGE AND DECISION MAKING

Age Group	A	B	C	Total
25-35	8	4	2	14 (42.4%)
36-45	5	5	4	14 (42.4%)
46 & above	2	2	1	5 (15.1%)
Total	15 (45.4%)	11 (33.3%)	7 (21.2%)	33 (100%)

(A- on their own, B- influenced by family members, C- totally made by male family members)

TABLE 4.8  
RELIGION AND DECISION MAKING

Religion	A	B	C	Total
Hindu	8	8	5	21 (63.63%)
Catholic	7	3	2	12 (36.36%)
Total	15 (45.4%)	11 (33.3%)	7 (21.2%)	33 100%

(A- on their own, B- influenced by family members, C- totally made by male family members)

**TABLE 4.9**  
**EDUCATION AND DECISION MAKING**

Education	A	B	C	Total
Illiterate	-	-	2	2 (6.06%)
Primary	-	1	1	2 (6.06%)
Middle School	4	4	2	10 (30.03%)
High School	8	5	2	15 (45.45%)
Graduation	2	1	-	3 (9.09%)
Post Graduation	1	-	-	1 (3.03%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(45.4%)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(33.3%)</b>	<b>7</b> <b>(21.2%)</b>	<b>33</b> <b>(100%)</b>

(A- on their own, B- influenced by family members, C- totally made by male family members)

**TABLE 4.10**  
**ECONOMIC STATUS AND DECISION MAKING**

Income group	A	B	C	Total
> 25000	3	2	1	6 (18.1%)
26000-50000	3	2	-	5 (15.15%)
51000-1 lakh	3	3	3	9 (27.2%)
Above one lakh	6	4	3	13 (39.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(45.4%)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(33.3%)</b>	<b>7</b> <b>(21.2%)</b>	<b>33</b> <b>(100%)</b>

(A- on their own, B- influenced by family members, C- totally made by male family members)

**d) Are they dominated by male panchas?**

When asked about whether these women were dominated by men panchas interesting picture arose. 27.2 percent being Sarpanches and Deputy Sarpanches, they were not dominated. Similarly three of them were wives of the Sarpanches of their villages, thus the domination was not visible. 6.06 percent did not go for meeting at all. 9.09 percent said that they rarely spoke in the meeting. They preferred the informal ways, where they communicated their grievances to the Sarpanch after the formal meetings were over. Some felt timid to participate when the men made it

plain that they were not wanted. The writer had an opportunity to witness a Panchayat meeting at Marra, Siolim. There were four women panchas in a nine-members village Panchayat. Three had won from the reserved wards, while one had contested from the general ward. The latter was more articulate and vocal than the others. She insisted that men would like to dominate but women should be assertive enough. She insisted with the Sarpanch that she required two trucks of laterite stones for her ward. In the same Panchayat there was a pancha who went out of the meeting after every five minutes. She communicated to her husband, who was not allowed to attend the meeting but was waiting outside, the Panchayat proceedings and came back and spoke whatever her husband told her. When requested for an interview she refused. Similarly, when I went to interview the women panchas, who are wives of the Sarpanches of Soccoro, Sangolda and Nachinola, their husband Sarpanches offered to answer all the questions. However on insistence they let their wives to be interviewed. One of these women pancha, came with indifference and could hardly give any information. This reflects the cultural bias that exist in Goa. There are instances where the husband and other male family members are supportive towards their women in the family, and encourage them to participate in public life. This gives an optimistic picture of Goan society where the patriarchal hold is declining. However the above few examples of over-protectionism makes us aware of presence of patriarchy in its invisible form.

It was observed that young and elderly women felt less dominated from the male panchas. For young panchas, the possession of education has helped in resisting such domination while for the elderly women it is the age and experience over the years which has helped in asserting themselves. (refer table 4.11) Also Catholic women felt less dominated by the male Panchayat members. (refer table 4.12) However 48.4% of the women panchas said that they did speak in the meetings and expressed the needs of their areas. It was also observed that women panchas from the ruling panel were more vocal, and regular for the meeting than the others. Also it was observed that those who were employed were more articulate than the housewives. The sense of economic independence, the exposure and awareness have made these women more articulate. It was also felt that women who had won from unreserved seat were more assertive than the others. This was mainly because they were self motivated, and had contested because they were interested in grassroots politics. It was observed that Catholic women were more assertive than their Hindu counterparts.

TABLE 4.11

## AGE AND DOMINATION BY MALE PANCHAS

Age group	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
25-35	3	9	2	14 (42.4%)
36-45	6	7	1	14 (42.4%)
46 & above	-	4	1	5 (15.1%)
Total	9 (27.2%)	20 (60.6%)	4 (12.1%)	33 (100%)

TABLE 4.12

## RELIGION AND DOMINATION BY MALE PANCHAS

Religion	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Hindu	6	12	3	21 (63.63%)
Catholic	3	8	1	12 (36.36%)
Total	9 (27.2%)	20 (60.6%)	4 (12.1%)	33 100%

TABLE 4.13

## ECONOMIC STATUS AND DOMINATION BY MALE PANCHAS

Income group	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
> 25000	2	3	1	6 (18.1%)
26000-50000	1	2	2	5 (15.15%)
51000-1 lakh	4	4	1	9 (27.2%)
Above one lakh	2	11	-	13 (39.3%)
Total	9 (27.2%)	20 (60.6%)	4 (12.1%)	33 (100%)

TABLE 4.14  
EDUCATION AND DOMINATION BY MALE PANCHAS

Education	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Illiterate	-	-	2	2 (6.06%)
Primary	-	2	-	2 (6.06%)
Middle School	8	1	1	10 (30.03%)
High School	1	13	1	15 (45.45%)
Graduation	-	3	-	3 (9.09%)
Post Graduation	-	1	-	1 (3.03%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b> (27.2%)	<b>20</b> (60.6%)	<b>4</b> (12.1%)	<b>33</b> (100%)

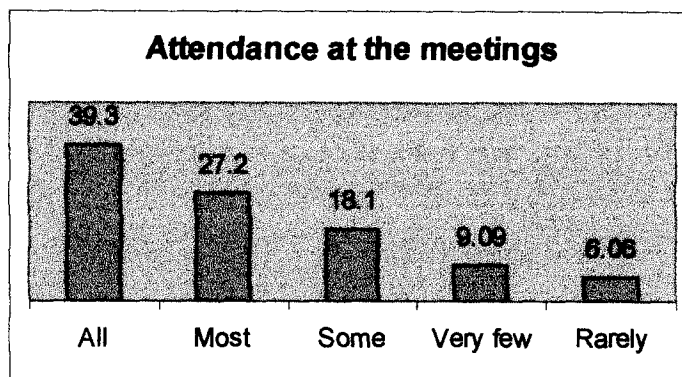
From the 10 women members from Bardez Taluka who have won elections from the general category, seven come from Catholic religion. Due to Portuguese rule, which granted a large number of privileges to Catholic, there was tremendous impact in the Catholic way of living. It brought in progressive changes in the institution of family. The relations in Catholic family are more based on democracy and equality. This has given Catholic woman more freedom in areas outside family to exert herself and nourish her identity. On the other hand, Hindu family patronize and cherish the old authoritarian paternal set up. It becomes difficult for a Hindu women to break the umbilical cord of male domination.

A look at the relationship between the Panchayat officials and the women panchas it was found that they shared a cordial relationship. A few of them had grievances against the Secretary and the Talathi of the Panchayat. A finer observation emerged when the women who aggrieved said that the attitude of officials was biased towards women from ruling panel. It was also observed that many of them had contested and won for the first time. Being new entrants in politics, they required time to learn the grassroots politics.

**e) Attendance at the meeting**

The change is evident. There is growing sense of responsibility and assertion among the women panchas. 39.3 percent went regularly to the Panchayat meetings.

TABLE 4.15  
ATTENDANCE OF WOMEN PANCHAS AT THE MEETINGS



30.3 percent visited government offices for Panchayat work and 6.06 percent visited local M.L.A. with their problems. 50 percent of them went to Panchayat besides attending the Panchayat meetings. In Goa, men and women panchas are treated on equal footings and they sit together in the meetings. The phenomenon observed in other states, where women sit on one side and men on other, or women sit on floor and men on chairs, women observing purdah etc are **not** practiced in Goa.

#### **f) Profile of Women Sarpanches**

Study of women Sarpanches revealed interesting information. There are 10 women Sarpanches in Bardez Taluka as these posts are reserved. All the ten Sarpanches were interviewed. Six of these have studied up to S.S.C, while two have passed middle school, one is with primary education, and one of them is a lawyer. Two of them are from kshatriya varna, while seven are from Bahujan Samaj, while one of them refused to indicate her caste. Five of them were from the age group of 35 to 40, two were between 25 to 30 years, and three were above 45 years. Five were Catholic and five belonged to Hindu religion. It is necessary to note that seven of them did not come from a political family. Most of them came from middle class family. While one was poor, staying in a small kaccha house. A note of husband's occupation revealed that three of them are working as clerks, one in government and two are in private service, one is a driver, one is working abroad, two of them run small businesses and one works in agriculture. Two of the women Sarpanches are widows. Thus the grassroots politics offers opportunity to common women to enter



politics, unlike state and national politics where women from elite background and from political family have a upper say. Three of them had political experience. Two of them had been elected for a previous term of the Panchayat, while one had contested earlier elections to the Panchayat in the general category, but could not win it. All these women are particular in attending the meetings of the Panchayat. They are aware of the procedures of the Panchayat. Except for the Sarpanch from Bastora, all others were able to assert themselves. The Bastora Sarpanch, with primary education, belongs to Bhandari Samaj. She is poor, works in the fields and is a tailor. It was her father's link with the Maharashtra Gomantak Party, and the villagers which prompted her to contest elections. She declares her helplessness to understand the Panchayat proceedings and has to depend on other male members, and the Secretary of the Panchayat. However she opined that they were co-operative and helpful to her. Now that women have emerged as Sarpanches they are also involved in party politics. Many women found themselves subjected to politicking particularly by the political parties. Two of them openly declared that they were from the 'Narvekar's Panel' (belonging to Congress party).

The writer had an opportunity to attend a meeting of Sarpanches of Bardez Taluka at the B.D.O. office, Mapusa. It was the meeting of 'Building Construction Clearance Committee' of Bardez Taluka. The Government of Goa has constituted this committee to bring in transparency and expediency in matters relating to grant of permissions for the constructions of Buildings.<sup>33</sup> The meeting is chaired by B.D.O and its members are Sarpanches of the village Panchayats, Town Planner or her/his representative, Technical Officer from the P.W.D, Health Officer or her/his representative, and Assistant Engineer, Department of Electricity. For any construction in the village, the applicant has to send the copy of the plan and other required documents to all the above departments. On the meeting day, the representatives gives the N.O.C or rejection of the plan to the concerned Panchayat. This meeting is called twice a month. The Sarpanch has to place the applications which are recommended in this meeting before the next meeting of the Panchayat, and convey the decision of the Panchayat to applicant.

The meeting was attended by four women Sarpanches. They all were very assertive. They expressed their problems and gave suggestions. One of them had a

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<sup>33</sup> As per the Order No. 30/3/DP-99 dated 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1999, Government of Goa.

genuine problem. The earlier Sarpanch in her village had laid down pipe-lines in the village some eight years back without filling any tender. Now, the present Sarpanch was 'pressurised' to fill in fresh tenders for the same pipe line and show that it is built now. The earlier Sarpanch asked her to give him Rs.15,000 which he had then spent in building this line. She told the B.D.O that she has refused to listen to such 'nonsense'. She then approached the Dy. Collector with regard to some file that was pending with him. She complained that the files moved at a snail pace in the government. She also asked the representative of the Health Department as to why they were so particular about the construction cases, when the soak-pits in the State were over flowing and was an open invitation to malaria. The Arpora Sarpanch expressed her anger that none of her files was cleared. She questioned the representatives from the departments for the delay. When one of them told her that he was not the authority to answer her question, she responded and asked him 'Why if he did not have the authority, did he attend the meeting'. The Anjuna Sarpanch told the concerned departments to send their N.O.C. to the concerned parties. She complained that such permissions led the villagers as well as the panchas in her Panchayat question her about the permissions granted. Thus Panchayat no longer exercise the control over deciding construction legality in its village. The Sarpanches read the replies that came from the various departments very carefully. One of the plans was rejected because it was that of a farmhouse, while the proposal that was put forward was for a Bungalow. The concerning woman Sarpanch then and there studied the whole plan. It was observed that the Secretaries of the Panchayats occupied the back seats. They were consulted only to know about some pending files or to get the full names of the parties involved. Thus the women Sarpanches were confident and knew exactly what they were working upon. They personally looked into each file of their Panchayat. They also raised queries about the files rejected.

They also discussed about the M.L.A's promises to supply electricity connections to their Panchayats. They were very vocal that they does not get any allowance and they had to spend from their pockets in making visits or attending meetings. They refused to use Panchayat amount on the grounds that it was public money and that it would also create problem while auditing the finances of the Panchayat. They were clear that they required T.A./D.A or some salary, as they did not want to appropriate money through any 'other' means. They requested the B.D.O. to put forward their suggestion to the Directorate of Panchayat. The trends

indicate that women Sarpanches have been assertive, to a larger extent, in carrying out duties entrusted to them.

### **C) Influence of Woman's Entry in Politics on Quality of Her Life**

It was interesting to study how women's entry in politics has influenced the quality of their lives. The study looked into three aspects:-

- a) Challenges from the family front
- b) Relief from domestic/economic activities by sharing the same
- c) Challenges from men and community by way of assault on her character or body.

#### **a) Challenges from the family front**

Women play multiple and vital roles of housewives, mothers and care-givers. Family is considered as an integral part of the society. One of the strong argument put against the women's entry in politics is that it will disturb the harmony of homes, of family life and it may upset the existing pattern of behaviour in the family. The children may be ignored, the women may offend the elders, including their husbands. If males and females do not adapt themselves to the new situation, it will face tensions, and this old age institution may undergo a drastic change. Family is regarded as sacred institution in India, and women has been given greater responsibility of looking after the well being of it. In any given society women shoulder larger responsibilities of nurturing this institution. Therefore the argument put against women's entry in politics is that this will affect her other roles.

It was decided to test this hypothesis. In the survey twenty six of the total respondents were having children. Four of them have children below 5 years, while eight have children from 5 to 10 years age group. Seven of them have children from the age group of 10 to 15 years, while seven have children above 15 years. When asked whether they were able to devote time and attention to their homes as they did earlier, all answered positively. In fact, the membership of Panchayat have built in them a sense of self confidence. Many of them felt that their image was heightened in the minds of the family members. Now people visited them often, asked their help, neighbours respected them, and this elevated the respect the children have for their mothers. They realised that their mother was an important person. Though, being a Panchayat member, there is increase in work in form of attending the meetings,

visiting the ward or meeting ward people, but it is the quality time rather than quantity time devoted to the family that matters. Thus women's needs, interests and concerns are not just those of women themselves, but reflect their primary role as mothers, wives and care-givers. Therefore, incorporating a women's perspective in decision making should result in better decisions that more adequately reflect the needs and interests of children and families.

**b) Relief from domestic/economic activities by sharing the same**

When it came to sharing of household work, interesting points were noticed. 69.6 percent were nuclear families and 30.3 percent were joint families. 16.6 percent of them revealed that since their paper work was done by their husbands and they only put down their signature, it did not affect their household responsibilities. Also when they went for meetings they were accompanied by the male members of their family, usually their husbands or brother-in-laws. However 18.1 percent of them felt that it would be impossible for them to carry out their duties without their supportive family members. 16.6 percent conceded that their husbands not only encouraged them to take part in politics but also willingly shared the domestic responsibilities. Thus small works like cleaning, sweeping, making tea or dropping the children to school were no longer considered as women's realm. Thus increasing participation of women in politics has enhanced their lobbying power over public affairs and that will in turn result in their power over private life too. The Sarpanch of Anjuna gave all the credit to her mother-in-law who not only managed all the household work but also took care of her grandson. She expressed that her mother-in-law was like her mother, and without her she would not have been able either to practice law or to carry out the work as Sarpanch.

**c) Challenges from men and community by way of assault on her character or body**

It has been observed that women's entry in local politics have made them vulnerable and victims of violence. There are incidences of violence against women grassroots leaders in various states (as reported on p. 98) like rape, physical assault, verbal abuses, etc. These assaults are due to the reasons like:

- They are usually attempted by men from privileged class or caste from the village. These people want to extract some benefits from the women panchas. However when women refuses to listen to them or does not release some illegal benefits, they are made the victims of violence.
- Violence can also be the result of caste rivalries, and a woman Sarpanch may be assaulted as to take revenge against people belonging to her caste. This is more so with regard to women belonging to OBC or Dalit caste.
- A worst type of violence may erupt from within the family in the form of wife-beating. Sometimes, men from the family may become aggressive when they can no longer digest the idea of women becoming more powerful and respected by the villagers than them. Sometimes husbands also inflict harm to women as they can not tolerate the idea of their wife mixing with other men panchas and talking with village men, or staying away from home due to longer hours of work.
- Women panchas may also have to be victim of abuses from the men panchas. The reasons are like reservation of post of Sarpanches for women, the refusal of women to listen to the dictates of men panchas, their refusal to change panels, or when women Sarpanches are not willing to release schemes or other such benefits to the relatives or friends of the men panchas.
- The community at large also can be the source of violence, though it may exist in a more subtle form. There may be character assassination of women panchas as they have to work with other men panchas, government officials etc. The worst is when they are looked down by other women from their own village.

It was decided to test whether women panchas in Goa have to face such inhuman treatment. There are no reported incidences of any physical assault on women panchas, or any complaint of misbehavior of male panchas (except the Guirdolim Sarpanch who has been reported to assault a women staff working in the Panchayat).<sup>34</sup> Yet some of the respondents did complain of the men panchas using double meaning language. Also some of them said that they were often looked down as they had won from reserved post, were new entrants and were not aware of real politics. They were often told that they ‘talked too much’ and they were rudely told to shut up. It was witnessed by the writer how even the secretary of the panchayat abused the women Sarpanch in English, because she did not understand English, is

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Guirdolim Sarpanch released on bail,’ (1999), *The Navhind Times*, 24 (February), p. 3.

illiterate, and is a migrant who has settled in Goa for last twenty years. One respondent was very vocal on this issue, where the male Sarpanch of the concerned Panchayat chose cheap method of character assassination when she refused to bow to his illegal demands. A new form of harassment of women panchas by men panchas has been uncovered. When the post of Sarpanch is reserved for woman, the men panchas form a panel not to allow any woman pancha to become the Sarpanch. Thus the post of Sarpanch of the Advalpal village Panchayat, in Bicholim taluka, which was reserved for woman candidate is still vacant since holding of the last Panchayat elections. This Panchayat consists of seven members, out of which two are women.<sup>35</sup> Women panchas have also worked upon a strategy to stop men panchas from harassing them on the above ground. In some Panchayats where the post of Sarpanch is reserved for women, all the women panchas of that Panchayat have reached to an agreement to be the Sarpanch in rotation. Thus in Panchayat having three women members, each woman would hold the post of the Sarpanch for the term of one year and eight months.

Though there may be male domination in the Panchayat, and there may be some instances of character assassination, there are less chances of men inflicting any physical harm on the women panchas. Firstly, villages in Goa are small where people know each other, secondly the caste conflicts in these villages have never taken severe forms, thirdly and more importantly, women are educated and less likely to cow down to the pressures from men. Besides, survey clearly reflected that the male members from their family were strongly behind these women, which served as a check for other men to do any harm to them. However it was difficult to extract information as to whether within the family there were instances of violence, as no woman was willing to confine her personal matters. However the incidence which I have cited elsewhere, where a woman was forced to contest by her husband, when she was not at all willing to do so and her mother had expired few days back, can be categorized as mental assault which is more harming and painful than the visible bruises on the body.

However the overall picture shows that woman's participation has altered her condition. In day-to-day existence she is not rendered powerless, whether on the domestic front or outside through the decision making process which takes place in

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<sup>35</sup> 'Panchayat without Sarpanch,' (2000), *The Navhind Times*, 15 (January), p 3.

different spheres of life. She can assert her rights, right to work, her matrimonial relationship, her basic rights as human being. She can actively participate in the decision-making and can also influence the decisions in her favour. The women panchas are getting more exposure and they are associated with many dignitaries. It has given them not only power but prestige and respect too. It has given them equality and freedom in shaping and sharing of power, respect for their life, work, and thought. They have motivated the women of their area. Their status at home has changed. Their friends in the village treat them well, and even look at them for some help. This makes them feel good and important. This confidence has helped them in voicing their concern about improving the village. Couple of them are bold enough and have approached the local M.L.A with their problems. The social and cultural barriers are reduced. It has given them an opportunity to exercise the public power in a manner that they consider appropriate to change the power balance for democratic change. They need opportunities for improving their condition, and men need to appreciate their role better.

#### **D) Has Women's Entry in Politics Brought about Qualitative Change in Local Administration ?**

There has long been heated debate in the feminist movement as to whether women should be seen as essentially different from men or essentially similar. The 'sameness' lobby argues that women and men are more or less a blank slate on which gender identity is inscribed in the process of a lifetime of learning experiences.<sup>36</sup> By contrast, the 'difference' lobby proposes that women's physical difference from men results in a different psychology and different (and better) moral values.<sup>37</sup> It is claimed that female leaders would speed up the passage of social welfare legislation, and enhance consumers protection. By virtue of their sex, they would act as a cohesive force to bring out social change. Reformers believe that once women come to power the entire political system would be transformed. Mahatma Gandhi wanted women to enter public life as selfless, devoted social workers to undertake the crucial task of social reconstruction. He wanted women to cleanse politics, to feminise it by

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<sup>36</sup> Mukhopadhyay, Lipi (1998), 'The Search for Identity,' *Social Welfare*, (January), p 7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

bringing in the spirit of selfless sacrifice rather than compete with men in power-grabbing.

It was therefore decided to analyze whether women's entry in grassroots politics have led to qualitative change in local administration. Besides the replies from the sample respondents, the data for this section was also collected through observation, talking to the ward people, and interviewing some men panchas. It was found that some women panchas have been involved in corrupt practices, though the reasons for involvement varied from person to person. Sometimes it was the result of more than one factor working together. The following observations were made in this regard:

- Some women members felt that now that they have assumed the office of power, they should also have equivalent economic status. They aspired for a good house, a fridge, T.V, sofa set, etc. Since the office of the pancha is non remunerative, the way left to them was to extract money through illegal means.
- Some of the women panchas had spent a sizable sum of money during elections to cultivate support from their ward members. Now that they were elected, it was the harvest time for them. They had to recover the cost they had borne.
- One women pancha was bold enough when she said that she does not mind accepting bribes because people are willing to offer. People want their work to be done within a day or two, and they do not mind bribing the concern Panchayat members.
- An interesting finding came up when one woman pancha said that it was the desire for power that made women get involved in corrupt practices. When promised of anonymity, she elaborated her point by giving an example. She is in the ruling panel. Their Panchayat consist of seven members, and the ruling panel consist of five members. In a particular case an applicant approached the Sarpanch and asked him to issue him a license for construction of a house. The land on which he wanted to build the house was the *comunidade* land and was not converted (*Comunidades* lands are used for agricultural purpose, and if it is to be used for any other purpose, the conversion has to be sought through proper procedures). The applicant was told to go ahead with the construction work when he willingly offered the Sarpanch Rs. 50,000/-. This was shared by all five ruling members, thus each got Rs. 10,000/-. It was also observed that women



panchas who did not have an independent power base of their own became dependent on the male members who have been dominating politics for years.

- Low education and Lack of proper information may also result in women unknowingly getting trapped into mal practices. As one of the respondents said she was given some money by the Sarpanch who told her that the money was given to her by the government for the services she renders.
- It was also felt that the male members in the family often coaxed or even pressurised women to make money through illegal means. Women did not object probably because their well being in the family depended on the goodwill of men.

Thus there is a case where CID arrested red handed, Sarpanch of Honda, Ms Sita Rama Gawde, while accepting monetary gratification.<sup>38</sup> There has been allegations against some of the women Sarpanches for granting licenses in illegal constructions. The Sarpanch of Anjuna was alleged for issuing license to a hotel project within 200 Mts. of high tide line at Ojra beach.<sup>39</sup> In the survey, one of the respondent's husband, who is the Sarpanch of that village has number of corruption charges registered against him but she hasn't raised her voice against it. Similarly in a years time, two of the women Sarpanches took to building their houses, cannot be considered as mere coincidence. In another survey conducted in Bardez Taluka, which covered 172 panchas in 25 villages, only 39 % felt that women would be more honest than men. While 8% felt that it would bring in less honesty, 42 % felt that it would make no difference.<sup>40</sup>

- Some of the women panchas are also involved in other types of mal practices. They did not hesitate to change the panels when they knew that there were various perks together with the chances of becoming Sarpanch, the post being reserved for women. In fact many of them expressed unhappiness because there was lot of groupism and threats of 'no confidence' within the Panchayat. In a simultaneously conducted survey which scrutinized the local daily 'The Navhind Times' from June 1998 to Feb. 1999, there were large number of cases where there was no-confidence vote passed against the prevailing Sarpanches. There were eight cases

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<sup>38</sup> 'CID Sleuths arrest Sarpanch while Accepting Bribe,' (1998), **The Navhind Times**, 10 (October), p 3.

<sup>39</sup> 'Dy Sarpanch, panch assaulted as Anjuna Gram Sabha gets violent,' (1998), **The Navhind Times**, 25 (November), p 3.

<sup>40</sup> Survey conducted by the undergraduate students of Goa University, Political Science Department, as a part of their Project Curriculum in 1996, unpublished.

of women Sarpanches and Deputy-Sarpanches voted out of power in Goa. The reasons were that Sarpanch was not taking the members into confidence over the Panchayat work in the village, not initiating developmental projects, not equally distributing the government schemes, and encouraging illegal constructions in the village.

Another mal practice was followed by one woman pancha and it was brought to the notice of the writer by a man pancha from the same village Panchayat. This woman pancha who has been winning from the general category for last four terms, has evolved a strategy to win elections. She has got inserted a large list of names of migrant labourers in the voters list from her ward. These labourers are seasonal. During the time of elections whoever is available is paid and made to vote in anybody's name. These cases of impersonalization have gone unnoticed! When this information was scrutinized it was found to be true.

However a ray of hope emerged when it was found that some of the women panchas did protest against issues like corruption. In the Construction Committee meeting attended by the writer, all the four women Sarpanches who attended it, were vocal that they should get T.A/D.A or some salary, implying that they did not want to appropriate the Panchayat finances. A case is already cited elsewhere, where a woman Sarpanch refused to fill in fresh tender to lay water pipe lines which were actually laid eight years ago without filling any tender. She was told that she would not have to spent any amount on these pipe lines as they were already been built and were in good conditions and therefore whatever amount that was sanctioned by the government would be shared between the earlier Sarpanch and her. The woman Sarpanch was adamant and refused such illegal offer. Another women Sarpanch narrated how she was pressurized by so called 'privileged' person from the village to issue him a license to build a cow shed in the centre of the village. She refused to cow down to such pressures. Another women Sarpanch in a swift move removed the illegal fencing of an 'established' villager which was encroaching upon the public pathway.

Thus women cannot be considered as monolithic bloc and expected to behave in a same fashion. Various factors influence woman's behaviour:

- The individual as a rational person, is competitive in his/her attempt to maximizes his/her gain. Thus the women may respond to public affairs as

individuals rather than as members of a special group with a distinctive set of interests.

- Women belong to variety of groups which hold different political opinions.
- Their outlooks are determined primarily by the socio-economic background of their families.
- Also as long as women are expected to follow the lead of their husbands and fathers in activities outside the home, it is hardly likely that they will act as a separate and autonomous segment.
- Also most of these women panchas are new entrants in politics. They lack an independent power base of their own. As a result they become dependent on the male members who have been dominating politics for years. Because of their own political survival, they too are likely to imitate the autocratic model of male panchas as they know that men like to retain control, and they preferred women who go down to the 'practical things of politics'.

Thus it is observed the cultural lag and the fear of the materialistic and affective aspects of life running parallel in the society do create a series of strains in the society. The mindset of the people has been conditioned and various factors like economic status, hunger for power, cut throat competition, have been responsible for this conditioning. A drastic change needs to be brought in, in the very functioning of the society. Values of integration, harmony, ahimsa, selflessness, have to be practiced by all and not merely preached. Women as well as men should enter politics with devotion and work towards social reconstruction.

### **E) Snapshot of Their Current and Potential Impact - Assessment of the Work Undertaken**

There are many areas where women Panchayat functionaries have made a better contribution especially in such fields as primary education for girls, crèches, wasteland development, provision of fuel and fodder, drinking water etc. They have implemented certain schemes like schemes under R.D.A, and Directorate of Women and Child Development. There are various schemes under IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) which provide for 30 per cent beneficiaries should be women. Similarly under TRYSEM there is a provision that over 33 per cent trainee should be women. The Jawarhar Rozgar Yojana has also provided that 30 per cent

beneficiaries should be women. Besides there are various schemes assisting women to improve the educational and nutritional standards of children.

It is interesting to note that these women have a manifesto of development items for the village. This included street lights, toilets, sewing machines for young girls, old age pension scheme, widow pension scheme, transport facilities, soak pits and drainage, organising health camps, development school playground, children parks etc. Their priorities have been different from men where the latter have been emphasizing on layout and making of new roads, construction of bridges, issuing or withholding licenses for buildings and constructions, leasing lands for hotels, factories, shops and kiosks, etc. The survey showed that the women felt that they must do something for their village. Many of them gave priority to solving the problem of water and street lights. They did communicate information on government schemes to the people. When asked about their work towards the gender cause, most of them answered that their Panchayats have started the tailoring classes and implemented widow pension scheme. However they were not able to give any information about how many women in their ward have benefited from this scheme. They complained of the red tape. They were articulate about problems like they were not taken on important committees, specially on Finance Committee and Vigilance Committee. Most of them were included only on the Garbage Committee. They complained about lack of transparency about the decisions. They also said that most of the funds which were reserved for women were utilized for construction purposes and building of roads. Also these women did not mobilize women on issues like prohibition, lotteries, matka, or protection of forests. In fact 15.1 percent of the women panchas have their own liquor shops. Only one respondent, from Calangute village Panchayat said that she tried to solve local conflicts and educate women of harmful effects of alcoholism. Another women pancha from Socorro village Panchayat, whose husband is Sarpanch of that village, was successful in persuading him in implementing number of schemes for women. She organised Mahila Mandal, started Anganwadi, implemented widow pension scheme, organised health camps specially on health and nutrition care for pregnant women. Another women Sarpanch from Moira, who was earlier an anganwadi worker, has been working for her ward. She visits the local M.L.A. with the problems, bombards the B.D.O. Office, and dare to go to the M.P. if need be. Joane Fernandes, village Sarpanch of a small island of Calvi in Aldona, has been able to establish her identity due to the amount of work

she has undertaken for the village. Riding a scooter, with a cap on the forehead, she visits her ward as often as possible. She has provided the widow pension scheme, given approximate hundred water connections, and has been insisting on the authorities to give a bigger pipe line of pure water to the village. She has been demanding for a small fly-over to connect their village to the Aldona Mapusa road, and she has regularised the ferryboat services. She forced the then local M.L.A. to visit the village which had been ignored for a long time. A woman pancha from Reis Magos got the drainage system laid for her ward. All these years, this problem was ignored which led to water sipping in their houses during monsoon. She was in the ruling panel when she did this work. However the then Sarpanch was voted out of power. Now she is in the opposition panel. She expressed the desire to work for the village, however she felt that being in the opposition panel was the biggest handicap in the process of getting work done. The woman Sarpanch from Assagao has build parapets, a crematorium shed and repaired the wells in the village. She has also taken the initiative to built toilets in the village under the GIA (Grant in Aid) from the State. Her Panchayat has conducted classes to teach needle work, food preserving, flower making etc. She has special interest in promoting education and is a Secretary of Assagao Union School. She has also been a staunch social worker. The woman Sarpanch of Anjuna has following schemes implemented through her Panchayat, which are also financed by the Panchayat itself.

- Financial Assistance to widow of Rs. 100/- per month.
- Medical assistance to the needy up to Rs. 1200/-
- Financial assistance to the needy students from the village.
- It has started a tailoring course for girls which is financed by the Gomantak Bhandari Samaj.

This Panchayat has sufficient finances as it gets lot of income due to tourism flourishing in this area. The Panchayat also has its own Paying Guest homes, where they charge Rs. 100/- per day. This has been a good source of finance for the Panchayat.

In spite of these achievements, women leaders felt that they were not able to do all what they had promised to their ward people. They also complained that lack of sufficient finances with the Panchayat has been a major problem.

## **Future Prospects**

The trends shows that women have been able to assert themselves. They have started taking interest in their work. Women who had reluctantly entered politics are now showing greater political maturity and are aware of their role and responsibilities. Even though there are cases of women being only proxy, it will not take time for them to assert themselves as the procedures at the Panchayat level are simple. One cannot expect a miracle to happen immediately. It has to be kept in mind that reservation is not an end in itself but a means for women's empowerment and development. Certain important observation made about the women panchas are as follows:

- It was observed that large number of women panchas came from the age group of 31-40 years.
- Though, large number of them are housewives, they have been able to blend household work with the Panchayat work.
- Women panchas in Goa are not proxies. A few of them though, are dependent on male members of the family, many of them have been able to tow a line for themselves.
- Catholic women are more assertive than the Hindus. This may be seen from the fact that from the 10 women who have won from general seats in Bardez taluka, seven are Catholic.
- Also women who have won from general category are more assertive than those who have won from reserved seats.
- There are qualitative changes that have come up in the lives of women panchas. The neighbours respect them, and the family members are co-operative. There are no cases of physical assault on women panchas in Goa.
- There are changes on developmental front. Women panchas have an agenda of developmental items like provision of water and electricity, laying drainage, emphasis on health and education etc.

Certain measures needs to be adopted for enabling women to play their role effectively. The major among them are four:

1. Imparting Training
2. Creating General Awareness
3. Setting up of All Women's Panchayats.

#### 4. Devolving more powers to Panchayats and cleansing Panchayat politics

##### **1. Imparting Training**

Intensive training is necessary to orient and train women in the intricacies of the process of decision making and in administration. So far training camps have been organised at Quepem, Panaji and Margao. The women members were guided about the new Panchayati Raj, various Government schemes, reservation policy and the active role to be played by them in Panchayat affairs. They were also guided on family welfare, malaria eradication, water sanitation and environment, health and child care etc. However this training has become just marginalized and low priority activity in the scheme of things. The women panchas from Bardez Taluka have attended only one such orientation programme. This training was for three days and was organized in Panaji. The women panchas expressed the need that there should be such training programmes at regular intervals which can assist them in better understanding of the Panchayat functioning. The B.D.O of Bardez Taluka complained that much of her time was consumed by the cases dealing with illegal constructions in the Taluka. Also there was a dearth of faculty for organizing training programmes for women. However the B.D.O has evolved her own strategies to motivate the women panchas which requires mention over here.

- The B.D.O is accessible to women Panchas without any prior appointment. Thus they can approach her any time, drop into her office, express their doubts, grievances and seek advise. The B.D.O viewed that she being a woman had acted as a positive factor for building up a good rapport between her and the women panchas.
- Some of the women panchas from Bardez are members of SHG (Self Help Groups). They organize their exhibitions and the B.D.O makes it a point to visit such exhibitions.
- The B.D.O visits the Panchayats as often as possible.
- The B.D.O also meet these panchas and discuss the matters when they come to attend the construction committee's meeting, which is held twice a month.

It was observed that though the women panchas are assertive, the lack of knowledge on various aspects involved in Panchayat functioning is a major hurdle which demands intensive training.

Training must be imparted at four levels:

- a) Training for prospective candidates
- b) Training for elected members as well as officials
- c) Intermittent refresher courses for the Panchayat functionaries
- d) Training to women in general as they are going to elect their representatives

Training should consist of gender sensitization to those in power which will help to bring in attitudinal change in them. Political training should emphasize on aspects such as:

- Functions of Panchayat
- Constitutional provisions and the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment
- The role of panchas and Sarpanches
- The various Schemes implemented through the Panchayats
- Knowledge on various disciplines and technical subjects having bearing on development- agriculture, animal husbandry, rural industry, health etc.
- The ability to analyze and critique the system must be communicated.
- They should be trained to locate resources, and must be made aware of various sources of Panchayat finances.

Training should be also imparted to the administrative functionaries like the Secretary and the Talathi and men panchas as well, which will help to change the patriarchal orientation.

When training is imparted certain factors have to be considered :

- The convenient time for women panchas. The training should be conducted on public holidays, so that the women do not carry the tension of the household work, and are not worried about their school going children.
- They should be paid cost of travelling and honoraria.
- The training has to be at regular intervals, and scheduled in advance.
- There has to be proper arrangement for the trainers. It should not be 'one day training where the trainer appears and disappears'. The trainer should build a rapport with the respondents and has to be an educator as well catalyst in the process of empowerment. She/he should have the knowledge of the areas, of



need potentials, resources, resource maps, and should be aware of national as well as state goals, plans and schemes. The Central Government has taken the initiative for training of trainers at different nodal organizations such as IIPA - Delhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration- Mussori, and NIRD - Hyderabad. Such intensive training will be of much assistance to the women panchas.

## **2. Creating General Awareness**

Women in rural areas must be made aware of their rights - political, social and economic. They should realize the importance of economic independence. A large number of factors like orthodox conservative attitudes, economic structures, illiteracy, superstitions etc are the major obstacles in the progress of women. Women have to be empowered to break the shackles of these obstacles. The emphasis should be on both the processes, (i) removing this hurdles for better participation, and (ii) promoting greater participation to remove this hurdles. The two processes are not contradictory but are complementary to each other. Women should be made aware of their own self, personal needs, health and legal needs. They have to realize their capabilities and potentials. People in general should be made aware of futility of public-private dichotomy. The institutions like the NGOs, specially the women NGOs, the education centres, the State Commission for Women, the Centre for Women Studies-Goa University, the mass media can contribute tremendously in this area. The NGOs can identify women leaders and assist them in contesting elections. They should provide the women, platform where they can share their experiences. The mass media, audio, video as well as print, can be effective in creating the required consciousness among the people. There can also be a separate Mahila Sabha for adult women in the village as it would help in establishing better coordination among rural women. Such Sabhas would not be a substitute to Gram Sabha but a supplement to it.

## **3. Setting up of All Women's Panchayats**

There should be establishment of statutory all women's Panchayats in Goa. Such establishment will result in certain advantages:

- It will ensure greater participation by women in the political process. This will provide greater opportunity to more women to gain experience and confidence in managing their own affair.
- Their enhanced legal status will have a direct impact on the general status of women in rural society and their increasing experience and responsibility may be expected to improve women's keenness and capacity for greater participation in the political process. It will serve as a springboard for participating in Zilla Panchayats, State Assembly and even at Parliament level.
- The existence of such Panchayats will also ensure better coordination of various services and programmes for women at the level of implementation.
- The all women's Panchayats have been success stories in other states. The networking and pooling of resources have been better among women. The all women's Panchayats, if successful in Goa, will change the perception of men who are pessimistic about women's role in such bodies.
- Such establishment will be of immense help in understanding and analyzing the development priorities of women and making a comparative study of success of such Panchayats and co-Panchayats.

#### **4. Devolving more powers to the Panchayat**

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment is an effort to ensure adequate powers and finances to the Panchayats to implement the economic development programme meant for the people. However the Act requires more teeth to make decentralization more effective. There is general grievance that the state government considers the Panchayats as mere instruments for carrying development objectives. There is a dire need that they are considered as autonomous units with political authority and administrative capacity to formulate their own skills and potentials. In the survey conducted, one of the women Sarpanches lamented that the position of the Sarpanch was degraded to only issuing water connections and income certificates. She felt that even the Secretary of the Panchayat enjoyed more powers than the Sarpanch. She said that if the situation did not change, she would not contest elections again.

One of the major problem faced by most of the Panchayats is th inadequate finance. The functions of the Panchayats included in Schedule I of the Goa Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 comprise of all the 29 items specified under Schedule XI of the Constitution of India. However the resources of the Panchayat are too inadequate to carry out the work entrusted to it. The State Legislature enjoys the power to authorize the Panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate local taxes. The state government is neither willing to give more sources of finance to the Panchayat, nor to give aid to the Panchayat. In fact, the R.D.A (Rural Development Agency) has even stopped some of the schemes like TRYSEM implemented through the Panchayat from Jan.1999. It is necessary that the Panchayats have sufficient finances or they will be 'grass' without 'root'. The Panchayats also suffer from various problems like corruption, lack of transparency, criminality, delays, antagonism between the administrative functionaries and the elected representatives, the political interference from M.L.A and M.P. etc. It is necessary to cleanse these bodies from such defects for its smooth functioning.

Thus spirit of self government cannot come with a stroke of law at the centre. It is slow, steady and a conscious evolution from below. For women to be active participants in this process, what is required is external support for their action, and not external action for their development. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment has acted as a centripetal force for women. It is heartening to note that one of the women panchas, expressed her desire to contest for legislative assembly, while two other are enthusiastic about contesting for the Zilla Panchayat which will be set up in the state soon. Thus to conclude with Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA, 'Everywhere in the country we found the women were the most committed proponents of our future. So the Future of the Nation lies in the hands of these women.'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Narayanan, Revathi (1994), 'Women in Panchayat Raj: The Divide between Intent and Implementation,' *Kurukshetra*, (June), Vol. XLII, No. 9, p 45.

## CHAPTER V

### WOMEN AS POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

**'The agenda for the women's movement in Goa must go far beyond the kitchen and the four walls of the house; women are half the world and most of the world's problems are theirs too.'** Albertina Almeida<sup>1</sup>

In any society, women are victims of patriarchy, oppression and violence in varying degree. This has led to coming up of a large number of women's organizations, organized by women, based on the maxim 'women's problems can be best understood by women'. These organizations may have different priorities, ideologies, strategies and goals, yet they share a common assumption about women's oppression. It is necessary to study the role played by women in these organizations. A sizable number of women NGOs have emerged and survived in Goa. This chapter looks at women as activists in these organizations.

#### **Understanding NGOs**

The last two decades have seen an unprecedented growth of non-government organizations (NGOs) in India. They have come up mainly due to failure of the government to cater to the basic requirements of the people. The role of NGOs has become varied and complex and its range of activities encompasses a wider perspective. Some NGOs operate on larger arenas, while others function within the localized setting. Some aim charity and are great providers of benefit, while some others are part of larger establishments. NGOs strive to change social, economic and political conditions, to achieve development and social justice, to redistribute power, status and wealth. They monitor the effects of developmental actions of the government, industry or other voluntary agencies, and of people themselves. They strengthen democratic values and institutions and facilitate participation processes. They envision for themselves a watch-dog role, the corrective role and the change-

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<sup>1</sup> Almeida, Albertina (1995), 'Beyond hearth and home,' *Goa Today*, (August), p.123.

agent role and thus are 'Harbingers of silent Revolution'.<sup>2</sup> The role of NGOs can be broadly labeled as developmental, mobilisational and political.<sup>3</sup> NGOs are non-government non-party formations and have no formal affiliation with any political party.<sup>4</sup> They exclude governmental or quasi-governance organizations. In fact many of them came into being as a result of the failure of state-sponsored programmes of development to benefit the poor and disadvantaged. However not all NGOs are hostile to Government. Some prefer to collaborate with the State to implement developmental programmes. Yet some others question the role of State in perpetuating the existing inequality and injustice.

NGOs which operate in a localized setting are now important and contentious actors in the political process. The structure and style of these organizations reflect their challenging ideology, and herein lies their larger significance for contemporary political systems. These groups have certain features:

- The participants are drawn from the underprivileged group, are young and better educated.
- The size and nature of such groups is limited (small and local).
- They are more organized in non-hierarchical pattern rather than in a bureaucratic fashion.
- They do not operate as proxy for the government.
- Though they follow the conventional methods such as petitioning, eliciting public opinion etc, to put forward their demands, however they are aware that their demands are more likely to be noticed if they follow unconventional methods like protests, filing writs etc.
- They are not successful in bringing out large revolutionary changes, yet they possess the capacity to influence the policies of contemporary political system.

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<sup>2</sup> Sharma, S. L (1992), 'Social Action Groups as Harbingers of Silent Revolution,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 21(November), p. 2557.

<sup>3</sup> These roles make impact on three different sectors. The developmental role refers to improving physical quality of life and it aims to effect the design and delivery systems of Government or those organizations, which concern themselves with programmes aimed at raising the physical quality of life. The mobilization role attempts to mobilize the intended beneficiaries of development so that they can influence the government's delivery system or look after their own development. In the political role, the approach is to influence the political system: either its policies, laws and legislation or its processes and performance.

(Source: Bhatt, Anil (1995), 'Voluntary Action In India, Role, Trends and Challenges,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 22(April), p.870.)

<sup>4</sup>Kothari, Rajni (1986), 'Non-Government Organizations, the State and World Capitalism,' **Economic and Political Weekly**, 13 (December).

A great diversity exists in the origin, nature, size, character, ideological background, activities, approaches, methods, forms of organizations, techniques and strategies, social support, funding support source etc, but underlying all this variety and divergence, is a 'mission of social transformation'.<sup>5</sup> Today, a large number of NGOs have made headway in India. These include environment protection groups, NGOs for protection against cruelty to animals, developmental NGOs, NGOs that work with women etc.

### **Understanding Women's NGOs**

There are a large number of women's organizations all over the world working for the cause of women. They have inter links and communication where information is shared and global action is strengthened. The women NGOs forum held in Beijing in 1995 saw 40,000 women participating in it. It brought to centre stage the perspective of women, their capacities and their views. The patriarchal, hierarchical, and authoritarian nature of most of the organizations gave an impetus to women to organize separately from men. Women were denied positions in higher cadre. They had little or no say in decision-making. Women's issues were never given priority in these organizations. Women's experience as second class workers, as second class citizens, as sex objects, as bearers and rearers of children and so on, led them to challenge the sexual division of labour in the home and the workplace. They questioned the outdated laws. They criticized the reproduction of stereotypic choices for girls and women within the educational system. They identified the discrimination women face at the work place, such as lack of access to male dominated trades, to training, or to promotion.

Women suffer a range of injuries inflicted by living within a social hierarchy based on sex. These includes violation of 'bodily security and .... the social bases of self-respect, the loss of self-esteem associated with having been objectified, marginalized and trivialized in the polity and the culture, the pain of being targeted for sexual and physical violation, and the frustration of being denied economic and political power'.<sup>6</sup> Thus one of the tasks for feminist organizations was to present women as persons whose injuries are recognizable, compensable and remediable. Thus

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<sup>5</sup> Bhatt, Anil (1995), *op. cit.*, p.873.

<sup>6</sup> Brush, Lisa (1997), 'Harm, Moralism and the Struggle for the Soul of Feminism,' **Violence Against Women**, Vol.3, No. 3.

the sense of powerlessness, oppression and exploitation, physical violence, combined with a lack of economic independence caused women to feel the need to organize themselves. These feminist movements revealed to women<sup>7</sup>: a) that there is an existence 'independent' of man. b) that physically they need no longer 'fear' male domination c) that there is a way out for them from exploitation and oppression which has been their fate for centuries.

### **Trends in feminism**

Feminism may be defined as transformative perspective on any question that person can take by looking specially at how something affects women and challenging how gender is socially constructed. The activity thus constituted varies by context, time and place. The older feminist movement which emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, was based on two cardinal principles: (i) personal is political and (ii) sisterhood is powerful. The slogan 'personal is political' asserted that the shape of women's personal lives was not the result of individual choices or the law of nature. The overall direction of women's lives - their ideas, behaviour and choices, is primarily shaped by the particular way in which a society is structured. It challenged the way the private and public realms are separated. Thus the discrimination against women needed to be seen in the context of existing social and ideological structures. Sisterhood is powerful asserted that womanhood itself formed a basis that united all women. It acknowledged that there is a common character to women's experience, hence a fundamental bond.<sup>8</sup>

By the late 1970's these principles came under severe criticism. A section of feminists began to emphasis on 'difference' argument rather than equality in treatment. The third world feminists movement which emerged at this time, also challenged the western stand. It is interesting to look at the third world feminist movement. Third world feminism, unlike western feminism, was part of the colonial struggle for independence, which gave them legitimacy and some perks after liberation. Most of these countries gave women voting rights. However, the feminists struggle continues and they have to fight double battles, firstly against the

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<sup>7</sup> Sinha, Aruna & Kedia, Kusumlata (1997), 'The Feminist Issue in the Gandhian Perspective; A Civilisational Discourse,' *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 19, No.3, p.365.

<sup>8</sup> Adamson, N, Briskin, L & Phail, M (1988), *Feminist Organising for Change*, Oxford University Press, p. 198.

patriarchy at home, and secondly against the new economic imperialism of the west. Women in the third world are worst hit, as their societies are impoverished, and because they are women. While western feminists are concerned with equality in political participation, the third world feminists have emphasized liberty from poverty. Thus 'politics of location' reflects that women's experiences are structured by race/ethnicity, region, class, sexuality and so on. It emphasized the need to acknowledge that there are relations of power between women. On one side there are all those who feel the need to associate with other women as woman, as they have something to win by doing so, and on the other hand are those who see themselves as having much to lose if they are categorized as women. This is the result of the contradiction women constantly experience between the pressure to be a woman and the pressure not to be one. This conflict is rooted in contradictory interests of race, class, caste, religion and experience. Today feminism is faced with the 'problem of representativity', that is who is to speak for whom and on what basis, which has given rise to feminist debate which has led to significant division. However there are certain common assumptions shared by all feminists.<sup>9</sup> (i) It is accepted that gender is social construction that oppresses women more than men. (ii) These constructions are shaped by patriarchy and (iii) women's experiential knowledge best helps to vision a future non-sexist society.

### **Women Organizing in India**

The theoretical maturity and sophistication in the contemporary feminist intellectual tradition helps us in understanding women's movements in India. The concept of 'difference' helps in understanding the complexities and pluralities in which Indian women are placed. Women's Movement in India has had a long and chequered history in terms of perspectives, issues and ideological trends and also in terms of participation, intensity and form of struggle, public visibility and impact.<sup>10</sup> 'The women's movement in India is one of the many burgeoning efforts at assertion of citizen's claims to participate as equals in the political and development process. This

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<sup>9</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, 'Gender and Politics,' (1993) in Joel, Krieger (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, New York: Oxford University, p.337.

<sup>10</sup> Palriwali & Agnihotri, I (1996), 'Tradition, the Family, and the State, Politics of the Contemporary Women's Movement,' in *Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India* by Satyamurthy, T.V (ed.) Vol. 3, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.



places it in a situation of direct confrontation with the forces of conservation and reaction.’<sup>11</sup> ‘Women’s movements can be defined as those which arise as conscious, organized efforts of groups of women to change their system of economic, cultural, and political inequality. Their efforts often centre around correction and/or replacement of existing social, economic and political institutions in order to serve the needs of their new urgencies and priorities. Thus a movement per se is an effort and the organization is the means used to achieve the specific goals.’<sup>12</sup> The women’s movement in India has expanded enormously, both in number of women’s organizations as well as range of issues it has addressed. Today there are several thousands of women NGOs working on multiplicity of issues facing women in India - violence, poverty, work, unemployment, property, health, dowry deaths, illiteracy, laws biases against women, rape, lack of access to common property etc. The groups differ in their ideologies, strategies, priorities, mode of organizing etc, yet they share a set of core assumptions about the nature of women’s oppression. However there is no consensus on strategy as one women’s liberation can be another woman’s destruction, but understanding is definitely possible. Suppriya Akerkar giving central place to politics of difference in feminist practice, views for a possibility of plural practice which includes the categories of race, class, ethnicity and sexual strategies. She asserts that the question of difference between women need not become point of immobility, but a focus of solidarity.<sup>13</sup> Thus the splintering of groups is seen as a much needed diversification.

### **Understanding Women’s NGOs In Goa**

Women’s movement in Goa encompasses a sizable number of women’s NGOs in Goa. The major among these are Bailancho Saad, Bailancho Manch, Bailancho Ekvotte, All India Women’s Conference (AIWC), Women Entrepreneur Group (WEG) and Nari Annaya Nirmulan Samiti. The AIWC is the oldest organization, and its branch was set up in Goa in 1962 and one of its major meetings of all India level was held in Goa as far back in 1963. This is a hierarchical organization and has a

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<sup>11</sup> Agnihotri, I & Mazumdar, V (1995), ‘Changing Terms of Political discourse, Women’s Movement in India 1970s-1990s,’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(July), p. 1869.

<sup>12</sup> Mathew, P.M & Nair, M.S (1986), *Women’s Organizations and Women’s Interests*, New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Akerkar, S (1995), ‘Theory and Practice of Women’s Movement in India, A Discourse Analysis,’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 (April), p. ws-2.

written constitution. Its annual membership is Rs. 12/- and life membership is Rs. 250/-. It has its general body meeting twice a year. It raises its own funds. It has its own food centre and runs a working women's hostel in Porvorim. Bailancho Manch was launched in 1993 and has its headquarters in Mapusa. Bailancho Ekvotte functions from Margao and is a hierarchical organization, though elections are not held and its executive body has not been changed for last few years. WEG was formed in 1990 and consists of around 250 members. The president of this organization resides in Bombay and has a say in every thing. The communication mostly takes place on the phone. They organize exhibitions every three months. They have their co-operative in Ponda. They also undertake classes for women in computers, flower making, and assist its members in getting loans from NABARD. The Nari Anyan Nirmulan Samiti, formed in 1992, consist of 22 members. This is a group of rural women living in a small village in Taligao. They were encouraged and assisted by an advocate to form such an organization. They get financial assistance from Project Assistance Sponsorship from a NGO from Rome.(more details could not be extracted as the members could not give any information about sponsorship or its whereabouts. They are contacted by one woman from Verna who hands over funds to the members after specific periods). Bailancho Saad was set up in 1986 and it has shouldered major responsibility of voicing women's questions in Goa.

TABLE 5.1

WOMEN NGOs IN GOA

NOMENCLATURE	DATE OF FORMATION	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	REGISTRATION	MEMBER SHIP	OFFICE
AIWC	1962	Formal	Registered	Large	Panaji
Bailancho Saad	1986	Informal	Not registered	Limited	Porvorim
Bailancho Ekvotte	1992	Formal	Registered	Limited	Margao
Bailancho Manch	1993	Informal	Not registered	Limited	Mapusa
WEG	1990	Formal	Registered	Large	Porvorim
Nari Anyan Nirmulan Samiti	1992	Formal	Registered	Limited	Taligao

These organizations have various tasks ahead. Irrespective of their ideological positions, their tasks can be directed at three levels. At one level they are directed to address some situations specifically adverse to women, at the second level the tasks are addressed at the character of Goan society, and at the third level, the forces at work

globally and regionally have to be addressed as Goan society is located in India, which is in the Third world.<sup>14</sup>

### **Bailancho Saad - A Case Study**

This study evaluates the performance of one of the major women's organizations in Goa - *Bailancho Saad* in terms of its structure, functions, activities, decision-making and overall orientation.

The aspects examined are:

- A) Growth of *Bailancho Saad*
- B) Organizational strength in terms of (i) membership, (ii) decision-making process, (iii) financial position.
- C) Its areas of concern - (i) women and violence (ii) women and health, and (iii) women and development.
- D) The strategies followed by *Bailancho Saad*.
- E) Its relationship with the state

The present scheme of analysis depends on qualitative data from secondary sources and primary data collected through field work. It is based on qualitative material collected through interviews of its members, discussions and observations made during its meetings. The leaflets of the organization have been used in assessing the role of the NGO.

#### **A) Growth of Bailancho Saad**

*Bailancho Saad*, a Goa based women's collective, came into existence on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1986. It was formed in response to the need for an organization which would deal with women's rights issue. The initiative was taken by group of like minded women who felt that a collective organized effort was required to tackle problems of oppression and exploitation faced by women in Goa. The founders were Sabina Martins, Albertina Almeida, Sushila Mendes, and Bernie D'Souza. After a lot of discussion and debate it was decided to name this organization *Bailancho Saad*, i.e., the Awakening Call of Women. The members had two to three meetings only to decide on the nomenclature for their group.<sup>15</sup> They wanted the nomenclature in local

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<sup>14</sup> Almeida, Albertina (1995), op. cit., p.123.

<sup>15</sup> Martins, Sabina (member of *Bailancho Saad*), Interview'97.

language (Konkani), and which would reflect their goal. Thus *Bailancho Saad* was derived from Konkani word 'combecho saad', meaning cock's crow at dawn, which signified a call to women to arise against oppression. The initial centre of activities was at Margao. However as the membership began to spread out, it was decided to have three sub units of the group, at Margao, Panaji and Mapusa respectively. It was decided that they would have a joint meeting in Panaji, once a month, and each unit would have to send at least one representative. However, by this time some of the members were married and settled, while some were busy with their careers. Some of them, however, wanting to keep the organization alive and active, kept working for it. Most of them were working or staying in Panaji. Thus, at a later stage the whole focus was shifted to Panaji, which became the central place of the organization. One of the older members felt that this was only a transitional phase, as the collective is spreading out once again. Thus three sub-units of *Bailancho Saad* have come up, at Tivrem in Ponda, at Margao, and at Pilgao in Bicholim.<sup>16</sup>

The immediate reason for formation of *Bailancho Saad* was the Carnival parades which were heavily commercialized. Carnival, is a festival of fun and frolic celebrated in Goa before the Lent season begins. Earlier it was a spontaneous celebration by people. However commercial interests began to intervene. This festival was now used to promote tourism in the state. This had dual effect on Goan society. Firstly, it robbed people of Goa of their moorings by homogenizing culture, and secondly, the commercial Carnival parades and the advertisements about them portrayed women as sex objects. The tourists assumed that women in Goa were available for the asking. *Bailancho Saad* objected to the vulgarity in the Carnival float parades. It objected instances of gestures, writings, derogatory to women. It protested by having an exhibition in two major towns, Margao and Panjim. It was a small voice then, and very few took cognizance of the protest. That was just the beginning. Today *Bailancho Saad* is a Goa-based women's collective striving for a just and humane society where both women and men will walk shoulder to shoulder. It has, for its objectives, the following:

- To collectively understand, and analyze the status and oppression of women in general and women in Goa in particular.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

- To raise the consciousness of people about women.
- To assist women in gaining confidence to develop their talents and to live their own lives.
- To take up issues relating to women.
- To build solidarity among women at the national and international level.

It believes that changing the attitudes of people is of primary importance in pursuing the above objectives.

## **B) Organizational Structures**

Success of any organization depends on its membership, their attendance at meetings, frequency of meetings, its structures, tenure of office bearers, its finances, and whether or not fees are collected. The size of the organization, in terms of membership as well as asset position, is a conventional measure of strength. Larger the membership, and sounder the financial position can contribute to the strength of the organization. However when we try to assess the success of NGO which is set up for charitable purpose and/or has non-profit objectives, the above criteria may not be applied in toto. Thus for e.g., rather than membership per se, what is more important is the proportion of active members in such NGOs.

### **(i) Membership- small and informal**

Adequate participation by members is a key to the success of women's organizations. *Bailancho Saad* has informal membership. It does not have any restriction on membership. It does not have membership form or fee. Any woman who wants to join the collective can do so and attend meetings as and when it is possible. There are no identity cards and no statutory attendance. It does not have any record of its membership. When the members were asked as whom they considered as a member, it was observed they judged the membership in terms of amount of time and work put in for the organization. Commenting on the criteria of membership, one of the older members, said that members could be classified as:

1. Those who are very active and involved in running of things
2. Those who regularly attend the meetings
3. Issue-based membership
4. Area based membership

5. Activities-based membership.
6. Those who are sympathetic with the group.

Another member of the group gave her interpretation of membership. A member was recognized on the basis of her involvement in organization's activities, the frequency of attending meetings, whether the member 'was able' and yet did not come for the meeting, spirit of involvement, degree of commitment, readiness to accept responsibilities and the degree of identification with the organization. Thus the criteria for membership is subjective. The organization has got trapped in the intangible hierarchies of commitments. Some members prefer not to attend meetings, others come only for demonstrations, others may be interested in particular campaigns. Thus it functions on ad-hocism, and is open to whoever want to be part of it and willing to work on the basis of collective decision making. However such an open policy give ample opportunity for anyone who would like to join in. The only qualification that is required is gender. This has attracted women from different walks of life to join this organization. It consists of students, housewives, working women, teachers, journalists, nuns, lawyers, accountants, clerks, etc. This has enriched it with talents, and varied agendas. Study of membership, reflects that they come from middle class families. A genuine lack of caste/political/religious bias and true spirit of cosmopolitanism is something of *Saad* (*Bailancho Saad* is also referred as *Saad*) which needs to be appreciated. One of the members of *Saad*, who is a nun, commenting on the membership said that, she as a nun is religion oriented, however the members of the group were not religion oriented, in fact, some of them did not believe in religion at all, 'but they were all concerned with humanity, and cared for human beings.'<sup>17</sup> However, most of the members are working to earn their livelihood and cannot give their full time to the organization's work. They do not receive any remuneration for the work they do. In fact one of the members said that 'at a time, they not only spend time, but also money from their own pockets.' But there are problems too. Such an open door policy has not encouraged a growth of membership. Lack of formal membership has resulted in less sense of identity, responsibility and commitment. It may also be a problem for new women joining it, as they may have to depend on older members or 'cultivate' them to be accepted into the group. Due to lack of sufficient membership, many a times cases go without dealing.

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<sup>17</sup> Sister Alba (member of *Bailancho Saad*), Interview'99.

## **(ii) Decision making - Non hierarchical**

Hierarchies organize all aspects of life. All traditional organizational theory is based on the concept of hierarchy. It does not question whether hierarchies should exist, but emphasize on how they can run more smoothly. However some feminist organizations function without hierarchies. *Bailancho Saad* has rejected hierarchies. In fact, one of the members insisted on the writer to call their group as collective and not an organization, as organization was patriarchal and brought in male dominated values. The member was asked to differentiate between organization and collective. Organization emphasizes on hierarchy with formalized process of functioning. Such a system is likely to ignore human needs and emotions, affecting the involvement of members, and therefore their performance. The member felt that the horizontal system brought members more close and established a friendly bond between them. Their collective is service based and not profit based, and rejecting hierarchies has strengthened group feeling and solidarity. It was decided to critically understand the non-hierarchical functioning of the organization.

*Bailancho Saad* does not have any executive or elective body. All members are involved in decision making. They oppose the belief that there are some people with leadership qualities who ought to carry the responsibility of leading others. They feel that it is unequal and oppressive relationship. Leadership denies others the room to develop their abilities and ideas. *Bailancho Saad* is for total decentralization. Each member is able to relate to others equally as well as assume collective responsibility of leadership. It provides a space for the participation and development of capacities of all women. There are no salaries paid nor there is job hierarchy. It functions as a collective with meetings being held on a fixed day regularly and all decisions are taken collectively on that day. The business is transacted at meetings which all members are free to attend. These meetings are held every Saturday. The writer attended some of these meetings. The average membership for the meeting was four. The members were usually delayed due to preoccupation of their work. The discussions were carried in English or Konkani. Any member volunteered for taking down the minutes. The members sat on the mat on the floor, facing each other. There was no modulation or chairing done by anybody. Agenda for the meeting was decided by the members present. They voluntarily shared responsibility. There was point to point discussion on different matters for consideration and consensus was reached. With the small number of members present it was possible to reach a consensus. Thus the group is open to

listening. At times a matter is postponed if no agreement is reached. For e.g. the organization could not reach to consensus on their stand on the 'Miss India beauty contest' which was held in Goa in 1994. However they debated the issue at a later stage and agreed that they would oppose such beauty contests tooth and nail in future. Thus the organization played an important role in stopping the Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd. from holding such a contest in Goa in 1996. When asked about this dual policy, one of the members said, that the organization does not take stand till all members are clear in their minds about the issue and are able to take a stand. However if the matter requires urgent attention, emergency meeting is called. Any member can initiate emergency meeting. They contact each other on phone and inform each other about the meeting. Individual member is free to take decision on her own if the need is felt. In individual cases of rape, dowry, wife battering etc, any member, whoever is approached by the concerned party can proceed with the case without discussing it in the meeting, however, the other members have to be kept informed about the cases dealt with. In the meetings, each member has to brief the case dealt by her and discuss the follow up. Sometimes, if any member come across such case reference she handles it on her own. Also if one member is approached by the aggrieved party, and the member is preoccupied, she suggests to the party, the name of other members or at times she herself requests the other member to handle the case. However this is all based on mutual trust. If the case is complicated, advise may be asked or the case may be discussed in the regular meetings.

Sometimes, a member is given authority, to carry out the task allotted. However this is only temporary, meant for that purpose only. The need for consensus is felt when the organization has to decide its stand on some major issue, issue that affect position of women in general. Thus they apply modified consensus as method of decision-making and a form of organization. They view concept of consensus and efficiency as compatible. The routine decisions of the organization are usually taken by those who have particular skill, knowledge and time. But critical decisions, those that determine the overall path and goals, are retained for the entire membership and



are arrived at by consensus. There are various features of such consensual structures.<sup>18</sup> This is very different from decision-making in hierarchies in which critical decisions are made by the few at the top of the organization. All members of the organization discuss matter of policy until a decision acceptable to everyone is reached. Thus it believes that leadership is a process of collective efforts rather than one person who leads others. The members interact, are interested in one another, and negotiate with one another to achieve their goals. They identify issues, study them, make recommendations and act on them. This strengthens the feeling 'not that one is better than other, but that together we are better'. Thus there is no formal acknowledgement of leaders and no encouragement to hierarchical or authoritarian practices. The deliberations are oral and decisions are also taken orally. For the members the sense of fitting into the organization grows stronger as they discover their own capacities. Some offer the capacity to 'get things done' others are best at strategizing while others employ both kinds of skills. There is no rotation of tasks. Thus the administrative structure is non pyramidal.

*Bailancho Saad* cannot go without criticism. The following are the major shortcomings in the functioning of *Bailancho Saad*:

- The minutes of the meetings are not regularly maintained.
- The major handicap of this organization is the lack of proper membership procedure.

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<sup>18</sup> Features of Consensual Structures are as follows:

- *Authority*- Authority rests with the collective and not in individual according to her position or rank within the organization as in bureaucratic structures.
- *Substantive ethics* - In the consensual organization, the rules are minimal and based on the 'substantive ethics' of the situation.
- *Social control* - Social control is based on something akin to peer pressure. Social control rarely becomes problematic, because of homogeneity of the group.
- *Social relations* - For the collective, social relations stems from the community ideal. Relations are holistic, personal of value in themselves. In the traditional model, the emphasis is placed on impersonality.
- *Recruitment* - In the consensual organization, recruitment is based on friendly networks. The concept of advancement is generally not valued, since there is no hierarchy of positions and related rewards.
- *Incentive structures* - For such organization normative and solidarity incentives are primary and material incentives are secondary.
- *Social stratification* - The consensual organization strives to be egalitarian
- *Differentiation* - Division of labour is minimized, particularly with regard to intellectual versus manual work. Jobs and functions are generalised.

( Source: Rothschild, J. & Whitt, Allen J. (1986), *The Cooperative Workplace*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 62.)

- Also those with strong personalities (the pushy ones) dominate the group. The writer witnessed that although it appeared that all made the decision it was the informal leaders who were responsible. The older members monopolize the decision making process of the organization. The combination of experience and information which founder members usually have, can sometimes become the basis of hierarchy and power. As Foucault has pointed out, the invisible authority do exist, and does not operate through hierarchical organization as it is charted out. Power comes from everywhere and nowhere.<sup>19</sup>
- Though the members claim that they have sizable membership, the average number of members attending the meetings has been only four.
- Ambition, desire for power, knowledge possessed, different perceptions and self centered attitude have made its presence felt in this organization. The organization has not been able to harmoniously synthesize the identity of individual within the group and the autonomous identity of the collective. Individuals have felt rejection by the group, which has led them to disassociate from the group. While at times the need to identify as individual has overpowered the need to identify as member of the collective, which has led some members leave the group and form a new one.
- There have been personality problems which have made some women leave this organization. Some of them could not associate with the non-hierarchical nature of the organization, while some others felt the existence of invisible hierarchy and domination. A member of this organization has split and formed another women's organization which is also based on non-hierarchical structures. When asked about this split, one of the older members felt that it was basically a growing up process, and coming up of more such organizations would be encouraging at large. Another member felt that when members cannot identify with the informal functioning of the organization they split, while yet another member felt that it was 'personal and personality problem' which has led to split.
- There is presence of subtle, invisible forms of hierarchy. There are some members who can afford to spend more time, take more responsibility and therefore have more access to people and decision making. They have gained a special status,

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<sup>19</sup> Weaver, William G (1997), 'Dewey or Foucault ? Organization and Administration as Edification and as Violence,' **Organization**, (February), Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 42.

without accountability, because of their non-remunerative social work which is based on the notion of altruism. Women with full-time jobs and family responsibilities who may be equally committed, may not have sufficient time at their disposal to intervene or opine on issues or actions. Thus there are certain members who have gained positions of power within the organization without their positions being formalized. And once such individual develop power there is no procedural means of removing them from the position. When the positions are formalized, the organization runs the risk of becoming 'The Tyranny of structurelessness'.<sup>20</sup> There are certain factors which limit the ability of the organization to achieve a non-hierarchical structures.<sup>21</sup>

- Then there is a group within group who have certain things in common such as education, social class, tastes, language or a political tendency. They are, at the same time friends who share similar ideas and values. This has been both a help and a hindrance to the group. For example work allocation is often swift and easily executed as people are personally close, but this has also lead to the formation of inner circle which has become an elitist force and which often has control of the decision-making.
- Lack of job hierarchy and sharing of work has also lead to problems. Tasks are not completed in time and correspondence is not prompt. There is no system of deadlines. Some members take the specific tasks and do not meet their commitments and eventually the burden falls on others. In such a case, where few

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<sup>20</sup> Kathleen, Iannello (1992), **Decisions Without Hierarchy, Feminist Intervention in Organizational Theory and Practice**, New York, London: Routledge, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> These factors include:

- Time - Consensus-style decision-making takes more time than bureaucratic decision-making. The idea of consensus, in which every member of an organization must agree to a decision, confuses up the picture of long drawn-out sessions in which members never agree. However the issue of time is specific to the issues and circumstances facing the organization.
  - Emotional intensity- There is more emotional intensity in the consensual setting. Consensual organization provides face to face communication and consideration of the total need of the individual. As a result, conflict within the organization may exact a much higher personal cost, individuals are held accountable for their actions.
  - Non-democratic habits and values - Patterns of domination learned in earlier contact with family, educational institution, and setting which is more bureaucratic, are likely to be repeated within other organizations.
  - Environmental constraints - Economic, social and political pressures from outside, and such constrains are more intense for consensual organization often form around issues which run counter to mainstream of the society.
  - Individual differences - Differences in attitudes, skills, and personalities of individual members pose a problem for such organisations as such diversities may lead to conflicts.
- (Source: Ibid., p. 27-31.)

work and others don't, everybody having a say in the decision making has led to annoyance among some members. Also the more interesting jobs are picked up by the older members, thus leaving the less interesting tasks to others, thereby reinforcing hierarchy.

- Its composition also points out to another factor. Only few of them are vocal, resourceful and perform most of the groups administrative work and suggest programmes. The rest neither have experience nor the time. Such a lopsided division of work and responsibility has created a situation in which these few have become the mainstay of the organization and its unofficial leaders, and by virtue of this, dominate the decision making process. For decision-making to be truly collective and equal, there is not only need of a common background of skills, political experience and time, but also respect and value for each other's views. This would help to overcome the various differences between members and encourage them to get fully involved in the group and its processes.

### **(iii) Financial assets**

Profitability and viability have been traditionally used as measures of financial strength. These measures cannot, however, fully explain the strength of such organizations since these are more welfare-oriented as compared to business enterprises. Yet some amount of money is necessary for bringing out pamphlets, to contact officials, getting press releases, police permission etc. The sources of funds vary from sales, grants, fees, subscription, donation etc.

Donations are accepted by *Bailancho Saad* from both, individuals and groups. This may be in form of kind or cash. Thus the furniture, the shelves, clip boards, etc for the office of *Bailancho Saad* were donated to them. This organization do accept small sums from charitable trusts and from individuals. However it is difficult for the few activists to reach a large number of people who are willing to give small personal donations. It does not go for outside organizational funding as it feels that such funding come with strings attached.<sup>22</sup> To maintain its autonomy it lay emphasis on fund raising efforts. Funds are raised through the holding of charity films shows, variety concerts or plays. This is not so easy. As it is not easy to sell high-priced tickets, people are willing to buy once, but not every year. *Bailancho Saad* volunteers

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<sup>22</sup> Almeida, Albertina (member of *Saad*), Interview'97.

to sell tickets of the dramas and *tiatr* (Local Theatre Groups) at various places in Goa. Once it decided to raise funds by selling the tickets of a *tiatr* staged by local group. Coincidentally, the name of the *tiatr* was also *Bailancho Saad*. However the group gave it up as there were derogatory remarks made against women in this *tiatr*.

*Bailancho Saad* also publishes a newsletter called 'Saad' once in two months as the free and fearless voice of women. This newsletter is for private circulation only, and there is a minimal charge for it. There is annual contribution made for it from abroad as well. Unlike the souvenirs of other organizations, Saad does not have any advertisements or any sponsors for it. It does not have cooking recipes, nor instructions for beauty-care. It is a small leaflet which throw light on some major issues affecting women, women's experiences and the cases dealt by the organization. *Bailancho Saad* organizes programmes of low budgets. Usually some well-wishers sponsor the space or hall required to organize these programmes. It organized a seminar-cum-workshop in coordination with Centre for Women's Studies, Goa University on 'Gender Equality' on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1994. Nineteen colleges participated in this workshop. Similarly, it planned a participatory workshop for rural students of Canacona in coordination with S. S. Angle Higher Secondary at Mashem. Such programmes are organized in various schools in different parts of Goa. The collective has also organized health camps for women in association with the village Panchayats. One such camp was held in Tivrem village in Ponda Taluka.

It also follow other methods of raising finance like selling of yearly planners, dairies, Christmas cards, organizing some fete, exhibitions, putting up its eatable stall in exhibitions, etc. In search for an alternative economic model, it held its first exhibition and sale of products made by women , indigenous, sustainable products of small scale or individual ventures on 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> December 1995. The purpose was to encourage small scale ventures of indigenous, wholesale goods. This was in the wake of the New Economic Policy's market-economy, which promote big business at the cost of small ventures. *Saad* felt that the 'NEP fostered and promoted industrial and factory-made commodities of big business, national and international, which pushed out of circulation healthy, wholesome, time-tested goods of a local area, produced by individuals, families, small groups, often traditionally. Such people are a valuable resource. They are self-employed and put no pressure on the very limited jobs in the organized employment sector. They contribute to the economy and preserve and conserve local goods many of which are made from the produce that grows abundantly

on Goa's soil and environment.<sup>23</sup> The exhibition of *Bailancho Saad* consisted of items like Goa-special masalas, coconut oil, vinegar, pickles, handmade letter paper and greeting cards, needle work and kitchen items, fibre items, etc. It also introduced services offered by women, like that of a woman cobbler, potters, women who cane chairs and make furniture, practitioners of alternate health care, etc.

The members also send messages on women issues or those of concern for women and write articles in local dailies. The members conduct surveys and undertake projects individually or in collaboration. These reports are sold by the organization. Thus the organization constituted a fact-finding team to look into 'Evictions in Goa, Case study of Baina.'

The money thus collected is accounted and deposited in bank in organization's name. Though all the members are signatories to this account, it is operated by only three members, right from the initiation of the organization. The members of this organization agree that finances are less. The members are not professionals and do not expect any payment for their services rendered. On the other hand there is a tendency where the members spend from their pockets if need be. The organization does not take fees from the clients. However the donations, even in small amount, from the clients do contribute to the finances of the *Saad*. The expenditure of the organization includes celebrating women's day, organizing campaigns, making posters, etc. It does not have salaried staff. It had staff for the Counseling Centre, but it was sponsored by a Trust from Gujarat. Lack of funds has affected the functioning of the organization. The organization cannot bring out its documentation and publications. They cannot organize programmes of high budget. All these years they had no office to operate from. They operated from one of the member's personal office. However from August, 1999 the organization has bought an office in Porvorim, which has exhausted a large sum of their finances. The members expressed their willingness to furnish the new office with proper shelves, table, chairs, and a computer would be an additional asset as they can then co-ordinate with other NGOs, at national as well as international level. The members were thankful to their well wishers who are willing to help them for the services they render. Thus people have

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<sup>23</sup> 'Searching for an Alternative Economic Model,' (1995), *Saad*, 11(January), Vol. I, No. 6, Goa: A newsletter of *Bailancho Saad*.

approached the organization and are willing to help the organization in kind and cash. However the members are cautious while accepting such donations as it may encroach upon their autonomy.

The organization is also trying to extract the benefits from the government schemes. One of the members, when interviewed in 1997, had confided in the writer that the members are looking into the possibility of registering a part of their organization, to avail the benefits that follow due to registration. By 1999, a part of the organization was registered under the nomenclature of *Alashiro*. A separate account is maintained of this registered body, however its members are same as that of *Bailancho Saad*.

It was observed that the members were keen on reducing their expenditure. Even for the meetings, they did not spend on tea or snacks. Any member voluntarily brought some snacks for others. Also the banners, posters for the campaigns were made by the members themselves.

There are practical difficulties faced by the members due to lack of funds. With meager resources it becomes difficult for the members to arrange a lawyer or temporary accommodation for the victim. In cases like dowry harassment, the belongings of the victim have to be transported from the husband's place to her mother's place, which demands bearing of transport cost by the organization. Also swift action may not be possible if there is no sufficient finance. Thus one of the members narrated an incidence as how she was approached by a victim whose husband had deserted her and had left to Karwar to marry for the second time. The member in swift action hired a taxi and traveled from Goa to Karwar and reached at the nick of time and stopped the man from marrying again. In such cases the victim cannot be expected to pay such charges, specially if they come from poor class.

### **C) Areas of Concern**

*Bailancho Saad* deals with various issues that affect women. The areas of concern are identified under :-

- (i) Women and Violence
- (ii) Women and health
- (iii) Women and Development

### **(i) Women and Violence**

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. 'Violence against women refers to crimes which are specifically directed at women - rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation as in prostitution, sexual abuse by being reduced to objects of gratification as in pornography and domestic violence from beating, torture etc. to inducing death. The nature and forms of violence against women spring from the form of patriarchy - defined broadly as a system of male dominance, legitimated within the family and society through superior rights, privileges, power.'<sup>24</sup> In all societies women are victims of violence, physical psychological and sexual, though its degree and form may vary from society to society. Violence against women impair them from enjoying their fundamental rights.

*Bailancho Saad* believes in some form of change or transformation of society. Its major concern is to check violence against women. It is concerned with rape and wife battering, with divorce, maintenance and child custody, strict implementation of the existing laws, and equal opportunities to work with equal pay. It takes up cases of violence in family - natal as well as marital, dowry, women torture in the custody, cases of women alcoholics, etc.

#### **a) Dowry deaths**

Dowry deaths is one of the serious forms of violence committed against women. Violence is perpetuated on usually young married women in their marital homes. This takes many forms- beating, torture, verbal abuse, starving, lock up, imposing excessive work burdens, denying money for running the household, sexual abuse etc. Sometimes women are even murdered by burning them alive. However many such cases of murder gets camouflaged as suicide. The complaints are not registered and even if registered, the culprits are not brought to court and even if brought to the court for trial, rarely convicted. Women's groups have led intense campaigns against dowry harassment. Various reasons are attributed for increasing rates of dowry deaths: (i) women are devalued and seen as liabilities because they

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<sup>24</sup> *Maithreyi, Krishna Raj (ed.) (1991), Women and Violence, A Country Report, Bombay: SNDT University, p.2.*



become housewives instead of earners or producers, (ii) women lack property rights, (iii) consumerism and greed on the part of the boy's parents, and (iv) patriarchal family structure also play important role.

In Goa the scene is not different. In spite of property rights being granted by law to women in Goa, dowry system is prevalent in Goa. As per the survey conducted by Bailancho Manch, in the year 1993 there were 70 cases of women who were burnt to death- 30 of these were of the age of 30 years or below. In 1994 the statistics available up to August showed 39 cases of death due to burning.<sup>25</sup> However not a single case of dowry death is recorded by the Police for the year 1993 or 1994. Thus most of these cases go unregistered. Dowry demands are not only for cash, but also include gold, jewelry, clothes, lavish wedding, consumer items like scooter, refrigerator, television ,cupboard, machine, cash needed for the groom's education or business and other things called as *denem*, and *vojem*. *Bailancho Saad* has campaigned against the dowry system in Goa. It has written several articles in *Saad* condemning dowry. It has drawn the attention of the police towards the dowry deaths and pressurized them to take immediate steps. It has taken individual cases of dowry harassment. While following up dowry cases, it realized that the Dowry Prohibition Act was not applicable to Goa. So it demanded the extension of the law to Goa, but with amendments so that loop-holes in the law as it applied to the rest of the country could be plugged. The law was extended to Goa, however, without amendments. The *Saad* has helped harassed women to go to the court for justice.

The legal system is long drawn, time consuming and expensive. Therefore to some extent it has evolved alternate support system, for example, when woman is thrown out of her home by her husband or in-laws, instead of waiting for a court judgement to retrieve her dowry or her belongings of day-to-day use, the *Saad* activists pay surprise visits to her matrimonial home to collect whichever things the woman wants. Three copies of all items are made. One copy is given to the in-laws, one copy is given to the nearest police station and one is kept in the case-file of the organization. In Pushpa dowry case in Siolim, the father-in-law of the victim charge sheeted the activists on the grounds of theft.

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<sup>25</sup> 'Dowry Deaths in Goa ?', (1994), *Forum*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Goa: A Newsletter of Bailancho Manch.

## b) Rape

This is a common crime against women in nearly all parts of the world. Rape is a grossly unreported crime because the stigma is attached to being a victim. There is also occurrence of custodial rape, that is mainly by the police. *Bailancho Saad* views that rape or any sexual assault is an expression of power which keeps girls and women in constant fear, humiliates them, violates them, destroys them physically, emotionally, psychologically, puts restriction on their movement, behaviour, dress.<sup>26</sup>

The slogan of *Bailancho Saad* is

‘WE MUST DENY THEM THAT POWER  
HELP EMPOWER ALL WOMEN’

The organization’s struggle against rape has been long and consistent one. They feel that rape is expression of power. It takes place because women are in a vulnerable position. Women get raped during property disputes, to settle scores with the men because women are considered to be properties of men. Women need to be bold, courageous, independent, confident, and assertive. The cases of rape go unreported because of the negative consequences it has on the women. Young girls and women do not come forward to report rapes because fingers are pointed at them rather than the accused. Secondly, going to the Police Station, repeating the story over and over again to convince the Police to register FIR etc., in the presence of predominantly male police is hardly a conducive environment for reporting. Thus few come forward to complain about rape and those few who report, even fewer have their cases actually registered by the Police. *Bailancho Saad* has shown concern about the gang rapes, rape combined with kidnapping, rape combined with theft, and custodial rapes. In 1993 it analyzed the official figures of reported rape cases and the charges in each case.<sup>27</sup> There were 14 cases which were actually registered. In 13 of the cases, the rapist was known to the victim. Thus it refused to believe in myths associated with rape like - rape is committed only by strangers or that it occurs at the spur of the moment. Four of the cases were gang rapes, which reiterated the fact that rape is a well planned, intentional crime. Seven of the rapes were committed in broad daylight, this disapproved the myth that rapes are committed only at nights. *Bailancho Saad* also criticized the lethargic manner in which these cases are dealt with. First of all,

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<sup>26</sup> Leaflet issued by *Bailancho Saad* on rally organized by it on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Analysis of Official Figures of Rape cases and the Charges,’ (1994), *Saad*, 11 (May), Vol. I, No. 2, Goa: A Newsletter of *Bailancho Saad*.

investigations are not thorough, secondly, the complainant is pestered to bring witnesses, thirdly the chemical analysis reports had to be obtained from Mumbai and this took very long time (Goa Medical College-Bambolim has a laboratory to provide such reports, however such cases are given the lowest priority and involves a lot of delay). *Bailancho Saad* dealt with the Sandra rape case, who is mentally retarded, and who worked as a maid, was raped by her employer. The police insisted that they should produce a certificate to the effect that Sandra was mentally retarded. Sandra was pregnant by then, and the rapist was able to get bail. In another case of gang rape in Vasco, the Police refused to charge-sheet the case on the grounds that woman was of 'loose character', and on the contrary, charge of criminal trespassing was kept on the complainant. Meantime, the rapists were given bail. *Saad* strongly feel that bail should not be granted to the accused. The organization demands:

1. Gender sensitive police
2. Thorough investigation
3. Full fledged Forensic Laboratory for quick investigation
4. Speedy rape trials
5. Gender sensitive Judiciary
6. Moral support to the victim
7. Stringent punishment to rapists.

*Bailancho Saad* lobbied on this matter and got the question asked and drew the attention of the Goa Legislative Assembly in March 1993. On 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1993, it made a petition to the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court for early disposal of rape cases. The letter read that precious evidence gets lost with the passage of time, as the possible witnesses and the women victims tend to forget relevant details. Besides the woman victim has to live with the trauma. By a letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1994, the *Saad* has been informed by the Special Officer of the High Court at Bombay, Panaji, Goa bench, that the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court has directed District and Sessions Judges at North and South Goa, to dispose the remaining trials of Sessions Cases (Rape Cases) pending in their respective Courts as expeditiously as possible.

*Bailancho Saad* organized a rally against rape on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1996. It asked the people to lend their voice to the public condemnation of such crimes. It would act as a deterrent to potential rapists. Public condemnation also would strengthen the base for a safe and secure environment. It asked people to conduct/join an awareness campaign against rape in their locality. It assured the public that women's

organizations in Goa would give helping hand in such matters. It distributed a Leaflet at the rally against rape titled 'What are you doing against rape?' Besides this, it has been tackling various rape cases in Goa. The *Saad* activists keep making trips to the police stations to make sure that the cases are charge-sheeted. They monitor the follow-up of this cases. Very often the activists accompany the victim to the court.

### c) Obscenity

*Bailancho Saad* strongly targeted the media for obscenity and vulgarity. Media plays an important role in perpetuating the exploitation and oppression of women by depicting women in stereotyped roles, sensationalizing issues pertaining to women, omitting news and dismissing it as not newsworthy. The organization campaigned against the advertisement of MS Cigarettes, subsequently the advertisement as well as the cigarettes were withdrawn. A slide shown at International Tourism Fair at Berlin showing the breast of a woman superimposed on a beach was withdrawn after the protest letters and a delegation of this organization to the Manager of Goa Division of the Department of Tourism, Government of India. *Bailancho Saad* took strong objection to the then Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Wilfred de Souza's reported invitation to M/S Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd. to hold the 'Miss World 1996' beauty pageant in Goa, in wake of protests in Karnataka. *Saad* saw it as yet another hurried attempt to bring a decadent element of tourism into Goa. The *Saad* decried the move particularly in the wake of its consistent opposition to 'treating human bodies as consumer products.'<sup>28</sup> In beauty pageants, it is vested interests that set such standards as they could use in the market to sell their products. *Saad* viewed that standards more often than not, reinforced certain traditional stereotypes about women. They only highlight physical beauty and devalue women's individuality and intellect, and project women as mindless sex objects, equate them with a commodity and exploit them commercially by vulgar exhibitions of the female figure for promoting products. *Saad* alleged that the primary aim of these contests was to sell their products. To sell these, particularly cosmetics, unrealistic dreams were sold on the vast majority of women. This is clear from the way in which the standards of beauty have been 'manipulated' and the trends at present to set standards with an eye on third world markets, *Saad*

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<sup>28</sup> 'Behind the Fests of Beauty Contests,' (1996), *Saad*, II (3), Goa: A Newsletter of *Bailancho Saad*.

claimed. It refuted the rationale for holding beauty contests in the name of raising funds for charity, in the present case, for spastics in Karnataka, as nothing but a clever move to launder money, akin to the government's projected rationale of setting up of off-shore casinos to raise funds for the schemes for destitute women and widows. *Saad* strongly objected to the trend of seeking to reinforce certain evils on the pretext of promoting a noble end. It declared its solidarity with women all over the world who have consistently opposed beauty contests on all above counts. It also extended solidarity with the protestors in Bangalore, and threatened to oppose tooth and nail any move to hold the beauty pageant in Goa. It called upon like-minded organizations to gear up for this 'possible onslaught'. Written representations, delegations, issuing press notes, demonstrations and other methods of protests were employed to make a point. With the pressures mounting from these organizations the beauty pageant was not held in Goa.

#### **d) Alcoholism and family violence**

Wife beating is invisible violence as it is hidden in many intimate, intricate and complex layers of the relationship between a husband and wife with overtones of romanticism, sexuality and patriarchy.<sup>29</sup> Wife beating does not even have social recognition in the sense that the neighbours do not interfere nor are the police willing to register such case as they consider it a 'private matter'. In Goa under the guise of alcoholism, a lot of violence is perpetuated consciously. *Bailancho Saad* led a campaign on this issue. The push came from the women of a small village called Tivrem. The activists with women from Tivrem launched a concerted campaign against alcoholism. They were successful in thwarting the setting up of a bar in this locality. They were also successful in their similar attempt at Cakra, Bambolim. The demands of the *Saad* has been :

- Moratorium on issuing of new licenses for outlets of liquor
- Enforcement of timings for the existing bars
- Non-promotion of liquor

The government assured that no bars would be set in any area without the 'consent of the people'.

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<sup>29</sup> Gandhi, N & Shah, N (1992), *The Issues at stake*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, p. 61.

### e) Prostitution

There is alarming increase in prostitution. It is an organized crime, that takes place despite the prevention of Immoral Traffic in Women Act. Poverty make women easy victim. The conditions of prostitute is pitiable. Women rescued from brothels are sent to rescue homes where their fate is just as bad. *Bailancho Saad* time and again has addressed itself to the issue of prostitution, specially in the context of tourism and with reference to its impact on women. In Vasco, at Baina there is growing incidence of prostitution. The population in this Red Light Area is approximately 6,700 including the prostituted women, gharwallis, the bar owners, small time hawkers, port workers, contract labourers and class IV employees of the Municipality. The area covered is of 0.09 square kilometers. The Government of Goa attempted at evictions in the Red Light Area in September, 1997 for three reasons- (i) the need to stop HIV Infection from spreading from Baina to other parts, (ii) the need to clean the area of criminals, especially those involved in prostitution; (iii) the need to recover the beach from the Red Light Area and make it accessible to the other residents of Baina, especially their children. This move of the Government activated the *Saad* to look into the serious consequences of such clean- up operation. It constituted a fact-finding team to look into the legality and other dimensions of these attempts to evict the people living in the Red Light area. The committee found out that in reality the evictions were being carried out in order that the Government may get back its land and then to lease it out for some commercial purpose. Government had made no arrangement for alternative homes and jobs for this evicted families. The investigations revealed that although most of the 3,000 to 4,000 prostituted women<sup>30</sup> were from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, the people who were profiting most from the sex trade were the local businessmen. *Saad* criticized the highly selective use of law in eviction. It was used to harass and terrorize the victims of trafficking i.e. the prostituted women and those who are living on them. The harassment included arrests, raids and even making their access to the toilets difficult. *Saad* believe that the prostitution trade and trafficking must end. There is the need to end the traffic in women which is a modern form of slavery and yet there is the need to

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<sup>30</sup> *Bailancho Saad* refers to the victims of trafficking as prostituted woman and not a prostitute so as to emphasize the fact that she has been forced into the profession, and also because no stigma should be attached to the woman but to the system which allows such a practice.

protect the human rights of the prostituted woman over her body, mind and life.<sup>31</sup> She is a trafficked person who is not a criminal but has suffered as a result of criminal activity. Saad feels that there should be thorough comprehensive plan chalked out to bring the culprits to book and also a comprehensive plan to equip the victims psychologically, emotionally, economically, and socially.

*Bailancho Saad* is also confronted with situations where children are victims of rape and other forms of sexual exploitation. They deal with complaints of sexual harassment of school children by their teacher. Thus on the one hand their case work throws up individual cases of minors, and on the other hand their campaigns throw up cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children. A member of *Bailancho Saad* was invited on the Government formed Advisory Committee on child prostitution. *Saad* suggested that in case of child prostitution, the method of rescuing children should be such that it should not be traumatic to the child. There should be proper rehabilitative methods for the victimized children. Their re-entry into the prostitution web should also be prevented.<sup>32</sup> *Saad* has been networking at various levels with other organizations like UMED, National Commission for Women on the issue of child abuse. Activists also have tried to impress upon the CID Foreign Branch that it was necessary to ensure stricter surveillance over foreigners residing in Goa in this regard.

## **(ii) Women and health**

Women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public life. Health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.<sup>33</sup> Women's health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being.

Women have different and unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of their health. Health policies and programs often perpetuate stereotypes and fail to consider socio-economic disparities and other differences

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<sup>31</sup> 'Evictions In Goa- Case Study of Baina,' (1997), *A Fact Finding Team's Report*, (November), Goa: A Publication of *Bailancho Saad*.

<sup>32</sup> 'The issue of Sexual Abuse,' (1997), *Saad*, II (4), Goa: Newsletter of *Bailancho Saad*.

<sup>33</sup> Gandhi, N & Shah, N (1992), op. cit. p. 102.

among women. Various factors like poverty and economic dependence, their experience of violence, negative attitude towards women and girl child, limited power women have over their sexual and reproductive lives, and lack of influence in decision-making have proved to have adverse impact on their health. Besides, inadequate access to safe water, sanitation facilities and fuel supplies, particularly in rural area, and poor housing conditions, all overburden women and their families and have negative impact on their health. The tradition of early marriage which results in early pregnancy and child-bearing pose grave health risks. The social taboos does not give women even the control over her fertility. She is left with little choice in deciding the number of children she is going to have, or what method of contraception she would use. The government further pressurizes women as it targets them as 'the motivated party' for its family planning policies.<sup>34</sup> Women workers, specially those in informal sectors have poor working conditions and barely any safe-guards.<sup>35</sup> The health problems of women in prostitution remains untackled. Apart from sexually transmitted diseases, there is also fear of AIDS which has led to increasing harassment of sex workers. The nature of their job, work conditions, the timing and social stigma attached are bound to take mental and physical toll of women body.

Woman should have right to make decisions concerning reproduction free from all discrimination, coercion or violence. She has right to be informed and have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of her choice, and right to appropriate health care services. *Bailancho Saad* strongly opposes the numerous anti-women family planning schemes adopted by the Government. The family planning seemed to have reached even the remotest villages in Goa. The idea that small family is a happy family is sold in the villages. The Department of Health has called this programme as Family Welfare Programme which is meant to encompass Family Planning and Maternal and Child Health Service. But there is no provision of better health facilities and education, what is being advocated is birth control methods. *Saad* points out that the focus of the family Welfare Program is on reproductive health and not on general health. A marked, disproportionate interest is

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<sup>34</sup> 'Conservatism and Development, Two sides of the Same Coin,' (1994), *Saad*, 1(3), Goa: Newsletter of *Bailancho Saad*.

<sup>35</sup> In one of the cases dealt by *Bailancho Saad*, it brought out the reality that 'bonded' labour existed in Goa. There were girls from Tamilnadu who were hired by M/S Rahul Foods. These girls were kept under poor working conditions, they were paid meagre amount of Rs. 2/- per day for peeling prawns and squids in a box weighing about 10 to 15 kg. They were not allowed to go anywhere. They were placed in dingy congested room with no windows.



seen to be given to 'population control'. Saad opined that there should be more emphasis on provision of education and better health facilities than advocacy of birth control measures. Also there is risk factor involved in birth control measures. Women in the third world countries are being used as guinea pigs for the contraceptive trials. Contraindications, possible side effects and long term risks are never explained to the 'acceptor'. Further it is not seen as the hospital's responsibility to follow-up the cases that are subjects for the trial. Besides, the whole scientific nature and human concern of such trials is questionable.

The *Saad* activists toured few villages in Goa to get the feedback of effect of Family Planning on women. They found out that the laparoscopic method not only deprived women of their potential of motherhood in the future but also left them sans post-operative medical care and full of added miseries, repercussions and ill health like backaches, cramps in the upper and lower limbs at a young age of 35-40 years.

*Bailancho Saad* has raised the following questions :

1. Has the Family Planning program eradicated poverty from this villages?
2. Why are the women singled out for family planning?
3. How many more women suffer in silence ?
4. Are there any safe alternatives ?

The matter has become worse for women with health care shifting increasingly from public to private sector. There are harmful drugs being used during pregnancy, lack of control over advertisements promoting goods which gives false information to consumers, illegal abortions etc, have affected women's health. *Saad* organized health camps in villages. These camps gave free medical service and medical advice on family planning to the women. *Saad* has expressed concern over the insensitive ways of reaching people, and the potential misuse of family planning programme. It has also pointed out the possible medical danger this poses on female population and their offspring in the future. It has also taken the educative task. Posters and exhibitions have been found very effective methods for health communication. Health problems faced by prostituted women and their children have also been of concern to *Saad*. The plan of action focuses around women's right over their bodies.

*Bailancho Saad* has been very much against amniocentesis. The use of amniocentesis to detect the sex of the unborn foetus and to abort it if it is a female has become widespread in the last two decades. Such tests were designed to detect genetic

disease to reduce the risks to the foetus and the mother. Today there is advance test done called as Ultrasonography. However these tests are used to detect the sex of the foetus, and if it is of female foetus, it is aborted. The Regulation of Prenatal Diagnostic Technique Act has been passed but its implementation has been indifferent and no conviction has been made. *Bailancho Saad* drafted a bill to ban the sex determination tests in the state. For this they took help from organizations like Forum Against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection in Mumbai. *Saad* lobbied to get it introduced in the Assembly. It was introduced. However, before it could be passed at the next Assembly Session, the Government collapsed and with that the efforts of the organization too. The members claim that the proposal for the Central Legislation relied principally on the Goa Bill. *Saad* created public opinion against these tests and their relationship with female foeticide, participated in public debates etc.

### **(iii) Women and development**

Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns. Resource depletion, the degradation of natural systems and dangers of polluting substances are destroying fragile economic systems and displacing communities, especially women, from productive activities. Development needs to be environment friendly. It should emphasize on aspects like food gathering, soil conservation, irrigation, sanitation, coastal zone and marine resource management, land-use planning, forest conservation and community forestry and fisheries. It should enable women's equal access to housing infrastructure, safe water, sustainable and affordable energy technologies such as wind, solar, biomass and other renewable resources.<sup>36</sup>

The involvement of *Bailancho Saad* in opposing the carnival parades led them to understand how it was being used to promote tourism in Goa. As a consequence they looked at tourism, and realized that tourism was homogenizing culture and robbing people of their moorings. It questioned about the price people pay and the benefits of the Tourism Industry with a focus on its specific effects on women. Searching for the answers to these questions led it to further question about kind of development envisaged for Goa, going as it were from the effect to the cause. It

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<sup>36</sup> 'Conservatism and Development, Two sides of the Same Coin,' (1994), *Saad*, 1 (3), Goa: A

Newsletter of *Bailancho Saad*.

strongly opposes the development model pursued by Government in Goa. It results in depreciation of traditional occupations and local skills. There is a vast pool of migrant labour especially women and children which creates problems for both the migrant labour as well as local people due to non-provision of basic facilities to them. Bonded labour, prostitution and increasing crimes are the inevitable corollary. *Saad* opposes the kind of development that either increases women's work or makes it more difficult and takes local peoples survival system for granted. It emphasizes on that kind of development which caters to peoples basic needs, is environment sensitive and sustainable in character, is labour intensive, gender sensitive and involves people in the decision- making processes. *Saad* struggled against projects which were more destructive than beneficial. These projects were like Nylon 6,6 Project, The Kaiga Nuclear Plant, Golf Courses, etc. The methods of struggle varied with different issues. In case of Nylon 6,6, *Saad* elicited the opinion of the women in the vicinity. In case of the Kaiga Plant, they coordinated the Anumukti Cycle Yatra in Goa organized by the people of the Anti-Nuclear Magazine 'Anumukti'. It wrote to the Government to give information about the project and expressed their fears over the safety of the same. In year 1993, *Bailancho Saad* took up the issue regarding Government's approval of setting up of seven golf courses in Goa. The Government had approved in principle two sites, one at Verna Plateau admeasuring about 6.40 lakh sq. mts. And other at Naqueri and Quittol villages in Betul, admeasuring about 10.00 lakh sq. mts. The land for both the golf courses would be acquired by Government under land acquisition Act,1894.

*Bailancho Saad* opposed the issue of setting up of the golf courses on the following grounds:

- It would have major implications on land and community survival. They were opposed to land being given up for leisure and pleasure at the cost of community survival as these tracts of lands are used for grazing the cattle.
- It would affect the water source. Golf courses involve clearing local plants, shrubbery, water retaining grass which would affect seepage of water into the soil. Also golf courses require enormous quantity of water to keep the grass green. This would result in scarcity of water. This means women walking longer distances to fetch water.
- It would have hazardous consequences for health. All the fungicides herbicides, pesticides, and soil coagulating agents used by the golf course would pollute the

water and air and the food chain. This would cause serious health hazards. Since traditionally, woman have been involved in health care of the family it would increase her work load.

- Setting of golf courses would affect water sources, health, land fertility, etc. It only went to show how Government go in for the kind of development that takes women for granted.

It followed various strategies to protest against the setting up of golf courses. It wrote letters to the Government asking for detailed information with regard to sites, area of land to be acquired, water requirements, copy of environmental impact assessment report as regard setting up of golf courses. It organized various meetings for the people specially in areas where the courses were to be set up. It made people aware of the side effects of such golf courses. It educated people about the possible health hazards, depletion of water sources, and loss of vast lands. It gave press notes and also wrote informative articles on this issue. It came out with a pamphlet titled 'In The Name Of Game: The Stakes in Golf'. In cooperation with other women's organization it submitted a joint memorandum to the Minister of Tourism opposing the setting of golf courses. The Government decided to keep the issue under abeyance. These projects would have long term adverse effects on the culture, environment and people of Goa. Women would have to pay a heavy price. *Saad* pressed for:

- a) Women to be part of the decision making process
- b) All relevant information to be made available to the people so that people can make informed choices
- c) Projects should be environment-friendly, labour intensive and gender-sensitive.

### **E) Strategies of Bailancho Saad**

The success of any organization depends on the strategies it adopts. It is interesting to study the strategies followed by *Bailancho Saad*, which have varied with time and circumstance.

- Mass Campaigning: In matters which requires larger public attention, *Saad* has often taken up to mass campaigning. It has organized rallies, morchas, and coined catchy slogans. It makes posters and distribute leaflets to elicit public opinion. Thus it organized a rally to bring to the notice of the people the increasing figures of rapes in Goa.

- They organize programmes, seminar-cum-workshops to make students aware of gender equality and child exploitation. They do this in coordination with the educational institutions in Goa.
- They take the opportunity to express their views at various fora, when invited for talks/sessions. They have represented their organization at various conferences held, within as well as outside, India. One of the members represented Goa at the NGO meeting at the world conference in Beijing in 1995.
- They organize training programmes and health camps with the help of local bodies like the BDO, or village Panchayat. They organize training programme for the police and the priests making them aware of women's issues.
- They mobilize the village women by touring these villages on foot, and having informal meetings with the rural women. This strategy was highly successful in Tivrem village where women asserted themselves to fight against the problem of alcohol.
- The activists lobby at the state legislative assembly, where there is a need of new law or repealing the earlier one. Thus they got the question asked in the house with regard to increasing violence against women in Goa. It got the bill introduced on the floor of the house, with regard banning of amniocentesis test in Goa. It got the rape laws amended and has also been able to get a Commission for women established in Goa.
- Time and again, they file writ petitions in the High Court. Thus they petitioned the court for early disposal of rape cases. In another case, they petitioned against reservation of posts of police officers for males.
- They often protest through letters and sending delegations. Thus they sent a delegation to the manager of Goa Division of the Department of Tourism, Government of India and got the advertisement withdrawn which showed the breast of women superimposed on a beach of Goa.
- Writing in the local dailies has been a very effective way of drawing the public attention. Besides they bring out their own leaflet which is available for token amount.
- They have also followed strategy of door-to-door campaigning in certain matters. They went from house to house, which would be affected by project Nylon 6,6, to make them aware of the harmful effect of toxic residues.

- They conduct surveys if need be. They conducted a survey in Panaji city to assess the number of doctors who conducted amniocentesis test. The data collected assisted them to have evidence to get the bill to ban amniocentesis put on the floor of the legislative assembly. They also work on projects.
- They have even resorted to satyagrahas. They organized a salt satyagraha on Panaji Bus stand on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1997, to oppose the Government's move to ban the local salt pans. They made small packets of locally manufactured salt and sold it for a token price. They distributed pamphlets educating the people about the harmful effects of such ban which would leave large number of people in Goa jobless.
- They work in association with other organizations to settle some important issues. They coordinated with UMED and National Commission for Women on the issue of child abuse. They worked with SOCO Trust, a socio-legal organization from Madurai, and Aadhar, a Goa- based socio-legal forum to release the bonded labour from the M/s Rahul Foods Company.
- They also demand representation on the committees formulated by the government. Today, *Bailancho Saad* is a part of the coordinating team of the women's cell. One of its members was appointed on the Drafting Committee for the State Women's Police and the Drafting Committee for the State Women's Commission Bill. One member is appointed on Goa State Women's Commission.
- The activists, sometimes, bombard the government offices or Minister's cabins if they feel that a particular matter is purposely ignored by the government.
- In cases, which are of individual nature, they resort to strategies like legal counseling, mediation, registering cases at police stations and 'giving fire brigade help to the needy woman'.

Thus a look at the various strategies followed by the organization reflects that it has been innovative and flexible for experimentation. As one the members put it 'the organization has evolved as per the need of circumstances, which has enhanced its sustaining capacities.'

## **F) Relationship with the State**

'The relationship of women's movement with the state has been a tight- rope walk between protesting against its patriarchal and repressive aspects and yet seeking

more space for women in terms of legal, juridical and rehabilitative support structure.<sup>37</sup> The relationship of *Saad* with State has been one of 'love and hate'. This relationship has to be understood over a period of time. In the initial years State was not at all responsive to the demands of this organization. It was looked down as group of man-hating women. However this opinion has changed today. The constant protests against and demands for certain legal reforms like amendments in rape laws and dowry laws, banning amniocentesis etc. have forced the State to recognize the need to devote attention to women issues. In fact the State has been consulting the members on the formulation of policies and legislation. Time and again members have demanded a voice on committees and commissions to investigate, guide and monitor. They have been cautious about co-optation and are adamant that their dissidence should go on record. They have questioned, exposed and combated lip-service paid by the state to women's issues. However there are certain areas where the State has continued to reinforce inequality between the sexes. The gender blind attitude of the Police and the Judiciary has often led to suspicion and hostility in the relationship. Their experience of working with the authorities has not always been positive. *Saad* activist often feel that police has been shielding the culprits and are more concerned about protecting the politicians rather than the common people. They criticized the engagement of police in the '*Bandobast*' of the politicians, and are critical about the legal procedures which are enough to stop anybody from approaching the police-station. The concerned authorities are not always willing to meet the activists. In such times the activists have followed the strategy of bombarding in their offices without prior appointments.

Half measures and lack of political will on part of government for implementation of programs has been frustrating. Thus when *Saad* asked for women cell in Goa, Goa Government was quick to reply that there were no cases of violence on women in Goa, and government did not have finances to set up such cell. Thus the relationship has been cooperative or conflicting depending on the issues. There has been cooperation on welfarist issues but conflict on the issues of rights. The organization has been able to explore the space provided by the State on the questions of legal reforms. However, the activists have not followed this up with persistent

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<sup>37</sup> Patel, Vibhuti . 'Women's Action Groups and the State Machinery,' in Maithreyi Krishna Raj (ed.), op. cit. p. 154.

lobbying. Not always they have made a consistent, hard hitting critical assault on the state and its policies. Also the battle requires to be fought at community and family level. The activists can utilize the institution of State to contest against the community and family restrictions imposed on women. They should develop strategies which can impact the family, community and market arenas. It is no longer sufficient to address only the State. Thus *Saad* has to develop its strategy based on priority of working with people, widening its base, and linking with other groups working on similar issues.

### **Observations:**

- Today *Bailancho Saad* has become a major force which cannot be reckoned with. In spite of being an unregistered body, with few members, it has been able to make a place for itself. It has reacted with intensity to various problems faced by women in Goa. It is a non-governmental body and does not take any institutional financial help. It is a voluntary, active, independent women's collective. Rejection to traditional structures helps it in making quick decisions and taking swift actions, and to produce creative and innovative results. In observing this group, one receives a sense of a relaxed, informal atmosphere. The members are from different professions, some are lawyers, teachers, accountant, however the professional identities are not considered. Instead the heterogeneity has helped in building up strategies in achieving its goals. This group is fairly homogeneous in demographic aspects such as age (mid 30s to 40s) and level of education (high). Also the small size of the group has enhanced the group's ability to function with consensus. One advantage of small size is that they get to know each other better than they would have otherwise. Members are considerate towards each and have clarity of goals. This helps in reaching at consensus. Small size and local character throws up the issues of identity and their position in general scheme of things.
- However lack of formal membership has resulted in a weak sense of identity, responsibility and commitment. Further, the organization has got trapped in the intangible hierarchies of commitments. The decision-making process of the organization is non-hierarchical. However on an average only four members are present for the meetings. Also those with strong personalities dominate the decisions. The older members monopolize the organization. Lack of job hierarchy



has resulted in tasks not completed in time. The organization has no system of deadlines.

- The kind of intervention it makes varies with each individual case, from helping women to take decisions by placing the pros and cons of various steps, to moral support, to general counseling, to legal counseling, to mediation, to registering cases at Police Station and follow up. It has been more sensitive to legal aspects of women's issues. It basically tries and seeks that law is just to women. When it comes to common problems, they take to mass campaigns, elicit public opinion, bring out publication, write letters to government to ask for information, organize rallies, marches, hold exhibitions, make posters, write protest letters, take delegations to the authorities etc. It has also lobbied on certain matters to get it introduced in the Assembly. It has organized programmes like Seminars on specific issues, Programs in schools, higher secondary, colleges etc on invitations, Talks/Sessions at various fora, Poster exhibitions, overnight workshops, meetings in villages, Orientation programmes for police and priests, etc. The small size of the organization has helped it to evolve different strategies according to the issues and circumstances.
- *Bailancho Saad* has not been successful in reaching women at grass root level. The four major defects in the organization are: Firstly, the small size, local nature and few active members lack impact and the area of influence gets limited. It has failed to attract more members. This is because of its elite composition. Secondly, the activists are not professionals and have to work to earn their own living, thus they cannot devote their time and energy to the fullest extent for the cause of women. Thirdly though its membership is open to all interested women, it has not grown beyond a basic core. This may be to foster and protect personal networks, their inability to resolve internal conflicts, problem of integrating new members, and the existence of the politics of identity. Thus differences between members has become more apparent and eventually lead some members to leave the group, rather than overcome those differences. The group has been able to keep itself small and comfortable by pushing out those who disagreed. Fourthly, lack of office premises is confusing for the women in distress (from June 1999, they have purchased an office, however it is open only on Saturdays in the afternoons when

the members meet). Lack of hierarchy is further confusing for the people as they cannot decide whom to approach.

- *Bailancho Saad* has been more successful in cases which are not totally gender specific, for e.g., issue of golf course in Goa. This is because such issue of general concern do not demand much human resource, finances or commitments. Also it has received the assistance of other organizations in such cases. However a detail study of cases tackled by *Saad* which are gender specific and individual in nature shows that they are still pending in the court. The maximum what is done by the *Saad* activists is to get the case registered. Very little effort is seen with regard to the follow up of these cases. In fact one of the important members of the *Saad* even confessed that lack of time and resources on their part is causing them to take up issues of general nature and avoiding individual cases. Also they have already registered (in August, 1999) a wing of the organization under the nomenclature of *Alashiro* to extract the benefit of some schemes of the Government. The members of this wing are same as those of *Bailancho Saad*. However a separate trust is created for this wing.
- In spite of its short comings, *Bailancho Saad* has gone a long way in changing perceptions in the society and has lead to greater gender debates. State gives due recognition to the organization, and its members are invited on government committees and commissions. It has successfully lobbied and got gender questions raised in the state legislative assembly, and are given due recognition by police and press. However it is no longer sufficient for *Bailancho Saad* to address only the State, but should also address the arenas of the market, family and community. To conclude, *Bailancho Saad* is a growing organization, and is a ray of hope for women in Goa.

## CHAPTER VI

### WOMEN AS WELFARE BENEFICIARIES

The UN Charter promises to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. The Human Development Report 1995, showed that human development, if not engendered was endangered, while Human Development Report of 1996 emphasized the need to avoid growth that was 'jobless, ruthless, voiceless, rootless and futureless.'<sup>1</sup>

Women in India suffer on two counts; one, because society as a whole is impoverished, and secondly because they are women. Development, as understood by our planners and policy makers, has not helped in improving the conditions for women. Some would argue, in fact, that the reverse may actually be the case. They see women as worst-hit due to the development policies adopted by the State. This has falsified the notion that industrialization and modernization would lead to development of women. Two important observations made on this front are: firstly, women have lost ground relative to men as development has proceeded, and secondly, women-headed household tend to have the lowest incomes, largely due to a lack of productive resources.<sup>2</sup>

To even out these effects of development, policies of rehabilitation and compensatory alternatives are necessary. If the government decides on less of a role in production, it has to gear itself for more of a role in distribution with regards the needs of the poor. Government has reduced expenditures on public services which has its obvious consequences for education and health. Poverty is the condition of deprivation. Besides women are not able to avail of the opportunities offered due to their multiple, crippling socio-economic handicaps.<sup>3</sup> Lack of education and skills, denial of fruitful employment, and lack of access to resources, have adversely effected women, specially in developing countries. There is a need of a 'Soft State' committed to women's equality and

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<sup>1</sup> Rao, Meena & Vijaya Lakshmi, M. (1997), 'Women and Development,' *Mainstream*, 22(March), Vol. XXXV, No.14, p 25.

<sup>2</sup> These observations are made by Buvinic, M. and is quoted by Desai, Murli, (1998), 'Policy Approaches to Women and Poverty Eradication', *The Indian Journal of Social Sciences*, (Oct.), Vol. 59, Issue 4, pp. 1007-1008.

<sup>3</sup> Haider, Saraswati (1997), 'Women Denied Support, Women Negated,' *Mainstream*, 22(March), Vol. XXXV, No. 15, p. 9.

development. It is necessary that women are given access to various rights like to participate in elaboration and implementation of developmental planning. They should be given access to adequate health care, different types of training and education, helped to organize self-help groups and cooperatives, given access to credit and loans and last but not the least ensured *adequate living conditions.*( emphasis mine) Thus women ought to strive for special rights.

There has been efforts in this direction at the planning level. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) envisaged welfare measures for the women. However 'It resolved to provide women with adequate services necessary to fulfil what was called a 'woman's legitimate role in the family'. Women were back to their iconic roles within the family.'<sup>4</sup> The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) urged for implementation of 'equal pay for equal work' and such other provisions for the protection of women workers from hazards at work. However it ignored women working in the agricultural sector. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) was concerned with female education. The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) renewed the emphasis on women's education and health. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) replaced the social welfare approach with the development approach. Now women were to be viewed not only as recipients of social goods but also as contributors to the economy. The Sixth Five Year Plan(1980-85) focussed on a multi-disciplinary approach with emphasis on health, education and employment. However the major drawback of these plans was they abandoned the integrated approach to the whole issue of survival. A number of issues which form the domain of society, were now shortlisted as 'women's issues'. The Seventh Plan(1985-90) emphasized the qualitative aspect of the development of women while the Eight Five Year Plan (1992-97) laid stress on increasing women's role as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) emphasized on economic empowerment of women. It also stressed on their participation in the decision-making process with regard to raising and distribution of resources i.e., incomes, investment and expenditure at all levels.

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<sup>4</sup> Banerjee, Nirmala (1998), 'Whatever Happened to the Dreams of Modernity? The Nehruvian Era and Women's Position,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25(April), p. ws-2.

The planning process has its own deficiencies. All the developmental plans, generally refer to man. The underlying belief has been that anything channeled through men would automatically be accessed by women. No serious thought is given to the fact that their needs can be different than men.<sup>5</sup> Women are neglected due to the ideological bias and due to administrative convenience in assuming that beneficiaries are a homogenous group. Women are not a monolithic block. The needs of young, single or married women are to be distinguished from that of older married women, as should be the kind of occupation they have. There exist gender blindness in administration, and measures are needed to bring about desirable changes in its mental makeup. It also reflects the biases of the planner. Thus the issues which are of larger concerns for human beings as a whole are sidetracked as women's issues and they remain peripheral and of low priority from the point of view of both bureaucracy and the structure of representative institutions. 'One is not seeking the mere inclusion of women as a row, column or chapter in the plan but a through reorientation of the plan document from a "quality of life" angle which includes the lives and living conditions of women as citizens of the country, as individuals or professionals in their own right, as members of their family, etc.'<sup>6</sup> Thus the stress should not be on growth rate or on growth with justice. What is more important is growth for justice.

Though the government machinery has proliferated in many forms, it has not reflected in any corresponding increase in its reach of the poor, more especially of poor women.<sup>7</sup> Also the programmes which are on the face of them gender neutral are in reality male biased. The situation of women, particularly with reference to their familial, societal and cultural existence, has not been properly analyzed, and as a result, the introduction of stray economic development programmes could not and cannot solve the problems of women development.<sup>8</sup>

There are various approaches towards women's development. The five major ones are the welfare approach, the equity approach, the anti-poverty approach, the legal

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<sup>5</sup> Chavan, P. S (1996), **Lengthening Shadows, Status of Women in India**, New Delhi: Mank, p. 183.

<sup>6</sup> Sebastil, Raj (ed.) (1991), **Quest for Gender Justice**, Madras: T.R. Publication, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Krishna Raj, M. (1988), **Women and development-The Indian Experience**, Pune: Shubhada Saraswati, p. 132.

<sup>8</sup> Bhowmik, K. L. (ed.) (1988), **Development of Women and Children**, New Delhi: Inter-State, p. 18.

rights approach and the empowerment approach.<sup>9</sup> There is a need of a holistic approach which will be a happy blending of all the above approaches. It is necessary to ensure economic independence of women, to invest in their capacities, to upgrade their skills and catch up with technological upgrading. There is need of improvement of de jure access to land by women and access to credit. The policies should be seen in an integrated way, in which changes in one aspect of women's life, can have reinforcing and multiplying positive effects on other aspects. It is need of the time not to shove out women into the wings but instead position them centre-stage. While harping on the needs to provide a better deal to women, government should not pursue policies that are worst-hit for women. There is need of breaking the 'glass ceiling' an invisible but impassable barrier that prevents women from advancing.<sup>10</sup>

### **Schemes for Women's Development**

The Government of Goa has envisaged some welfare schemes to improve the status of disadvantaged women in Goa. These schemes are implemented through the Directorate of Women and Child Development, Rural Development Agency, State Social Welfare Advisory Board and the Provedoria. These schemes are intended to cater the needs of poor women in Goa. Poor women can be divided into three categories on the basis of their needs<sup>11</sup>: i) Destitute, disabled and handicapped women who want social assistance rather than income/employment generating programmes. ii) Women (mainly belonging to the poorer sections) who are neither capable nor willing of taking up self-employment programmes and who want wage employment Programmes. iii) Women who have skill/education/literacy/enterprise to take up self-employment programmes.

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<sup>9</sup> The welfare approach is one that benefits the most vulnerable group as recipients. The equity approach takes special care of gender needs and emphasizes on the distribution of power. The anti-poverty approach recognizes that a majority of women fall in the category of deprivation and emphasizes on a better access for them to these resources. The efficiency approach provides for improving the capability and capacity of women by way of imparting education, skill, training, etc. The empowerment approach helps women in making their own choices with regard to their lives and makes them more active players in society. (Source: Shanta Kohli Chandra (1996), 'Women's Development: Problems and Prospects,' in Shamin Aleem (ed.), **Women's Development Problems and Prospects**, New Delhi: APH, p. 24)

<sup>10</sup> 'The United Nations and The Advancement of Women, 1945-1996,' **The United Nations, Blue Book Series**, Vol. VI, New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations, p. 379.

<sup>11</sup> These categories are made by Government of India Report of 1988, and are referred by Seetharam, M. (1992), 'Development Of Rural Women, Problems and Alternatives,' **Kurukshetra**, (January), p. 28.

Some of the important programmes/ schemes implemented by the Government of Goa are as follows:

1) Support to Training and Employment Programmes for Women (STEP)

STEP was launched in 1987. It intends to upgrade the skills of poor and assetless women by giving them specific training and creating conditions of employment for them on a sustainable basis in the traditional sector.

2) Supplementary Nutrition Programme

The scheme of Supplementary Nutrition Programme is implemented by the Government of Goa under Minimum Needs Programme. Under this scheme nutritious cooked supplements consisting of cereals and pulses to provide 12 grams of proteins and 500 calories per day to pregnant and lactating women are provided at the anganwadi centres.

3) Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)

The main concept of Indira Mahila Yojana is to co-ordinate and integrate component of all sectoral programmes and facilitate their convergent to benefit women. It proposes to bring about a mechanism by which there could be a systematic coordination among programmes in a meaningful integration of various streams of funds available under different schemes to meet women's needs, along with ensuring that women's interests are taken care of and provided for under each scheme. Thus IMY is an effort to mobilise women around an integrated delivery system.

4) Balika Samrudhi Yojana (Girl Child scheme)

Under this scheme, a post delivery grant amount of Rs. 500/ is given to the mother on the birth of a girl child as a gift from the Government with the objective of changing family and community attitude towards the mother and girl child and to provide additional nutrition to the mother. The other attraction of the scheme is the annual scholarship given to the girl child as per the prescribed rate from time to time for attending the school.

#### 5) Mahila Samridhi Yojana:

This scheme was launched in 1993. It is implemented through the network of post offices in rural areas. It encourages the rural woman to open MSY account in her village post office in which she may deposit her savings. For an amount upto Rs. 300/- per year, with a one year lock-in-period, Government contributes 25 per cent.

#### 6) National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

Another programme of benefit to the poor women is the National Social Assistance Programme where the Union funds the entire spending schemes of States on old age pensions, maternity benefits, and compensation for the sudden death of the family earner.

#### 7) Financial Assistance to Widows

This scheme came into force in January 1997. The Beneficiaries of this scheme are the widows, who are otherwise without any means of assistance. This scheme is also available to divorcees, judicially separated and deserted women. This scheme is popular and widely availed of, and therefore it was decided to study this scheme in detail.

### **Scheme for Financial Assistance to Widows**

The Government of Goa, in June 1996 via order no. 1/18/96-W&CD, announced a scheme for widows with the objective of providing them with social security by way of financial assistance. The cause of widows is an integral part of broader battle against gender inequalities. There is need to give attention to widowhood as a particular case of deprivation. Widowhood is a critical and tough period in a woman's life. It has traumatic consequences, not only because of the sudden loss of the spouse but also because of the well-defined cultural expectations regarding the role of widow.<sup>12</sup> Widowhood is not merely transition from marital status to another with the death of the partner. It involves complexity of consequences of widowhood which are more hurtful to a woman than to a man.<sup>13</sup> Widowhood brings about severe social, economic, emotional and cultural deprivations. It brings about restriction on participation of widow in social and religious

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<sup>12</sup> Reddy, A. P (1992), 'Forever Autumn?', *Social Welfare*, (Oct-Nov.), Vol. XXXIX, No. 7-8, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



functions. Thus they are now not invited for 'naming ceremony' or 'Haldikumkum'. There are constraints on type and colour of clothes and ornaments to be worn. Economically, a widow's position becomes vulnerable if she is left with no source of income. If her husband was a government servant, she can at least hope to get his provident fund or gratuity or pension. However, for a widow whose husband worked for a private sector, is less likely to get any benefit as these bodies like to flout the rules and regulations only to save money to increase their profits. All these aspects affect the widow emotionally. The deprivation, loneliness, suppression of psycho-sexual needs also affect her. 'Shocked, stunned and immobilised, the widow finds it extremely difficult to pierce the gloom that envelops her life.'<sup>14</sup>

Thus widowhood in our society is a stigma. All sorts of restraints are imposed on her social, cultural and economic activities. Her mode of dressing, eating habits, social contacts all change. Widowhood brings in changes in women's identity and status. The social taboos impose various restrictions on the behaviour of a widow. She is not treated on par with other married women and is bound by certain cultural and traditional restrictions led by the society. It takes a long time and a lot of courage for a widow to fight loneliness and insecurity and associated problems. She is considered as a burden by her in-laws. Added to this is the cultural conditioning that insists that a girl's place after marriage is with her husband till her death, and that it is shameful for her to return to her natal home, whatever the provocation.<sup>15</sup> She has to struggle for a living. Again, many women are dependent on others and not trained to lead a independent life from the beginning. One of the major economic consequence of widowhood is loosing the main bread earner of the family. This leads to increased dependency for livelihood on others. At a time, she has to make her living arrangements. Her choice to remarry is restricted as widow-remarriage is not prevalent in the society. A widow who remarries is often looked down in the society. Various constraints on dress code, behaviour, fear of rumours and accusation put further restrictions on her employment opportunities. The productive assets of the family, being commonly owned and indivisible, she does not have access to

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<sup>14</sup> Aradhya, B.M.M (1987), 'What it Means to be a Widow?', *Social Welfare*, (December), Vol. XXXIV, No.9, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Narsimhan, Sakuntala. (1990), *Sati: A Study of Widow Burning in India*, New Delhi: Viking, p. 48.

it. Her bargaining power with the male members, in the family as well in the economy, is weak. Her position becomes worse if she has minor children. In a joint family widow and her children are looked after. However, with the breaking up of the joint family, a widow has to bring up her minor children. It puts her in a situation of acute dependency and economic support from others. She has to bear social isolation and may be victim to physical violence. There is a fear that she may be exploited by her own relatives. This may, sometimes, lead her to destitution and prostitution. The position of young widow is still worse. Men look at her with anticipation while women with suspicion. 'Preyed on by relatives, cowed down by priests and persecuted by society, many widows have been driven to prostitution to keep body and soul together'.<sup>16</sup>

Thus a widow has to face a list of problems:

- How to earn a source of living
- Rearing of children
- Appropriation of property by relatives
- Problem of accommodation
- Acceptance by relatives and friends
- Exploitation by relatives
- Tension of daughters marriage if they are of marriageable age
- Social, cultural constraints on movements, dressing and food habits

Thus a widow's life in society is one of 'unrelieved abjectness, opprobrium and denial.'<sup>17</sup> This further reduces her social status. She suffers doubly, firstly being a women and secondly being a widow. There may be nobody to push her case. Thus widows form the marginalized segment of the society. It is necessary to understand and explore their felt needs. Therefore they have to be supported in their specific demands with regard to pensions, property rights and other entitlements. The role of the State becomes all the more important in this regard. Thus in the matter of destitute women the Question of social justice as enumerated in art. 41 of the Constitution, will have to be

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 83.

given concrete shape and form.<sup>18</sup>

However the rehabilitation of the widows should depend on the kind of services they need. The age, health status, the family background, economic status, educational level, occupational status of the widow and the number of dependents on her should be considered. B.M.M. Aradhya opines that widows require to be further classified into young widows, middle aged widows, with or without children and aged widows. They are categorized as rich and poor, upper caste and low caste, urban and rural, working and non-working.<sup>19</sup>

The scheme which is called as **Goa Financial Assistance to Widows** came into force in January 1997. It is applicable to the whole of the State of Goa. The Beneficiaries of this scheme are the widows, who are otherwise without any means of assistance. This scheme is also available to divorcees, judicially separated and deserted women. For the purpose of being entitled for financial assistance, the applicant should be a bonafide resident of the State of Goa by birth or by domicile for 15 years or married to a resident of Goa of 15 years domicile. The total family income should not exceed Rs 12,000/- per annum. The financial assistance provided to the beneficiaries is Rs. 500/- per month. The financial assistance payable to the widow who has children, is till the majority of the first child (21 years) or till the beneficiary completes 50 years, *whichever is earlier*. However in case of a childless widow, the financial assistance is to continue till her death. The sanctioning authority is the Director of Women and Child Development, and the amount is disbursed by concerned Block Development Officer (BDO) by 12<sup>th</sup> of every month to the beneficiaries. All the cases which are sanctioned for financial assistance shall be reviewed initially every year for a period of three years and thereafter at least once in five years.

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<sup>18</sup> Art. 41 provides that the State within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for security, the right to work, to educate, and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in cases of undeserved want. This is a social overhead and as a measure of social justice apart from the maintenance, a woman can claim from her husband. There must be an obligation on society to look after her.

(Source: Dandvate, P., Kumari, R. & Verghese, J (ed.), (1989), **Widows, Abandoned and Destitute Women In India**, New Delhi, Radiant, p. 8.)

<sup>19</sup> Aradhya, B.M.M. (1987), op. cit., 2.

### **Utility of this Scheme**

This scheme, if implemented well, can be of immense help due to the following reasons:

- It can promote a definite social identity for the widows.
- It can help them to fight their own fears, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.
- It would lead to building a positive self-confidence, which would enhance their self-respect and self-dignity.
- It would assist them to have greater control over their lives, as it would help them to become economically independent and self-reliant.

### **Methodology**

It was decided to study the implementation of Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme in Tiswadi Taluka. To study this scheme, the interview method was used. In Tiswadi Taluka, till June 1999, 106 beneficiaries have so far availed of this scheme. In all 24 respondents were interviewed in the month of June'99. Among these 2 were those who have never received the benefit as their applications were rejected at a later stage, 4 were those whose benefit will be stopped by the end of this year(1999), 4 were childless widows, and therefore the financial benefit will be availed by them till death, 1 was deserted and 1 was a divorcee, and others were those who have children and therefore the benefit of this scheme will continue, till their children are mature ( 21 years) or till the beneficiary completes fifty years of age, which ever is earlier. Some of the Sarpanches, the B.D.O. of Tiswadi Taluka, as well the Director of Directorate of Women and Child Welfare were interviewed in this regard.

### **Case studies**

In all twenty-four cases were looked into details. The interviews were conducted in the month of June'99. Each case was different from the other. The problems faced, their socio-economic background, the difficulties the widows faced in availing the schemes gave a deeper insight into the problems of widows in Goa. Some of the case studies are summarized as below:

### 1. Luiza\*

Luiza stays in Merces. She is all alone. Her house requires repairs and she fears that it might collapse in the rains. She takes the shelter of her friend when it rains heavily. She belongs to Chaddo caste and has studied up to S.S.C. Luiza, now of forty-four years, was married twenty four years back. Her's was a love marriage. Her husband belonged to a lower caste. She was teaching in a school for sometime. However her husband forced her to give up the job. However soon after marriage her husband died of heart attack and for last twenty years Luiza had to live lonely life. A year back she was informed by the Balwadi worker about the widow-pension scheme. She decided to avail of this facility. She had hand to mouth existence. Besides she is also not keeping well. She went to the panchayat but the form was not available. She then collected it from the B.D.O's Office. She did not have the necessary documents. She was married 24 years back but had not collected her marriage certificate. Her file was kept pending. The church certificate was not considered valid. She went to civil registration office 'so many times.' She was told that her certificate is not there and that she should register again. She had no money to bribe. She pleaded with the officials, but it did not work. She went to the 'higher authorities'. There the head could not understand Konkani. She tried to explain, to her level best, the case in Hindi. She asked the officials whether she should 'bring the bones of her husband and register with it.' This is living example of the uncouth, inconsiderate, heartless bureaucracy. She also had to make an affidavit in front of the Mamlatdar that she is poor and living all alone. She was determined to get the scheme. Now she is availing the scheme for the last one year. She gets Rs. 500/- per month. She helps other widows and destitute women in her village to get this scheme.

### 2.Pushpa\*

Pushpa resides in Chimbel. She is thirty two years of age and belongs to Gawdi community. She has three children, all are below ten years, and only one of them goes to school. Her husband died four years back and was an alcoholic. Her house is badly in need of repairs. Her mother -in-law and brother-in-law are also dependent on her. She is

\* The names of the respondents are changed to protect their identity.

working as a homeguard. She has been availing the scheme for last one year. Initially she used to get Rs 1250/- per month but from January 1999, she is getting only 500/-. She work hard to ~~take~~ care of her family. Her sister in law is also a widow, and often looks at her for support, moral as well as financial. Pushpa is now determined to get the benefit of this scheme for her sister-in law. This scheme has been of supplementary help for her. She grieved over the reduction in amount now given by the government, but at the same time expresses her ~~gratitute~~ gratitude towards the State. Her brother in law as well as mother in law have high respect for her. She has a major say in the family's decision-making.

### 3. Regina\*

Regina is thirty years of age. She has a daughter of seven years and they are residing with her parents at Mercedes. Regina is seventh passed. She was married at the age of twenty two. Her husband started ill-treating her. He was an alcoholic. She was made to do all the household cores, kept hungry and was mercilessly beaten up. Her husband was encouraged by her in-laws, and after some days, they too started torturing her. She was constantly asked to get money from her parents place. She tried to adjust to the situation. Her parents attempted to compromise several times but it did not work. One day her husband came with a sickle and tried to hit her on the head. It was then, Regina decided to leave him and stay with her parents. Soon she realized that at her parents place too there was no respect for her. She started working as a domestic servant, as there was nothing else she could do. She has little education, and she had not learnt any skill. However her child became an asthma patient, and required her attention for most of the time. She was again left jobless, with the sick daughter to take care of. One of her neighbours, who is a widow, informed her about this scheme. She applied for the scheme. Her application remained pending for more than a year. Regina is not outgoing and could not understand the formalities. She took the help of her neighbour. When she went to the B.D.O she was told that since she was neither a widow nor a divorcee, she had to prove that she was deserted by her husband. She was asked to produce the divorce certificate, but her husband was not willing to divorce her. Her application was sent back

twice on this ground. Then she gave the testimony of four recognized citizens which was certified by the Sarpanch. She is now availing this scheme from January' 1999.

#### 4. Lina\*

Lina is 33 years old and is a mother of a five year old son. She has studied up to S.S.C. She is unemployed. Her husband was a driver, and died in a fatal bus accident. She has availed of the National Assistance Programme scheme where she got Rs.10,000/- as assistance from the government. She owns a big house, part of which she has given on rent. She was not willing to give required information. First she said she had no in laws, but later said that her father-in law stayed with her. Her economic status is better off. Yet she is availing the benefit of Widow Pension scheme which she will get for next 15 years. It was observed in this case that the beneficiary had to go to the concern panchayat several times as the concerned Secretary was not willing to give the income certificate. When the Sarpanch of the Panchayat was interviewed by the writer, this case was brought to his notice. As per the Sarpanch, Lina has two brother-in-laws, in good jobs but they were not looking after her. Also the house which she resides in was shared by these brother-in-laws. The intentions behind two different replies required a further probe. There could be two reasons for Lina being hesitant to give the right information (i) she was afraid that the writer would bring the case to the notice of the higher authorities and the benefit she is availing would stop, or (ii) since her brother-in-laws were not looking after her she might have not felt like associating herself with them.

#### 5. Vijaya\*

Vijaya is resident of Taligao. She belongs to Gawda community. She has four children, two daughters and two sons. Her one daughter is married and other three are studying. She works on daily wages in fields. Thus half of the year she has to remain unemployed. She has passed II standard, and can't read or write. Her husband died in 1996. She came to know about this scheme in 1997 from another widow from her village. They both decided to get the necessary formalities done to avail this scheme. She traveled to different offices and collected all the required documents for the scheme. After one year she received a letter from the B.D.O that the scheme was sanctioned to

her. She went to B.D.O's Office and did the remaining formalities like affixing the photographs etc. After few months, when her neighbour started getting the benefit but Vijaya didn't, she went to the office and inquired. She was told that there were amendments in the scheme, and therefore she has to give some additional documents. She was asked about her children. She innocently told that she was able to get her elder daughter married. Then she was asked the age of her elder daughter and was told to produce the birth certificate of her elder daughter. She submitted the same to the B.D.O. office. After some days, Vijaya was told that her file was sent to the higher authorities. Subsequently she was asked to produce doctor's certificate on the death of husband. Today Vijaya is a confused woman. She is not able to know the reason why, in spite of complying with all the formalities, she is not been able to avail of the scheme, while the other widow from her village has benefited from it. It is difficult to convince her that since, in the beginning the Government had no funds, the scheme was kept pending, and later as the Act was amended, which clearly laid down that widows with matured daughter/son cannot avail this scheme, and as by then her daughter was of already of twenty-one years, she will never get the benefit of the scheme. Vijaya grieved that she had to run from one office to another, ask for favours with different officials, plea and beg with them, she should have got some financial assistance at least for a few months.

#### 6. Juliet\*

Juliet is forty eight years old. Her husband died in 1993. He was an alcoholic and was working on daily wages. Juliet is a housewife. She does not work in fields nor work any where else. She has studied up to third standard. She has got the rightful share in her deceased husband's property. She does not have children. According to her the aid given by the State is sufficient for her. However one of the neighbours confided to the writer that Juliet has married again and her marriage was solemnized in the church and the villagers are the proof to it. However, Juliet continues to avail of the scheme. She did not hesitate to tell the writer that she is a widow. If she remains childless, which she may, she will continue to avail of the scheme for the life time!



#### 7. Anita\*

Anita is twenty six years old, and resides in Cacara, Bambolim. She is a mother of a three year old girl child. She has her mother-in-law who is dependent on her. Anita is 5<sup>th</sup> pass, and works as a domestic maid. She belongs to the Gawdi caste. She has no other source of income. Her husband died under mysterious circumstances two years back. Anita is still traumatized by the incident. She was informed about this scheme by the Balwadi teacher. Anita asked her brother, who works as peon in a Government department, to help her avail the scheme. Her brother was kind enough and did all the necessary formalities required. Anita could not stay away from her work, as that would mean cut in her wages which she could not afford. She applied for the scheme in 1997. However even after one and half years she did not receive any response. When inquiries were made, it was found that there was some typing error in her name, and there was some confusion in her name. She was now made to prove that the two names were of one and the same person. She went to the Mamlatdar's office, made an affidavit and had to give witnesses of two government servants. Still her file was kept pending as now the funds were exhausted. Anita got the Benefit of the Scheme only from January, 1999.

#### 8. Flavia\*

Flavia is 35 years old and is resident of St. Estveem. She has only one daughter, who has passed S.S.C. Flavia herself is S.S.C. pass, and is a tailor by occupation. she also receive Rs. 200/- per month as a pension from her husband's firm. Her husband was working on ship and died in 1986. She has in-laws and they are on good terms. Flavia does not want to be dependent on them. It was observed that the house she was residing had no proper flooring nor are there window panes. She heard about the scheme on F. M. Radio. She went to the Panchayat and asked for more details. However she was told that the scheme was new and no forms were available with the Panchayat. She went to the B.D.O of Tiswadi, there also forms were not available. She got the form xeroxed from another B.D.O. She being aware of the importance of documents, had all the documents with her, except the income certificate. She went to the Mamlatdar's office for three to four days, made the required affidavit, gave the declaration and got the income certificate. For the last one year she is availing this scheme. Earlier she was given aid of

Rs.1000/-, while from January'99, it is reduced to Rs. 500/- only. She will avail this scheme for another five years only as her daughter will be of twenty-one years then.

## **Observations**

From the case studies, the following observations can be made:

### **A) Shortcomings in the implementation of the scheme**

Though the scheme recognizes the need for state intervention to provide social security to widows, divorcee and deserted women, however the current design of the scheme has a number of shortcomings:

#### **1) 'First come, first serve' Basis**

The criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries is based on 'first come, first serve principle'. Only certain number of applications are accepted in each taluka and the remaining are kept pending due to lack of funds. This denies the economic assistance to the actually needy widows. Instead, government should increase the funds allotted to this scheme so that all the applicants get the benefit of this scheme.

#### **2) Inconsistent Criteria**

The criteria of the scheme has been inconsistent. Several changes have been brought about within a period of two years(1997-1999). Initially this scheme was meant for young widows in the age group of 18-50 years. However now it is open to all widows. The clause which required the information on whether the applicant is from SC/ST/OBC category has been deleted. Similarly, earlier the amount given to the widows differed according to their status. Thus a childless widow was given Rs 500/- per month, a widow with a child was given Rs 1000/- per month and a widow with more than one child was given 1250/-. However with the latest amendment, from January,1999, all beneficiaries are getting Rs. 500/- per month. The justification given by the Government for the reduction in the amount is that it wants to bring in more widows in the beneficiaries net. However the reduction in amount has adversely affected some widows. In fact, the writer came across two widows who grieved that lack of money to meet the basic needs of their children have made them go for the 'means' which they would have never thought of. One of them told the writer that her neighbour has been helping her

with financial assistance, and therefore to oblige him she had to enter into physical relationship with him. She insisted upon the writer to justify her stand or give her an alternative solution, for which the writer had no reply.

Also, as per another amendment, the beneficiary who have children will be able to avail this scheme only till the children are minor, or till she completes fifty years of age, which ever is earlier. This has two problems. Firstly, the maturity of the children need not assure them jobs to take care of the family, and secondly even if they do get, it does not ensure that they will take care of their widowed mother. After all, looking after ones' parents is only a moral responsibility and not a legal one. Also the daughters usually get married and settle down in their husband's house. These factors may result in worsening of the conditions of the widows further. Flavia from St. Estevev grieved that now she was of only 35 years, but her daughter was of 16 years, and therefore, due to this new clause, she will be able to avail this scheme only for 5 more years and not for 15 years. Also initially this scheme was given to those whose income was below 25,000/- for a widow with children, and Rs. 10,000/- for a childless widow. However now it is reduced to Rs. 12,000/-. These changing rules have denied the opportunity for many widows of availing this scheme. The applications which were received two years back are scrutinized on the basis of present rules, which have resulted in rejection of number of them. Some of the beneficiaries whose applications were earlier approved for this scheme, are now cancelled. Thus Vijaya from Taliegao or Santan from Santacruz, whose names appear on the list of the beneficiaries, have not been able to get a single pie from this scheme.

### 3) Lack of Funds

The 'lack of fund' syndrome has been haunting this scheme through out. Thus in the first lot, out of 400 application only 22 were accepted, due to shortage of fund. It is only from January, 1999 the other beneficiaries are getting this scheme. Also the beneficiaries does not get the assistance in time, though the rule says that the amount has to be disbursed by 12<sup>th</sup> of every month. The amount for January and February 1999, was received by beneficiaries only in the first week of May,1999. It is necessary that the amount is disbursed without delay. Similarly the amount for July and August, 1999 was

given in month of October, 1999. Thus the amount for two months is given at one time. Till July, 1999, 1000 applications seeking to avail benefits under this scheme were pending for clearance due to lack of funds. In all 1541 beneficiaries were cleared under this scheme till June, 1999. Maximum of 178 applications were pending from Salcete taluka, while minimum of 16 were from Quepem taluka.<sup>20</sup> The attention of the Minister for Women and Child Welfare was directed to this question by raising the issue in the monsoon session of Legislative Assembly in July, 1999. It was brought to the notice of the Minister that not only were the applications pending for clearance, but a large number of beneficiaries whose applications were already cleared were still not receiving any financial aid from the Government. The Minister assured to look into the matter, however till December, 1999 the situation had not changed.

A deeper probe was undertaken to understand the delays in disbursement of benefits to the widows. All the Government officials gave the stereotyped reply that government has no funds. However if we glance at the extravagant expenditure of the ministers, it becomes difficult to believe that government has no funds to give even a token amount of rupees five hundred to the needy widows in Goa. If Government has funds to buy four new vehicles, each costing four lakh rupees, to satisfy the needs of four ministers, and no funds for the social development it is mockery of state democracy.<sup>21</sup>

It also reflects on the gender bias of the state. The schemes are announced to form the vote banks, but effective implementation of these schemes is not given a priority. At every step the gender bias of the state is evident. It is there while framing the schemes, where the opinions and views of the beneficiaries are not at all taken into consideration, the biases are reflected during budget allocation, which is usually of residual nature, and it is this budget which is likely to receive the axe when funds are short.<sup>22</sup>

The procedure for disbursement of the amount is very lengthy and time consuming. Each B.D.O has to make every month a consolidated bill of the total amount required per

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<sup>20</sup> '1,000 Widows Yet to Get Scheme Benefit,' (1999) *The Navhind Times*, 17(July).

<sup>21</sup> 'Vikas Kama Sathi Nidhi Nahi ---- Pun Mantrasathi Esteem Gadhae', (2000) *Goa Times*, (Marathi Daily), 4(January), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Krishna Raj, Maithreyi (1988), op. cit., p. 125.

month under this scheme, and send it to the Directorate of Women and Child Development. The bill is sanctioned and sent back to the B.D.O. Then the B.D.O. sends it to the Accounts office, Panaji. A cheque is drawn in the name of the B.D.O of each Taluka and is then send to the respective B.D.O. This cheque is deposited in a particular bank. Then the dealing hand in the B.D.O.'s Office writes the cheques in the names of the widows and informs the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries have to come to the B.D.O and receive their respective cheques. The sanctioning authority, thus lies with the Directorate of Women and Child Development. Many a time the bills are not sanctioned in time. Sometimes, the Directorate intimates the B.D.O not to send the consolidated bill as funds are exhausted. Besides, there are two days decided when the widows have to come and collect their cheques. They have to stand in queue for hours together to collect the same. When these problems were brought to the notice of the concerned B.D.O she grieved that the funds never reached in time, but she also blamed the beneficiaries as they did not come to collect the amount in time. She viewed that the beneficiaries wanted to keep it confidential and hide from the relatives and friends that they were availing this scheme, and therefore they wanted to come to collect the amount whenever it was convenient to them. But she agreed that some of the beneficiaries have no money even to come to the B.D.O office to collect this amount. On asked about the frequent visits these widows have to make to inquire whether the funds were available and their cheques were ready, the B.D.O called these needy women 'reckless people' who gave excuses and had no work then to blame the administration. When the Director of Women and Child Development was interviewed, he viewed that since there are large number of schemes implemented, he cannot give attention to any one particular scheme. Besides, from 1997 to January 2000, this department has seen four directors, while two of them were holding only an additional charge of this department. This reflects the deep rooted gender bias in the state.

Widows form the downtrodden section of the society, who are helpless and unable to form a strong united voice to force the state to listen to their grievances. They have no union nor any support who will take up their cause. The government knows that even if the money is not disbursed in time, the widows will not agitate but will suffer in silence. There won't be any morcha or any news report which will make the government

answerable to these poor women. Thus taking the advantage of the powerlessness of these helpless women, the state further strengthens patriarchy by refusing to give such issues the priority.

#### 4) Problem with the Distribution Mechanism

There is also a problem with the distribution mechanism. The beneficiary has to go to B.D.O. Office several times to check if the amount has been sanctioned and their cheques are ready. The B.D.O. Office for Tiswadi Taluka is situated in Panaji. Thus for widows residing in far-off places, like Cumbharjua or St. Esteveem, it is difficult to come to Panaji every now and then. They have to spare their time as well as money. When they grumble over this, they are told by the officials 'to contact them on the phone'. The Sarpanches were asked as what could be an alternative suggestion for smooth distribution. One of the Sarpanches felt that the amount could be disbursed through the Panchayat. Some of the respondents also felt the same. However, another Sarpanch was cautious of such suggestion. He felt that the secretary and other officials of the Panchayat would exploit the beneficiaries, especially the illiterates. There is a possibility of this, for this is being done with regard to the Provedoria scheme, and secondly since the amount did not come in time, the possibility of exploitation was double. However, if accounts payee cheques are issued in the names of beneficiaries and distributed through the concerned Panchayat, it would be a feasible alternative.

#### 5) Unequal Distribution

It is also observed that there is imbalance in distribution of this scheme. Tiswadi taluka has 18 Panchayats and one municipality. There were 23 beneficiaries in Municipality. Kumbarjua had 10 beneficiaries while village of St. Esteveem, Chodan, St. Cruz had 8 each. The remaining were given to the other Panchayats. This also reflects on the slow functioning of the Panchayats. This scheme is to be implemented through the Panchayats. The Panchayat has to inform the villagers, has to provide the necessary documents and process the files as early as possible. Some of the Sarpanches agreed that they had not made any effort to popularise the scheme, nor to process and follow up the applications. However, Sarpanch of St. Cruz requires a special mention in this regard. He

is the Sarpanch of the village for last 16 years. He knows all the people in his village. So whenever any married man die, he goes for the condolence visit with two application forms in his pocket, one is for availing the scheme for financial assistance for widows, and the second is the Bandodkar Niradhar Yojana scheme from Provedoria. Though this looks a little exaggeration, however it is one of the best ways to reach to the needy women. He grieved that the B.D.O was not cooperative and he had xeroxed the application forms of this scheme for his village as they were never available with the B.D.O. Two Sarpanches said that they sent the applicants to collect the forms from the B.D.O as they felt the scheme is implemented by B.D.O. Thus many of the respondents collected the application form from the B.D.O's Office as it was not available in the concerned Panchayats.

There is also implementation problem of this scheme. There is low motivation of Government officials, they are not accountable to the public and are prone to delays, corruption and other irregularities. Similarly the Gram Sevikas who have to popularise this scheme are not given targets to be covered. Very few respondents said that they came to know about the scheme through Anganwadi workers. The information about this scheme is not imparted properly. There is a strong need for establishing a network of information for implementation of such scheme which is found missing. There has to be co-ordination between the Directorate of women and child development, the B.D.O, the Panchayat, and the NGOs as well. There is need to campaign about this scheme through pasting posters in public places, panchayat building, distributing leaflets, announcing it at the gram sabhas, etc

#### 6) Misappropriation of the Scheme

The government has not been successful in checking the misappropriation of this scheme. Thus there are widows from well-do-families enjoying the benefit of this scheme. They have been able to manipulate the income certificate. There is a widow, who owns a two floor building which has been given on rent, yet availing of this scheme. There was another example where a widow has well built house, has the luxuries of life, has coconut and mango plantations, owns fields and yet she has been able to produce income certificate which showed her income below 12,000 per annum. Some of these

cases were brought to the notice of the concerned Sarpanches. Some of the justifications resulted in finer observations. A widow may be living in well furnished house, she may have her brother-in-laws in well paid jobs, but that does not ensure that the widow and her children would be looked after by these in-laws. The Sarpanch pointed out that the ration card was not the criteria to decide the number of households or to ascertain the income of the widow. This Sarpanch was given a memo by the B.D.O in one of such cases. On the other hand there is a case in St Esteveem, where a widow who has remarried is still availing the benefit of the scheme. When these cases were brought to the notice of the B.D.O she viewed that it was the job of the Bal Savikas and the C.D.P.O to check such cases and that these officials were accountable to the Directorate of Women and Child Welfare.

The interference of the local M.L.A. is also observed in some of the villages. As one of beneficiaries confessed that her local MLA got the scheme sanctioned to her with a single phone call, and within a period of fifteen days her name was included in the beneficiaries list. Thus the MLAs pressurize the Sarpanches to process some of their applications by giving false income certificate. One of the Sarpanches was adamant enough and rejected two such applications. However the rest Sarpanches replied that they processed all the applications which came to them leaving it to the B.D.O to decide on the applications. There is an urgent need to stop the misuse of this scheme. If there is political interference, if Sarpanches process the applications 'of the women who support him/her,' if false documents are produced and accepted without proper scrutiny, it will handicap the scheme. In the process of making it a popular scheme, it is likely to loose the substance. It is necessary to see that scheme goes to the actually needy widows.

#### 7) Tedious Application Procedures

The application procedure of this scheme is extremely cumbersome. The applicant has to collect the form from the respective Panchayat, where it is very often not available. Then they have to collect the same from the B.D.O Office, and sometimes it isn't available there either. Thus the applicant has to start with 'hunting for the application form'. When this lethargic attitude was questioned, some Sarpanches said that the B.D.O Office was not providing them with sufficient forms and they had no



finance to xerox these forms. On the other hand the B.D.O felt that they were supplying adequate forms to the Panchayats. This only reflects on lack of co-ordination among these bodies who are keen to put the blame on each other. To the application form the applicant has also to attach the marriage certificate, the residence certificate, birth certificate, income certificate (which has to be submitted every subsequent year), death certificate of the husband, birth certificates of the children, and testimony.

Thus there are all sorts of bureaucratic obstacles on the way. The need to supply number of certificates, each requiring extensive travelling, spending, pleading and bribing, is specially difficult for poor and illiterate women. 'Social security schemes are self defeating if they involve procedures that makes it impossible for disadvantaged persons to be involved'.<sup>23</sup> All the respondents replied that they had to go to the government offices several times. The applicants had to go to Panchayat/Municipality, Civil Registration Office, Mamlatdar's Office and the B.D.O. Office. The absenteeism, red-tape, and corruption in this offices was evident. Thus Luiza's application remained pending as she could not produce marriage certificate. She produced the church marriage certificate, but this was rejected, while Regina would not produce divorce certificate as her husband was not willing to divorce her though he has deserted her. Jacinta from St Estevem did not have a ration card while Justina could not produce her husband's death certificate as he had died abroad. Some of them had to go to the Mamlatdar and make an affidavit that they were residing in that area for last 15 years and that they were poor and lonely. Vijaya from Taleigao had not attached birth certificate of her elder daughter as initially it was not required. She was sanctioned the scheme till November, 1998. She was called and asked to do the remaining formality, like affixing the photos etc. After some days she went to inquire as to why she was not getting the benefit. She was then asked to get the birth certificate of her elder daughter, as it was now required as per the new amendment. Her daughter now was already of twenty one years. As per the amendment the benefit has to be stopped once the children are matured. Now her name was deleted from the beneficiaries list. She was aggrieved that she should have got the

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<sup>23</sup> Bhatia, B. (1995), 'Social Security for Single Women in Gujarat, An Assessment,' *The Administrator*, (Oct-Nov.), Vol. XL, No. 14, 63.

benefit for at least few months that she had taken the trouble to get the documents and to do the required formality.

#### 8) Insensitivity of the Bureaucrats

It has been observed that the behaviour of the bureaucrats towards these women has been one of arrogance and show of power. The respondents narrated the incidents where they were shabbily treated in various government offices, right from the Panchayats, the Civil Registrar's Office, the B.D.O. Office as well as in the Mamlatdar's Office. They were asked to come several times, made to type the applications, and some officials did not hesitate to ask for bribe from these poor women. The ICS survey has rightly conveyed that bureaucracy is but a new kind of patriarchy, not to help with expertise but to oppress citizens with a demonstration of their power.<sup>24</sup> Lack of orientation, inadequate training and skills, poor follow up, half hearted attitude, lack of target chasing, insufficient linkages and gendered thinking of these officials has affected the implementation of this scheme.

When it was brought to the notice of the Minister for Women and Child welfare that the rules of the schemes were more hampering rather than enabling, she denied that the widows were facing any difficulties in complying with paper formalities, and viewed that there was no need to relax the rules.<sup>25</sup> When the Sarpanches were asked to comment on the long drawn procedures of the scheme, the Sarpanch of Chimbhel, Fatima Bi, complained how her two applications were rejected as the widows could not produce their birth certificates. They are migrant women who have been residing in Goa for last 16 to 17 years. As per the scheme, there is a clause for constitution of Medical Board to decide on age of women if they do not have their birth certificate. However it is clear that the officials did not want to take 'additional burden' to constitute one to decide the age of such needy widows. When the Sarpanch was made aware of existence of such a clause she gave only one answer '*Waha khoi suntaz nahi*' (nobody listens to me in the B.D.O. Office). When the B.D.O was asked to comment on the rules of the scheme, she felt that such rules were necessary to see that the scheme was availed by Goan women

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<sup>24</sup> Menon, L. (1998), *Women Empowerment and Challenges of Change*, New Delhi, Kanishka, p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> 'Widow Scheme may be Revised: Nirmala,' (1999), *The Navhind Times*, 13(July).

only, and not by the outsiders. Thus the migrant women who have settled in Goa have to be differentiated from Goan women. Are we to assume that the problems of migrant widows are less painful than the Goan widows? It is necessary that the scheme should be need based and not rule based, the rules should be enabling and not constraining.

#### 9) Restrictive entitlements

The amount received by the applicants is not sufficient to enable a person with no other source of income or service. Although it is a form of supplementary income, many widows utilize it as primary source of subsistence. For some of them it is a short-lived dole as they can avail this scheme only for one year or so.

#### 10) Does not promote self-reliance

This scheme does not lead to self-reliance. There is no training provided. In Gujarat there is a similar scheme for widows which is called *Niradhar Vidhvana Punahvasvat Matai Aarthik Sahayni Yojna* (scheme providing economic security for the rehabilitation of destitute widows). Here training is imparted for self-reliance. They are trained in various skills for a year and pension is provided during this period only.<sup>26</sup> If some sort of training in skills like tailoring, flower making, embroidery, batik work, etc, is provided to the widows, it will help them to raise some money on their own. The aid given by the government is too little to meet the various needs of a widow and her children.

#### 11) Practical Difficulties faced by the Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries have to face a large number of difficulties right from the time of applying for the scheme and even after it is sanctioned to them.

- The applicants have to go from one office to another to gather the necessary documents.
- They have no funds to meet the needs of extensive travelling, spend on typing the application, on xerox, or to pay the minimum fees required to get the required

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<sup>26</sup> Bhatia, B. (1995), *op. cit.*, 55-66.

documents, or to bribe the officials. Some of them grieved that they have sold their gold ornaments to meet these expenses.

- They being illiterate and ignorant have to ask for favours from their neighbours, or somebody else to get the full information of the scheme, to fill in their application form, to write the applications to get the necessary documents, and to accompany them to the various offices. In fact it was observed that for most of the respondents these necessary formalities were done by their brother or brother-in-law or by their nephew. Thus those helpless widows who have nobody to rely upon will not be able to avail this scheme mainly due to the long drawn procedures and formalities.
- The benefits are never disbursed on time. This creates additional handicap to the beneficiaries. They have to visit the B.D.O Office several times. This means that some of them have to sacrifice their daily wage, others have to ask their neighbours or friends to take care of the children, and wasteful travelling, spending money and physical exertion. One of the respondents, aged 65, who is childless, has been suffering from low blood pressure, grieved that it is very inconvenient for her to go to B.D.O Office several times.
- The frequent absence of the dealing hand in the Government institutions has been often depressing. The applications remain pending for months together for reasons like (i) lack of funds, (ii) lack of necessary documents, (iii) change in rules (iv) absence of the dealing clerks. The applications are delayed at Panchayat level, at B.D.O level and in Directorate of Women and Child Development. The applicants are neither intimated nor their applications are sent back to them in time. Thus Regina's application remained pending for she could not produce the divorce certificate. While Anita's application remained pending as initially there was typing error in her name, and later because there were no funds. She could avail the scheme only after three years of making the application. When the B.D.O.'s attention was drawn to these cases she viewed that the widows did not give their address properly. Also they gave the address of one place and stayed somewhere else. Therefore even when the letters were sent to them, they might have not received, and if it was so it was 'not the look out of the B.D.O'. Some of the respondents grieved that the

officials treated them as 'beggars' and shouted on them if they failed to collect the amount on the date it was disbursed.

### **B) Other observations**

1) It was observed that emotional trauma and the economic insecurity do affect the health of widows. Out of twenty four respondents interviewed seven complained of poor health. The worries about earning the living, taking care of the children and other dependents, education of the children etc, lead to overworking of these women, both physically and mentally. They have to carry out all the household chores and at the same time work outside home to earn the living. In such situation, the amount given by the Government is of immense use at least to bear the 'medical expenses, and to pay the electricity and the water bills.'

2) An important observation made was most of these widows worked either on daily wages or were employed as domestic workers. Due to low literacy (4 were illiterate, while 12 were below seventh std.) and lack of skills, due to the time factor and the dependency in the early years they were left with no other option but to take up job as domestic workers or work in fields on daily wages. On this earnings they support their dependents. Domestic workers have no security of job. They have no right to choose, no legal protection, no bargaining power and no membership in any effective workers organization. They have no provision for paid leave. There is no acknowledgement of the work done by them and they never receive respectful treatment. 'The key to the understanding of female domestic workers lies in their powerlessness and dependence on their employer. The employer can terminate the services of domestic workers at will. It is hard to find another job immediately, if terminated.'<sup>27</sup> In case of employment in agriculture, it is seasonal and for nearly half of the year these women remain jobless. Thus some sort of economic assistance given by the state has helped these women to a large extent. As one of them put it, 'now at least we can borrow from our friends and neighbours as we know that we will get the scheme money and we will be able to repay

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas, Gracious (1992), 'Status of Female Domestic Workers,' *Social Welfare*, (May), Vol. XXXIX, No. 2, p. 13.

it. Also the neighbour or others are ready to lend as they know that these people are availing the government scheme.'

3) Being the beneficiaries of this scheme has boosted confidence in these women. As they had to go place to place and from one office to another, it has helped them to come out of the barrier they had build around themselves after the death of their husbands. They are keen to know about the other schemes available for women. They were more interested in knowing from the writer about the scheme under National Assistance Programme. This reflects that no sufficient information is provided to women about the various schemes available for them, and that they are willing to take the trouble to avail the benefits of other schemes.

4) Widowhood also has tremendous impact on the children. Lack of fatherly care, economic insecurity, difficulty in getting good education, often affect the child's psychology. It does have adverse impact on their studies and result in poor or average academic record. Lack of education, may hamper their prospects of gaining good jobs. Thus some sort of financial assistance can help the children of poor widow in getting education. In fact all the respondents with children replied that the assistance given by the Government has helped them in bearing the expenses of school fees, buying books and getting uniform for their children. Government should also explore the possibilities of assisting the school going children of these widows.

5) The widows in Goa are better then counterparts else where in India in certain aspects. It was observed that since there is Uniform Civil Code in Goa, the widows, though did not claim share in parental property, continue to get support from them. Most of the respondents who have parents, replied that they got assistance in form of rice and coconuts from their parents. Also it was observed that most of them except two, have their own house. They should be given some assistance in carrying out the repairs of their houses. They should be given incentives to avail of the self employment programme and given the necessary credit to start their own petty business. This would also help in reducing the dependency of these women and result in self reliance.

## **Recommendations**

There are various suggestions to improve the conditions of the widows:

1. There is need of creating awareness among the widows regarding their legal rights in the property of her deceased husband as well as her share in her parental property. It is observed that lack of such awareness on the part of these women have lead to their exploitation by their relatives. Thus one of the respondent grieved that her brother-in-law has taken over her husband's '*soppo*' (a marked place in the market given by the Municipality or Panchayat to each petty vendor). Another respondent narrated how she was now staying in a rented house as her brother-in-law had occupied the whole house.
2. The widows should be provided with vocational training so that they can be self employed. The Government can assist these widows with credit and should help them in marketing their produce. Self employment supported by credit has a better potential than wage employment. In case of illiterate widows, they can be trained in skills which are easy to learn and which does not require formal education. Various schemes in the lean season should be introduced so that the women are employed at fair wages. Provision of economic security has to be the basic element in the entire strategy for bringing the widows into the mainstream of life.
3. The Government can provide stay homes for widows who are young and alone, and have no source of living. However, in such homes Government should also run some small business so that this women are able to be economically self reliant. This will protect the young widows from exploitation and victimization.
4. There is also a suggestion for reservation of jobs in Government as well private jobs for the widows.<sup>28</sup> It is also suggested that the children of the widows should be given free education and that certain percentage of jobs in Government and public institutions should be reserved for them in case the widow is not suitable for such work. The possibility of absorbing widows in the institutions/offices where the deceased husbands were employed may be examined.
5. The NGOs, specially the women NGOs have to play a major role. They have to assist the widows in getting legal aid. The media also can play important role of

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<sup>28</sup> Reddy, P.A. (1992), op. cit., 10.

campaigning against the stigma attached to widowhood. There is need of a deliberative, articulated and concerted effort in this direction. There has to be encouragement for formation of widow organizations and widows should be encouraged to be its members. This will help them to fight their war on collective footings.

6. Society should not look down upon the widows, rather should assist them to live a peaceful living.

### **Conclusion**

The study of the scheme clearly reflects that the efforts of the State towards women's development are far below the expectation. It is observed that there is lack of commitment on the part of the state in this regard. A wider gap exist between articulated policies and performance. The way the concept of development of women is understood by the policy makers, has led to creation of small pockets of action in which women are confined to some select programmes and issues. To add to this, it is found that some of this programmes are not implemented at all. There is spill over of the amount sanctioned for such programmes, and on the other hand Government does not provide funds for some other schemes. Thus schemes like STEP is not implemented on the grounds that there are no takers, while schemes like DWCRA or The Dairy scheme under the Socio-economic Programme are abruptly stopped from January, 1999. The reason given is that the orders for stoppage came from centre. Here it is necessary that women are taken into confidence, and their opinion should be know before implementing or discontinuing any scheme for women. The bureaucratic centralized attitude, where decisions are taken in secrecy has to stop. There is a need for a holistic approach instead of merely catering to certain identified problems. There is need to understand the root cause and to deal with it.

Women are not just a segment of the society, but forms the core of the Indian poor. They need special programme for their development. The practical and strategic needs of women need to be distinguished. The practical needs are those such as food, clothing and shelter which are required by all the family members. They are identified as priorities by women and planners alike. However the strategic needs of women also need



to be given due recognition as they can empower women by challenge the existing gender division of labour and by bringing about greater equality. This demands long term commitments by the State. Women need to be considered as an 'integral' part of development processes. When women are looked at as mere beneficiaries, it has often resulted in ill conceived policies and faulty implementation. The need is not so much for better enforcement as for observance, not so much for better welfare schemes as for better implementation and utilization.<sup>29</sup> And finally, there is not only a need for better implementation but also for evaluation and assessment of various schemes as the success of such schemes depends not only with what it offers but also how, when, and to whom it offers benefits.

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<sup>29</sup> Helen B. Butt (1996), 'The Many-Faceted Role of Women in Development,' in Shamin, Aleem(ed.), **Women's Development Problems and the Prospects**, New Delhi: APH, p. 40.

## **SUMMING UP AND MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The study has attempted to understand the political participation of women in Goa. The three major objectives of the study were: (i) To understand the role played by women at various level in the political processes of Goa, i.e., as freedom fighters, voters, grassroots leaders, and as activists (ii) To look at the impact and significance of such participation for women's rights and living conditions (iii) To assess the role played by the state to promote women's welfare. The study has exposed a large number of paradoxes existing in Goan society. The culture of the post colonial Goan society is a synthesis of traditional and western values. It has assimilated elements of various cultures, from dynasties of Kadambas to Vijaynagar rulers, from Muslim rulers, and has pervasive influence of Portuguese rule. The forces of modernization, westernization, and development have also influenced Goan society. This has resulted in better prospects for women in Goa, yet, and this is paradoxical, the forces of patriarchy are visible. In the conclusions, I look at some of these paradoxes encountered while trying to understand women's political participation in Goa, and comment on the forces that have shaped women's activities.

- The position of women in Goa is better than their counterparts in the neighbouring states of Karnataka or Maharashtra. Women in Goa have achieved some degree of equality with men. They receive better treatment in society. The small size of the State has been a conducive force for the progress of women in Goa. The small population, access to education and health facilities, the provision of piped water and electricity to the whole of Goa, and wider employment opportunities have amply benefited women. The provision of right to inheritance on par with men, and the existence of Uniform Civil Code have ensured women the much required socio-legal security. The trend towards nuclear families has reduced the household drudgery of women. Besides, Goan society is by and large peaceful. The people of different castes and communities, have been living in harmony. This have created a favourable atmosphere for better status of women in Goa.

- The influence of Portuguese rule has been positive towards women's emancipation. The reforms introduced by colonial rulers freed women from clutches of evil practices like Sati, child-marriage, illiteracy etc. The major contribution of the Portuguese was the introduction of the Uniform Civil Code. It gives protection to woman at the time of marriage and the property she owns at that time. Daughters are entitled to their rightful share in their father's property, and have half the share in the husband's property. Civil marriage is regarded as the only valid marriage for all the purposes. Further, Portuguese invasion led to penetration of western civilization into the Goan society. This resulted in women becoming politically conscious, and they rose against the Portuguese rule.
- Participation of women in Goa Liberation Struggle lead to a tradition of female involvement in politics. The women freedom fighters came from all age groups, classes and castes. They participated in the struggle in different ways. They attended morchas, rallies, lead satyagrahas, distributed pamphlets and posters, gave shelter to the freedom fighters, nursed their wounds, and cooked for them. They even went in jail for the cause of freedom. However men were the main movers of the movement. They lead the parameters for the struggle and even determined the role to be played by women. The role of women was regarded as supplementary and supportive of the activities of the male family members, husband or father or brothers. The roles were performed within the accepted framework, without challenging the traditional norms. Thus as soon as Goa was liberated, women were regressed back to their iconic roles. The reforms introduced by the Portuguese could not eliminate the patriarchal forces which continued to exist. Goa's Liberation also gave rebirth to the *Narkasur* (the demon) of patriarchy which relegated women within the four walls of the house. Those who were able to assert themselves in political life, could do so mainly due to the active support of their husbands. A few of them who contested could not win the elections. People viewed such participation as deviation from conventional role of women, and could not accept women competing with men in the power struggle. Women's participation in liberation struggle was acceptable because such an activity

was projected as ideal of 'unselfishness' and 'sacrifice'. While the same move of women was thwarted as 'selfish' and 'power ambitious' after liberation.

- With regard to participation of women in politics, a paradox is reflected. Women, as voters, participate in large numbers, but their representation at decision-making level has been poor. The following trends are observed with regard to political participation of women in Goa.
  1. The percentage of women voters has been high and the gender gap in voting turnout is very narrow. The sex ratio as well as the Electoral Sex Ratio is highly favorable in Goa. Women are enthusiastic about voting and vote independently. However, though there is increase in education, urbanization, less violence or less fear of anti-social elements, the percentage of voting in Goa is showing a downward trend when compared with the first two decades of post liberation. This is mainly due to the political instability, frequency in elections, and the failure of the representatives to deliver.
  2. It is observed that the immediate years after marriage have influence on the voting behaviour of women. Women are less likely to vote when they are 'transferred' to their husband's place, due to the various reasons: (i) their names are not included in the voting list of the new place they have shifted to (ii) their native place is usually far away from their husband's place, and due to the distance they can't go to their native place to vote, (iii) pregnancy or post delivery reasons also restrict women from voting.
  3. It is observed that women are more concerned with their immediate sub-system than the larger state and national systems. They also give more importance to achievement oriented factors like party affiliation or merit of the candidate rather than ascriptive factors.
  4. It is revealed that the dependency-independence dichotomy is contextual. It has often been seen that women are dependent on men in making political decisions. Such a view is one sided. Family is a cohesive unit, and both men as well women form its major components. The members are likely to act on an united front, after mutual discussions and agreements, to achieve what is

best for the family. Thus there is mutual dependency, which need not always be viewed as dependency of women on men.

- With regard to women's share in decision-making at the state and national level in Goa, the following observations were made:
  1. The percentage of women elected to Goa Legislative Assembly is increasing.
  2. There is positive trend noticed with regard to women contesting elections. However in spite an increase in women contesting elections, they constitute less than 5% of the total number of contestants.
  3. Political parties are not willing to mobilize women and are reluctant to field women as candidates.
  4. Women are also not very enthusiastic of entering politics as politics is viewed as 'dirty game'. With increasing greed, conflicts and unholy competition, women are less willing to enter it.
  - 5. Most of the women who have contested have their male family members (father/husband/brothers) involved in active politics. There are few of them who have gained the candidature due to their close relationship with established party leaders. However, two of them have been able to make a niche for themselves on their own.
  6. The elected women have not been able to contribute in any constructive way towards the gender cause. This is mainly because they remain subordinate to the party dictates.
  7. Though the voting percentage of women is highly favourable, it does not reflect any co-relationship with their representation as elected members.
- The study of women at grassroots level reflects interesting findings. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments have been a milestone in the participation of women in Goa. There is perceptible change in the rural development as well as in the status of women. It has led to empowerment and has also brought in feminine perspective to the rural development programmes. Women's leadership at the grassroots level can be viewed as an important springboard for women to contest at Zilla Panchayats and even to

Legislative Assembly. It has also helped in role definition. Becoming politically active has offered women a chance to engage in many tasks that were normally off limits to them. Thus now they debate political issues, address people, make and defend political demands, organize group activity, and exercise responsibility as a leader. This has given them a sense of self-esteem and brought about remarkable change in their personal lives. It has provided them an opportunity to question the existing gender division of labour. Thus increased political role has offered women in Goa more latitude to engage in new types of behaviour.

Certain important observations made in the study of women panchas are:

1. Young women have come to power at grassroots politics. There are less instance of character assassination and no reported case of assault on women panchas. Villages are small, people are known to each other and women leaders are usually looked upon as '*sun*'(daughter in law) or '*dhu*'(daughter) of the village. However the paradox remains that unmarried women still do not have access to politics, in spite of having education, the prevailing trend of late marriage, and positive attitude of the villagers.
  2. It is also observed that the high caste families are more reluctant to field women at grassroots politics. Women from these castes have been able to get access to wider openings and have larger opportunities, they have access to education, and have 'encroached' upon the fields dominated by men, like driving or swimming, however they have not been able to cut the ice as far as their entry in politics is concerned.
- It is observed that on a whole, Catholic women are more informed, are conscious and assertive about their rights. They are politically motivated and show personal interest in participating in public life. A large number of factors have contributed towards the progress of Catholic women in Goa. The Portuguese rule was more favourable to Catholic women in early years of colonial rule. The reforms like right to property, educational facilities etc, introduced by the Portuguese were well appropriated by Catholic women and passed on to the next generation. The Catholic families in Goa are based on democratic norms. The sexual division of labour is less static and

woman enjoy freedom to make or unmake decisions of her life and home. This has given Catholic woman more freedom in areas outside family to exert herself and nourish her identity. On the other hand, Hindu family patronize and cherish the old authoritarian paternal set up. It becomes difficult for a Hindu women to break the umbilical cord of male domination. The efforts of the Church and the Missionaries also need to be duly recognized for ensuring better status for Catholic women. Church has been successful in keeping the community united, it preaches equality, emphasizes on Church marriage, organizes marriage formation course, gives alms to needy women, and run orphanages and old age homes. The Missionaries have set up a large number of educational centres in Goa, and some of them are exclusively meant for girls. These factors have helped women to break the clutches of patriarchal domination and establish an identity for themselves. The Hindu women have failed to break the shackles of patriarchy, and shy off availing of the socio-legal benefits. They are socialized to consider their role within a limited arena, and any act of deviance from the set framework is looked upon as disrespect for the elder members in the family. The existence of caste rivalries in Hindu Community and lack of unity has further strengthened the patriarchal forces.

- It is observed that the development as perceived by the Government of Goa has led to negative impact on the status of women in Goa. The increasing importance given to tourism industry, and emphasis on capital intensive developmental projects have adversely affected women. It is now apparent that far from enjoying the benefit of so-called development, the majority of women have been pushed to the periphery of production processes. Alongside the 'invisible' economic processes there is visible escalation of violence against women. These developments have further strengthened the patriarchal forces. The increasing violence against women demands more active role of voluntary women's groups. It is observed that the role of these NGOs is limited only to the few major cities, and their impact is hardly felt in other parts of Goa. Besides the problem of location, the area is also limited by the ability of meager women workers working actively in the field. The study of one of such major NGOs in Goa, reflect that the effective functioning of the organization is handicapped due to

shortfalls within it. Thus it has no criteria for membership, the people with strong personalities dominated the decision making, and ambition and desire have made its presence felt within the organization. The members have been able to remain small and comfortable by pushing out those who disagree, while there are people who have left the organization to form their own organization on similar lines. Further more, its composition also points out that only few are vocal, resourceful, and perform most of the tasks and suggest programmes, and have become the mainstay of the organization. The members also come from elite class, and are less engaged in household activities. The members are invited by the state on Committees and Commissions, and the organization have been able to explore the space provided by the state on the questions of legal reforms. However it is not sufficient to address the state, but there is a need to develop the strategies to create the impact on family, community and market arenas. They have to work in syllogism and symmetrical to mobilize the media, political parties, parliamentary committees, scholarly and legal resources and people at large.

- The detailed study of the implementation of the Financial Assistance to Widows Scheme in Goa was of critical importance to analyze the role played by the State in the development and empowerment of women in Goa. The State has provided progressive legislation and positive intervention on behalf of women. However the hierarchical structures of society, the caste, class and religious divide, and the diverse cultural values, does not allow women to enjoy the fruits of such legislation. Also, though the size of the State is small, the mal-functioning of the administrative machinery has led to uneven distribution of gains of development. The State is always haunted with lack of funds, and the axe falls on funds meant for women's development. The low motivation on the part of the government, the bureaucratic approach, and apathy towards women's issues have lead to ill implementation of various schemes meant for women. The piecemeal approach adopted by the state calls for severe criticism. Merely identifying some problems and deciding for its solution in a most bureaucratic centralized fashion cannot and will not solve the problems faced by women. The deep rooted gender inequalities and gender biases needs to be



challenged and changed. When the policies are made for women they need to be taken into confidence, and their opinions and views should be given due importance. The schemes should be need based and not rule based, furthermore the rules should be enabling and not constraining.

Thus to sum up, participation of women should not be considered as a goal in itself, but should be considered as a strategy to bring in change in the position of women, as well as in the society at large. Larger participation of women should challenge the hierarchies and ideologies that subordinate them. It is necessary to bring in values of equality, rights and justice in the real sense of the term. It can be foreseen that women in Goa will have to play a larger role in the coming future. The faster pace of urbanization, spread of nuclear family, economic growth, increasing access to higher education, favourable demographic factors ensure women a transformative role. And the strategy of transformative politics demands a change in power structures and gender relations.

## ANNEXURE I

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDY WOMEN VOTERS

#### PART - I VOTERS BACKGROUND DATA

1. Name of the voter Mrs./Miss .....
2. Age (in complete years) .....
3. Marital status :
  1. Unmarried
  2. Married
  3. Divorcee
  4. Widow
4. Level of education
  1. Illiterate
  2. Literate- No formal education
  3. Primary
  4. Middle school
  5. High school
  6. College- No degree
  7. College- Degree
  8. Post- Graduate degree
  9. Professional degree
5. What is/has been your main occupation?.....
6. Do you own land?
  1. Yes
  2. No
- 6a. If yes, how much land do you own.....
- 6b. What kind of land is it ?
  1. Agricultural / Cultivable
  2. Plantation
  3. Non-Agricultural
  4. Commercial
7. What is your religion ?
  1. Hinduism
  2. Islam
  3. Christianity
  4. Others
8. What caste do you belong to ?.....
9. Annual income of the family from all sources:-
  1. Upto Rs. 25,000/-
  2. Rs. 25,000 - Rs.50,000
  3. Rs. 50,000 - one lakh
  4. Above one lakh

#### PART - II

1. Let us talk about this village you live in. How long have you lived here ?
  1. Less than 10 years
  2. 10 years or more
  3. Entire life
- 2.(If not entire life) From which village have you come ?.....
3. Now I would like to read some statements made by many people about the relationship between different groups. Please tell me about each one whether you agree or disagree with:

Sr. No.	STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW / NO OPINION
a.	Relationship between different castes has become harmonious.	1	2	3
b.	Tensions between different religious communities have increased.	1	2	3
c.	Tensions between land owners and landless have decreased.	1	2	3
d.	Now there is more tension between the rich and the poor.	1	2	3

4. Did you vote in 1998 elections ?

1. Yes      2. No

4a) If No, what was the main reason you did not vote ?

.....

5. What about elections to the Lok Sabha two years back in 1996 . Were you able to vote then?

1. Yes      2. No

6. In deciding whom to vote, were you guided by anyone ?

1. Yes      2. No

6a). If yes, who's advice you value most ?

1. Spouse      2. Other family members      3. Friends / co-workers  
4. Caste / community leaders      5. Others

7. On what grounds do you cast your vote ?

A) Caste      B) Religion  
C) Local issue      D) Party basis  
E) Merit of the candidate      F) Regional issue  
G) National issue

8. Let us talk about problems facing the country. What in your opinion are some of the major problems:-

.....  
9. Which political party do you think can solve these problems better than others ?

.....  
10. Are you a member of any political party ?

1. Yes      2. No

11. Is there any political party you feel close to ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
12. If yes, what are the things about the party you like most ?  
 .....
13. Aside political party, are you a member of any other organization like Farmers Association, trade union, welfare organization, cultural and sports organization ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
14. If yes name it.....
15. How interested is your MP/MLA in solving the problem of your constituency?  
 1. Very much            2. Some what            3. Not at all
16. Do you go to your MP/MLA with your problems ?  
 1. Often            2. Sometimes            3. Never
- 16a. What has been the nature of your problem?  
 .....
17. Have you ever contacted any government official for any need or problem ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
18. How is your political interest or political activity now?  
 1. Very much    2. Little            3. Not at all
19. How interested were you in the election campaign this year?  
 1. Great deal    2. Somewhat    3. Not at all
20. What about the election meetings that parties and candidates organized during the campaign . How many of these did you attend ?  
 1. All            2. Most of them            3. Some            4. None
21. Did you help organize any election meeting ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
22. Did you join in any procession and demonstration during the campaign ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
23. Did you engage in house to house canvassing for any party or candidate?  
 1. Yes            2. No
24. Did you help to get voters to the polling station ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
25. Did you distribute any polling cards or literature for a party or candidate ?  
 1. Yes            2. No
26. Did you contribute any money for the election campaign of any candidate or party?  
 1. Yes            2. No
27. Is there any thing else you did to help in the election campaign of a candidate or party?  
 1. Yes            2. No
28. Now I would like your views on the following whether you agree or disagree with them

Sr. No.	STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW / NO OPINION
1.	Foreign collaborations should not be set up in Goa	1	2	3
2.	Every community should be allowed to have its own laws to govern marriage and property rights.	1	2	3
3.	Prohibition should be imposed all over the Goa.	1	2	3
4.	Like Gram Panchayats there should be reservation for women at assembly and parliament level.	1	2	3

29. I would like to seek your opinion about different institutions of India in which you might have good deal of trust , some trust or no trust

Sr. No.	INSTITUTIONS	GREAT DEAL	NOT AT ALL	SOME WHAT	DON'T KNOW
1.	How much trust do you have in the central Govt.	1	2	3	4
2.	How much trust do you have in the state Govt.	1	2	3	4
3.	How much trust do you have in the judiciary.	1	2	3	4
4.	How much trust do you have in the Election Commission	1	2	3	4
5.	How much trust do you have in the political parties.	1	2	3	4
6.	How much trust do you have in the Govt. officials.	1	2	3	4
7.	How much trust do you have in the elected representatives.	1	2	3	4
8.	How much trust do you have in the police.	1	2	3	4

30. Would you say that politics and government are so complicated that people like you can really understand what is going on , or would you say that you can't understand what is going on quite well?

1. Can't understand 2. Can understand 3. Somewhat 4. Don't know

## ANNEXURE II

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDY WOMEN PANCHAS

#### PART I

#### PANCHA'S BACKGROUND DATA

1. Name of the Pancha Mrs./Miss .....
2. Age (in complete years) .....
3. Marital status :
  - a. Unmarried
  - b. Married
  - c. Divorcee
  - d. Widow
4. Level of education
  1. Illiterate
  2. Literate- No formal education
  3. Primary
  4. Middle school
  5. High school
  6. College- No degree
  7. College- Degree
  8. Post- Graduate degree
  9. Professional degree
5. What is/has been your main occupation?.....
6. Do you own land?
  1. Yes
  2. No
- 6a. If yes, how much land do you own.....
- 6b. What kind of land is it ?
  - Agricultural / Cultivable
  - Plantation
  - Non-Agricultural
  - Commercial
- 6c. Do you own cattle ?
  1. Yes
  2. No
7. What is your religion ?
  1. Hinduism
  2. Islam
  3. Christianity
  4. Others
8. What caste do you belong to ?.....
9. Annual income of the family from all sources:-
  1. Upto Rs. 25,000/-
  2. Rs. 25,000 - Rs.50,000
  3. Rs. 50,000 - one lakh
  4. Above one lakh
10. Family Background
  - a) Husband's Occupation .....
  - b) No. of Children, their age and education .....
11. How many times you have contested elections ?  
.....
12. Were you supported by any party ?
  1. yes
  2. No
13. What were the reasons for your entry in politics ?
  1. I was interested
  2. Family influence
  3. Ward people requested me
  4. Party asked me
14. What are the reasons for your victory ?

1. Party support    2. Ward people    3. Caste    4. Personal Qualities    5. Others
15. Are you a member of any political party ?  
 1. Yes    2.No
16. Aside political party, are you a member of any other organization like Farmers association, trade union , welfare organization , cultural and sports organization ?  
 1. Yes    2. No

PART - II

1. Let us talk about this village you live in. How long have you lived here ?  
 1. Less than 10 years    2. 10 years or more    3. Entire life
2. (If not entire life) From which village have you come ?.....
3. Now I would like to read some statements made by many people about the relationship between different groups. Please tell me about each one whether you agree or disagree with:

Sr. No.	STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW / NO OPINION
a.	Relationship between different castes has become harmonious.	1	2	3
b.	Tensions between different religious communities have increased.	1	2	3
c.	Tensions between land owners and landless have decreased.	1	2	3
d.	Now there is more tension between the rich and the poor.	1	2	3
e.	Police attitude towards common people has become more humane.	1	2	3
f.	Compared to five years ago life and property are less safe now than before.	1	2	3

- 3.a Who according to you is best suited to resolve this tensions ?  
 a) Village Panchayat  
 b) Govt. officials  
 c) Police  
 d) Judiciary  
 e) Caste
4. Do you feel that Political Parties should be involved in panchayat elections ?  
 1. Yes    2. No    3. Don't Know
5. Were Political parties involved in last elections ?  
 1.Yes    2. No    3.Don't Know
6. Do you think adequate financial resources is a problem for functioning of the panchayat?  
 1. Yes    2. No    3.Don't Know

7. Do you approve that there should be reservation for women ?  
 1. Approve                      2. Disapprove                      3. Don't Know
8. What have you done towards the cause of women?  
 .....
- 9a. Who influence your decision-making?  
 .....
- 9b. Do you think women are manipulated by men as Panchas ?  
 .....
- 9c. Do the male panchas in the Panchayat dominate the women panchas ? What has been your experience ?  
 .....
10. Government has initiated several schemes and programmes for the benefit of the people such as housing schemes , employment schemes, loans / subsidies , etc. Have your Panchayat initiated any of these schemes?  
 1. Yes                      2. No
- 10a. (If yes) Which schemes ?  
 .....
- 10b. Do you think such schemes are well implemented or are they misused by Govt. officials?  
 1. Well implemented              2. Poorly implemented              3. Misused by Govt. officials  
 4. Any other
11. What do you feel of the attendance of the Govt. officials on duty?  
 1. Regular              2. Not regular              3. Don't know              4. No comment
12. How has been your relationship with the government officials?  
 1. Good              2. Bad              3. Indifferent              4. No opinion
13. What do you feel about the officials ? Are they  
 1. Cooperative              2. Non-cooperative              3. Don't Know              4. No opinion
14. How often you go to the Panchayat ?  
 .....
- 14a. How many meetings of the panchayat have you attended so far ?  
 1. All    2. Most    3. Some    4. Few    5. Rare
15. How many Gram Sabhas have been held by your panchayat ?  
 1. More than Two    2. Two    3. One    4. None
- 16 Which panel do you belong to, ruling or the opposition ?  
 .....
- 16a. Have you shifted from the panel from which you were elected?  
 1. Yes              2.No              3. No comment
17. What are the changes those have come up in your personal life due to your entry in politics ?  
 .....
18. Do you think that entry of women in grassroots politics has brought in qualitative changes in local administration ? What has been your experience ?  
 .....
19. What work have you undertaken so far for the development of your village ?  
 .....



**ANNETURE III**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDY WIDOW PENSION SCHEME**

**PART I**  
**PERSONAL DATA:**

1. Name: .....
2. Name of the village:.....
3. Age: .....
4. Caste: .....
5. Religion: .....
6. Occupation: .....
7. Educational Level:
  1. Illiterate
  2. Literate- No formal education
  3. Primary
  4. Middle school
  5. High school
  6. College- No degree
  7. College- Degree
  8. Post- Graduate degree
  9. Professional degree
8. Economic position:

a. House	Kaccha/ Pacca
b. Two wheeler	Yes/No
c. T.V	Yes/No
d. cattle	Yes/No
e. Fields	Yes/No
9. Family members:
  - a. Children      i) How many? ii) Their Age iii) what they are doing?
  - b) In-laws
10. Details about the husband:
  - a) When did he die ?.....
  - b) What was his occupation? .....
  - c) What was his age then? .....
  - d) How did he die ? .....



**ANNEXTURE IV**  
**STATE POLICY FOR WOMEN**

Official Gazette, Government Of Goa Series I, No. 48, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1997

GOVERNMENT OF GOA  
Department of Women and Child development

Notification  
4/37/95-SWD/W7CD

Government is pleased to notify the State Policy for Women as reproduced below:  
By order in the name of the Governor of Goa

-----  
**STATE POLICY FOR WOMEN**

**Introduction:**

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.

Within the framework of a democratic policy, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women advancement in different spheres and from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-75), onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. The 73 and 74 Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

The various women's movements, with a widespread net work of non-Government Organizations which have strong grassroots presence and deep insight into women's concerns has inspired many initiatives for the improvement of women.

On analyzing the report on the status of women in the State of Goa, it is seen that there exists a very wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, Legislation, plans, programmes and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality on the other.

Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being continuously declining sex ratios of women in the last few decades, social stereo-typing and violence at the domestic and societal levels and some of other manifestations. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women still persists. Thus women's access to opportunities to avail of inputs relating to education, health and productive resources among others, are inadequate and they remain socially excluded.

Taking into consideration the problems of the women in the State of Goa the State Government after consultations with NGOs, Social Activists, Researchers and other experts has drawn up this Policy.

The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women mainly to be achieved by changing societal attitudes and elimination of social injustice, active participation of gender perspectives, translation of de jure equality of women into defacto equality and affirmative action, wherever necessary.

**Human Rights and Fundamental freedom:**

The de jure and defacto enjoyment of all Human Rights and fundamental freedom of women on an equal basis with men shall be ensured both in letter and in spirit.

**Elimination of Violence against Women:**

All forms of violence against women, physical and mental whether at domestic or societal levels, particularly sexual abuse, torture by alcoholic husbands will be eliminated.

Mechanisms/Schemes for assistance will be created/strengthened for rehabilitation of the victims of violence also the action taking agencies be strengthened.

**Ending Discrimination against women:**

Equal rights of women will be ensured in respect of access to and opportunity to avail of quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security, health care and public office.

Special awards should be started to the employment Organizations/workshop which gives maximum employment opportunity to the women.

**Elimination of Discrimination Against and violation of the Rights of the Girl Child:**

Strict enforcement of laws against fore-natal sex selection and foeticide, female infanticide, child marriage, child abuse and child prostitution, No discrimination in the treatment of the girl in the family and outside will be allowed and positive image of the girl child will be actively fostered.

**Women in Decision Making:**

Active participation of women in decision making will be ensured for the achievement of the goals of equality, development and empowerment. All measures to be taken to guarantee women's access to and full participation in all decision making bodies at every level in the public/private sector, including legislative, executive, judicial, advisory commissions, committees, Boards, Trusts etc. Appointment of Nodal Officers in every Government Department/Agency in order to decimate necessary information and General Statistics on the welfare programmes for women. Also provision of percentage share of women Directors in Cooperative institution will have to be ensured.

**Women and the Development Process:**

Policies, programmes and systems will be established to ensure main streaming of women's perspectives in all development process. Co-ordinating and monitoring mechanisms will be devised to assess from time to time the progress of such mainstreaming.

**Sensitization to Women's issues:**

Specially designed and well funded sensitization programmes will be conducted on a regular basis for all sections of society. There will be special focus on functionaries of the State in the Executive and Judicial wings and all developmental Agencies, Government and Non-Governmental.

**Ensuring Provision of Women's Basic Needs:****a) Education:**

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Measures to be taken to make education compulsory for girls upto age of 14 years, eliminate discrimination, universalise educational system, increase enrolment and retention rate of girls. Vocational courses specially for women/girls in Hotel Management, House Keeping, Fashion Designing, Computer Training in existing institutions like Polytechnic and Nursing Institutions will be introduced. State will provide free education for

girls/women upto graduation level. It will provide necessary assistance to widows, destitute and divorced women to pursue their further education. A special rolling fund to the tune of Rs. 1 crore for providing financial assistance on loan basis to the girls who desire to pursue their higher and professional education and cannot do so because of poverty be created, the income criteria to be adopted for this financial assistance should be Rs. 25,000/-.

For the girls dropouts from eight standard onwards a separate scheme should be started for the benefits of these dropouts. A new subject "Computer Awareness" would be included in school curriculum.

b) Health:

A holistic approach to women's health will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women throughout their lives, including the nutrition and basic services during infancy, childhood, adolescence, pregnancy reproductive years and services during old age, maternity leave of six months for mothers for adopting small family norms upto two children could be considered.

For ensuring general health of mother and child (specially the girl child) machinery should be set up for regular free health checkup after a certain age to check against disease like cancer, T.B. etc. This should be provided through GMC by procuring equipments separately, women should be encouraged to take advantage of such advance modern facilities available in various institutions. Mobile clinics should be started by GMC in order to have free health checkup especially in rural areas. The system of maintaining health checkup cards in each and every school should be introduced.

c) Women and the Economy:

Women's perspectives will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such process. Women's contribution to socio-economic development will be recognised in the formal and informal sectors and appropriate policies related to employment and other working conditions will be drawn up.

d) Support Services:

Support services for women like child-care, facilities including creches at work places and educational institutions. Hostels for working women, homes for the aged and the disabled will be expanded and improved so as to enable women to participate effectively in the development process. Also shelters and Short-Stay Homes be established for destitute, deserted and divorced women and unwed mothers.

**Resources:**

There will be an enhancement in the budget for women's programmes and earmarking of funds for women in the budget of Ministries/Departments implementing development Programmes in different sectors like education, health welfare, rural development, Urban Development, Labour, Agriculture, Industry, Science and allocation by Department/Agency.

**Involvement of NGO's:**

The involvement of Voluntary Organizations, Associations, Federations, Trade Unions and other non-Governmental Organizations including educational Institutions and University will be ensured in formulation, implementation, monitoring and review of all policies and programmes affecting women.

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