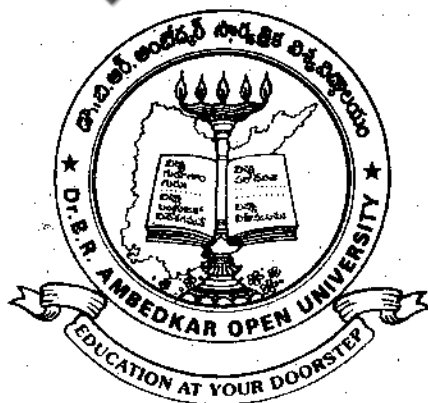


# **P.G. DIPLOMA IN WOMEN'S STUDIES WOMEN AND POLITICS**

- Block - I** : Conceptual Frame work of Power and Politics  
**Block- II** : Political thought and Women  
**Block - III** : Political Participation of Women  
**Block - IV** : Political Empowerment of Women  
**Block - V** : Women's Movements and Emerging issues  
**Block - VI** : Women in Politics



**Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY,  
HYDERABAD.  
2002**

# COURSE TEAM

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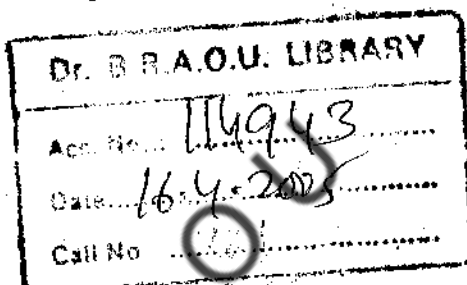
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## COURSE INTRODUCTION

Women's studies emerged as a field of enquiry due to the articulating of women's question by the contemporary women's movement. Women's studies is variously defined as "Studying Women's problems with women's perspective, looking at women in the world from women's point of view" and so on. Women's studies is designed to visualise understanding, 'Awareness', and 'Action'. The educational role of women's studies is most important role because it has an impact on 'change', women can change their lives, change the nature of knowledge what is being taught, and change the society and its values.

This book deals with the topics in women's studies which are included in course V of P.G. Diploma in women's studies offered by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. The syllabus is divided into six blocks and thirteen units. Block-I deals with the conceptual framework of power and politics. Block II deals with Political Thought and women. The units in this block discuss the trends in ideology & feminist perspectives of power and politics. Block III deals with political participation of women. The units under this block deal with aspects participation of women in the political processes, impediments, Indian constitution & emerging policies. Block IV deals with political empowerment of women. Units in this block deal with women's education and empowerment of women, Role of women's movements, organisations & issues in the political empowerment of women and Reservations for women & women's rights as Human Rights. Block V deals with women's movements and encasing issues. Block VI deals with women in Political Parties and women politicians.

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**BLOCK - I : CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK OF  
POWER AND POLITICS**

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# **UNIT-1 : POWER - POLITICS AND STRUGGLE FOR POWER**

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit you will be able to discuss-

- \* the conceptional frame work of power and politics
- \* define the concepts power and politics
- \* discuss the relationship between power and politics
- \* describe the struggle women encountered in achieving access to power.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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In order to study politics through the analysis of power, it has been assumed that there are power relations among the significant units of political system. The analysis of power, therefore, can be applied to any level of political system, of any state and of any period. In order to study the political set-up of any society it is necessary to examine the power structure of that political system.

Power is closely associated with politics. Modern behaviourists are convinced that it is the key concept in politics. Harold Laswell's main concern in the book 'Politics, Who Gets What, When and How' is to discuss who possessed political power. Power is the key concept, it is argued, because if politics is the resolution of conflict, then it is distribution of power within a community that determines how the conflict is to be resolved and whether the resolution is to be effectively observed by all parties.

Since times immemorial political power is not evenly distributed. It is usually concentrated in the hands of a few, may be the rich or elite group.

In human affairs, the word 'power' often describes the effectiveness of action on the capacity of action bestowed to the person by the authority. Almost everyone understands in a quantitative way what power means in the affairs of man.

Politics refers to the funding of a whole array of public institutions and forces, which are involved in moulding the lives of people by way of decision and policies that impinge on their relation with one another. In a way then it concerns itself with the availability of exercise of rights and liberties, freedom and justice by the citizens, both individually and as a group, such an exercise, in turn will be dependent on the ordering of the society and its polity in terms of equality / hierarchy, the nature of power relations and the quantum of power possessed by individuals / groups as against other individuals.

Politics then is an exercise in power and a participation in politics should lead to a meaningful say in the processes that lead to the making of policies and decisions and an effective control, over the apparatus of the state in getting the same implemented so as to preserve equality and justice where they exist, reserve the existing situation wherever they do not, and bring about the necessary social order. However, such a participation itself will very much depend on the modicum of power a group possesses in the given social order, and how will it organise itself.

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## 1.2 DEFINITION OF POLITICS

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Certain scholars have defined politics itself in terms of power struggle and claim that political relationships are mainly power relations. Politics enables us "to enjoy variety suffering either anarchy or the tyranny of truth". Politics implies diversity. As J.D.S. Miller argues in his agreement and is concerned with the use of government to resolve conflict, that is, reach agreements that will be preserved for atleast sometime.

The system of politics is as old as the society itself. Politics came into existence when men began to speculate and frame the rules of conduct for the members of the society. The term politics was first used by Aristotle and he treated it as a way of life or organised system of behaviour, operative in a political community which at once produces the disposition by its governments, laws and education and give place and scope to its energy by providing a wide circle of persons engaged in mutual relations where it can be exercised.

Centuries ago, the Greeks were among the first people to study politics systematically. They used the word 'politics' to describe the totality of state phenomenon and the word 'polis' to mean a self-supporting community organised to govern itself. It is also interesting to note that to the Greeks, participation in the life of 'the polis' was the means of self realisation. Therefore, they called a man who took no intelligent part in politics "an idiot".

Politics presupposes a plural society, that is, in a society made of groups of individuals with different opinions and interests. Politics then tries to reconcile this conflicting interest and allows them to share in power or policy-making.

Politics means listening to various groups, reconciling conflicting interests as far as this is possible, and thus creating a sense of security and participation among members of society. Also politics implies diversity and democracy and it is debate and discussion for some purpose. The purpose is to provide a scheme of priorities, which reconciles the various rival claims on the scared resources of the community. In this respect politics involves both conflict resolution and decision-making.

### 1.3 DEFINITION OF POWER

Power is defined entirely in terms of its effects and can be any kind of capacity, which produces these effects. In his book on the political systems, David Easter defines power as the 'relationship in which one person or a group is able to determine the actions of another in the direction of the former's own ends'. Power implies a relationship, it is something one can use against somebody else. However, power as a possession (substantive power) and power as a relationship (relationship power) are in one sense mutually interdependent. Power is invariably used to produce certain effect we desire. Bertrend Russel spoke of power as "the production of intended effects". And this is not a bad definition provided we realise the fact that power may not always produce the intended effects but also unintended effects. The merit of this definition lies in the fact that intended effects are easy to identify and much easier to deal with empirically. Now, one can produce intended effects either by persuasion or influence or by force and domination.

Further, elucidating the concept of power, one may refer to three dimensions of power, viz., the range of power, the zero of acceptance and the intensity of power.

The range of power has reference to the number of persons the power wielder can influence, the zero of acceptance as reference to those matter of areas within which the power wielder exercises power. Lastly, power relationships do not follow the "zero-sum-game". That is to say an increase in one man's power does not necessarily mean a decrease in someone else's power. When for instance during the II world War, the British Government increased its power it could not be said that the British citizens who conferred power lost their power.

Power is defined as the capacity to influence the decisions of others - groups as well as individuals. There are several sources of power. Power is derived from the economic, political and social status of an individual or a group. The politically powerful make important policy decisions through popularly elected bodies at various levels. These policy decisions are in a democratic set-up expected to reflect the will of the people. People's movements like trade unions/women's movements/agricultural labour movements/and dalit movements, in short the movements of the oppressed are crucial in forcing the so-called popular state bodies to make policy decision that will further improve interests of people and not of some groups only. These movements themselves in turn, are decisions of the decision makers with respect to the choice of views to be presented, the strategies and the facilities to be followed and the structure of the required organisations.

Bringing women to positions of political power is just the first step in the



social transformation. Gender sensitization of those in power, both men and women, is of critical consequence.

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#### **1.4 POWER-POLITICS AS STRUGGLE FOR POWER : THE RELATION BETWEEN POWER AND POLITICS**

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Power as concept, is however, often disparaged particularly in a country like India where it is mistakenly identified with struggle for exercise of authority, greed and conflicts, unholy competition and display of physical might bring out the worst qualities in a human being. More so in the case of women who have been socialised to believe it is a male game, a dirty field and leads to debasing of feminine feature. Conciliatory self-effecting and self denying women can best group themselves and make their desires felt. Their co-operation and collectivity itself is source of women's power and influences if organised properly, even informally.

The concept of power in social and political theory is a development of that which we use in everyday life. Power is a readily intelligible notion, which we use without difficulty in every day life.

Steven Lukes (1974) a political theorist has most incisively and influentially argued that the choice between different concepts of power is incalculably a moral and evaluative one. He arrived at this view while analysing the way that power affects political decision-making. There are, says Lukes, three dimensions of political power, three ways in which it may be used to influence the decision making process most straight forward, power may be exercised to insure that one set of interests prevail over another, and that a consistent political decision is made in the way in which more powerful party prefers, here is the first dimension in which power operates. Less obviously, power may be used to ensure that policy issues are initially framed and formulated in the interests of its possessor, and that formulation which would serve other interest are never made available for debate. the second power dimension of intercotaffects not just the immediate process of decision making, but behind the scenes activities like agenda - setting and it may involve not just visible action but also failures to act, which failures may prove to be just as significant is their consequences. Finally, power may be means of shaping the perceptions and cognition's of others, so that what they consider to be in their interests is radically transferred, through the dimension of power, its possessor may secure their interests not by winning a contest or even by avoiding a contest, but by transforming the consciousness of their political opponents and weakening their grasp upon the nature of their real interests so much that no contest threatens.

The nature of politics is well stated by Henry Mayo, 'Binding decision relating

to Government and arising from disputes'. There are three distinct ideas here which need to be emphasized. Firstly, that politics is related to the governing function which implies not only a study of institutions but also, has reference to policy making. Secondly, that politics is concerned with decision or policies that are binding on all members of society. In this sense politics involves power - relationships with the state being the repository of ultimate supreme power. And thirdly, those political policies emerge from conflict a dispute whether openly conducted as they generally are in a free society or suppressed and driven underground as in despotic regime. However, politics is generally associated viz., state, law and power equilibrium etc. it would be erroneous and confusing to associate politics exclusively with power and this for two major reasons. Firstly, as D.D. Rapheal points out, politics as a power struggle may emerge in non-political context, too, in family and in university. Secondly, the term power does not have a specific connotation. It can mean control, which is desirable or domination and brute force which are undesirable. In other words 'power' is too broad, general and even confusing a term to be employed to describe the totality of politics.

A political scientist will perceive political process as an educative opportunity a process of legitimization of power and the therapeutic exercise. In other words it is an institutional device to ensure that the nature of the political authority remains popular and the control as the misuse of power remains operative.

Since time immemorial in the struggle for politics and power, men were always at an advantageous position in a patriarchal society and women had to struggle to emerge successfully on par with men in the field of education, power and politics.

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## 1.5 EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN

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For an analytical account of the position of women in a particular period, it is essential to study the socio-economic context of that particular period as this affects the social groups differently and certain customs and institutions, which are the expressions of that particular system. From the enquiry into the customs and institutions of a society, one is likely to find that apart from certain rights and duties which in a society as a whole are meant for women only. There are different sets of rights and duties for different social groups. These groups can be classified as higher or lower ones, depending upon the social and economic distinction prevailing in a particular society.

In ancient times in all patriarchal societies, including Vedic Period, the birth of a girl was generally unwelcome as compared to a boy. There was a marked preference for son as he was a permanent economic asset of the family. To impart education to children and to help them in setting in life are the two main duties of

parents. Down to about third century B.C. girls could remain unmarried till the age of sixteen, till about the beginning of the Christian Era, Upanayana or the ceremonial initiation into Vedic studies was as common in the case of boys. It may be adoption of discipline or specialization in Vedic theology and philosophy. The Atharva Veda observes that a maiden can succeed in her marriage, if she has been properly trained during her studentship. That women are ineligible for Vedic studies is the view of later age. In pre-historic times by education we mean developing new tools and learning the techniques of its utility. That education was concerned with men and women.

One of the best ways to understand the spirit of civilization and appreciate its excellence and realize its limitation is to study the history of the position and status of women in it.

The degree of freedom given to women to move about in a society and to take part in its public life gives a good idea of the nature of its administration and enables us to know how far it had realized the difficult truth that women too have a contribution of their own to make to its development and progress.

In pre-historic times, in matriarchal societies women enjoyed an equal status on par-with men. They participated in food collection along with men and distributed the food to all the members of the clan. In the process, women who were alienated from production process were slowly prohibited from enjoying the fruits of education.

With the development of agriculture, means of production, modes of production, men gradually monopolized techniques and women were isolated from social and educational fields. State was developed as an institution. Brahmins and Kshatriyas were encouraged to enjoy the fruits of education by state in order to regulate and control people. Teachers, Ashrams teaching during the limited period, continuous learning, tests of talents all turned it into elite education. Acquiring of skills through experience and learning, improving it by training, agriculture and other productive education related to life were not considered education at all. 'Intellectual exercises' received momentum in place of physical labour. Brahmins and Kshatriyas had acquired control over education. As a result Vaisyas, Sudras and a majority of others didnot have any access to education and not to speak of women, only prostitutes and dancing girls used to read and write.

To know whether there was a system of co-education, or whether lady students were taught separately is rather difficult to answer. In Vedic age education was mostly centered in the family; mothers, sisters and cousins probably studied together under the family elders. Subsequently, when specialization became the order of the day students had to leave their homes and often used to go to distant

places to study under celebrated teachers. When there were competent lady teachers available parents must have naturally preferred to send their daughters to study them.

Aryans did not allow women to use weapons as they looked down upon them. Therefore, education pertaining to arms and archery was only within the reach of men and not women. During this period there were as many as 20 women scholars who were considered as 'Seers' or authors of Rigveda such as Lopamudra, Visvavara and Ghosha. But this does not mean that all women had access to education. Though women recited Vedas we do not come across neither women teachers nor women students who had participated in this education.

Women students were divided into two classes, Brahma Vadinis and Sadyodvahas. The formers were life long students of theology and philosophy; the latter used to prosecute their studies till their marriage i.e. till they attain the age of 15 to 16. The latter used to learn by heart the Vedic hymns prescribed for the daily and periodical prayers and for those rituals and sacraments in which they had to take an active part after their marriage.

Brahmavadinis used to aim at a very high excellence in scholarship. Down to about 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Vedic and philosophical studies attracted the attention of society. Many of them used to specialize in purvamimamsa, besides studying Veda, which discussed the diverse problems, connected with Vedic sacrifices.

It is not easy to determine the extent of education among women from the Vedic to the Sutra period (down to 300 BC). However, well-to-do families could hardly have neglected the education of girls down to 300 BC.

The case of women's education suffered a good deal after 300 BC on account of new fashions of child marriages that began to come into vogue by the beginning of Christian era and pre-puberty marriages.

The survey of female education during the last 700 years reveal that during the Muslim rule the percentage of literacy among Hindu women went further down with a great rapidity. Rich and cultured families were as a rule ruined by the new political revolution, that they were no longer in a position to make special arrangements for the education of their daughters. Some new Hindu families also no doubt rose to eminence with the rise of Islam, but their number was generally small and they did not, as a rule possess sufficient culture to induce them to take active steps for the fostering of education among the girls of their households. The daughters in Rajput, Nair and Zamindar families and Jain nuns used to read and write. However, society had a prejudice against female education; it was believed that a girl taught to read and write would become a widow.

The admission of women to the Buddhist order gave a great input to the case of female education among the ladies in business and aristocratic families. Yet this did not fully facilitate advanced studies, which could not be obviously finished before the age of 12 or 13 which was the new marriageable age. Even the initiation ritual (Upanayana Samskara) so necessary for endowing women with the proper Aryan status, was first reduced to a mere formality and then dropped out altogether. This put an end to their Vedic education. It is no wonder that they should have lost the status of the regenerate classes (dvijas). Like the Sudras they were in the course of time naturally regarded as unfit for reciting or hearing Vedic prayers. By about the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century AD the marriageable age of girls was further lowered to 9 or 10 years. This gave practically a death blow to any education worth the name.

Though unlettered, they became more faithful custodians of ancient traditions and culture than even literate men did. However, the literacy of Hindu women had reached its nadir by about 1850 AD. Subsequent to the assumption of the Indian administration by the British crown, Government began to take some steps for the promotion of education among girls. By the end of the last century the public opinion and the vigorous championship by the school of social reformers necessitated the need for girls' education. The rise of the marriageable age of girls has helped the cause of the female education in a remarkable degree. Further, since the Second World War an earning and educated wife has become an economic necessity in lower middle class families. The exigencies of the situation have in a way forced to reconcile to co-education and to a common curriculum in recent past.

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## **1.6 POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN : WOMEN AS POLITICAL ADVISORS AND THEIR ROLE IN JUDICIAL MATTERS**

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As regard the political status of women, we find two parallel streaks: on the one hand the political condition of women was seemingly quite backward and on the other hand, because of the compulsion of dynamic rule we find many examples of women administering Kingdom in various capacities and exercising immense political authority under special circumstances. as a general rule succession to the throne was confined to males. The Aryan society, being patriarchal, does not furnish many names of female rulers. In the Vedic and Post-Vedic literature we seldom find a reference to a reigning queen.

In the Ramayana at one place a proposal is made to offer the crown to Sita when Rama was banished, but it could not materialize owing to Sita's determination to accompany her husband in his banishment. In the Mahabharatha Bhishma advised Yudishthira to sanction the coronation of the daughters of those kings who had died in the war.

In a Jataka story we find a king of Varanasi renouncing the world and his queen assuming the reigns of administration at the request of the subjects. During the captivity of king Udayana of Kausambi his mother took full charge of the administration. The way in which she discharged her duties elicited admiration even from experienced ministers. Magasthenes mentions lady rulers of the Pandya country. In the second century BC queen Naganika was the head of the administration of the extensive Satavahana Empire during the minority of her sons.

The rise of the Imperial Guptas is attributed to their matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis. It is generally believed that Kumaradevi, whom Chandragupta-I married, was perhaps heiress of the Lichchhavis State. This fact is reflected in the Chandragupta Kumaradevi type of coins, which suggest that the Lichchhavis and the Guptas jointly ruled the Gupta Kingdom. Inscriptions also testify several queens and princesses taking active part in administration, particularly in the Deccan.

Thus Vijayabhattacharya, the senior queen of king Chandraditya of the Chalukya Dynasty, ruled over a portion of Bombay in the middle of the VIII Century in 786 AD. We find Sita Mahadevi, the queen of Rashtrakuta king Dhruva, making a land grant on her own authority. Revakannammadi, a daughter of the Rashtrakuta king Amonghavarsha-I and wife of Erraganga, was the governor of the district Edetore in 837 AD. Altekar has quoted many more instances of this type.

In the IX century AD Tribhuvana-Mahadevi-I (Known as Siddha Gauri), a widowed queen of the Kara Dynasty of Orissa, was requested by the feudatory chiefs to accept the throne, on the example of Devi-Gosvamini who belonged to the same family and had administered her kingdom under similar circumstances. In compliance with their request she ascended the throne. Queen Tribhuvana-Mahadevi-II ascended the throne on the death of her husband's Younger brother, King Sivakara-III. The third great queen, who ascended the throne after the death of the last king Subhakara-V of this dynasty, was Gauri-Mahadevi. Her daughter Dandi Mahadevi succeeded her. The last known ruler of the Bhaumakara dynasty was Dharma Mahadevi, wife of Santikara-III. Tribhuvana-Mahadevi-I and Dandi Mahadevi issued charters and also bore the titles Paramabhattacharya Maharajadhiraja Parameshvari.

Under the Rajput Dynasties there are several instances of widowed queens efficiently administering the kingdoms of their respective deceased husbands during the minority of their sons. In 1139 AD for example, Kumaradevi, on the death of her husband Samarasi of Mewar, undertook the administration of the state in her own hands.

Women from Karnataka and Rajput princess were adept in the use of the sword and the spear. Kumar Devi, (a queen of king Samarasi took over the administration of her kingdom after her husband's death and) repulsed the attacks of Kutub-ud-Din. Javahhari Devi, a queen of King Sanga, died fighting at the head of her army, while defending Chittore after her husband's death. Tarabai, the founder of Kolhapur State used to lead her army and directed her government. The example of Queen Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, who executed the administration by her remarkable bravery and sound generalship, is well known.

#### **1.6.1 Women as Political Advisors and their Role in Judicial Matters:**

Ancient Indian lawgivers do not suggest the appointment of women as advisers to kings or as members of king's councils. Of the eight executive officers of the king or crown mentioned by Sukra not even one is suggested to be a woman. It was thought that women tend to divulge secrets of the state and are incapable of offering any sound advice in complex matters of government. Kautilya also does not recommend that women should be entrusted with the duties of the state.

In judicial matters women were not called upon as advisors. Both Yajnavalka and Vasistha are in favour of men appearing as witness; only Manu grants the right of giving evidence to women but only in exceptional cases. However, women may appear as witness for women, essentially in disputes involving female matters.

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### **1.7 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

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Empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence. A critical component to achieving economic independence is access to and control over productive resources. A second component of empowerment is knowledge and awareness of one's self and society and of personal needs, health issues, legal rights, technological innovations and the availability of social and economic resources and how to take advantage of them. The third component is self-image. This includes realisation of one's capabilities and the potential and confidence to take action in one's life. Both economic independence and knowledge create a positive self image but confidence in one's self can also facilitate the acquisition of further knowledge and action towards attaining greater economic independence. The final component is autonomy which in its ultimate realisation, is the empowerment of women at the level of society. For women, empowerment is the restructuring of gender relations both within the family and society at large, and it society's recognition of women's equality with men on terms of their worth to society as independent persons.

However, equitable access to resources, power and decision-making is of

paramount importance in empowerment of women and under Gandhiji's leadership played a very important role in the freedom movement. Women from all walks of life participated in the movement. After independence the constitution guaranteed to all women equal rights of participation in the political process of the country along with equal opportunities in education and employment.

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## **1.8 POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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Despite women constituting half of the population, women's role in political process is limited due to several socio-economic constraints. According to the document on women's development (1985), women's role in political structure had virtually remained unchanged despite the rapid growth of informal political activity by them. This political participation has been severely affected by traditional factors such as consideration of caste, religion, feudal and family status. Even in 11th Lok Sabha the women selected by various parties to contest the election is insignificant. The constitutional (73rd and 74th Amendment) Acts, 1992 which reserved one third of seats for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions and Municipal Bodies is a major land mark in the political empowerment of women. This would invariably provide them a greater opportunity to express their grievances and socio-economic problems in a formal forum, a political process necessary to ensure the improvement for all women in all spheres of life. Reservation of seats guarantees representation to women as a group.

The political empowerment of women has made considerable strides with 2.8 percent women being represented in the 1st Parliament of 1952-57 to 7.2 percent in the 10th Lok Sabha. In 1952 elections out of 499 members only 22 were women and in 1991 general elections 28 women were elected to Lok Sabha and out of 58 Ministers in the cabinet only six were women including one with cabinet rank. Women's representation in the Rajya Sabha has shown some improvement, having increased from 7.7 percent in 1952 to 15.5 percent in 1991.

In parliament, despite steadily expanding participation from the 3rd Lok Sabha onwards, and also in general election, their numerical strength has never exceeded ten percent of the total membership of either houses of Parliament.

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## **1.9 CAUSES FOR THE LOW PROFILE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS**

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However, barring a few exceptions politics still continues to be a male prerogative. The low profile may be traced to a number of factors such as :

1. The distinct Sex of Women
2. Numerical Minority Status



- 3.Character of larger Socio-economic System
- 4.Political Conservatism
- 5.Lack of Leadership quality
- 6.Attitude of Political Parties
- 7.Disillusionment with the functioning of Democracy

### **1.9.1 The Distinct Sex Roles of Women :**

The reproductive functions, discharge of household charges of women reduce their active role during the active part of their life. These functions render even otherwise strong women weak. This may also curb their ability to participate in public life even if they were to have a political ambition all over the world. For example no where in the world women constitute anything near half of the total legislators.

However, the advancement of Science and Technology, birth control measures and health improvement programmes may enhance their labour contribution potential and as a consequence to improved socio-economic status and political participation.

### **1.9.2 Numerical Minority :**

Unlike the advanced countries like USSR, USA and Japan in India women have been a numerical minority. This has been reinforced with the adversely declining sex ratio in the country's population. Thus the female population per 1000 males went on decreasing between 1901 and 1991 and it was 972 and 927 respectively. Consequently, the minority sex position imposes natural limitation on women from enjoying political equality. However, with the recent 73rd and 74th Amendments it is hoped that women would have a greater participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipal Bodies at grassroots level.

### **1.9.3 Constraining the Socio-economic System :**

The nature of socio-economic system in the country would limit the participation of women in the political process. The socio-economic setup in India unlike the other parts of world would subordinate women to fathers at a young age and to husbands in youth and to the sons in old age. This subordination would deprive them of an equal share in property, despite the law and an active participation in politics. The idea of male supremacy and patriarchy is embedded in all the established world religions. It relegates the status of women to the secondary grade citizens by imposing innumerable restrictions on them. Social inhibitions restrict them from enjoying the fruits of education. As a result they remain dependent voters and a majority of them make their choices on the basis of suggestions from the male of the family.

#### **1.9.4 Political Conservatism :**

The women's socio-economic status influences their political status. Then political parties hardly chose women as contestants in electoral process and the same is the case with the political parties for the 11th Lok Sabha, because of their negative attitude towards women. Further, their dependent status, low literacy rate, low ability, inaccessibility to information and low political awareness, low political consciousness have made them ineligible and affected their political status adversely. Further, women entering both as independents and as party candidates have less chances of success owing to their immobile nature and security problem and due to lack of support from all walks of life.

#### **1.9.5 Lack of Leadership Quality :**

It is assumed that unlike men, women lack leadership quality. There were very few women leaders at all levels. The patriarchy and the socio-economic constraints prevent women from accepting the leadership roles. However, 73rd and 74th Amendment acts of 1992 had reserved one third of posts in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipal Bodies at local level for women. This may wither away the pre-conceived notions about the leadership qualities of women.

#### **1.9.6 Attitudes of political parties :**

Despite making effective and attractive election manifestoes for the development of women. Political parties including Congress have failed in the implementation of their ideas. Even the left parties who have special approach towards women are not exception. The insignificant percentage of representation of women in national councils is a strong example of this. Sometime back only the Bahujana Samaj Party has made Mayavathi both party Secretary and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

Laxmi Parvathi was made party President of Telugu Desam Party (NTR) after the demise of N.T. Rama Rao the founder of T.D.P., under unavoidable circumstances.

#### **1.9.7 Disillusionment with the Functioning of Democracy :**

Generally speaking people in general and women in particular are disillusioned with the present political atmosphere prevailing in the country. Every time 30 percent to 40 percent of the people do not exercise their franchise thinking that it would not help them in any way. It is also felt that people join politics to fulfil their personal interests and goals but never bother to know about the fundamentals of democracy such as democracy, socialism, secularism, eradication of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment.

However, the participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and

Municipal Bodies with the Amendment of 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts is considered essential not only for ensuring political participation in the democratic process but also for realizing the development goals for women as voters, members of political parties, as candidates and as elected members of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Local Bodies.

### **1.10 POLITICAL RESERVATIONS :**

This raises the important questions for achieving political equality between sexes. A change in the statute is needed for reserving seats for women in the legislative bodies on the same lines as has been done for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Introduction of 73rd to 74th Amendment Acts 1992 which has reserved one third of seats for women in P.R.s and Municipal Bodies is a unique measure and will go a long way in uplifting the women who constitute about half of the population of the country.

Women are oppressed at all levels right from cradle to grave. Protests and demonstrations by women outside the legislature for gender justice would not help them to overcome the situation. A woman being the oppressed group, would be the best fighter in the legislature against all sorts of exploitations for gender equality. Their representation at state level and national level legislatures has been continuously falling due to the reluctant and indifferent attitude of the political parties forcibly field the candidates in elections. Only the reservation policy can preserve their voice in legislature and provide them an opportunity to take part in decision making process and make them spokespersons of women's rights.

The reservation policy alone would elevate their status, give liberty and make them independent, changing the established definitions of women's roles on the basis of their movement. Further, reservation policy would enable them to find some room for themselves in the established power structure, hitherto which was exclusively a male prerogative thereby weakening the monopolistic hold of men in the politico social structure. This also provides them a fairer deal and provides them opportunities to articulate their views and motivate them to shoulder higher responsibility on par with men. It will also change the attitude of political parties and enable women to direct change in their social and economic position.

Thus the reservation of women in local bodies has to be followed by women at state and national level legislative bodies. Then the entry of women in legislatures in sufficient number would enable them to participate in debates and discussions pertaining to women and would bring in gender equality and gender justice and make them powerful in all walks of human life.

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## 1.11 SUMMING UP

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The status and position of women in given society to a considerable extent depend upon the political power that they enjoy in that society. Since time immemorial women have been looked down upon and treated as playthings and deprived of access to education, power and politics with a few exceptions here and there. Even today in a democratic country like India women encounter innumerable difficulties in the process of their political empowerment except at grass roots level. Reservation of seats at state and national level alone would provide them an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and to shoulder a higher responsibility on par with men.

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## 1.12 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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I. Answer the following in about 30 lines each :

1. Examine the relation between Power and Politics.
2. Examine the underlying problems in the political empowerment of women in India.

II. Answer the following in about 15 lines each :

1. Trace the causes for the backwardness of women in education.
2. What was the political status of women in ancient India.

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## 1.13 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Altekar. A.S., 1983, "The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation" Banarasidas Motilal.
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## **UNIT-2 : STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

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#### **2.0 Objectives**

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#### **2.2 State**

##### **2.2.1 Origin, Nature and Functions of State**

##### **2.2.2 Origin of sub-ordination of Women**

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##### **2.3.1 Nature and Characteristics of Civil Society**

##### **2.3.2 Relation between State and Civil Society**

#### **2.4 Summing-up**

#### **2.5 Model Examination Questions**

#### **2.6 Recommended Books**

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### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this lesson you will be able to discuss -

- \* the origin and nature of state
  - \* nature of civil society
  - \* roots of subordination of women
  - \* relationship between state and society
  - \* changing nature of state
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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this lesson an attempt has been made to provide a historical context to study the position of women in the past and in contemporary society. In order to have a better understanding of the present social structure and position of women therein, it is imperative to know the operation of various historical, political, cultural and economic factors binding the society. Such an historical perspective is all the more necessary in the case of a society with a continuous history of more than three thousand years. It is also crucial to have their roots in the past. Of course, the attempt here is only to provide a general overview and not to go into the details of periodisation and its contravention. However, state and society seem to be identical terms.

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## 2.2 STATE

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### 2.2.1 Origin, Nature and Functions of State :

Modern works on polity devoted considerable space to the discussion of the origin of the state. But no contemporary work would enlighten us on this point. While we possess ample evidence to show how some particular states originated among people already accustomed to political life, we have only the uncertain light of legends and mythology to visualize the circumstances under which men for the first time associate themselves into a political organisation.

Mahabharata, Digghanika, Plato's Republic, Kautilya's Arthashastra discuss about the origin of the state. Many a Hindu thinker held the state was that the state was an indispensable institution for the orderly existence and progress of society in the imperfect world as known to us in historic times, a country without government cannot exist. The idea of primeval Golden Age is accepted only in some sections of Mahabharata and Buddhist literature. Writers on polity only got with it for sometime and hasten to point out that it was soon succeeded by a social choice, which was terminated only when God gave a king to society. People regarded the state as a divine institution, implying thereby that it is as society and owed its origin to that socio-political instinct which is twin-born with man.

The Mahabharata implies that people accepted Virajas as King, the Digghanikaya expressly states that Mahajanassammata accepted the peoples request to put an end to monarchy and there upon people elected him to be their king. A notion of government came into existence as a result of some implied contract. It is now generally recognised that the contract theory of the origin of govt is bad history and worse logic. It can no doubt explain the origin of a particular form of state among people who have already developed governmental institution, but it cannot explain how the first agreement took place among the members of a community, which was still in the state of nature. In some primitive societies government may have actually arisen owing to operation of some one acting as priest, some commanding as magician and the some one curing as doctor. But as far as Indo-European communities are concerned, the institution of the patriarchal joint family seems to have been the germ out of which state was gradually evolved. The position of the patriarch in pre-historic times was more or less like that of a king amongst all the Indo-European communities. State was evolved in India also in pre-historic times out of the institution of the joint family. The patriarch of the family was instinctively revered and obeyed; and social tradition and atmosphere inspired a similar respect for and evoked a similar obedience to head of the village or tribe who generally acquired the status of chiefs and kings.

Most of the primitive societies were generally considered to be matriarchial societies in which women played the principal role in production.

Women performed both house hold and food production functions, while men roamed in the forest in quest of game. The release of new productive forces and desirability to increase production brought tremendous change in the social relations and paved the way for the emergence of the concept of private property and new classes such as masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited emerged on the scene. The invention of fire, weaponry, cattle rearing, agriculture, domestic handicrafts etc, gave further impetus to the release of new productive forces. Subsequently, the necessity for more labor was increased to meet the requirements of increased productive forces. In the process, battles were erupted between groups of people and it provided the winners with prisoners who later were converted into slaves. Women were also held as captives.

Further, during the course of history, idea of 'stable life' regularization of male- female relations, the origin of family had relegated the woman into secondary position, confirming her to domestic labour. According to the division of labour within the family at that time, it was the man's part to obtain food and the instrument of labour necessary for it and even in the event of separation of husband and wife, man retained the instrument of labour and the woman household goods. The institution of marriage and especially 'pairing marriage' introduced a new element in social life replacing mother right often to a 'natural father' phenomenon. The division of labour within the family had regulated the division of property between the man and the woman. The division of labour had remained the same. It turned the previous domestic side of labour outside the family and changed paving the way for patriarchal structure of society and the joint family system.

The institution of the joint family thus gradually led to the evolution of kinship. It supposed the rise and acceptance of the notion of family property and also of the inviolability of the sacred family ties and relationships, especially connected with the institution of marriage. Molestation of women had to be stopped and the peaceful enjoyment of property had to be ensured. This could be guaranteed only by the rise of the institution of state. The institution of family with the notion of the family property thus played its own part in the origin of state. The system was further fortified during the feudal age as concentration of authority and economic power become the base for the prevalence of class structure and subordination of women in the social system of society. Exploitation became the prime concern of feudalism and women were the worst sufferers in all respects. The changes in the mode of production and emergence of capitalist system, although improved the status of dominate 'class' women to some extent, it further ruined the status of dependent class women and they become the secondary citizens.



People regarded state as a beneficent institution evolved in pre-historic times for the efficient protection of human life and for the better realisation of its higher ideals.

It is owing to the presence of anti-social elements that danda or force became the ultimate sanction of government. Ancient Indian thinkers do not desire that danda should make its appearance every now and then; on the other hand they regard that state as an ideal one where its exercise is rendered almost unnecessary by willingness of the people to accept the scheme of a righteous life, by the code govern the humanity by God. In the ideal state both the king and the subjects were expected to follow the provisions of the divine code for peace.

Modern writers divide the function of state into two categories. Constituent and ministrant. Under the former class fall these functions of state which are absolutely necessary for the orderly organisation of society like defense against foreign aggression, protection of person and property, preservation of peace and order and adjudication. Under the latter class fall those activities of the state which it undertakes to promote the welfare of the people, to increase their wealth by a co-operative effort, and to add to their amenities, postal service, trade regulations, roads and communication, development of mines and forests. Care of the poor and invalid etc., would come under the ministrant function of state. The modern tendency of the state is to increase its ministrant functions.

The available evidence shows that for a long time the state in ancient India and well-organised governments in ancient India like those under the Mauryan and the Gupts discharged most of the constituent functions.

### **2.2.2 The Sub-ordination of Women**

Indication of change in the status of women can be noticed in the early texts referring to the origin of the state. Women along the means of production lost their 'communal' identity and began to accede to private ownership. It was from this point on, the status of women began to deteriorate as is evident from the narration in the texts of the Buddhist canon and the Mahabharatha. The texts of other puranas and Dharmashastras classified men and women as two distinct classes and equated women with sudras. Woman was considered as man's private property and was symbolised as the adjunct of low legal status and a ritual contempt. Though the deification of woman was the creation of early societies, it was continued even now as a compensatory gesture to suit to the changing conditions. It also refers to the dualistic character of Indian society, there was a vast gulf between the status of the women in the early Vedic period and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Like the various sections of a society women derive their ideological and

moral basis for the status and their institutionalized roles from the religion. However, in the latter stages a few reform movements gave impetus to the elevation of the status of women, and due to the royal patronage the religion-received teachings were promptly put into action. There is however, a sharp difference of opinion about the changes taking place over the years in the position of women in India. Some regard these changes as profound and pervasive. They point out to the increasing participation of women in public life.

### ***2.3.1 Nature and Characteristics of Civil Society***

Civil society existed long before we are born into it, and it will exist long after we are gone. Society gives content, direction and meaning to our lives and we, in turn, in countless ways, reshape the society that we leave to the next generation but in the complex interaction between the individual and society, society is usually the dominant partner.

Without society we could not survive. No infant could reach maturity without the care and protection of other people, and no adult could remain alive without using the vast store of information about the world that has been learnt and transmitted through society. Almost every thing that we do is social in some - learned from others, done with others, directed towards others. Even those very rare individuals, the identities, the ideas and the techniques that they have learned from others. Hermits in their caves live with society in the memories.

What exactly is a society? Several conditions must be met before people can be said to be living in one society. First, they must occupy a common territory. Second they must not only share the territory but must also interact with one another. Third they must to some extent have a common culture and a shared sense of membership in and commitment to the same group. A society is a group of interacting individuals sharing the territory and participating in a common culture. A society is not necessarily the same as a nation-state, although in the modern world the two are often identical. Many nation states include smaller societies within their own borders. Most of the countries of South America, for example contain smaller societies of indigenous Indian peoples who have not been integrated into the larger society.

The organisation and characteristics of each human society are not based on the rigid dictates of its member's 'instincts'. They are created by human beings themselves and are learned and modified by each new generation. Consequently, although all human beings are members of the same biological species, every human society is different - so different that an individual suddenly transplanted from, say the United States to jungle tribe of Brazil would have very little idea of how to behave appropriately. Each society therefore presents a fresh challenge of understanding to the sociologist.

A Civil Society is but a collective name for the number of individuals. Societies are aggregates, which grow. Along with increase of size in societies goes increase of structure. Primitive hordes are without establishment distinction of parts. A society has broad divisions between ruling and the ruled, then within the ruling part divides into political, religious, military and within the ruled part divisions like food producing classes and handy-craftsmen; then within each of these divisions minor ones, and so on.

Passing from the structured aspect to the functional aspect, we note that so long as all parts of a society have like natures and activities, there is hardly any mutual dependence, and the aggregate scarcely forms a vital whole. As its parts assume different function they become dependent on one another, until in highly evolved societies general disorganization is caused by derangement of any position. This contrast between undeveloped and developed societies arises from the fact, that with increasing specialisation of functions comes increasing inability in each part to perform the functions of other parts.

Most modern observers will have experienced life in societies structured largely in classes where a person's place in society is largely determined by occupation, and particularly by the individual's relation to the means of production where relations between people are based on contract rather than time honored connections. Moreover, in contemporary industrial societies there is considerable mobility between classes, individuals can change and achieve status by their own efforts. In India we see a society where until the twentieth century class was a concept and force of little significance. Most people's place in the social order depended on ascribed rather than achieved status and was determined by the accident of birth. Social relation - between men and women, different generations, relatives were ordered according to long-standing connections from childhood onwards. What is distinctive on the Indian sub-continent is the basis of ascriptions and comparative rigidity of the society to which this gave rise through the mechanism of caste.

Change in the predominant social activities bring metamorphosis. Where the militant type has not elaborated into so rigid a form as to prevent change, a considerable industrial system arises, there come mitigation of the coercive restraints characterizing the militant type and weakening of its structures. Conversely, where an individual system largely developed has established freer social forms, resumption of offensive-defensive activities causes reversions towards the militant type.

Many scholars observe that the position of women in a given epoch has to be studied in the context of the material culture of the society concerned. However,

the economic development of the society can be equated with the position of women. Suvira Jayaswal contends that society in the Rigvedic period was still predominantly pastoral and nomadic. It did not produce enough surplus to allow any section of society to be completely sub-ordinate or withdrawn from the process of production. This perhaps explains the better situation of women in the Vedic period in terms of access to education, religious rights, freedom of movement etc. It has been noticed that the growth of a class society, which manifested itself in the form of varnas and the decline in position of women have occurred simultaneously. This decline dates back from the period of manusmrithi i.e., 500 BC to 1800 AD.

### ***2.3.2 Relation between the State and Society***

Human societies are essentially heterogeneous, and the intermediate state is attained because the requirement of uniformity is very strong in some individuals, moderately strong in others, very feeble in still others, and almost entirely absent in a few. The average is found in each individual, but in the group comprising them all one may add as datum of fact that the number of individuals in whom the requirement of uniformity is stronger than the average requisite of the intermediate state in which the society is situated is much greater than the number of individuals in whom the requirement is weaker than the average and very much greater than the number in whom it is entirely missing.

State in ancient India was regarded as the center of society and the chief instrument of its welfare, and hence it was permitted to have a wide sphere of activity; individual liberty did not appreciably suffer in consequence, primarily because the state discharged its multifarious functions not exclusively through its own bureaucracy.

It owes to the presence of anti-social element that force becomes the ultimate sanction of government both in ancient and modern India. The available evidence, however, shows that the state in the early Vedic period was still tribal. There was now proper territorial basis. In the later Vedic period, the state became territorial. It is in the 4th Century BC the political thought had developed fairly. Both Kautilya and Manu held that the state was not a loose assemblage of parts, each having its own interests but it was characterised by an organic unity. Peace, order, security and justice were regarded as the fundamental aims of the state. The king was the upholder of the law and order. He was to punish the wicked and help the virtuous. Religion was to be promoted, morality was to be encouraged and education was to be patronized. The state, however, was to secure not only the moral but also the material well being of its citizens. All round welfare of the public was regarded as the chief aim of the state during the Vedic period. The state promoted Dharma. The inclusion of promotion of Dharma among the aims of the state has given rise

to a considerable misunderstanding in modern times. It exalts Brahmanas and reduces the Sudras almost to the position of slaves. The Sudras and women were prevented from holding properties and were subjected to heavier punishment than those meted out to Brahmanas for identical offences. It is extremely doubtful whether many cases had occurred in ancient India of the state - punishing the Sudras and Brahmana women for pursuing the study of the Vadas.

The historical evidence confirms that during the Vedic age, women enjoyed considerable freedom and equal opportunities with men in society. Women as primarily procreators, were highly respected and as partners in economic activity played a significant role in decision making. The Vedic women being grown up and educated has a voice in the selection of their husbands ... often there were also love marriage ... widow remarriages. However, the position subsequently altered.

However the society depicted by Kautilya permits levitate and remarriages of widows, as also post puberty marriages and divorces. This was the state of affairs in Maurayan age. Arthasastra and Megasthenes refer to the female bodyguards of the king and to his habit of shampooing. Even today in the modern period Colonel Gadafi, the President of Libya is guarded by 12 female bodyguards. Further, he advises around 10000 women in Libya to join the army. Such women are not expected to marry for ten years.

State in ancient India was regarded as the center of society and the chief instrument for the welfare. And hence it was permitted to have a wide sphere of activity. Individual liberty did not appreciably suffer in consequence, primarily because the state discharged multifarious functions not exclusively through its own bureaucracy but through various other organisations established in society.

The available evidence show that women enjoyed a much better status in primitive society. During the feudal times women were looked down upon as chattel of men with child bearing and rearing as main functions in family life. As capitalism was superimposed over the feudal and semifeudal structures in India, particularly during imperialist rule, new forms of exploitation and social oppression of women came into being.

The Indian society like a number of classical societies was patriarchal. Patriarchal values regulating sexuality, reproduction and social production prevailed and were expressed through specific cultural metaphors. Over the rules prohibiting the women from specific activities and denying certain rights did exist. But more subtle expression of patriarchy was through symbolism giving messages of inferiority of women through legends and through the ritual practice which day in and day out emphasize the dominant role of a woman as a faithful wife and

devout mother. India's emphasis on being a welfare state had significant impact on women's status and role. Besides the preamble, directive principles are non-justifiable, these are nevertheless pointers to the fundamental vision of a sociopolitical order. The state is expected to take notice of these principles while formulating laws. Free and compulsory education, for all children up to the age of 14, right to an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally, equal pay for equal work and maternity relief are some of the specific directive principles. In short fundamental rights and directive principles not only provide the framework of the ideas of the state, but they are the instruments to attain the national objectives of justice, liberty, and equality.

Besides providing a formal structure of equality, the government as it is found in many of the Third World Countries, used law as a major plank to change society. The enactment of Hindu law guaranteeing the right to divorce and remarriage to Hindu women, the Inheritance Act, providing equal share to women in the property and the establishment of the principles of monogamy are some of the important innovations introduced in the Indian Social structure affecting women's status. The Medical termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), the Maternity Benefit Act, the Dowry Prohibition Act etc., are some of the measures of the relief for all women irrespective of caste, colour, creed or religion and sex. Significant legal measures have been introduced during the last decade. The Criminal law Act (1953) provides crucial amendments concerning women in India Penal Code. The recent women's movement for the ban of alcohol all over the state of Andhra Pradesh is a classic example of growing consciousness of women to fight against the exploitation meted out to them by state or society. However, states were forced to agree to the demand of women and introduced total prohibition barring toddy.

Recent 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of State for the New Panchayati Raj System, give the country a whopping 22.5 lakh elected representatives with reserved seats for STs/SCs, in proportion to their population. Women who are allowed 33.3 percent representatives in all the three tiers of the system all over the country would invariably elevate the status of women in society. Further 33.3 per cent of reservation in education and employment would definitely bring a vital change in the life conditions of women.

A woman should get her due share in society and should not be confined to routine household work. She should be made an important segment of society, which amounts to the empowerment of woman.

The present demand of the women for the provision of increased and equal opportunities outside home in all walks of life should be termed as tertiary state in the history of women's emancipation to obtain gender justice and gender equity.

The shift over from the traditional role of the women subservient to men took since time immemorial to the neo-traditional phase, in which the women have risen in revolt against all types of exploitation, reiterating their equality with men in all fields of rights and responsibilities, ranging from education, employment, health and institutional economic activity is the order of the day. Thus there is bound to emerge a highly developed society eliminating all traditional taboos that have led to restricting the women's life to certain spheres only.

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## 2.4 SUMMING UP

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In primitive societies women enjoyed principal role in production process. But with the origin of family, state and private property, the women lost their identity and have been reduced to a secondary position and confined to household chores. However, in the light of growing consciousness of women, state realised and initiated the measures of uplift to the women who are agitating to provide them equal opportunities on par with men on all fronts for their total emancipation.

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## 2.5 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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I. Answer one of the following questions in 30 lines.

1. Explain the Origin and Nature of State.
2. Examine the relation between State and Civil Society.

II. Answer one of the following in 15 lines each :

1. What are the causes for sub-ordination in Women?
2. List out the various acts passed by the government since Independence for women's upliftment.

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## 2.6 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Altekar A. S. 1984, "State and Government in Ancient India", Delhi, Motilal Benarsidas.
2. Dessai, Neera and M. Krishnaraj, Ed., 1970, "Women and Society in India", Delhi, Ajanta Publication.
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## **BLOCK - II : POLITICAL THOUGHT AND WOMEN**

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## **UNIT-3 : TRENDS IN IDEOLOGY**

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- 3.8 Recommended Books

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit follows a largely descriptive mode of presentation touching upon the different movements in Feminist theory to suggest what might have been the origins of modern thinking in this field. After going through this unit you will be able to

- \* Describe the different approaches to feminism
- \* List out the essential features in each theory
- \* Compare and contrast them to study their similarities and differences
- \* Critically analyze their impact on modern trends in Feminist ideology.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Ideology is a body of ideas that form the basis for a national or sectarian policy. To put it differently, it is the science of ideas, which makes up a way of thinking. What does ideology have to do with feminism or women's studies, one may ask? Is it not sufficient if one is a practicing feminist? Does she need Old Testament re-assure herself that the convictions and beliefs are right and her energies are justified? Isn't philosophy of feminism a luxury? No, perhaps it is not. The reason why we turn to ideology and trends in it, is to give us a firm basis for locating action and for relating ourselves to it. A theory may help a woman to understand her own situation better. Any theory, which she uses to understand her situation clearly is history. This history itself is shaped by feminist and non-feminist practices. Thus her action gets located or contextualised by an awareness of ideology and the trends within it.

In turning to ideology we find that the first systematic justification of women's rights in the nineteenth century was based on liberal or democratic theory. At the same time socialists attacked the liberalists and came up with their own analysis of class relations and the economic degradation of women in the bourgeois family relationships. The domestic servitude of women was highlighted and women's issues were focused on the radical role that women needed to adopt to change their status. The Marxist theory, however, had its own inadequacies and feminists came up with an analysis of feminism within existentialism and its description of the self and the other. Feminist psychologists too attempted to interpret the feminine psyche as generated by the family structures and its reconceived notions of women and their roles. Finally the structuralists came up with the theories of a sexism that underlines the origins of culture.

This then forms the gamut of theories that make up the feminist ideology. In this unit we shall discuss the different theories that underpin discussions of

feminism. We begin with a brief account of liberal feminism and its historical origins. In the next sub-section we draw upon feminist strands of thought in the Marxist ideology and then go on to elaborate upon socialist and radical feminism.

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### 3.2 LIBERAL FEMINISM

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We begin our discussion of specific theories of feminism in a more or less historical manner. This means that we shall touch upon the feminist theories of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth century first. Perhaps we can trace the beginnings of modern feminism there in the phenomenon of women associating together, initially for different reasons and then recognizing and asserting their common interests as women.

We may notice this recognition of one's status and its assertion in events such as women getting together, addressing other women and men publicly; organisation of activities, campaigns and movements around women's rights, and claims for a different identity. The result of such an awakening among women was that it created a public awareness of women's rights and their roles. self-determination and autonomy were the two main values that received the greatest emphasis.

#### 3.2.1 *Equality of Vote/Suffrage*

The women's movement seemed to start suddenly the mid-nineteenth century. It has, in fact, taken root before the close of the eighteenth century when men first raised women's voices against endless domination. Women were led in this revolutionary thinking by Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft's own life and experience were testimony to the subjection of men and social practices laid down by them but her book Vindication of the rights of women, brought out in 1792, was one of the most powerful feminist critiques of the time.

Mary's uncontrolled anger was against "the tyranny of man over woman" which gave rise to all the social evils that women suffered such as lack of education, denial of fulfilling work, insufficient wages, discrimination in social acceptance. The Vindication of the Rights of Women, demanded education, work and equal companionship with males in society. It articulated some of the most serious concerns of women and exposed the myths created by men that the members of the "fair sex" were happy with their status and position in society. There were violent and open attacks against Mary Wollstonecraft when she attacked the uncontested powers and prerogatives of men. For once women were being tutored to separate their interests from the interests of men. The movement also received the attention of some men who broke away from the rest of their sex and refused to maintain their privileges in an unconcerned manner at the sort of women's

rights. In the late eighteenth century, particularly the 1790s there was marked increase in awareness about feminist issues. John Stuart Mill was preparing the draft of his "subjection of women". In 1825 a socialist-philosopher, William Thomson wrote about the 'slavery' of married life. "Home is the prison house of the wife", he declared, while presenting his plea for the political equality of women. But such support was short-lived as Thomson himself was ridiculed and excluded from society.

Forty years later in 1869, John Stuart Mill tried again through his logically presented essay, 'The Subjection of women', to support the battle for women's freedom, justice and a full human status.

Debates about the position of women were coming to the fore and a general climate of public awareness about women's rights and their role in different movements was obvious. The awareness itself was encouraging enough to permit the moving discussion from women's right, women's employment and the case for reform in existing laws. The focus was directed to an entirely different though related argument about women and their identity as the moral and regenerating power in society.

Referring to cultural and psychological factors for the inferiority of women, JS Mill, one of the early thinkers of the moderate or women's Rights Feminism, supported their cause. His "Subjection of Women" (1869) was a landmark in the history of the women's movement.

According to Mill, women were given a subject status in society not because of any inherent inferiority in them but because of a historical culture. Her physical inferiority to men was converted into a legal right.

He believed that such artificially created distinctions in the status of men and women could be over through by the sharp reaction of women to the "subjecting environment". Only "enlightened womanhood" could change women's self image and restore her dignity in her own estimation./ Her recognition of herself as an individual, as a human being like any other "would effect an immense expansion of the faculties of their moral sentiments". Mill's description of the abilities of men and women as reciprocal suggests that he did not believe in one as superior to the other. Interestingly, in a letter to a friend he wrote, "we are almost as much the natural complement of one another as man and woman are; we are far stronger together than separately, whatever both of us agree in, has a very good chance of, I think, being true". Like other liberal thinkers he expressed the view that equality of sexes can only be achieved if there are moral reforms, proper education and suitable legal measures. He supported women's suffrage and granting legal rights to women.

Like Wollstonecraft, Mill wrote about the ethical double standard that society had set up for women. The "virtues" that women are praised for are in fact those which negatively affect their individual characters and their progress towards "person-hood". Mill argues therefore that women be given the same education as men to help them develop not a forced sense of duty but a genuine unselfishness towards their work. Giving women the right to vote by assuming their roles as morally responsible citizens can also remind them of their larger function in society.

Mill's approach can, on the whole, be summarized as one of a liberal reformer rather than that of a revolutionary. Taylor's view towards marriage and roles of men and women in the home are more realistic and reveal consciousness of the pressures that the family responsibilities place on the women as against the man.

Liberal Feminism in the 20th Century: Betty Friedan's book (1963) The Feminine Mystique was somewhat less radical than the work of Wollstonecraft. Clearly Friedan was not asking women to sacrifice marriage and motherhood for a high powered career. Being a wife and mother she suggested, need make very few claims on a woman's time. Once a woman sees house work for what it is - something to get out of the way, to be done "quickly and efficiently", and sees marriage and family for what it is - a part of her life, but not all of it - she will find plenty of time and energy to develop her total self in "creative work outside the home".

In The Second Stage written a quarter century after the Feminine Mystique, Friedan reviewed the problem of combining marriage and career. Friedan exhorted women to get the women's movement going again and work with men to change public values, leadership styles, and institutional structures. Unlike Wollstonecraft, Mill and Taylor, Friedan seemed to advocate a balance of women's assimilation into the work place with a counter assimilation of men into the family. Earlier Friedan had believed that equality of women meant that they should be equal to men. But Liberalism as Friedan argued in her changed stance, held that the task of the liberal feminist is to determine what liberty and equality are for concrete men and women. She moved close to urging women to work with men and for men to produce a truly human society.

The right to vote was always the cornerstone of every emancipation programme and its denial was seen as the most visible symbol of women's subordination. The First Reform Bill of 1832, which sought to exclude women entirely from the national achievements of the British Government, received widespread criticism for its biased attempt to legalise the right to vote.

Campaigners for the cause of women raised their voices everywhere, for education, for law reform, employment, civil rights, and above all, 'votes for

women'. The symbolic power of the last is evident from the fact that it was not granted until after all the others had been won.

The first country to give women the right to vote to its eternal credit, was New Zealand in 1893; Australia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Russia all brought their women to the polls before the British victory in 1918.

The over-riding goal of liberal feminism always was the application of liberal principles to women as well as to men. Most obviously this meant that laws could not grant to women fewer rights than they could allow to men.

"No one who understands the feminist movement, or who knows the soul of a real new woman would not make the mistake of supposing that the modern woman is fighting for the vote for education and for economic freedom, because she wants to be a man. That idea is the invention of masculine intelligence. Woman is fighting today, as she has all the way up through the ages, for the freedom to be woman". Anne B. Hammam 'Professor Beyer and the Woman Question Educational Review 47 March 1914, p 296. (Emphasis added).

The contemporary movements led by the National Organisation for women and the Women's Equity Action League agree that their goal is sexual equality or gender justice.

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### 3.3 MARXIST FEMINISM

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Marxist theory was formulated in the mid-19th century at a time when the impact of the Industrial Revolution was becoming evident. The liberal democratic or bourgeois revolutions were just occurring in Europe. Marxism brought about a sudden attack on the capitalist system. For Marxists the notion of class underpins all social phenomena including the oppression of women. The ideal sought is a classless society. For Marxism, class rather than gender is the important issue. Although Marx and Engels acknowledge that women's equality with men is critical to a classless society, how women's experience under capitalism differed from that of men is not directly addressed in their work. In this sub-section we shall examine how Marx and Engels debate social class and social change and how recent Feminist critiques of Marxist theory have dealt with issues such as production, class, alienation, marriage and family to depict women's nature.

Most of what is interpreted as Marxist theory comes to us from Marx's early essays, Engels' (Marx's friend and collaborator) writings, their summary of the main ideas of the The Communist Manifesto of 1848, Marx's unfinished treatise Das Capital, and their attempts to popularise their ideas. Even after Marx's death in 1883 Engels strove to spread their ideas through different works.



August Bedel, a German Socialist Democrat spread the message of Marxism through his 'Women under Socialism'. His ideas, which influenced Alexander Kollontai in Russia, Clara Zetkin in Germany and Emma Goldman in America, were suggested; there would be a change in the social situation. Like men, women will have a right to work, be educated and participate in politics. Marriage will be a happy partnership without property interfering in husband-wife relationships.

### **3.3.1 Production**

The Marxist concept of human nature is present in Marxist feminist thought. Marxists reject the liberal theory of human nature that human beings are specially endowed with abilities that distinguished them from animals. They believe instead that production of one's means of subsistence makes human beings different from other animals. We are able to meet our basic need by engaging in productive activities such as farming, agriculture, and construction of buildings. For Marxist thinkers, material forces are the 'prime movers' in history. What they define as material forces are the production and reproduction of social life. To put it differently, Marx believed that "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines the existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness". (Karl Marx A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy New York International Publisher, 1972; pp. 20-21).

Marx held that the ways in which a society produces conditions the general process of thinking that it adopts, the forces of a society's production (the raw materials, tools and the workers who actually produce the goods), the relations of production (the ways in which the production process is organised) generate a superstructure (with a layer of political, legal and social ideas). For example, the Americans have characteristic ways of thinking about qualities such as freedom, liberty and equality because they belong to a capitalistic mode of production.

Like the ideas expressed in Marxist thought, Marxist feminists believe that social existence determines consciousness. This means that women's self-image is linked to women's work and social status. Production is thus the basis for the general outlook on life and the development of thought.

### **3.3.2 Class**

The Marxist analysis of class can be studied by examining the Marxist theory of society. Women's oppression can be understood using the conceptual tools employed for the Marxist analysis of class.

According to Marx, every political economy has the seeds of its own destruction. Even within capitalism the Marxists see extreme divisions with respect

to class. At one end there is wealthy and property-owning class of employers while at the other is the class of poor, property-less workers. The employers live a luxurious life while the workers struggle to eke out a living for themselves. The employer can live in luxury while the worker lives in want receiving only barely enough to maintain an inhuman level of existence. As these classes become conscious of themselves as classes and engage in a class struggle the system begins to topple and the very framework from which they rose begins to crumble.

Classes, however, are not static entities. They are dynamic and slowly evolve into different shapes. The people who are like-minded and share the same status, get together and form a class. Initially they may be very different from one another but later, by constantly struggling together they build up a unity that binds them as a group with a common identity and purpose. Once the group establishes itself as a class it asserts itself and moves towards its goals.

The concept of class plays an important role in Marxist feminist teachings because it brings together women as a 'class' of workers not by their relationship to men as wives, daughters, friends, lovers or mothers but as women caught in a campaign for recognition as themselves.

### **3.3.3 Alienation**

A related concept here is the ideal of alienation. For different classes there exists a different type of alienation. (i) Workers are alienated from the product they labour for (ii) They are alienated from themselves because they are conscious that their work is not pleasant but is a way of dehumanizing them. (iii) Workers are alienated also from other human beings because they view them as rivals or competitors for positions and promotions. (iv) The worker also experiences a sense of isolation from nature because of the type of work he has to do. In the case of the woman these forms of alienation take on "an oppressive form". (Ann Foreman). Men seek relief from their alienation through their relationships with women; for women there is no relief. For these intimate relations are the very ones that are the essential structures of the oppression. (Foreman, Ann, *Femininity as Alienation : women and the Family in Marxism and Psychoanalysis*, London : Pluto Press, 1977; pp. 101-102).

### **3.3.4 Marriage and Family**

Marxism had offered a new way of approaching the root causes of sexism and appeared to suggest new strategies for change but in the concept of marriage and the family there remained a degree of haziness. Engels in the The origin of the family, private property and the State (1845) observed how the Marxist theory perceived the institution of family and the woman's role in marriage.

The concern of Marxist theory appears to focus more on woman's work related issues than on those of her status as woman.

Early descriptions of the family showed that before it came into being as a social institution there existed a primitive state in which "promiscuous intercourse" was most common. All women and men enjoyed freedom of sexual relations but gradually as a process of natural selection certain restrictions were placed on relationships with blood relatives. Fewer and fewer women were available to the tribal man and individual men began to enforce restraints on the 'free' relationships, individual men began to enforce personal possessions. Over a period of time the paired family, with one man married to one woman, came to be accepted as a social institution. Interestingly, Engels comments that early pairing societies were both matrilineal (with lines of descent being traced through the mother) and matriarchal (with women holding political and social and economic power). For the Marxist, or so holds Engels, the status of women derives from role in the household, which was the centre of production. As long as the centre of production remained in the home, she retained her position of significance. It was only when the centre of production itself moved outside the home with the coming of industrialization, the women's role became subsidiary to the man's. Man, as the holder of control through possessions such as cattle 'naturally' became the holder of power in the family. This superior status, says Engels, was also related to man's production of "surplus" in meeting the needs of the tribe. Thus the question of inheritance and bequeathing of possessions also assumed significance. Gradually, the work of men took on a greater importance and value of women's work within the home decreased.

Engels described this change as demoting the position of women in society because it reduced them to the status of slaves in the family and man assumed the bourgeois role while woman was the proletariat - the oppressor and oppressed roles having come into being. In the family women are perceived as of being oppressed with trivialized roles and unpaid labour.

It is important to understand these concepts for examining the Marxist approach to marriage. On account of the emergence of private property and patrilineage (line of descent from the father) Engels believed that the men imposed the shift to the monogamous family in which paternity could be ensured by insistence on one woman being loyal to one man only. Ironically, in the attempt to fix the paternity of their inheritors, men kept themselves free from the role of monogamy and the patriarchal society too did not require it from them.

Without sparing any bitterness Engels declares that a marriage in which the man insists on the woman's being faithful to him in return for provision of material

support can only be the "crassest prostitution" because the woman agrees to sell herself "into slavery once for all". This kind of bourgeoisie marriage is different from a proletariat marriage because the material conditions are different. That is to say there is no private property to bequeath therefore the insistence on monogamy is not strong and since the women are as much employed outside the home as the men, their status is more equal to that of the men. In this relationship Engels observes that there is a greater degree of "sex-love" and all signs of "material dominance" are considerably reduced.

In response to the descriptions provided by Engels, contemporary feminists have focussed attention on woman's work-related issues to the exclusion of concerns that impact on their status as women, their gender related questions.

Marxists Feminists argued that women's work has been trivialised and the only way to restore its significance was to demand wages for housework. The leaders of the "wages for house work" campaign, Dalla Costa and Selma James opposed the idea that women's work is not productive. Women's work, they stated, is in fact what makes other productive work possible and permits surplus production.

Contrary to this view, Margaret Benston argues that women are primarily producers and only later, at a secondary level can they be termed consumers because they are responsible for the production of "sample use-values, in the activities associated with the home and family" (Benston, Margaret "Monthly Review 21, No. 4 September 1969, P. 16 quoted in Tong, R, p. 53). Their work is equally difficult as that of others who sell their products. Benston believed that unless a woman was freed from her household duties she could not move towards liberation.

"At all times household work is the responsibility of women. When they are working outside the home they must somehow manage to get both outside jobs and housework done (or they supervise a substitute for housework). Women, particularly married women with children, who work outside the home, simply do two jobs; their participation in the labour force is allowed if they continue to fulfill their first responsibility in the home". (Ibid p.21).

Thus Benston stressed the need to socialize women's domestic work. The result may not be liberation of women from their household labour but it will bring an acknowledgement of the value of domestic work by showing how difficult it is. Consequently every woman will get the respect she deserves.

Unlike Engels, Della Costa and Selma James had asserted that woman was already in the productive work force because she made it possible for other productive work to be taken up. The difference was that she was not being paid

for the labour. Advocates of the (wages for housework) group declared that if women worked within the home, the state and not individual men (husbands, fathers, and boy friends) should pay wages because capital was ultimately benefited by the work extracted from the woman. Benston, with her theory of socialization of domestic work, similarly belonged to the Marxist tradition because she too saw woman's oppression as related to her domestic and social roles, and saw women as a class of the oppressed groups in society within the Marxist fold itself. However arguments have arisen against the 'wages for house work' ideal. The main focus of such criticism is that women are a part of a larger work force and their services are needed outside the household. By offering to pay a wage for housework the state would be commodifying women's relationships within the family. Women would be further isolated within the home with no incentives to step out of fixed sexual divisions of work.

Marxist approaches to women's status are uniform in their thinking that the women's struggle is a part of a larger class struggle. Some of the questions that emerge from such a perspective, however, are

- (i) Can just the abolition of private property improve the status of Women?
- (ii) How can an age-old institution such as the family, which has come down through different types of societies, be overthrown or done away with?
- (iii) What is the relationship between patriarchy and private property?

Later theorists who have built upon some of these questions argue from a different point of view about the status of women.

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### 3.4 SOCIALIST FEMINISM

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Socialist Feminists break away from Marxist Feminism in a fundamental respect because they argue that they have not laid enough emphasis on the fact that the oppression of women is by men. In Marxist Feminist approaches capital is perceived as being responsible for the condition of women in society whereas men are only "secondary oppressors". Closer analysis of the status of women has led Socialist Feminists to stress the fact that domination by class and gender are not identical. The condition of women and workers cannot be likened with respect to oppression, especially when we examine the status of wives and prostitutes, nor can any satisfactory explanation be provided for categorization of work place and home as specific areas for men and women respectively. Heidi Hartmann, a socialist feminist declares that Marxist Feminism is inadequate because it gives no clues about why particular people fill particular places. They give no clue

about why women are subordinate to men, inside and outside the family and why it is not the other way around". They give greater emphasis to workers' oppression than to women's oppression. Socialist Feminists argue that Marxist thought is, therefore, gender blind.

### 3.4.1 Class and Gender

In Marx's unfinished work Das Capital, he had indicated that capitalist societies were made up of three classes - wage labourers, capitalists and landlords. This categorization was based on the mode of production, which was capitalist. In his manifesto, however he distinguished a two-class model with the proletariats and the bourgeoisie. "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle", the Manifesto stated. Later Marxist scholars elaborated upon this idea and identified social class by the following three characteristics :

- (i) its relationship to the means of production
- (ii) its consciousness of a common exploited position in the process of production, and
- (iii) the political organisation of the group to take action on their own against the oppressors.

The Socialist Feminists, while they base their insights on the Marxists analysis of exploitation of a social group, go deeper into a discussion of the condition of women within it.

Eisenstein, a revolutionary critique of Marxist theory, looks for explanations in the exploitation and oppression of women in society. Although the economic conditions act as determining factors, the feminist approach emphasizes the patriarchal factor as continuing component of women's oppression. She believes that dual Marxist-feminist analysis is necessary in order to formulate a correct picture of the status of woman. In her words, "What we must do is begin to understand what class means for women.

"We must not just reexamine the way women have been fitted into class categories. We must redefine the categories themselves". (p 31). In doing so we would have to look at cross-class commonalties among women which relate to aspects of their lives such as reproduction, child rearing, sexuality, consumption and maintenance of the home.

The analysis of society by Marxist thinkers had taken into account only economic relationships and exploitation and oppression within them but the revolutionary feminist analysis of the social situation revealed that patriarchy

preceded capitalism and combined with capitalism to create conditions for a much more greatly oppressed class. The new feminism therefore is interested not just in studying economic power relations but also power relations of sexual and racial oppression. To quote Eisenstein, a dual Marxist-feminist analysis is necessary because, Exploitation speaks to the economic reality of capitalist class relations for men and women, whereas oppression refers to women and minorities defined within patriarchal, racist and capitalist relations. Exploitation is what happens to men and women workers in the labour force, women's oppressions occurs from her exploitation as a wage-labourer but also occurs from the relations that define her existence in the patriarchal sexual hierarchy - as mother, domestic labourer and consumer. Racial oppression locates her within the racist division of society alongside her exploitation and sexual oppression (p.22).

In the way the patriarchal society is structured, it determines the control, men will exercise over women's sexuality and reproduction. The differences of roles are assumed to be "naturally" given biological differences. We must re-examine, therefore, the way women have been put into class categories.

### 3.4.2 Utopianism

Utopia is a word, which was coined by Dr. Thomas More, and though it means a dream world, it also means "nowhere". Associating it with Feminist thought suggests that feminist thought has created a society so unlike the real society that it cannot exist anywhere. It is an unreal, unimaginable society in which nothing is as it is in this world. Roles are reversed almost as in a play or game. The Socialist Feminists, however, explain that it helps in describing an alternative society, a model society depicting the changes expected in the current society.

The element of this society that is invented woman's place in relation to society. It implies that reversal of women's roles will bring about change in personal identities, sexual relationships, family arrangements, childbearing customs, economic structures etc. Fuller participation of women in public life and in political and economic structures will also call for the inclusion of men in domestic spheres. In what she describes as an element of "visionary futuristic thought" Eisenstein remarks that women have not been given the opportunity so far to participate in public life and assume power, privilege and decision-making roles. When they do so, while there will be positive changes in social structures it does not necessarily follow that the women will be above corruption. Women being socially produced beings are equally capable of being corrupted by power.

The Utopian concept of a society in which women occupy positions of power and are liberated from their fixed domestic roles assumes that the change would be for the better and that men would also accept their changed status and roles.

### **3.4.3 Feminisatity and Masculinity**

Women centered approaches will inevitably re-describe concepts of masculinity and maleness while it attempts to sheld light on femininity. In the existing order of things woman was 'The Other' or different, alien and abnormal according to Simone de Beauvoir. With the re-drafting of the patriarchal tradition it is man who will become the Other (Gerda Lerner).

The critique of gender identity emphasizes female psychological development. As a result of asymmetrical child-rearing men and women develop different paths. While both sexes develop vis-a-vis a female person-the mother, the male child is more conscious of his identity as being different. The fundamental truth for him is 'I am "not-you"'.

Nancy Chodorow, in her writings on family structure and Feminine personality argues that it is father who "sex-typed" children and made them conform to what was called "gender-appropriate" behaviour. The men were "generically human" while the women were termed deviant or alien. The upbringing of the child was so taken up as to make the boy-child repress or reject the residual element of femaleness by denial of sameness with the mother.

Related to the notion of woman, as Other was the concept that science and scientific professions are 'male' and out of bounds for the female gender. Keller argues that this association is artificially imposed and a distortion. The relationship is now being recognised as outdated and baseless.

### **3.4.4 Division of Public and Private Worlds**

Socialist feminism, which arose out of Marxist feminists dissatisfaction with the "gender-blind" nature of Marxist thought, brings together the essential concepts in Marxist, radical and psychoanalytic approaches. Clara Zetkin, one of the co-revolutionaries of Lenin, was one of the first to discuss the division of public and private worlds. She believed that it was essential to study the degree and nature of oppression of women in the private and public domains. The categories described under Marxist analysis of society did not adequately explain why capitalism had assigned women to the household and men to the workplace or why women's work is subordinate to that of men. In the event of change taking place, the Marxists cannot say convincingly what will happen to the private and public domains.

The most, obvious manifestation of the division of labour in modern society is the division into public and private worlds. What constitutes the public or private world is, however, a matter that has been much debated. For instance, during the ancient greek era 'the economy' was considered to be part of the private sphere whereas according to the liberals and the Marxists it definitely belongs to the



'public' realm. The area, which un-contentedly belongs to the 'private' world, is that of sexuality and procreation. Some critics describe these elements as "natural" as against the "cultured" elements of the public world. Clearly therefore, procreation and sexual labour have long been perceived as the domain of women and woman has taken on the stamp of 'sex object' and 'mother'.

Further, very early in life, partly because of the above categorization, women's work is also gender-defined.

Radical feminists, in contrast, give a gender analysis of who will fill which places under patriarchy. The concept of society as patriarchal is therefore taken as a universal phenomenon and women's oppression through sexual harassment, rape, women battering, sati, purdah etc are condemned.

Psychoanalytic feminists also provide an analysis on the basis of gender to explain the private and public domains of women and men respectively. Their explanation refers to women's inherent gender identities and behavioural repertoires embedded in the unconscious by social conditioning.

Like radical feminism however, psychoanalytic feminism assumes that universalistic claims can be made without reference to social and cultural differences. Further, it does not show any material base for the oppression of women suggesting instead that the psychic structures are responsible for it. By this it exposes itself to criticism as being imagined rather than real.

### **3.4.5 Socialization**

Sociological perspectives of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century suggest that like the biological theory of evolution propounded by Darwin, there is a theory of social evolution. According to this theory sexual relations provide the clue to the nature of social relations. Women's biologically endowed reproductive capacity gave them a social status, which was "natural". The concept of the stronger males and weaker female members of society arose from such thinking.

Marx and Engels have posed a challenge to the idea that patriarchy was a preordained social form, arguing that early society was matriarchal and that the psychological desire of fathers to establish their paternity and to pass on property brought about the superiority of men. As for the mother-child connection was concerned, it was regarded as a 'natural' pre-social connection.

Thus Socialisation of the relations between men and women resulted in the construction of myths regarding biological differences and role perceptions. Juliet Mitchell pointed out that women's oppression originates in the home. While her

oppression at work is related to the "feminine psyche", it is in her position of subordination in her roles as wife, mother, housekeeper that she gets more constrained. The oppressed nature of the woman's role was found in the way her functions of reproduction, sexuality and the Socialisation of children were structured within the family. Her gender relations, in turn, were determined by the ideological constructions of society.

Emile Durkheim, who systematically studied sociological practices and defined the relations of the individual and society using the methods of science, argued that marriage and family were social institutions of rights and obligations that varied from one society to another. Further, though society depends on division of labour, he adds, the members are bound together by ties, which go deeper than external contracts entered into. Thus the general social experience of transactions governs their actions.

### **3.4.6 Exploitation**

Socialist feminism, is mainly an attack on the gender-blind character of Marxist thought, that is, its tendency to dismiss women's oppression as not significantly different from the oppression of workers. Unlike the traditional Marxists, the social feminists explain women's oppression in two different ways. Two common approaches are the dual-systems approach and the unified-systems approach.

Juliet Mitchell, in her book 'Women's Estate', expounding the dual-systems theory argued that both patriarchy and capitalism had exploited women but the exploitation of the women in the family was non-material and "bio-social" - the result ideas generated in society about the way in which women should relate to men.

In Mitchell's opinion, the ideological mode in which patriarchy exploits women and the economic mode by which capitalism exploits the worker are two separate spheres. For one, we need to use Marxist strategies and for the other psychoanalytic strategies. Capitalism should be replaced by socialism but the ideal alternative for patriarchy does not seem to be a matriarchal society.

Critics of the dual-systems theory, however, believe that the view of patriarchy supplies only the form of women's oppression being oblivious of historical change. But traditional Marxist theory supplies its content, specificity and modes of change. Ultimately, they say, it is reduced to a single-system theory, Marxism, in which capitalism is the primary cause of women's oppression. They argue that we need a socialist feminist theory to explain gender-biased capitalism. Iris Young criticizing the dual-system theory states that the "marginalisation of

women and thereby our functioning as a secondary labour force is an essential and fundamental characteristic of capitalism". (P.58).

### 3.5 RADICAL FEMINISM

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Radical Feminism essentially addresses the question of women's "highly elaborate" and "deeply entrenched" role in society and attempts to free them from the "cage of femininity". While discussing how sex and gender have caused women's exploitation the Radical Feminists describe ways of emerging from such a situation. Their solutions, which range from the replacement of male culture by female culture, include the introduction of concepts such as celibacy, auto eroticism and lesbianism.

#### 3.5.1 Paternity

One of the leading writers of this group of Feminists, Sulamith Firestone claimed that Patriarchy - the systematic sub-ordination of women - is rooted in the biological inequality of the sexes. "Sex class" is a class which the traditional Marxists have ignored, she declares. It is biologically different roles of men and women, their different reproductive roles, which led to the origins of the class struggle. She calls, therefore, for a biological revolution in her book The Dialectic of Sex.

Firestone called for the abandonment of patriarchal reproduction as well as capitalist production in order to explode myths of masculinity and femininity. Today such a biological revolution has become possible on account of a number of reproduction-controlling technologies, which gives to the woman a greater degree of freedom with regard to her gender role.

With the advent of reproduction-aiding techniques of artificial insemination by donors, contracted motherhood, etc., fixed sex roles will be eliminated. "If technology can eliminate the role of woman - the reproducer, it can eliminate the role of man - the producer"

In their criticism of traditional Marxist approaches, the Radical Feminists explain that Engel's explanation why men wished to pass on their property to their children was the weakness of his theory. It is the vice of possessiveness (here determined by paternity) that they wish to overcome so as to end a divisive approach to culture and hierarchy.

#### 3.5.2 Sexuality

One of the first radical feminists to elaborately detail the role of men rather than "society" or "conditions" in furthering women's oppression in gender specific

roles, was Kate Millett. In her work Sexual Politics (1970, she described the entire system as a "politically" determined power relationship which fixed male-female positions in society. As male control has caused women to be in subordinate positions under patriarchy. Millett argues that it (male control) must be eliminated to eliminate Patriarchy. But doing away with its impact on social status, sexual biases and social behaviour. In order to overthrow the patriarchal ideology, she must cast off her own femininity, that is, her role as submissive, weaker, subordinate member of society. The result may be harsh and may involve facing cruelty and barbarity, the resistance from patriarchy.

The society Millett visualized was a new society, which was unbiased with regard to sex and gender, and in which men and women were equals at all levels. Instead of men who are arrogant and women who are seville, she imagined a system where in one person would combine in himself/herself the complementary qualities of strength and compassion, which have traditionally been assigned to make the female characters.

Another essential domain in which the Radical Feminists object to the roles assigned to women is that of sexuality. Male violence against women is considered normal and legitimate in sexual practices but women are to adopt submissive passive roles.

The radical feminists believe that women will always remain subordinate to men unless sexuality is reconceived and reconstructed. Giving the example of pornography they show how it amounts to the international degradation and humiliation of women to men and makes a demand for legal measures to end it.

### ***3.5.3 Dialectical Logic of sex***

The apparently simple solutions suggested by the Radical Feminists, however, pose some crucial problems and give rise to contradictions. They argue that women need to give up their apparent monopoly on the power to give birth and shatter the original power-relation paradigm to reconstitute human relationships in such a way that there are no hierachical better-worse, higher-lower, stronger-weaker role assignee to one or the other member of society. But the elimination of the family and giving up of "possessiveness" over children not only makes women free but also creates man's alienation from the parenting role. How is women's oppression to end if women give up the only source of men's dependence on them ask some critics of Radical Feminism? Further, the liberation of women from the reproductive process may, instead of consolidating their power, result in their losing their claims and status in society.

### 3.5.4 Androgyny and Misogyny

Like Kate Millett, Marilyn Daly attacks the concept of gender. She predicts that the oppressive gender biases will give way to a radical feminism where a new being will emerge - a whole person, the androgynous person. In her book Beyond God the Father, She states that God, the supreme patriarch should be dethroned from the consciousness of men and women in order that women may become full persons. Polarized gender roles will be shed and traditional feminine traits will be re-interpreted without letting them border on excesses. The ideal 'person-hood' will develop from out of the rejection of earlier ideological constructs of patriarchy. Once "sexism is trumped, all other - isms will tumble down and the whole person, an androgynous person will emerge".

In her later works Daly argues more strongly against labeling asserting that "Famininity is a man-made construct, having essentially nothing to do with femaleness". (p.68). She adds that the ideal of androgyny is not acceptable to her because what is good for women is precisely what patriarchy has identified as evil for women. Building the concept of misogyny, she claims that the image of a "wild female" in the patriarchal terms is the woman who "actualizes her full potential". She calls therefore for a "transvaluation of values". Women must therefore spin out new powerful self-understandings apart from men and in direct contrast to their attempts to subsume women.

### 3.5.5 Motherhood

Aloison Jaggar describes the term 'mothering' as "any relationship in which one individual nurtures and cares for another". Though critics do not distinguish between biological and social motherhood it appears to be necessary to do so in order to clearly understand the position of Radical Feminists in this regard.

Patriarchal society advocated the woman's rearing of the child after giving it birth. Some Radical Feminists argue that this places an unreasonable demand on her physical and mental energies. Others however feel that it is a joy and satisfaction for a woman and she should not deprive herself of it.

Ann Oakley and Shulamith Firestone are two feminist thinkers who oppose biological motherhood. Oakley declares that motherhood is a myth based on the patriarchal notion that all women want to be mothers.

Psychosocial conditioning she says, and is not a feature of either the biological or mental 'instinct' of women strengthens the myth. Further, that children need mother is another social construct, which is disproved by the presence of any other caring individual.

Fiewaronw'arguments are stronger in tone than those of Oakley but reiterate the same idea - that mother hood is a cultural construct.

The second group of Radical Feminists supports biological mother hood. Adrienne Rich believed that though biological motherhood has been made out to be an institution under patriarchy and women must be liberated from its restricting influence, the experience of mother hood was a means for women to sence their potential. It was therefore very significant.

Despite the differences in their two points of view, Radical Feminists seem convinced that there is no form of biological motherhood, which can maintain a woman's priorities and not limit the range of her alternatives. Jeffner Allen declared that women needed to concentrate not on their power to have children but on their power not to have children. Unless women stop mothering, Rich adds, men will never learn how to mother.

Recently the Radical Feminists have focussed their attention on the idea of contracted or surrogate motherhood and argued that women's role even in these cases need to be eliminated from patriarchal traps.

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### 3.6 SUMMING-UP

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In this unit we have discussed the different theoretical approaches to Feminism. The theories have been examined with the primary focus of highlighting the sailent features in each and distinguishing one from another. The body of knowledge had not completely or exhaustively covered feminist theories in all respects. Further study and critical examination of the theories is recommended.

Further, as in the case of Marxist feminism and socialist Feminism there is a degree of inevitable overlap of ideas and beliefs that prevents a strict categorization of the features of each movement. Here, we have, for the sake of convenience, selected some of the major aspects in each approach and provided an over-view of the theoretical stance within the approach.

Feminist theory took concrete shape with the plea of the liberals for women's rights to vote and participate in the democratic movement. Arguing for the equality of women on the grounds of individual dignity, anotomy and self-fulfillment, the Liberal Feminists did not perceive women as essentially different from men in terms of their rationality or power to reason.

Marxist approaches to feminist theory held those reforms in the legal and political system as suggested by the Lberalists could only alleviate the problem for women but not change their status in society. For this the answer lay in the

economics of society and the power to participate in production. The family too, according to the Marxists, is a part of the economic mechanism. Thus Marxists theory attempts to explain social relations with reference to economic arrangements and women's oppression is grouped under the oppression of the social classes by capitalist societies.

Socialist feminists reinterpreted Marxist theory to include feminist actions outside the mechanics of capitalist distribution and production. In their feminist analysis of sex-class relations they captured women's situation within the dynamics of familial relationships as well as their professional environments. Radical Feminism examines the role of women "deeply entrenched" in social contexts that restrict them as women. They suggest that exploitation of women has taken these very shackles to emerge through a radical change into individuals in their own right.

While these theories may not of themselves influence women's situation it would be of use to study their impact on the development of a theoretical body of knowledge that can underpin action.

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### 3.7. MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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- I. Answer the following questions in 30 lines.
  1. Discuss the ideology of liberal feminism.
  2. Discuss the ideology of Marxist feminism.
  3. Discuss the ideology of Socialist feminism.
  4. Discuss the ideology of Radical feminism.
- II. Answer the following questions in 10 lines.
  1. Division of Public and Private World.
  2. Dialectical Logic of Sex.
  3. Femininity and Masculinity.

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### 3.8 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Barrette, Michele, 1980 rep. 1985, "Women's Oppression Today: Problems Marxist Feminist Analysis", London: Verso.
2. Dube, Leela, et al (Eds), 1986, "Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development", Delhi, O.U.P.
3. Eisenstein, Hester, 1984, "Contemporary Feminist Thought", London, Unwin Paperbacks.

4. Jaggar, Alison M., 1983, "Feminist politics and Human Nature", Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld.
5. Leacock, Eleanor, in Dube, Leela et al (Eds), 1986, "Visibility and Power", Delhi, O.U.P.
6. Nye, Andrea, 1988, "Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man". New York, Rout Ledge.
7. Ruthven, K.K., 1990, "Feminist Literary Studies - An Introduction", USA: CUP, 1984 Canto Edition.
8. Shah, Kalpana, 1984, "Women's Liberation and Voluntary Action", Delhi, Ajantha Publications.
9. Sydie, R.A., 1987, "Natural women Cultured Men: A Feminist Persoective on Sociological Theory", Milton Keynes: OUP.
10. Tong, Rosemarie, 1989, "Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction" London, Unwin Hyman.

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## **UNIT-4 : FEMINISTS PERSPECTIVES OF POWER AND POLITICS**

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4.4 Model Examination Questions

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### **4.0 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit you will be able to discuss what is

- \* Liberal feminism
- \* Radical feminism
- \* Marxist and Social feminism and
- \* Other perspectives

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit you have studied the different ideologies or theoretical approaches to feminism. One of the concerns of western feminists has been to understand the cause of women's subordination. The three ideologies - Liberal feminism, Radical feminism and Social feminism - differ in their analysis of the causes of the subordinate position of women and consequently in their action programmes. In this unit we will study about the feminists perspectives of power and politics.

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## 4.2 FEMINISTS PERSPECTIVES OF POWER AND POLITICS

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Feminists are the activists who demonstrate a commitment to improve women's position in society. Feminism is a comprehensive analysis of the nature and cause of women's oppression and proposals to end it. It is an integrated theory of women's place in contemporary Society for which the feminists are struggling hard to build up a new society.

It is difficult to understand feminism in its diversity, its differences and in its specificity. The diversity of representations of feminists has grown since 18<sup>th</sup> century. These analytical differences and the political differences, which spring from them, are the causes of division in the women's movement. Different forms of women's politics, fragmented as they are, have been called by the same name, feminism. Feminism is a concern with issues affecting women, a concern to advance women's issues and therefore anybody who shares this concern is a 'feminist'. Feminist can thus be established as a field, but it cannot claim women as its domain. That means all those who support women's demands or women's movement may not be called as feminists.

In the writing of feminist history it is the broad view which predominates that feminist is defined as an active desire to change women's position in society. It is a social movement for change of women's position in society. The identity between feminism and women's movement is, moreover, part of the self-image of contemporary feminism. The new movement of the 1960's was 'Second Wave', the continuation of struggle started just over a century before the new movement.

Mary Wollstone Crafts "A vindication of the Right of Woman" and John Stuart Mills "The subjection of women", are the two scholarly works dealing with movement. The writing of feminist history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century movement. Ray Strachey's "The cause" is an important contribution. It is the product of the mainstream feminism of the turn of the century and also an introduction to the subject. Its author was an active feminist, secretary to Mrs. Fowett and introduced

the word "Feminism" in the period between 1860 and 1920 and its meaning was 'advocacy of the claims of women'. She started her history on the basis of Mary Wollstone Craft, a feminist theorist and the other is Hanna More, Evangelical Philanthropist and educationist. Ray Strachey says that 'the ideal or the whole extent of the feminist ideal or the whole claim of equal human rights' are introduced by Wollstone Craft. Mary Wollstone Craft, articulated women's claims, needs and desires at a deeper level. Hanna More was a feminist and even criticised Mary Wollstone Craft and Hanna More as a conservationist in their approach. Ray Strachey did not accept Florence Nightingale, though she includes her 'Cassandra' in her work. She has not accepted Coroline Norton also as a feminist. Feminists are the leaders, organizers, publicists, and lobbyists of the women's movements.

Though feminists' image has been the creation of women's liberation, still unsolved problems connote the significance of the word 'feminism'. It is understood by feminists in the global situation as it is created for and on behalf of women, as a 'gender specific', "women are its subjects, its enunciators, the creators of its theory, of its practice and of its language".

Women's liberation movement started in the mid sixties. Feminism in England and North America has interacted extensively and the general political and economic involvement of the two countries is reflected. A very significant change, affecting woman in England is the steep rise in unemployment. Women increased their percentage in labour force from 33% to 40%. In England female industrial workers are thrown out of jobs because women are treated as subordinates. As Lenin said, the "proletariat cannot achieve complete freedom unless it achieves complete freedom for women".

*The social roots of feminism in the fifties and sixties are as follows:*

- (1) Social spaces within which members of an oppressed group can develop an independent feeling of worthiness.
- (2) Role models of people breaking out of patterns of passivity.
- (3) Ideologies that can explain the sources of oppression justify revolt and provide a vision of a different future.
- (4) It becomes impossible for the individual to "make it on her own" and escape the boundaries of the oppressed group.
- (5) Friendship network through which the women can lead the movement.

*The different Feminists theories are as follows:*

- (1) Liberal feminism
- (2) Radical feminism

- (3) Marxists and Social feminism
- (4) Psycho analytic and gender feminism
- (5) Existentialist feminism
- (6) Post-modern feminism
- (7) Multi-national and global feminism
- (8) Eco-feminism

#### **4.2.1 Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism has evolved from liberalism, a school of political thought. Alison Jaggar, in her work "Feminist Politics and Human Nature" observed that liberal political thought locates its uniqueness in human persons.

Liberal feminism has two streams of thought namely (1) Classical liberal (2) Welfare liberal. Liberal feminism goals are equality and opportunity.

#### **Liberal feminist thought in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Equal Education.**

Wollstonecraft denied that women are, by nature deriving more pleasure in doing traditional type of jobs like:

"cleaning the vessels,

My mother lost her hands too,

she is like a spoon,

she is like an oven,

she like an instrument,

she is like a flaming stove,

Restless creature,

Nobody helps her in kitchen.

But she is queen in the kingdom of the Kitchen".

Says Vimala a feminist activist in her poem 'Kitchen' (Vantillu) in Telugu about the work of a woman in the kitchen. She says that the work of a married woman is confined either to the kitchen or to the bedroom.

In the second stage, Friedman understood the difficulty of combining marriage, motherhood and career. That means in '1960's' that is "stay at home". Women should achieve perfection in two places, one at work place and two in the Home. Added to these two, if she is of sociable type, she has to suffer a lot. Life is an experiment, and she is expected to play a compromising role. Friedman expects men to realise this truth and like their wives, they too could become active participants in the web of familial relationship and weave their life together. Friedman reasoned that if men were confined to cama cages that women find themselves locked in, they would develop the same characteristics. Men, like women would become emotional and develop hypersensitivity. In her view any woman, if provided with the kind of education to develop her rational and moral capacities, her full human potential will develop. The perfectly educated woman will be a major contribution to society's welfare. She opined that, a woman strong in mind and body is not a slave to her passions. The plight of the situation is that a man treats his wife as less than a person, as some one exists not for herself but as an appendage to some one else; she forsakes her freedom and moulds other's personalities.

### *Liberal feminist thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

#### *Equal political rights and economic opportunities*

After a century, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Joined Wollstone Craft and insisted that to achieve sexual equality, or gender justice, women should be provided the same education that men enjoy.

The National Women suffrage Association forwarded a revolutionary and radical agenda for women, where as the American Women's Suffrage Association pushed a reformist and liberal feminist agenda.

### *20<sup>th</sup> Century Liberal feminist Agenda*

The women's liberation groups aimed at increasing their consciousness about the oppression as women's groups. In a "Feminine Mystique" Friedman wrote that in "in lieu of more meaningful goals these women spent too much time cleaning their already tidy homes, improving their attractive appearances and spoiling their obnoxious children". At this juncture what women needed was to find a full time meaningful work in the public space. That means, in addition to household work, a woman should develop her personality outside the four walls. As the feminist activist wrote about the kitchen in the poem which I mentioned earlier:

"I have learnt Kitchen work in the  
kitchen itself

My mother, my grand mother,

All the mothers transformed into womanhood

In the same kitchen,

My mother looks like a kitchen

she lost her eyes by weeping and

Her hands become weeping, powerless

She is not the first liberal feminist who found humanism attractive. Wollstone Craft, Taylor and Mill advocated human in community life.

Whether liberal feminists response monoandrogyny or polyandrogyny, however, they tend to agree a person's biological sex should not decide his or her psychological and social gender.

### Criticism

#### (1). Critique - I

Male and female differences are the products of culture rather than biology or nature.

Elshtain's critique of liberal feminists considered the second stage of Friedman as a Pseudo - feminist test.

#### (2) Critique - II

Women do not live by reason and autonomy alone.

Human beings are not satisfied with the routine things of eating and sleeping.

Woman is also a rational being and has the capacity to wonder, imagine and comprehend. Jaggar said that human interdependence is necessitated by human biology.

#### (3) Critique - III

Liberal feminism as racist, classist and Heterosexism. Friedman wrote her second book, 'Fountain of Age', in 1993. Liberal feminists do not claim that women must orient to love women more than they love men. Both of them should treat each other as equals.

Liberal feminists improved the quality of life for women. They still have work to do before all women get educational, legal and professional/occupational gains.

#### **4.2.2 Radical Feminism**

During 1960's and 1970's active women's rights groups wanted to achieve gender equality in educational, legal and economic policies. Their main goal was to achieve equal rights. In contrast, certain women's groups called themselves as revolutionaries rather than reformers. They wanted to participate in one or more of the radical social movements. They thought sex/gender was the primary cause of women's oppression.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a liberal feminist, a critique of Christianity said, "creeds, codes, scriptures, statues", all were based on the patriarchal ideal. Woman was subjected to man as inferior being to the society. According to Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenbery. Radical feminism was interpreted as:

- (1) Women are the first oppressed group seen from a historical perspective.
- (2) Women's oppression is universal.
- (3) Women's oppression is a deep-rooted and hardest form of oppression.
- (4) Women's oppression causes qualitative and quantitative suffering, but that suffering has no recognition.
- (5) Women's oppression provides a conceptual model.

After the emergence of existentialism, radical feminists are divided into two groups viz. Radical Liberal Feminists and Radical Cultural Feminists. According to Radical feminists, woman's reproductive and sexual roles are constraints for her full-fledged development of personality, woman wants to have her own life. Radical feminists rejected the idea of androgyny as a desirable goal for feminists. Some radical cultural feminists opine that male/female differences are rooted in nature.

Kate Millet felt that the roots of women's oppression are buried deep in patriarchal system. She expressed in her book; 'Sexual Politics', that male- female relationship is paradigm for all power relationships. According to Millet, patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between man and woman. Men have masculine qualities like dominance and woman have feminine qualities like subordination. According to Millet many psychologists and sociologists like D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailor (Psychologists) tried to assault the feminist ideas. In the late 1970's women realised their mistake and tried to create a new society with egalitarian order. (Thorough evaluation of all masculine and feminine traits was required.) Shulamith Firestone and other radical feminists felt that reproductive roles of men and women are responsible for their traits. Firestone stated that, sexual perversions freed from their gender roles at the level of biology,

women would no longer need to be passive, receptive and vulnerable. There is scope for men and women to mix freely and exchanging their thoughts.

Another division of men, women according to firestone was that science and technology were meant for men and humanities and arts were associated with women. That means men are objective, logical, extroverted, realistic, rational, pragmatic, mechanical and stable while women are subjective, intuitive, introverted, wishful, dreamy, emotional, temperamental and with aesthetic sense.

### *Some radical - cultural Feminist views*

#### *French and Daly*

Marilyn French attributes male-female difference more to biology than to socialization. She is a radical cultural feminist. In fact, in French's book, a form of androgyny emerges that suggests women's traditional traits are somehow better than men's traditional traits. French believed sexism is the model for all other isms, including racism and classism. French thought that early human beings lived in harmony with nature. They were considered to be small segments of a larger whole. Those were simple societies. Nature is a friend as sustainer of nature and reproducer of life. Woman was also a good friend as nature is. Human beings tried to control nature as far as psychological barriers. French claimed that feminine values must be reintegrated into the masculine society which patriarchal ideology has created. French said that we must treasure in our lives "love and compassion and sharing and nutritiveness equally with control and structure, possessiveness and status".

French androgyny involved a substantial reinterpretation of male/masculine traits. "Humanness" had been identified with a destructive, power-mongering masculine world in the past. French suggested it should be identified with the creative, power-sharing feminine world now and in future.

Mary Daly is a radical cultural feminist. She began her intellectual journey with her book "Beyond God and the Father". She rejected the terms "masculine" as hopelessly befuddled products of patriarchy. Daly also used the terms "masculinity", "Femininity" but these were used in different sense. Stripped of their femininity, Radical libertarian and Radical-Cultural feminists have different ideas about the gender as well as about sexuality. According to Ferguson, Radical-libertarian feminists are usually heterosexual feminists or Lesbian feminists. Lesbianism is the subject that divides Radical libertarian feminists from radical feminists. Since a woman does not require a male body to derive sexual happiness, she should not engage in sexual relations with a man unless she wants to.

Radical libertarian feminists also stressed that men are not Women's primary oppressors but it is patriarchal system. Not only radical - libertarian and radical -



cultural feminists have different views about sex, they also have different ideas about reproduction. Natural reproduction as the source of women's liberation was felt by some critics. Women should not give up biological motherhood for ex-uterogestation forever.

Radical - Libertarian and radical - cultural feminists thought about the motherhood of women and expressed their ideas for and against it.

#### *The case against Biological Motherhood*

According to Oakley's opinion, biological motherhood is a myth based on the three-fold belief (1) all women need to be mothers (2) all mothers need their children and (3) all Children need their mothers.

As Oakley saw it, each of these three assumptions is false.

#### *The case for Biological Motherhood*

Although Adrienne Rich agreed with some of Firestone's analyses, she criticized Firestone for condemning biological motherhood. According to Rich, Firestone was wrong to argue that female biology is necessarily limiting and that the only way to liberate women from this limitation is through reproductive technology.

#### *What makes a woman a mother?*

Genetic, gestational, rearing connections which are making a woman really a mother are important aspect of feminism.

The attention of radical - cultural feminists and radical - libertarian feminists has recently centered on surrogate, contracted, motherhood - an arrangement where a third party is hired and usually paid to bear a child.

In general, radical-cultural feminists oppose contracted motherhood on grounds it creates destructive division among women. One such division is between economically privileged women and economically disadvantaged women. Radical feminists disagree with radical - cultural feminists assessment of contracted motherhood.

If women want men to spend their time caring for children as women now do then women should not repeatedly remind men of women's special connection to infants. In that case, women should not stress the sympiotic nature of the maternal fetal connections?

## *Critiques of Radical-Libertarian and Radical-Cultural Feminism*

Non-radical feminists have some strong criticisms against both the Libertarian and radical-cultural feminists.

Elshtain urged radical-cultural feminists to overthrow the categories that entrap women in rigid roles. Roles are simplest definition that every man is an exploiter and woman an exploited and oppressed victim. She speculated that the absolute condemnation of patriarchy by radical feminists might be rooted in their fear that women may have certain common things with men. Radical-cultural feminists project the rejected qualities into men in order to shield themselves from the more awful parts of their personalities. It is a mistake that men and women are fundamentally different by nature or by nurture. Man encompasses evil; women advocate the concept of 'moral purity' which Victorian men used to keep women on high pedestals. These ideas should change from time to time.

Social feminists like Ferguson are correct in their view that women's sexual and reproductive desires, needs, behaviors, and identities are largely the product of the time and the place they occupy in history. They argue that

1. Neither hetro-sexuality nor lesbianism is either inherently pleasurable or dangerous for women.
2. Neither natural reproduction nor artificial reproduction is either inherently empowering or inherently dis-empowering for women. Male domination and female subordination are slowly losing their ground. If political empowerment, according to their proportion in the population were given, it would gradually set right the relationships between men and women.

### *4.2.3 Marxist and Social Feminist*

It is possible to distinguish between Marxist and socialist feminist thought, as the differences between these two schools of thought are more a matter of emphasis than of substance. Marxist feminists tend to identify classicism rather than sexism as the ultimate cause of women's oppressions. They are influenced by 20th century thinkers like Louis Althusser and Jurgen Hebermas. They insist that women's oppression is due to an intricate relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. They believe women's oppression is not the result of individual actions but are the product of political, social and economic structures of the society.

Marxists reject the liberal conception of human nature. Richard Schmitt insisted that "Human beings create themselves", but instead men and women and the rough production, collectively create a society which in turn, shapes them. For liberals, the ideas, thoughts and values of individuals account for change over

time. Marxists think, material forces, the production and re-production of social life are the prime movers in history. This is what is called the "historical materialism", the live wire of Marxist theory. Marxist feminists believe social existence determines consciousness. However, the Marxist feminists should understand why women are oppressed while men are not. We need to analyze the links between women's work status and women's self-image. For this we have to analyze her role in the family, work-place, in society which is definitely far superior to man's work. The family rests on her backbone. Child bearing and child rearing are the uphill tasks for anybody in the family. The work which she does is treated as unproductive and make her a subordinate human being at home.

Marxist feminists believe that women's work shapes women's thoughts and thus "female nature" is formed. They also believe that capitalism is a system of power relations as well as exchange relations. All fiscal transactions are fundamentally exchange transactions. In this context, capitalism is viewed as exploitative. The worker-employer relations can be looked at as the employer has superior power to the ordinary laborer. According to Marx, the value of any commodity produced for sale is determined by the amount of labour or actual expenditure of human energy and intelligence, necessary to produce it. Workers receive no compensation for the extra work they put in and the surplus will line the pockets of the employer. According to Marx, Capitalist ideologies lead workers and employers to focus on capitalism's surface structure of exchange relations.

### *The Marxist theory of Society*

Like the Marxist analysis of Power, the Marxist analysis of class has provided feminists with some of the conceptual tools necessary to understand women's oppressions. It is important to emphasize the dynamic nature of class. Classes are formed slowly through a long and complex process of struggling together about issues of local and national nature. In a capitalist society, workers are alienated from the product of their labour. They are alienated from themselves because they completely absorb themselves in work. They are also alienated from other human beings because there is an element of competition at every step in their job. They also are alienated from nature because of the kind of work they do. For a woman, however, her place is with the home. The effect of alienation of man's job acts on the lives and consciousness of woman and takes an even oppressive form. Man seeks relief from a woman but woman has no relief at all. Thus, Marxist feminists try to create their own world and experience themselves as whole persons.

### *Fredrich Engels : The origin of the family, Private Property and the State*

The fathers of Marxism took workers oppression more seriously than the oppression of women. Engels wrote "The origin of the family, Private property

and the State" in the year 1845. He explained that material conditions of people affect the organization of their family relations. In the primitive society group marriage was prevalent in which every woman was fair game for every man and vice versa. In monogamy, one man is married to one woman. These were first matrilineal but also matriarchal in which women played political, social and economic roles. The "domestication of animals and the breeding of herds" led to a new source of wealth to human beings. When men possessed more than the wealth required, the issue of inheritance took on major significance for them. As men's work and production grew in importance, not only women's work but also her status within the society decreased. Men possessed something more valuable than women did and they wanted to own their children and with a great effort transformed the society from a matrilineal to patrilineal one. As Engels phrased it, mother's right had "to be over thrown, and over thrown it was". This "over throw of mother's right" constituted the world historic defeat of the female sex". Men took control of the household reducing woman to become a "slave", slave of his carnal desire and a mere instrument for the production of his "children". Man, thus controlled the property and treated woman also as his property. So, the oppression of woman will cease only with the dissolution of the institution of private property. Male dominance, in the forms of patrilineage and patriarchy, is simply the result of the class division between the propertied man and the property-less woman. The family was based on economic conditions. Engels argued that the wives are to be emancipated from their husbands, women must become economically independent of men. i.e. "the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry" and secondly, the socialisation of house work and child-rearing. Engels believed proletarian women experience less oppression than do bourgeoisie women.

Marxist theory has little room for issues relating to women's reproductive and sexual concerns (contraception, sterilization, and abortion; pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment, rape, and women battering). Marxist feminists focussed on women's work-related concerns i.e. how the institution of the family related to capitalism, how women's domestic work is trivialized as not real work. The work of women - cooking, canning, planting, preserving, child bearing and child-rearing-was as central to the economic activity of the extended family as the workmen do. Her work became "non productive" in contrast to "productive", wage-earning man.

### *The Socialization of Domestic Labour*

The trivialization of women's work was not appreciated by Marxist feminists. Women were increasingly regarded as mere consumers. Marget Benston said that women are primarily producers and consumers secondarily. They are responsible

for the production of simple use-values in those activities associated with home and family.

Another important aspect is that equal access to jobs outside the home, while one of the preconditions for women's liberation, will not in itself be sufficient to treat women as equals. She takes up the responsibility of house hold duties and also the work outside the home and both will constitute a double workload. Benston said that the socialization of domestic labour alone rescue women from oppression. This is not for doing work outside the home but the value of it should be realized by the society. Oppression then will automatically come down. This socialization of private house keeping and tending children are the factors which will end oppression of women.

For this, Marxist feminists stressed the wages for house work campaign. Mariarose Dalla Costa and Selma James stated that women's domestic work is productive and useful, "creating surplus value". Many Marxist feminists are not supporting "wages for house work campaign". 1. This creates an atmosphere of alienation in the house. 2. By demanding wages for housework, the housewife contributes to the tendency of capitalism and to commodification. Man-woman relationship, child-mother relationship would be lost. 3. This gives scope to intensify her work and should like to confine herself to the four walls.

Working class women are exploited in their wage work as well as in their domestic work. They suffer more for sexism than middle and upper class women. 'Capital' is not only perceived in the work-front but also in domestic front. The person who drops out of the work should be female, in some cases women lose promotions to the higher cadre because man's employment is permanent in the sense, she is the one to retreat from the public work back into the private world.

The two reasons of Marxist feminists supporters are (1) assessments of feminization of poverty (2) assessment of values of women.

### *Criticism*

- (1) Marxist feminist remains committed to the core teachings of Engels. They still press for the full socialization of housework and childcare. They make women's economic well being and independence their primary concern and have focussed on the intersection between women's experience as workers and their status in the family.

Bethke Elshtain was particular about 'Public man' and 'Private Woman' concept.

- (2) Socialist feminism is largely the result of Marxist - feminists dissatisfaction with the essentially gender-blind character of Marxist thought, with the tendency of Marxist to regard women's oppression as far less important than worker's oppression.
- (3) Juliet Mitchell combined a materialistic or economic account of capitalism with a largely non-materialistic or ideological account of patriarchy. In her book, "Women's Estate", Mitchell abounded the traditional Marxist feminist position according to which woman's condition is simply a function of her relation to capital, of whether or not she is part of the productive work force. Convinced the cause of women's oppression are buried deep in the Herman psyche, Mitchell rejected the claim of liberal feminists that social reforms would make woman man' equal. She also rejected the radical feminists' theory that the reproductive technology is the key to women's liberation because purely biological solution cannot resolve an essentially psychological problem. Mitchel also rejected the traditional Marxist feminists that an economic revolution aimed at over throwing the capitalism order will make men and women full partners in action.
- (4) According to Iris Young, so long as Socialist feminists try to use "class" as their focus, they will not be able to explain the oppression of women in Socialist Countries. In her essay, "Beyond the unhappy marriage: a Critique of the Dual Systems Theory", Young provided a historical analysis of the gender division of labour. She traced the decline in women's status as they moved from a pre-capitalist economy into a capitalist one. Like Young, Alison Jaggar in her book, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature", identified 'alienation' as concept to accommodate the main insight of Marxist, radical and even liberal feminist thought.

Jaggar explained how childbearing practices ultimately alienate, or estrange, mother from their children. "She sees the child as her product", and try to do the work accordingly. Jaggar also explained how woman not only alienated from their intellectual capacities, she has developed insecurity in each and every thing and every one, including herself.

Marxist - Socialist feminists ask questions such as "does capitalism cause patriarchy or vice versa?" Another important question, "Do women, simply because they are women, see reality differently from men?" A woman's race, class ethnicity, age, sexual preference, physical conditions, or psychological conditions will affect her position in the feminist platform. The challenge for social feminists therefore, is to draw on the experiences of women, never falling prey to the temptation to valorise the experiences of the most oppressed group of women as somehow the

paradigm for what it means to be woman. The like minded women should begin the work and think together.

#### ***4.2.4 psychoanalytic and Gender Feminism***

Each of the schools of Feminist thought have provided explanations of solutions for women's oppression that are rooted either in the Societies, political and economic structures or sexual or reproductive relationships, roles and practices. French opined that masculinity and femininity are the products of sexual maturation.

Early feminist psychoanalysts such as Alfred Alder, Karen Horney and Clara Thompson all contended that women's gender identity, gender behaviour and sexual orientation are the result of biological fact.

Unlike psychoanalytic feminists, gender feminists are interested in the differences that distinguish the female psyche from the male psyche. Psychoanalytic explanations for women's oppression do not give a total explanation for female sub-ordination. Gender identity explanations for women's oppression are problematic. Women should not depend on men for their self-development. Men need the caring of women. Women should not neglect men, in the sense, they have to solve their problems in a steady manner. There will be chaos in the society; if all of a sudden women abandon the men who physically and psychologically depend on them. Women for centuries together are serving the needs of men. They develop attachment towards their husband and children. There are two types of caring in the society. As Shiela Mullett pointed out, the terms as "distortions of caring" on the one hand and "undisturbed caring" on the other. In a society where male domination and patriarchal values are prevalent and inevitability of female subordination, then there is no space for caring. Only under the conditions of sexual equality and freedom women care for men. They also need self-dignity, equality of status and economic independence in the society. Such ideal conditions are required for women to care for her husband and children.

- (1) She should have faith and belief to fulfil her duty, "the caring";
- (2) Her individuality should be respected and then there will be no limitations in her caring;
- (3) Reciprocity is essential in a family set-up;
- (4) The family should be one in which love and kindness are required.

This should be developed by mutual understanding.

Caring is the fundamental requirement of the family. It can be secured by friendship and mutual understanding. The atmosphere should be such where the members of the family can discuss thoroughly through conversation. As long as men demand and expect caring, so also women demand transparency and clarity from the members of the family. Then only caring can be genuine.

Dorothy Dinnerstein pointed out the first characteristic of current gender relations is men's greater sexual possessiveness. The woman fears the power of the mother within herself. She is in search of a man who can control her. Secondly a muted female eroticism is one oriented exclusively towards male pleasure. Through sexual intercourse, the woman seeks to satisfy the man but, woman's needs must go unattended. The idea is sexual excitement and personal sentiment must be tied together for women but not for men. In contrast to women, men are notorious for their ability to separate sex from intense emotional commitment. The fourth hall mark of current gender arrangements is that a woman is viewed as an 'it'. This is what is called as the commodification of a woman. The fifth characteristic according to Dinnerstein her body is powerful because it represents the forces of life and it is disgusting because of menstruation. The last point is that men are exposed to the world and they should go into the public world, whereas women should stay behind within the private sphere. Even Chodorow agreed with Dinnerstein with dual parenting. Like them many other critiques like Coral Billigam, Nel Noddings accepted some aspects of Dinnerstein and they also differed at several other points. Thus these critiques of Freudian theory did not accept fully his theory.

#### **4.2.5 Existentialist Feminism**

Margaret A. Simons and Jessica Benjamin interviewed Simon De Beauvoir before her death for the Journal of Feminist Studies. They both commented on the significance of her theoretical work, 'The Second Sex'.

Though there are certain limitations in her theory, like her focus on myths and images and her lack of practical strategies for liberation, still Margaret and Benjamin felt that her theoretical source stimulates feminists to analyse women's position. I was very useful to have a dialogue with her within feminist past, present and future. 'Second Sex' is a classic on feminist thought to understand feminism everybody should have a glimpse of this great work. The second sex is an application of being and nothingness to women's specific situation.

According to Simon Existentialism means that woman exists for the sake of man and so should be considered as sub-ordinate to him. There is oppression in



the world between whites and blacks, between haves and have-nots, between men and women. But women's oppression has two distinct features.

(1) The oppression of women is not a contingent historical fact

(2) There is a feeling in the society that man is an essential being while woman is non-essential. Although biologists, Freudian psychoanalysts and Marxist economists provide their answers to woman's otherness, "existentialist philosophers provided the best explanation for it.

De Beauvoir said "the enslavement of the female to the species and the limitations of her various process are extremely important facts. Civilization is more complicated and so the relations between men and women. She considered Freud's theory for woman's otherness as incomplete. The social status of men is not to be traced to certain features of the male anatomy, rather she called it as the "prestige of the penis", by the authoritative attitude of the father or man. Women are the other not because they lack male organ but because they lack power.

The other factor is that the activities of woman are quite different from that of man. Woman, because of her reproductive activity, is confined to the house. Her work, child bearing and child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, washing, all are considered as unproductive activities. Man's activities are hunting, fighting which are helpful to the means of production. Men will remain as "bourgeoise" and women the "proletariat". This will be continued until capitalism is overthrown and socialism is brought in. The girls after puberty are compelled to accept and internalize as shameful and inferior their otherness. This otherness is cemented in the institutions of marriage and motherhood. They are considered as objects.

### ***Critiques of Existentialist Feminism***

- (1) Jean Bethake Elshtain criticised De Beauvoir's "Second Sex" as not accessible to the majority of women.
- (2) The words like "immanence", "transcendence", "existence", "being for it", all these ideas emerged out of armchair speculation of De Beauvoir.
- (3) Elshtain did not like vocabulary used by the De Beauvoir of the body of woman.
- (4) Another criticism leveled against her was as she stated that woman's reproductive capacities rob her of her person-hood.
- (5) Elshtain also criticised De Beauvoir for celebrating largely male norms.

The problem with making woman's body the linch pin of woman's liberation

is that it mistakes a biological fact for a social fact. De Beauvoir recognised the legal, political, economic, social and cultural circumstances that restrain women.

#### **4.2.6. Post Modern Feminism**

The post-modern feminists are suspicious of traditional feminism so that they reject everything. They invite each woman to become the kind of feminist she wants to be.

Anglo-American feminists first referred to post-modern feminism as "French". Post-modern feminists are good at theory. Their goal is to write something on women. Their roots are found in the works of Simon De Beauvoir. In the opinion of post-modernists, 'otherness' is advantageous, in the sense, they can criticise the norms, values and practices of the dominant culture (patriarchy).

Post-modern feminists believe in deconstruction. They take a critical attitude towards everything that society regards as good, true and beautiful. Lacan Derrida took the ideas from post-modernists. Lacan said that we should go through three stages:

- (1) Imaginary phase
- (2) Mirror Phase - A normal stage of women's development
- (3) Estrangement Phase - estrangement between mother and the Child.

***Jacques Derrida was criticised by post-modern feminists.***

Irigaray claimed that women should experience themselves as something other than "Waste" or "Excess". Three courses of action are available. They are  
(1) women can create female language  
(2) women can create a female sexuality  
(3) women should take men's images.

#### ***Jacques Derrida***

Although post-modern feminists faulted Derrida for mystifying and romanticizing women, their purpose being

- (1) Logocentrism, Colloquial language
- (2) Phallo Centrism, the Primacy of Phallus
- (3) Dualism, the expression of everything in terms of binary oppositions.

A woman has become silent in the void between language and reality, now the time has come for her to emerge from this abyss.

### ***Post-modern feminism: Three perspectives***

Post-modern feminists are rejecting any label ending in 'ism' including feminism and post-modernism.

#### ***Helene Cixons***

She is a novelist experimenting with literary style. She contrasted feminine writing with masculine writing. Masculine writing is rooted in a man's genital and libidinal economy. This writing has reigned supreme over feminine writing. In the words of Ann Rosalind Jones, man has claimed "I am the unified sub-controlled centre of the Universe", and expected everybody to follow him. She urged women to write and she can change the society.

#### ***Lucey Irigaray***

She agreed with Cixons that feminine sexuality and the female body are sources of feminine writing. There are substantial differences between Cixons and Irigaray claimed that if woman want to experience themselves as something other than "waste" or "exces" in the little structured margins of man's world, three courses of action are available (1) woman can create a female language as forcefully as they eschew male language. (2) Woman can create a female sexuality and her sexuality is at least double and auto-erotic practice. (3) Women should take men's images of women and reflect them back to men in magnified proportions. If men view women as sex objects, women also should exhibit them, so that woman can liberate her life from the phallogocentric concepts.

#### ***Julia Kristiva***

Of all the postmodern feminists, Julia Kristiva is the most controversial.

Unlike Cixons and Ivagary, Kristiva restricted identification of the "feminine" with biological men. Culture is more upset when a man speaks like a woman and vice versa. Kristiva's main emphasis is on difference in general rather than sexual difference in particular.

The feminist movement has to realise that it is a white middle class movement that has worked to exclude other women. Thus, Kristiva endorsed those aspects of feminists movement that breakdown or render ambiguous identity, especially sexual identity.

### ***Critiques of Post-modern Feminism***

Some critics reject postmodern feminism as "feminism for academicians". Many eglitarian feminists like Simon De Beauvior, Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Firestone promulgated the view that there is nothing unique about women's nature.

Women's Subordinate status is nothing distinctive. It is the result not of biological but of cultural construction which can be changed.

But these egalitarian feminists made several mistakes.

- (1) They took "male achievements, values and standards" as the norms to which woman should aspire.
- (2) They minimized woman's specific needs and interests. As a result, women's struggle for gender justice became a mere movement in the struggle for human justice and feminism receded into the bowels of humanism.

Different feminists calibrated women's bodies, reproductive rhythms and sexual organs. What woman want is the right to be as free as man.

Rejecting the label of "essentialist". Most post modern feminists maintain the following aspects (1) woman as biological and social entities (2) the "female", feminine or other which are very important aspects (p.38.)

Despite all criticisms raised against post-modern feminism, it remains one of the most exciting developments in contemporary feminist thought. It seems, then, that men as well as women have much to gain by joining a variety of post-modern feminists in their celebration of multiplicity, women should learn to exist for themselves.

#### ***4.2.7 Multinational and Global Feminism***

The protagonists of this theory share with post-modern feminists a view of the self as fragmented. This fragmentation is cultural, radical and ethnic rather than sexual; psychological and literary. There are many similarities between the groups. Multi-cultural feminism is based on the insight that even in one nation, all women are not created equally. Each and every woman in any country depends on her race, class, age, religion, academic qualifications, occupation, marital status, health conditions and so on. Their experiences are different.

#### ***Multi-cultural feminism: An over-view***

In the west these feminists talk about the issues of race and class where as in countries like India we have caste and class issues. Different women expressed effectively their views on their unique position during the late 1980s and throughout 1990s. A valid feminist theory must take the differences among women seriously. It cannot claim all women are "just like me" or just like one person or the other.

Alice Walker described a black man's feelings as "what he has refused to see... is that where white women are depicted in pornography as "objects", black women are depicted as animals. Where white women are at least depicted as human bodies if not beings, the black women are depicted as slit". In degrading women, the black man degrades himself. He also helps set the stage for black women's sexual harassment. Black men, too, indulge in sexual harassment.

It is not the colour that is important. Anne Rungold, media director for the Democratic Party, stated - "both working class women and highly educated women put up with sexual harassment every day.....".

### ***Global feminism: An over view***

Global feminism differs from multi-cultural feminism because its focus is on colonial oppression and national policies and practices. On agreement with multi-cultural feminists, these people wanted to broaden to include all kinds of oppression. Global feminists wanted to widen the scope of feminist thought.

There is a gap between third world and first world women. The first world women are interested in political and social issues. But oppression more or less is equal in both types of women. Third world women do not appreciate the word "Feminist" where as they use the term 'Womanish'. The complaint of the first world woman is that the third world woman's minimization of gender discrimination. In spite of all the differences between the two, global feminists, all over the world, coming together to share their experiences, discuss their commonalities and differences as honestly as possible.

According to Charlotte Bunch, the two goals of global feminism are:

- (1) The right of woman to freedom of choice and control over their lives and bodies to ensure dignity, autonomy and self-respect of every woman.
- (2) The removal of inequality and oppression through just social and economic order. For global feminists, the personal and political issues are on the same plane. Reproductive freedom has the same place as that of political freedom. We should find that experiences or oppression of women are similar throughout the world. It is a universal phenomenon.

Maria Mies said "catching up development" is not feasible for the following reasons:

- (1) Inevitable distribution of human resources
- (2) Elimination of economic gap in order to maintain its power. Freedom, equality, self-determination depend on the control of wealth. In both the worlds, it is men who control money and power.

- (3) In a capitalist society competition is more because money and power are limited only to the rich.

The possession of material goods and power are equated with human happiness and definitely there will be antagonism and competition between the two (p.42).

- (4) From the perspective of global feminists, women should take the lead in devising, implementing the systems, structures, and policies and programmes which affect the transformation. Good life in their view is not rich but a life with power.

In Global feminism women have different priorities. In order to be global feminist, one must be first a multicultural feminist. Ethical relativism is a stumbling block for global feminist and this promoted some heated discussion between the two world's women. But this feminist relativism cannot escape all of its absolute tendencies.

Muti-culturalism and global feminism present a great challenge to feminism. The sisterhood of friendship and the sisterhood of political solidarity are an important one. A friend is a 'partner in virtue and a friend in action'. These kinds of friends the multi cultural and global feminists want to have are almost same.

#### **4.2.8 Eco-Feminism**

Like multi-cultural and global feminism, Eco-feminism is concerned with human oppression. Human beings attempt to dominate the nature, women are tied to nature. There are conceptual, symbolic, linguistic connections between women and nature. According to Karen J. Warren, the western world's basic values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions are that women are oppressed by patriarchal framework.

Warren opined that the patriarchy's hierarchical, dualistic and oppressive mode of thinking harmed women and nature. Women are "naturalized" and they are treated as animals. Man thinks that he is the lord of the nature as well as Lord of women. Radical-cultural feminists disagree with this view, Rosemary Radford Ruether said that woman's and nature's liberation is a joint project.

#### ***The Roots of Eco-feminism***

Rachel Carson wrote a book, "the Silent Spring" in 1962. She warned Americans that they should take care of the environment. Otherwise the contamination of air, earth, rivers and sea will shatter the whole atmosphere. The human-centered environmentalists provide reasons for respecting nature based on furthering the human interests, whereas so called earth centered environmentalists provide reasons for respecting the nature and the value of earth. Human-centered environmentalists emphasise the environment. We should protect

and safe guard all life forms. In spite of knowing the dangers, we sacrifice the environment in order to serve our interests.

Human-center or anthropomorphic environmentalism, sometimes termed "shallow ecology" was popular until 1940s, when a new generation of environmentalists forwarded and earth-centered known as "deep ecology".

Eco-feminism is a new philosophy or it is called 'Ancient Wisdom'. It is a new variant or ecological ethics. In fact, the term Eco-feminism first appeared in 1974 in Francoise d'Eau Bonne's Book *Le feminine on la Mort*. She expressed the view that there is a link between:

- (1) The oppression of women and Oppression of nature
- (2) Understanding fully the oppression of women and oppression of nature
- (3) Feminist theory and practice should include the ecological perspective.
- (4) Solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.

Male centeredness, Androcentrism, is the chief enemy of woman and nature.

### *Problems in Eco -feminism: To link or not to link women with nature*

Eco-feminists agree that the association of women with nature is the root cause of both sexism and naturalism. They disagree about women's connections with nature, whether they are (1) biological (2) psychological (3) social and (4) cultural.

### *The argument for serving the Woman -Nature Connection*

Simmone de Beauvoir urged women to "transcend" their links to nature in order to overcome their status 'the other' or 'second sex'. She speculated women's identity as other deprived partly from her biology i.e. her reproductive capacity and partly from her child-rearing responsibilities, woman's body as fundamentally alienating and her body does not permit her to contribute to any kind or creative activity which men have the opportunity to enjoy. Simmone de Beauvoir opined that women should become fully human in the same manner as men. The male-female dichotomy will not be bridged into wholeness. If women abandon nature, then it will become defenseless.

### *Sherry B. Ortner:*

According to Sherry B.Ortner, it will not be easy for women to disassociate themselves from nature. That women are much closer to nature is accepted by all cultures in the world. There are three reasons for the universality of this belief. They are:

- (1) Women's body nurtures huminity's future
- (2) Women's place is in the domestic context where "animal-like infants" are transformed into cultural beings".
- (3) Women's psyche fit for mothering functions.

In the opinion of Orthener,

- (1) Woman has middle status i.e. lower than man and higher than nature
- (2) Woman does the work of Socialization. Culture seeks to restrict women's sexual, reproductive, educational and occupational choices. Women's special psychology, domestic positions are responsible for her status in the society. If there is a change in the above said aspects, automatically change will come. Even if the rules are framed, laws are enacted, the conditions remain the same.

In general, Eco-feminists with a radical-cultural feminist background seek to strengthen rather than weaken women's connections to nature.

### ***Mary Daly: Gym/ecology***

Mary Daly moved towards Lesbian separatist feminism perspective. She began to reject male culture as evil and to embrace female culture as good.

According to Daly, woman must work hard to stop the patriarchal forces of necrophilia that is, of death. Most females have been seduced into co-operating with the "Phallogentric" system of "necrophilla" and have become men's "fembots". According to Daly "Spring" with in women should change the ecology.

### ***Sasan Griffin***

Sasan maintained that she was not an "essentialist" who believed in biological connections between woman and nature but she wrote: "We know ourselves to be made from this earth. We know this earth is made from our bodies and we are nature seeking nature with a concept of nature".

Griffin used poetry to challenge dualistic thinking instrumental rationality and unbridled technology. In 'women and Nature Griffin often spoke through the' voice of an animal:

"We are bird's eggs. Bird's eggs, flowers, butterflies, rabbits, cows, sheep; we are caterpillars; we are leaves of ivy and springs of wall flower. We are women, we are air, we are flames, we are oyster and pearl, we are girls. We are women and nature".



Emphasizing the links between men's ideas about nature and their attitudes toward women, Griffin saw similarities between men's domestication of animals and their "domestication" of women. Griffin suggested that the words used to describe a cow could be used equally well to describe a woman:

"She is a great cow. She stands in the midst of her own soft flesh, her thighs great wide arches, round columns, her hips wide enough for calving, sturdy, rounded..... the milk white of her eye, staring, trusting, sluggish..... who lays open her flesh, like a drone, for the use of the world". Nature has a value that cannot be reduced to her usefulness to man, unless there is going to be a revolutionary change in her attitude, exploitation cannot be stopped.

### *Spiritual Eco-feminists*

Among the Eco-feminists a variety of spiritual Eco-feminists are there. Prominent among them, Starhawk and Charlene Sprentanek. Spiritual Eco-feminists draw strength from a variety of earth-based spiritual ties. They tend to gravitate towards ancient goddess worship, "Earth-Mother" (Gaia) who are giving life and creating all that exists.

Starhawk stress the Women-nature link. In one of her poems she wrote that nature's and women's work are one and the same :

"As you're labour has become her labour

Out of the bone. Ash

Out of the ash, pain

Out of the Swelling, the opening

Out of the opening, the labour

Out of the labour, the birth

Out of the birth, the turning

Wheel the turning tide,"

Through their uniquely female bodily experiences ----- through her monthly cycle - woman supposedly come to know in a way men cannot, that human beings are one with nature.

Starhawk claimed the kind of earth-based spirituality, she practices as with Provides a good deal of the energy still left in the feminist moment. The second feature of earth-based spirituality has interconnection and the expended view of self it encourages. The Third important factor is the kind of compassionate life-style women typically lead. She claimed that unless we care for each other, we can forget about "reweaving the world".

The nature-culture dichotomy, indeed all dichotomies, must be dissolved so we can appreciate the "oneness" of reality. Dorothy Dinnerstern wants to end the oppression of everyone and everything currently devalued. In her view the core meaning of feminism lies in its relations to earthly life's survival.

### ***Karen J. Warren***

Karen J. Warren emphasized that the dualisms threatening to destroy us are social constructions. Feminism is as much a movement to end naturism as it is a movement to end sexism.

- (1) Feminism is a movement to end sexism.
- (2) Sexism is conceptually linked with naturism.
- (3) Feminism is a movement to naturism.

All forms of oppressions are inter locked and intertwined. Oppression is a many-headed beast that will continue to exist and regenerate itself until human beings manage completely to behead it.

### ***Socialist feminists***

Marxist feminism is inadequate for very different reasons. They believe physical labour as essential human activity that transforms natural, material resources into products for human exchange and consumption.

Marxist feminism fails to appreciate just how closely women's oppressions are linked with nature's oppression.

Warren observed that Radical feminism is inadequate because it "assumes the very nature-culture split that Eco-feminism denies." According to her, transformative feminism has six features.

- (1) It recognizes and makes explicit inter connections between all systems of oppression.
- (2) It stresses the diversity of women's experiences
- (3) It rejects the logic of domination
- (4) It rethinks what it means to be a human being
- (5) It relies on an ethic that stresses those traditional "feminine" virtues that tend to weave, inter connect, and unite people.
- (6) It maintains science and technology to extend to preserve the earth.

## ***Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva***

Like many global feminists, Mies and Shiva believe that women are more concerned than men about the elements: air, water, earth and fire.

There is "the flight into 'Nature' 'the wilderness', 'under developed'" countries of the South. The areas where white man ---- has not yet penetrated. In general, people in capitalist patriarchies have little direct physical contact with plants, the earth, animals and the elements. The mechanization alienates them from nature. Both Shiva and Mies, as socialist-transformative economists, believe that there are enough similarities among women to motivate to work together against capitalist patriarchy. In Shiva's poetry,

"Sister, it is fight to protect  
Our mountains and forests  
They gave us life -----"

The freedom to which Mies and Shiva referred is not the kind of Marxist freedom that required man to master nature and therefore women's body. All of us should recognise and accept our "naturalness", our physicality, materiality, carnality and morality. Mies claimed that people in capitalist patriarchies need to take ten steps to develop a subsistence life-style.

- (1) People should produce enough to satisfy fundamental human needs.
- (2) People should use as much of nature as they need
- (3) Representative democracy should be replaced by participatory democracy
- (4) Problem solving approaches should be developed.
- (5) There should be an admixture of science, technology and ancient wisdom and traditions.
- (6) People should breakdown the boundaries between work and play.
- (7) People should view natural resources as community resources.
- (8) Socialist transformative Eco-feminist view should be adopted.
- (9) People should cultivate traditional feminine virtues
- (10) All people should have "sustainable development".

## ***Critiques of Eco-feminism***

As there are so many varieties of Eco-feminism, no general critique is applicable. The fact of the matter, insisted Biehi is that the nature-women connection has been "enormously debasing to women".

### ***Spiritual Eco-feminism***

Critiques on the left fault spiritual Eco-feminists for substituting religion for politics and for spending too much time dancing in the moon light, casting "magic" spells, chanting mantras, doing yoga, meditation, giving messages to the people. Some people misunderstood genuine Eco-feminists to the above said things. But such mistakes were exception only. Worship of goddess was not at all "luxury spirituality", according to Mies and Shiva. Spiritual feminist should use "community-building techniques" and maintain harmonious relations in difficult situations of political engagement in the world.

### ***Social and Social-Constructionist Eco-feminist***

Social Eco-feminists deny women as "naturally" caring and nurturing products of Eco-acculturation and socialism.

### ***Socialist Eco-feminism and Transformative Socialist Eco-feminism***

Critics find the perspective of socialist Eco-feminists compelling and they suspect its demands are too challenging for ordinary people to accept.

### ***Conclusion :-***

These Eco-feminists believe that human beings are connected to one another. Unfortunately they do not communicate with each other so intimately and as a result they do violence to each other and nature too.

### ***The Status of Feminism in the Third World***

We have to raise some important questions regarding the feminism of the third world women's political struggles, which are necessarily "feminists" What is the chart of third world women's engagements with feminism?

Histories of third world women's engagement with feminism have not been explored in great detail. But, work is going on the "women of developing countries". This may or may not be necessarily on the questions of feminism. There is a substantial amount of Scholarship on women in liberation movements and on the role and status of women in individual countries. 'Third World Women', in terms of the underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism, and "over population" of the third world countries.

However, we have to understand the aspect how women in different Socio-cultural and historical locations formulate their relations to feminism. Feminist movements have been challenged on the grounds of cultural imperialism. These women have been engaged with feminism. In 1981, "This Bridge called My Back : writings by Radical women of color?" Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Analdua delineate the major areas of concern for a broad-based political movement of U.S. third world women:

- (1) How visibility/invisibility as women of color forms our radicalism
- (2) The ways in which these women derive a feminist political theory.
- (3) The destructive and demoralizing effects of racism in the world movement
- (4) The class, cultural and sexuality differences that divide the women of color;
- (5) Third world women's writing as a tool for self-preservation and Revolution
- (6) The ways and means of a third world feminist future. (1983, XXIV)

Aida Hurtabo (1989) discussed the significance of the idea "the personal is political", and she distinguished between the middle and upper class women with that of working-class women. Welfare programs and policies have discouraged family life, sterilization and armed disproportionate numbers of people of colour to fight its wars overseas. Hurtado introduces the contemporary liberal, Capitalists State as focus of activity for women of colour. Kumari Jayawardena in writing about feminist movement's (1) For equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the system (2) She said that these movements arose in the context of (a) the formulation and consolidation of national identities during independence struggle (b) They're making pre-capitalist and feudal structures and attempts to "modernize" their world societies. The common link between political struggles of women in India, Indonesia and Korea is the fight against racist, colonialist status for national independence.

"The third world women and the politics of feminism" is divided into two parts. Questions of definition and questions of context (1) the first part delineates the urgency to think feminist practis and theory within cross culture international framework (b) definitions and contests over feminism in the third world women. (2) Secondly, five provisional contexts for understanding third world women's engagement with feminism. The first three connote political and historical junctures: decolonization, national liberation movements in the third world, the consolidation of white, liberal capital within global economy. The last two sections focus on discursive contexts.

Women in the United States have realized more freedom than women in other

countries i.e. the third world countries. There are compelling inter locking relations between national liberation struggles, multi-national corporations and women's oppressions is worldwide - phenomena. National liberation struggles and feminism are two sides of the same coin. The U.S. women must boldly define a unifying perspective that integrates race, gender and class. As Amilear Cabral (1975) an African Scholar said that "we must build a society on a scientific basis", we can no longer afford to believe in imaginary things:

The song of factory women, in one stanza is as follows:

When we get our monthly pay checks,  
Our monthly worries mere grow,  
Most of it goes for some rice and the rent,  
Our private debts we still owe".

This indicates the fact the many working classes struggles being waged by women throughout the world. Women in the third world countries, continue to be part of the on going liberation movements.

In the first world countries, women continue to participate in all political fronts, from reproductive rights to union organizing, for social, economic, political, racial and sexual equality. Some women are using the terms "womanish" rather than "feminist". The participation of these women in defining feminism and setting a feminist agenda is often primarily a question of power.

Feminism constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interest of women from different regions, classes, nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. It is international, in defining, as it's aim, the liberation of women from all types of oppression in providing solidarity of women of all the countries. There is a broad base on which first and third world feminists must agree if feminism is going to solve the problems of women. The twin problems of racism and economic exploitation are the primary forces in the oppression of most women in the world. These women wherever they are whatever the country or class they belong to must view women's oppression in it's own context. Out primary goal is to get a human-centered world in which a challenging feminist perspective is very essential.

We have to accept the fact that there is universality in women's subordinate position in society. Western women think that they too have problems but, those are different from the third world women. Women wherever they are, they have to observe certain fundamental things :

(1) All women have to fight for equality and also for other rights

- (2) Feminism is not a reservation policy. It is a claim in which all women are to be involved.
- (3) Irrespective of the time and women are victims of male violence
- (4) It is a fact that women, to whatever degree it may be, are universal dependents.
- (5) All women, regardless of class and cultural differences, are affected by familiar system
- (6) Women's oppression is Global phenomenon
- (7) Women are powerless unified groups.

Women cannot represent themselves, they must be represented in all spheres of activity.

### ***Feminism in India***

Women's position is determined not by civilization or culture but, by the entire framework of society. The status of women does not reflect the prevailing intelligence of the society nor does it indicate the nature of economic life of the community.

"Patriarchal authority is based on male control over the women's productive capacity, and over her person. In 1791 Mary Wallstone Crafts Olampedigangas pronounced the Declaration of the Rights of women. Mary Wallstone Crafts wrote in 1792 'Vindication of the rights of women'. It became a part of feminist movement.

In Western countries women fought for their franchise and got their rights. In Switzerland women got their franchise in the 1971. In India, irrespective of caste, class, creed or gender, everybody got the right of franchise. In spite of the right to vote still women are deprived of their rights. This is because of the double standards of morality, a severe code for women as the preserver of social morals of society and an easier standard for the men whose fickleness and lapses are to be indulgently treated". In a society which tries to render women helpless chattels of men, 'a machine to reproduce children has brought out gender discrimination in India. In ancient India there was absence of rigidity and woman's right to her own style of life is reflected in the choice of the five puranic women; Sita, Mándodari, Draupadi, Tara and Ahalya. They are known as Pancha Kanyas. Sita being the wife of Rama was victimized and humiliated by her husband. In the end she proved her mettle and went away with her mother, leaving her sons and husband. Draupadi, alone became an example of polyandry in this country excepting some tribal families in north India where this system is prevailing. She showed Krishna (whom she considered as her brother) her hair and indicated the

humiliation in the court of Duryodana. Rani Rudrama Devi dressed like a man and ruled the Kakatiya Kingdom.

In 1892, the feminist congress took place and feminism became a universal way of life in many countries. In addition to these movements, the slogans of French revolution of 1789, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' and their impact was felt by all the countries of the world. This was in fact the first milestone in the history of women's movements in the world.

In 1990 AD the condition of Indian womanhood in general was at its lowest ebb. In 1939 AD the tide of political, educational and social honor for women has risen so high that India had 80 women members in its legislative councils of provinces and thus ranked higher among the nations of the world as regards the political influence and position secured by women.

Many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswara Chandra Vidya Sagar, Mahadeva Govinda Ranade, Pandit Rama Bai, Jyothibha Phule, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Gurajada Appa Rao and others worked for the cause of women and endeavored to eradicate social evils.

It was Gurajada Appa Rao, the Telugu poet, perhaps the first in India who declared that Indian women would write her history in future. That is precisely what is happening to day. Was Appa Rao a feminist writer? Watching from close quarters he grasped the issues involved in reform movements and combined them with his wide ranges of learning of the western literature and ideas condemned the patriarchal social structure and the domination of men. Love, compassion, insecurity of life and subordination were treated as the traits of femininity; valour, power, domination were the traits of men. Gurajada was one of the earliest writers who wrote about 'feminism', though in a vague form. His creation of female characters like Madhuravani, Venkamma, Buchamma, Meenakshi, Purnamma and Kayka reflected the ideology of feminism.

The plight of infant marriages and consequent widowhood, prostitution and the like formed the content of his writings. The century old Telugu play 'Kanyasulkam' (the bride price) is a living monument of his creative genius. All the characters depicted by Gurajada are the living examples of any society in India. Nagaratnamma of Bangalore gave her verdict on Radhika Swantanam written by 18th century Telugu poet Muddupalani. She questioned Kandukuri Veeresalingam, the social reformer for commenting Muddupalani's poetry. She was critical about Veeresalingam who said that Muddupalani being born in 'vesya family' shamelessly filled with crude descriptions of sex. "Indian women's sexual propriety, however was also to be vindicated .... described as the moral degeneration of Indian Society".



It is observed in general that men have criticized women's writings. Serious work on the tasks of writing feminist literary histories and anthologies and evolving a critical paradigm took place by the late 1970s. Presently many people critique the anthology short stories and novels in many Indian languages written by feminist writers. Feminism is yet to be understood in its right perspective by the Indian society.

Women's protest movements of the seventies have left us a host of questions about the nature of the social and cultural processes which determine the working of patriarchy in the daily lives of women. Even social legislation, which set out to improve the situation of women, was at times counter-productive. Both tradition and modernity are the carriers of patriarchal ideologies in India. These two are colonial constructs. "The ideologies of women as carriers of tradition often disguise, mitigate, compensate, contest, actual changes which are taking place. Social movements to change may be termed as 'democratizing' movements. We have to see that there should not be gender discrimination on issue of family, education, economic participation or other problems".

Patriarchies are still being reconstituted and the anti-woman practices should slowly vanish by the efforts of the social women activists of India. Given the uneven development of capital and our position in the wider global economy, we as women activists should educate the women and fight against these issues. In this context we have to be careful about the infanticide, 'CARA' Act and dowry deaths and the problems of sex workers in our country and also the prevalence of religious prostitution etc. Every woman in this country should take it as a challenge and wipe out the root causes of these social evils. Many more surveys and feminist research are the need of the hour.

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### 4.3 SUMMING-UP

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Feminism is defined as an active design to change women's position in society. Mary Wollstonecraft's "A vindication of the Rights of Woman" and John Stuart Mills, *The Subjection of Women* are the two scholarly works dealing with the movement. Liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist and Social feminism, psychoanalytic and gender feminism, existentialist feminism, post modern feminism, multi-national and global feminism, Eco-feminism are the broad feminist theories.

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#### 4.4 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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**I. Answer the following questions in 30 lines each.**

1. Discuss the difference between liberal feminism and radical feminism.
2. Discuss Multinational and global feminism.
3. Describe the ideology of Eco-feminism.

**II Answer the following questions in 5 lines each.**

1. Post modern feminism
2. Marxist feminism
3. Existentialist feminism

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#### 4.5 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Rose Marie Putnam Tong, 1988, "Feminist Thought", USA.
2. Simone De Beauvoir, 1988, "The Second Sex", London.
3. M.R. Raju, 1941, "Sex and Socialism" Bombay.
4. Sheila Rombbotham, 1983, "Women's Consciousness Men's World" New York.
5. Nancy Colt, et. al., 1986, "What is Feminism" A re-examination, New York.
6. Mary Woollston Craft, 1982, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women", London.
7. John Stuart Mill, 1982, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women", London.
8. Sara Evans, 1981, "Personal Politics", New York.
9. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, 1997 "The Feminist Reader", USA.
10. Chandra Talpade, Mohanty, Ann Russo, Lourdes, Torres et al (eds), 1996 "Third World Woman and The politics of Feminism", USA.

11. Elaine Marks and Isabel de Courtivron, "New French Feminists", New York.
12. Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, "Women's Writing in India" (Two Volumes) 600 B.C. to the Present, New York.
13. G.M. Guddeford, 1967, "Women and Society", London.
14. The Advancement of Women, United Nations meet for Notes for speakers (Beijing Conference).
15. Acharya Modali Nagabhushana, Kabtyasykam, Sharma and Sanpadak Nyrekus sanakicganam Dr. Atekuri Prasad
16. Rendu Vyasalu, Dr. Datyayani Vidmahe Kanyasulkam - Kutumba Vyavastha
  - 1 - Olga
  - 2 - Kanyasulkam - Feminism
17. Kamkum Sangari, 1989, "Recasting Women", New Delhi, Sudesh Vaid.

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BRAOU

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**BLOCK - III : POLITICAL PARTICIPATION  
OF WOMEN**

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BRAOU

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## **UNIT-5 : INDIAN SOCIETY AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION**

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### **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The main aim of this unit is to bring out the Socio-economic and cultural factors of various periods in India's past history, which helped or hindered the participation of women in political activities. Important factors during the ancient, medieval and modern periods will be highlighted. The unit will also bring out the nature and importance of women's political participation in modern India in terms of their participation at various levels i.e., as voters, as contestants, as legislators and as executives (decision - makers). There is also a discussion on women's role in local-self-government and the recent trends made therein.

- After going through this unit you will be able to discuss the
- \* Socio economic & Cultural factors which helped the participation of women in politics during ancient, medieval & modern periods in India;
  - \* Importance of participation of women in politics;
  - \* The role of women in local self government.

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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Women's contribution to politics is not as much recognized as their contribution to society or culture. Both in the west and in the east politics are predominantly a male-world. Politics belongs to the public world of men whereas women's primary role is at the 'Private' sphere, i.e., the home. Men are producers and women are basically confined to reproductive roles and the maintenance of the race. Several social and cultural norms, beliefs and conventions resulted in this situation. However, in India, with the dawn of independence, women are constitutionally recognized as political participants on par with men at all levels as voters as contestants for public offices. The parliamentary structure that India has adopted created its own infrastructure of parties and factions and women are called upon to fit into these new roles. As a result, there emerged a rather complicated situation of society and culture inhibiting women in taking up political roles and the polity offering them new opportunities for public participation outside their homes. Though all the major political parties talked highly about their commitment to women's causes, in practise the participation of women in formal political process has both quantitatively and qualitatively been very low. The recent constitutional amendments specifying reservations for women on local bodies' holds forth renewed hope for women's recruitment into the political system on a vast scale. However there has been increasing participation of women in non-formal political activities like voluntary action, pressure groups and Socio-economic movements.

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## 5.2 SOCIO - ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS

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### 5.2.1 Women's Socio-Economic and Cultural Status-Ancient India

The attitude of the people towards women has a great social significance in any society. The attitude of the Hindu society towards women in ancient India can be understood from various Vedas, Sastras and Puranas. It is seen that during the Vedic period, so far as education was concerned, the position of women was generally not unequal to men. Many women were described as philosophers like Visuavara, Ghosha, Lopamudra, Sisvathi, Apala, Sikata, Nivauari and Juhu - is a testimony to the fact that women had similar educational background as men. Similarly, the Satapatha Brahmana informs us that woman was regarded as an



equal sharer with man of the responsibilities and duties in the home and a man without woman was considered as "inadequate". But in the same Brahmana there is another passage which shows that women are intellectually inferior to men or more emotional and less rational than men, and they lack the ability for balance of mind and depth of reason. The Ramayana holds forth the image of the ideal woman in the form of Sita. We also have other ideal women like Ahalya, Draupadi, Tara and Mandodari who are known for their purity as well as capacity for counseling and guiding men on religious and social issues. However in the Puranas, in Mahabharata (Anusasana parva) Bhishma says at one point that woman is the root of all evil and naturally is temptress and lurer - in another instance he says women should always be adored and treated with love. Manudharma says on the one hand where women are honoured there the Gods are pleased and on the other hand he says that she should always be under the control of a man, father, husband or son. On the whole, except in the role of wife and mother women in general were not acknowledged any independent status. The dual forces of benevolence and malevolence, Shakti and Prakriti come out strongly in the understanding of women in ancient India.

The dichotomous perception regarding women is brought out very vividly by Manu. He felt that it is in the nature of women to seduce men. Women, according to him, can lead astray not only the ignorant but also the most learned men and hence cautioned men to sit in a lonely place even with their own mother, sister or daughter. The same Manu also says that a true householder should respect his mother who is more venerable than even the father. One who casts off his mother to pay a very high penalty of six hundreds Panas, and such a man should never be invited. The same Manu described women as personifications of purity. According to soma (the Moon) gave them purity; Gandharva (The celestial Musicians) gave them cultured speech; Agni (The God of Fire) has granted them freedom to eat anything; hence they are pure as gold. Women are incomparably pure (Pavitram); they are never defiled; their menses destroy all their blemishes, is what Manu said at some places in his writings.

It is true that in the early Hindu India the woman could freely avail herself of Ashrama Vyavastha in the same way as a man did. Later, women along with Sudras were not taken into account so far as the management of life through the Ashrama stages is concerned. Along with this we must also remember that Vatsayana, Sukra-Niti and the Mahabharata mention a scheme of education in the sixty-four arts for women. This implies that generally speaking, both men as well as women should be educated but the content of education was conceived along different lines for men and for women and women were not expected to undergo the hard and vigorous life of the Ashrama discipline like boys but to stay at home and pursue studies - at least until marriage. This is as far as Brahmacharyasrama is concerned.

The Grihasthrama is a joint Ashrama for both the man and his wife; and here also the content of the Ashrama discipline and the modes of behaviour prescribed are naturally bound to be different for the two parties, though generally speaking they are considered to be equal partners in the home. The Vanaprasthasrama and the Sanyasasrama do not seem to be meant for women, probably because of the hardship involved in these, though here too, we have instances in very early literature of women who led the life of Sanyasinis. The woman is also denied many of the Samskaras like Upanayanam. The explanation offered in support of all this seems to be that the lives of man and woman after marriage were considered as one and the woman could never be thought of independently of married life. But then in this connection, questions of perpetual widowhood, absence of divorce and absence of a public career for woman are issues very difficult to answer. These are the ways in which women were viewed as 'Goddess' on the one hand and as Seducers on the other hand. No wonder their life was restricted to the protective shelter of the home and public career was something that was considered to be beyond capabilities.

### ***5.2.2 Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors-Medieval India :***

From 500 B.C. to the Muslim period, the position and freedom of women declined considerably and they sank into a state of subservience. During the early medieval period, upto 1200 A.D. some women of the upper strata received considerable education, some of them distinguishing themselves in the field of scholarship. But this tradition diminished with the establishment of the Muslim rule. In spite of the fact that the Turks had brought their own heritage and women of the royal families took active part in political and social life, the life-style of women in general deteriorated considerably. But in the medieval period, some of the great women are mentioned in the history of India. Their names are Didda - The queen of Kashmir, Razia - The Queen of Delhi, Chand Sultana, Rani Durgavathi, Nurjahan, Jahan-Ara, Zeb-un-Nissa, Tara Bai, Rani Lakshmi Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal.

Feudalism struck roots during this period and women came to be regarded as part of family property and came to be considered as second grade citizens in all walks of life. A limited number of women did play an indirect role in statecraft as mothers, wives or concubines but generally women's role in Socio-economic matters was considered insignificant.

### ***5.2.3 Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors-Modern India.***

The social and economic deprivation of women was at its highest level as modern era dawned. The patriarchal, commercial and materialistic onslaughts on the society have only helped further deterioration in the status of women. Women's

contribution was invisible and unrecognized and this led to the development of low self-esteem among women themselves. The reform movements for women, inspired by western liberalism were initiated by men, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Maharashi Phule and others in the 19th century and early 20th century. These were born out of the same ideology as the nationalist movement. These received new fillip with the concept of Stree Shakti given by Gandhi who reinterpreted Hindu texts and drew our women in large numbers to participate in the freedom struggle. The activities of women in the nationalist movement again brought forth the strength of women-power and encouraged society to take their grievances seriously. The women won support for their cause by linking freedom for women with freedom for India. This also helped the introduction of the issue of sexual-equality into national debates. In the beginning the movement for women's uplift was based on elitist approach concentrated on the acceptance of women's right to formal education and improvement in her social and economic status. Progress achieved in women's literacy by the beginning of the 20th century raised the consciousness among educated women and led to the emergence of women's organizations like All India Women's Conference. The demand for enforcement of women's surface was presented in 1915 by women's delegation headed by Sarojini Naidu to the British Parliament. By 1926 women started entering the provincial legislatures. In 1929 and 1935 women exercised their franchise. In 1937, 42 women from reserved constituencies and 8 from general ones got elected.

#### ***5.2.4 Women in Post-Independence India***

By the time India attained independence the changes had come about were that women's right to vote was recognized and they were allowed to get involved in legislative and executive activities of the state. Given the stratified nature of the Indian society these were open only to the elite sections of the Indian women who were educated, urban and of high caste origin. The inauguration of the Indian constitution in 1950 provided legal and constitutional sanctions against discrimination of women. article 14 ensured equality before law for all citizens while Article 15 prohibited discrimination based on sex in public employment. Article 16 guaranteed equality for all irrespective of sex in public employment. Article 15 further permits the state to make special provisions for advancement of women.

Besides these, there have been acts of Parliament passed from time to time to improve the status of women in society. The Hindu marriage Act of 1955, Hindu succession Act of 1956 Dowry prohibition Act of 1961 and the equal remuneration Act of 1976 are some acts in this direction. The Government has also been making serious attempts to bring about a common civil code for the entire country. It is widely recognized that political participation by any section of people depends

upon the basic educational, social and economic status and women are considered to be lacking in all these aspects. As a precondition to their development in the field of politics, their educational level and Socio-economic status are to be improved. The report on the status of women which is commissioned by the Government of India in 1974 has brought out vividly that the developmental efforts of the state have not filtered down to the level of women because of Socio cultural constraints and they remain poorer, less educated and less powerful. For the empowerment of women there should be all out effort to bring women on the political scene. The emergence of women into decision-making bodies of the country is considered as the only guarantee for which efforts have been made by the state agencies, Political parties and other organizations to facilitate the entry of women into public life on a larger scale.

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### **5.3 WOMEN IN POLITICAL PROCESS-ELECTORAL PROCESS**

#### **- FORMAL POLITICAL PROCESS**

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#### **5.3.1 Parliamentary System-Importance of Elections**

In 1950 India has come out with a political system akin to that of its colonial master i.e., the British. The Parliamentary system of government calls for a competitive electoral politics among the people by which the majorities emerge and form governments both at the state and central level. Elections in India are described as the only national festivals when all eligible voters are called upon to their representatives. In fact we cannot even conceive of a parliamentary democracy without the conduct of elections. Though elections are derided as a "number game" no alternative mechanism has yet been devised to ensure representation to all sections of the people. It has to be admitted that in terms of their numerical strength as voters women always had a secondary place compared to their male counterparts". The percentage of women among total number of voters has always been lesser than their percentage in total population. The gap between male and female voter turn out has slowly been declining over the years. While the gap was 17.9% in 1984. Polling booth fear of violence, lower levels of mobilization and cultural norms as factors determining voting levels and women are adversely situated in all these aspects.

#### **5.3.2 Women as Contestant**

The number of women contestants in parliamentary elections has not increased significantly over the years. Political parties seem to be reluctant to field women candidates-inspite of their public statements in support of women's participation in politics. The high cost of electioneering is another cause, which deters women. One of the major factors for women's entry into active politics is family and community support and their ability to make their domestic life secondary to public

participation. It is in this context that majority of the women who enter into active politics as contestants are related by kinship to political personalities and families as daughters, wives, daughters-in-law or close kin. It is in very rare cases that political parties attempt to project women without political background though they are accomplished in other areas of life.

The highest number of women to contest and win for Lok Sabha was in 1984, the year when Congress (I) also had the highest number of seats and voting percentages. Among other non-congress parties including the Left parties, the women contestants form a very meager percentage. Though all political parties talk about 30% reservation for women, the practice always has been different since the chances of winning are considered to be lesser for women. Socially and culturally speaking the costs that a woman politician had to pay for facing the hubbub of competitive politics are very high indeed. Hence the gap remains wide between precept and practice. The following table illustrates the picture of women's electoral participation clearly.

**TABLE**

Number and percentage of seats contested and won by woman during the UN Decade (1975-1985)

| LOK Sabha |             |       |         |       | State Assemblies |             |        |         |        |
|-----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|------------------|-------------|--------|---------|--------|
| Year      | Contestants |       | Elected |       | Year             | Contestants |        | Elected |        |
|           | Total       | Women | Total   | Women |                  | Total       | Women  | Total   | Women  |
| 1977      | 2439        | 70    | 542     | 19    | 1977             | 17282       | 408    | 2852    | 74     |
|           | (2.87)      |       | (3.5)   |       |                  |             | (2.36) |         | (2.59) |
| 1980      | 4620        | 142   | 542     | 28    | 1970-80          | 17826       | 420    | 2590    | 117    |
|           | (3.07)      |       | (5.16)  |       |                  |             | (2.35) |         | (4.51) |
| 1984      | 5315        | 164   | 528     | 42    | 1982-83          | 8656        | 241    | 1530    | 44     |
|           | (3.08)      |       | (7.95)  |       |                  |             | (2.78) |         | (2.87) |

(Source; Women's Participation in Politics ed. by Susheela Kaushik, IAWS, 1993)

### 5.3.3 Women in the Legislature

The notion of participatory democracy calls for the presence of all sections of people in legislative bodies. The percentage of women in parliament as well as in state legislatures has all along been low, mostly in single digits. This is obvious since their participation as contestants itself is low. The political behaviour of

these women in legislatures also is usually dictated by the policies of the party which they represented. Once in the saddle as legislators women are found to be active in attending and actively participating in the business of legislation. They have been giving useful suggestions such as having a national commission for women, having women judges, family courts and special courts for hearing cases of dowry deaths.

#### **5.3.4 Women in the Executive**

Despite the general depressed picture of women's role in Indian politics there have been a number of women in key positions of power. India is one of the very few nations, which had woman Prime minister in Smt. Indira Gandhi. However, women holding portfolios as ministers have never been more than 8. The ministries assigned to them are usually considered as low ranking dealing with cultural affairs or welfare ministries. Women are usually not considered for portfolios like Home or Defence and are preferred to play roles, which are complementary to their private roles as providers of childcare and family welfare. The following table throws light on the above discussion.

**TABLE**  
Number of women ministers, (including Deputy Ministers and Ministers or state) in the Union and states since 1952.

| Year    | No. Of Women Ministers<br>In The Central Govt. | No. Of Women Ministers<br>in the States |
|---------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1952    | 3                                              | 5                                       |
| 1957    | 3                                              | 12                                      |
| 1962    | 5                                              | 21                                      |
| 1967    | 5                                              | 10                                      |
| 1971-72 | 3                                              | 18                                      |
| 1977    | 2                                              | 22                                      |
| 1980    | 8                                              | 5                                       |
| 1984    | 5                                              | 10                                      |
| 1989    | 1                                              | --                                      |

#### **5.3.5 Women's Political Participation - New Definitions**

Both in the western and in the eastern social traditions women have been excluded from the field of politics. The earlier sections of this chapter showed

how from the latter part of the ancient history, women have been gradually confined to their domestic roles without many opportunities for self-development beyond their homes. Aristotle, the father of Political Science in the Western tradition has equaled women with slaves who do not even attain citizen-ship. Liberals like J.S. Mill did speak of freedom and rights to women but it was more in a reformist sense than with a motive of empowering them. The socialist and the Marxist writings brought out in clear terms origins of patriarchy, like the writing of Engels on the "Origins of Family" but the practicing socialist systems either in U.S.S.R. or China failed to translate their concern into action by according equality to women in letter and spirit.

New issues have been raised by modern writers regarding the propriety of participatory democracies, which in practice do not provide equal opportunities to women i.e., 50% of the population in their functioning mechanisms. The participation studies India and elsewhere concentrate mostly on women's political participation at the elite form I level, viz., parliament, state legislatures or political parties, that too in terms of their numerical strength. A satisfactory account of politics, as well as a comprehensive picture of women as participants calls for broadening the definitions of political participation. There is need to include politics at the local and community level, protest activity and the functioning of women's organizations, all of which leads ultimately to affecting the political system and the process of politics the report affecting the political system and the process of politics. The report "Towards Equality" in 1974 gives the following definition of political participation. "It is necessary to attempt a definition of political participation which is broader than the conventional one. It includes a gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political processes including voting support of political groups; communications with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities. Besides social relationships, there are some spheres of power relationships, which are generated, and institutionalized. They are used to encourage control of people's behaviour, attitudes and beliefs in specified directions. It refers broadly also to activity by those not formally empowered to make decisions, these activities being mainly intended to influence the attitudes and behaviour of those who have powers for decision making. In fact, protests and demonstrations against those in power also form part of political participation. Women's participation has covered a range of activities including protests and support meetings on all issues connected with labour, dowry, rape, domestic violence, price-rise, adulteration and definition of political participation defines the political sphere as 'sphere in social relations where power relations are generated, institutionalized and used to encourage control or move people's behaviour, attitudes, beliefs in specified direction to control and regulate distribution of resources. Thus political sphere has been

extended to include a wide variety of agencies : from government, economic, social and cultural institutions like family”.

Western writers have defined political participation as essentially a part of modernization process in the context of a developing nation. In the context of women in our country, political participation in this sense is constrained by Socio-cultural factors like caste, religion, status, class etc. The visible indicators of political participation that are normally looked into are attendance at public meetings, taking part in protest activities, membership of political parties, voting and contesting in elections and occupying decision-making bodies. But it is to be noted that gender equality is a pre-requisite for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure. Non-formal public participation by women's is treated a social in nature and is under-estimated. However the growing awareness levels among women and their entry in social and economic movements are undoubtedly a 'unique' way of political participation. By its slogan 'personal is political', the feminist movement through out the world has tried to redefine political activity as such.

#### ***5.3.6 Women's Role in Local Self-government :***

Decentralization is the heart of democratic political development. By its very definition, democracy is for the people and by the people as Abraham Lincoln said. Decentralization basically means establishment of local self-government bodies and facilitating decision making at local level. This results in voluntary citizen participation and need-based development programmes. Especially in a country like India with its variety and diversity centralized decision-making results in unbalanced and lopsided development. Democracy is said to function only in the local bodies in the real sense of the term because people who are affected by public policies do participate in decision making process also at the local level.

India has a long history of local-self-government in some form or the other. The local administration of Cholas was of great historic significance. In modern India, during the British period, the Mayo accord and Rippon accord have laid the foundation for local self-government in India. However, the colonial masters have ruined local development by neglecting the small-scale industries and traditional crafts. In post independence India, Article, 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, embedded in India's constitution makes it mandatory for the government to develop local bodies. The community development programme initiated in 1952 has not picked up momentum even after fifty years. The Balwantarai Mehta committee appointed in 1957 has stressed the importance of decentralization and suggested a three-tier system of Panchayat Raj. The Ashok Mehta Committee in 1977 has suggested a 2 tier Panchayat system.



It has to be confessed that Panchayat system during the last forty years has not resulted in realising the Gandhian dream of Gram Swaraj. Undue delays in conducting elections for these local bodies, financial bankruptcy state control and more than all lack of effective representation to weaker sections and women were some of the major draw-backs of Panchayat Raj in India. Because of their illiteracy and social subordination, women could not play any significant role in local bodies. Local politics is very often full of group and factional rivalries and caste and communal issues pervade the local elections. Though in terms of accessibility, local bodies are closer to women and local issues are more comprehensible, the Socio-political system as it exists rarely allows them to contest and get elected. Even those who are elected act only as proxies to the males in their families and hardly know what is going on in local bodies to which they are members. Many studies conducted on women in local politics show that their awareness levels are very low and their participation is only token.

### ***5.3.7 Women's Role in Local Self-Bodies - Recent Trends***

Since 1975 there has been an all - out effort by the Government as well as non-government organizations throughout the country to bring more and more women into the mainstream of public life. It is realized that one of the primary reasons for the slow pace of development is neglecting the 50% of India's population - namely women. Besides improving their education, cultural and economic status, it is of great urgency that their participation in public decision - making institutions is increased. In 1988, the National Commission for women has suggested 30% reservation to women in all political institutions - from Panchayat to Parliament. It is in this background that the historic 73rd Amendment to the India, constitution has been passed in April 1993. The provisions of this Act are compulsorily to be implemented in all the states of India. The main aspects of this Act are that the three-tier system of Panchayat Raj is to be created in all the states of Indian federation, holding of regular elections and meetings and creating the office of election commissioners. The Act is of historic importance in the context of empowerment of grassroot women. In all the three levels, 33% of the seats are reserved for women. This will lead to around 8 lakhs of women flooding the local bodies in India. Around 75000 would be functioning as Sarpanchee, 1700 as Samithi Presidents and around 150 as Zilla Parishad Chairpersons. Even in municipal bodies women should fill 1/3 of the offices and this applies to Chairpersons of municipal councils and the Mayors of Municipal Corporations also.

This is considered as a silent revolution leading to major structural changes in the India Political Scenario. Though women's contribution to the Socio-economic and cultural development of the nation has been acknowledged, their participation in and contribution to politics has not been considered as significant.

Especially lack of literacy and economic dependence coupled with the social and cultural system as it obtains, women on their own are not able to get into the hubbub of competitive politics on par with men. The new constitutional provisions will however prepare a more welcome ground for women to enter into politics on a larger scale. Women's organizations and other voluntary agencies should leave no stone unturned to equip the rural women with skills in administering local affairs. What is more important is raising the level of their awareness and self-confidence. The very presence of so many women in public bodies is hoped to bring about positive changes in the very culture of politics. The violence and competitive factionalist may hopefully give way to a more peaceful and co-operative process of politics when Indian women bring in their feminine skills of tolerance, persistence and human sensitiveness into the mainstream political culture.

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#### **5.4 SUMMING - UP**

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The primary role of women was in the private sphere. They were basically confined to reproductive roles and the maintenance of the race. After India achieved independence women were constitutionally recognized as political participants on par with men at all levels. Women are participating in a number of political activities. Political sphere is defined as a sphere in social relations where power relations are generated, institutionalized and used to encourage control or move people's behaviour, attitudes, beliefs in specified direction to control & regulate distribution of resources.

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#### **5.5 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS**

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**I Answer the following Questions in 30 lines each.**

- 1) Discuss the Socio-cultural factors that hindered the political participation of women in medieval India.
- 2) Discuss the Socio-economic & cultural factors that hindered women's participation after independence.

**II Discuss the following in 15 lines each.**

- 1) Social factors and political participation of human.
- 2) Economic factors and political participation of human.
- 3) Cultural factors and political participation of human.

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## 5.6 RECOMMENDE BOOKS

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1. Government of India, 1974, "Towards Equality" Report of the Committee on the Status of Women, New Delhi.
2. Kaushik Susheela, "Political Participation of Women", New Delhi.
3. Ramchander M. and Lakshmi, 1993, "Women and Politics", Hyderabad, Book Links Corporation.
4. Chopre J.K., 1993, "Women in Indian Parliament", New Delhi, Mittal Publications.

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## **UNIT-6 : WOMEN IN POLITICAL PROCESS**

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- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Indian Women in Political Process during Pre-Independence Era.
- 6.3 Indian Women in Political Process during Post Independence Era
- 6.4 Women's Movement After Independence
- 6.5 Organizations Working for Women's Political Empowerment
- 6.6 Reservation for Women in Parliament.
- 6.7 Summing-up
- 6.8 Model Examination Questions
- 6.9 Recommended Books

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### **6.0 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit you will be able to discuss.

1. About political participation of women before Independence and after Independence
2. About the organisations working for empowerment of women.
3. Reservation for women.

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### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The role of women in sharing and shaping a country's policies can be described as participation of women in the political development. It also means the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women and their significance in the society.

The Indian Constitution guarantees political equality through 'adult franchise'. Article 15, of the Constitution prohibits discrimination inter-alia on grounds of gender. Apart from the socialist countries, perhaps no other state in the world had given women the status of equality with the exception of India. It is a radical step in the political evolution of our country.

In the U.S.A, and U.K., women conducted serious political struggles and acquired the right to franchise. Many other countries followed suit in the post-

second world war period. However, Switzerland granted franchise to women only in 1971. With regard to India two factors acted as catalysts in the achievement of political equality for women. They are :

- (1) Women's participation in the freedom struggle
- (2) The leadership of Gandhiji

Gandhiji declared that he will not compromise in the matter of women's rights".

### ***Status of Women in Politics***

The position that Indian women occupy today is the result of the earnest endeavour on the part of social reformers, educationists and political leaders during the 19th and early part of 20th centuries. They ushered in an era of dynamic changes that effected positively the status of women. The political subjugation for two centuries resulted in the people's determination to throw off all the schedules of bondage. India gained her political freedom and emerged as an independent sovereign, democratic Republic. The principle of equality was made an integral part of the objectives of free India.

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## **6.2 INDIAN WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS DURING PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA**

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The advent of the British marked an entirely new phase in Indian society. The colonial domination paralysed the country in all respects. The alien culture that was introduced deprived the nation of its natural mode of self expression. It damaged the country emotionally and spiritually. The economic changes initiated by the British primarily aimed at the exploitation of the natural resources of India. The introduction of a new system of education through the English Medium created a wide gap between the elite and the commoners. The social reform movements concentrated mainly on problems concerning infant marriages and bride-price etc., since these social evils deprived women of their moral leadership and economic partnership. They instead encouraged women's education and widow remarriages. Before the reform movements started women were made socially weak, economically dependent and politically powerless. They were troubled by caste and economic difference. In the process, women in general became dehumanised and their natural faculties neglected, which led to a decline in their talents and skills. With perfect impunity the basic rights of women were grossly violated.

Gandhiji, during the national movement, uplifted women from their predicament. He presented community life as single canvas. To achieve the desired

goal, there had to be a revolutionary change. He wanted to bring about the changes through 'Sarvodaya'.

He firmly believed that the duty flowing from the tradition of dharma alone will succeed in the end. To put it in his own words "a new edifice with a new pulsation and fresh rythm replacing the old". However due to the far reaching poltical developments after 1947, the hopes of the Sarvodaya society dashed to the ground.

Women with the middle class background had the resilience to adjust to the new environment. Women's organisation started gaining ground. The participation of women in social and political movements, though in a small measure, increased. Some adventurous and committed women even participated in the revolutionary movements as couriers, distributors of revolutionary literature, risking police repression and imprisonment. It is necessary to note here, that such women as mentioned above came from the affluent or middle class urban back ground. Gandhiji's comments are significant in this context. "Woman is the companion of Man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the same right of freedom and liberty as he has ... by sheer force of vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women, which they don't deserve and ought not to have". He further said that, to become a leader in Satyagraha, women require not the scholarship but a stout heart".

Women who spent their lives for ages behind purdah came out to fight orthodoxy and superstition, responding to the call of Gandhiji. Women of different communities, different walks of life came forward to join the freedom struggle as campaigners, protesters, demonstrators, and constructive social workers fighting against social evils and oppression. Some educated women came together to spread literacy and self-reliance among people. Several events proved that without the participation of women, freedom struggle would not have been so successful. On April 6th, 1930, during the salt satyagraha, thousands of women marched to the sea with pitchers of clay, brass, and copper; to make salt, violating the British law. Thus, they became Militant rebels and got the approbation of Gandhiji who said "the part the women played will be written in letters of gold". Women who were mostly unlettered and un-trained displayed remarkable bravery. Along with salt-Act they attacked forest law, obnoxious taxes and regulations. Women young and old, rich and poor came out of their hearths and homes in large numbers and fought for their mother land. Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, wrote in his Autobiography : "There were these women of the upper or middle classes, leading sheltered lives in their homes, peasant women, working class women, rich women pouring out in their tens of thousands in defiance of government orders and police lathis". Nehru was surprised not only at their display of courage but also their

organizational power. It was at the Karachi Session (1931) of the Indian National Congress, the historic decision was taken committing itself to the political equality of women, which was later enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Montague reforms of 1919 did not live up to the expectation of Indian political leaders. Subsequently, there were great uprisings such as Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the Non - Cooperation Movement etc. The British were unwilling to grant franchise. Women led by Sarojini Naidu, the women leaders represented their demands before the parliamentary committee in London. The provincial legislatures that came in the wake of the 1919 act granted franchise to women- women participated in the elections. But the franchise was limited to tax payers, though it was extended to educated women later.

As stated earlier women in large numbers participated in Salt-Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi's successor who led the salt raid was a woman by name Dharasana. In the south Smt. Rukmini Lakshmi pati who was arrested led the Salt Sathyagraha. Elderly women leaders inspired the younger women to start 'Vanarasena'. It was originally started in Bombay where the active role was played by women like Kisan Dhumarkar, Kamala Devi Chatopadhyaya. Similarly, young girls were organised by Rameshwaramma at Madras and Indira Gandhi at Allahabad.

Some other prominent women participated in the movement were Jayasree Rajaji Hansamehta, perin Captain, Joshiben, Leelavati Munshi, Maniben Patel, Mahtre sisters and others. They declared that "every yard to foreign cloth brought into India tightened the noose around the necks of Indian weavers. Therefore the foreign cloth should be discarded. The British government declared picketing as illegal and picketers were arrested. Nevertheless, the movement continued and nearly 17000 of convictions were made of women only.

The police oppression was let loose. Women were bundled into police vans and were left in the jungles to frighten them but all these measures were in vain. The shop keepers of both cloth and liquor sympathised with women and closed shops in protest against the British repression. Women were treated shabbily in prison. There were no minimum comforts for them in the jails. However, all these measures did not deter women from their resolve. Shelter was provided secretly to the Satyagrahis; but they were persecuted on grounds of abetting illegal activities. Mothers of the new born babies gave them names like "war babies", "princes of the Prison", "Lord of the struggle" and "victory". These babies belong to the entire community and were mothered by all. The prison life united them all irrespective of differences of religion and caste.

As part of this struggle several camps were organised all over the country to give political training to women. The resolution of Karachi session of Indian

National congress was very significant and emphasized that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of sex. By the close of the freedom struggle women, irrespective of class or caste became entities in the political world. The 1935 act increased the strength of enfranchised Indians and relaxed the qualifications also. After Independence, the Indian Constitution pledged to achieve justice based on equality and dignity of the individual. Those can be secured by means of equal legal and political rights of women. This, it is hoped, end the problems like poverty, illiteracy, illhealth and inequality. Also it would end the exploitation in the name of patriarchal values. That women are favourably responding for this is indicated by the following :

- 1) Willingness to participate in the political process
- 2) Political attitude play significant role in determining political behaviour, their level to awareness, commitment and involvement of women in politics. The autonomy that they enjoy in this context is the yard stick of their political status.
- 3) When we consider the role of women in the political process, it can be stated that the political rights are only an instrument to achieve the other goals. This can be judged by looking at the women view of their own role efficiency in the political process the society's attitude towards them. This indicates their role in the elections, the efficacy of pressure groups and their place in the respective political parties and the government.

Patterns of political behaviour from different regions showed different relationship influenced by inter - related factors like the social status of women, their economic position, cultural norms, and the over all regional outlook towards candidates from different regions are obviously not related to the level of poll participation, literacy, economic and social position of women in that particular region. We have to examine as to how far women have done justice to their political rights conferred by the Constitution. Even now, the participation of women in the political process is negligible. Muslims and tribal women show a lower level of participation both as voters and candidates. Women of scheduled urban and rural women's political participation. There is a strong feeling that the political parties have neglected their task of politically educating and mobilising women adequately.

An important factor to be noted is that majority of women candidates come from relatively well to do families, that too from families with fairly long traditions of political participation. They are educated and are articulate, have a better perspective of politics and have continued in the struggle for power through several successive elections. Another deterrent to women's active participation as candidates is the increasing expense of elections. Such people have to be backed



by a political party. The other obstacles are the threats of violence and character assassinations which have increased now.

The levels of awareness vary from region to region, from class to class and from community to community. This is conditioned by the political parties towards women. There is no positive relationship between higher socio-economic status and the degree of awareness. By and large, politics constitute a peripheral interest for women from high socio-economic status and generally women legislators come from an affluent background.

Generally women are concerned with problems that affect their day to day lives like price rise, non availability of essential commodities, hoarding, black-marketing, adulteration, unemployment and poverty. They are disillusioned with the political process because of the corruption and inefficiency in political circles. Women are more sensitive and cannot relish corruption, favouritism in and nepotism prevalent in political circles. They are convinced that the political parties are not in a position to solve their problems like (1) unemployment and poverty (2) rising prices (3) corruption and (4) law and order.

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### **6.3 WOMEN IN THE POLITICS IN POST INDEPENDENCE ERA**

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After the advent of independence, for sometime the involvement and commitment of women in the political process was noticed. There was unity among women on political, economic and social issues and the involvement of women in all the issues concerning the nation. At present, that commitment is absent and hence the women's participation in politics is very less.

The percentage of successful women candidates for the Lok Sabha has been declining steadily from 33% in 1962 to 21% in 1971.

A state - wise comparison of successful women candidates for the Lok Sabha shows that the number of successful candidates has been greater in U.P. Bihar, M.P. and Andhra Pradesh. As per percentage Karnataka was the most successful state.

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### **6.4 WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

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As we have observed earlier, there was women's movement in India which began to take organizational shape from the early part of this century. The emphasis of this organisation was more on equal opportunities for women. It gave tremendous importance to education. The women demanded universal compulsory primary education for all children. A wing of the Indian Women's Conference had

setup Homes for the care and education of destitute children, some of which took permanent root. The biggest campaign was for a change in laws. All these enactments have come into vogue. The vast of women, who had poured into the freedom arena, had slipped back into their old grooves. Even the women leaders who got the power and position had no link with the wide mass of women, who are approached briefly before election times. Democracy and welfare state have real meaning only where people at large are sensitised to their rights, duties and obligations. Women, as citizens, cannot be isolated from the entire society.

It is generally known that there is a close relationship between literacy and political awareness. The difficulty about the Indian political scene is that we cannot generalise and say that any single factor leads to a particular type of political behaviour. It is closely associated with the women's status, their economic position, the cultural norms and overall regional outlook towards women's participation in the society. Only during the 1971 elections we found women held 17% of the total seats. Otherwise women have never exceeded 4%

#### Women Contestants for the Lok Sabha

| Year of general election | Total Seats Contested | Number of Women Contestants | Percentage | Elected | Percentage of Winners |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 1                        | 2                     | 3                           | 4          | 5       | 6                     |
| 1962                     | 491                   | 65                          | 13         | 33      | 50.6                  |
| 1967                     | 515                   | 66                          | 13         | 28      | 42.4                  |
| 1971                     | 518                   | 86                          | 17         | 21      | 25.9                  |

If we consider the figures from 1952 to 1991 about the contestants and the women elected to the Lok Sabha we find as follows:

#### Women Contestants To Lok Sabha

| Year | Contested | Elected |
|------|-----------|---------|
| 1952 | 43        | 22      |
| 1957 | 45        | 27      |
| 1962 | 70        | 34      |
| 1967 | 69        | 34      |
| 1971 | 86        | 22      |
| 1977 | 70        | 19      |
| 1980 | 149       | 28      |
| 1984 | 164       | 44      |
| 1989 | 198       | 27      |
| 1999 | -         | 46      |

This shows that even though some women contested in the elections, very few of them got elected. Male domination still exists in the society and also the indifference of political parties in giving them nominations. States where women's position is a relatively low, have a record of higher number of women candidates seeking elections for the Lok Sabha or for State Assemblies, and is in no way comparable to their proportion in the population.

The reasons being :

- (1) Over all development or lack of it such as literacy rate.
- (2) Change of attitude among men with regard to women's political participation.
- (3) Attitude of political parties towards women's participation.
- (4) Women's own perception, both in urban and rural sectors, that their role is confined to household duties and rearing of children. That means domestic duties prevent them from participation.
- (5) Muslim and tribal women still show a lower level of participation as voters and candidates.
- (6) There is a general consensus that political parties have neglected their task of politically educating and mobilizing women adequately.
- (7) Politically socialization usually comes from families with fairly long traditions of political participation.
- (8) Increasing expenditure in elections also is one of the factors.
- (9) Women are afraid of threats of violence and character assassination.
- (10) Levels of awareness vary from region to region, from class to class and from community to community and women are conditioned greatly by the political culture of the area.
- (11) Political awareness varies with the level of modernization in a particular area, with concomitant factors such as literacy rates, education and exposure to society and mass media.

It is the need of the hour to encourage greater involvement of rural women in decision-making at all levels. The central issue is the relationship of women's movement with the political process of women. That means creating space for women to come to the forefront and occupy the positions of leadership. With the perspective of the transformation of existing Socio-economic and political conditions, the movement for empowerment needed to effect all these changes.

The much acclaimed political participation of women before independence did not translate political power into the hands of women after independence. Now and then we come across women occupying prestigious positions of power like Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Sucheta Kripalani, Durgabai Deshmukh, Jaya Lalitha and others. Similarly there are instances like Indira Gandhi, Benzir Bhutto, Sirimavo Bandaru Nayake, Chandrika, Margerate Thatcher and others occupying positions. It does not however mean that empowerment has descended upon women in general. They are only exceptions and not a general rule.

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## **6.5 ORGANISATIONS WORKING FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT**

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We have in our country, Women's Commission, an organisation at all India level working for the empowerment of women. The other all India Organisations are All India Women's Conference; All India Democratic Women's Association; Young Women's Christian Association of India (Y.W.C.A) National Federation of Indian Women; Center for Women's Development Studies, Mahila Dakshata Samiti, Bharatyia Grameen Mahila Smaj, Joint Women's programme and NAWO ( National Alliance of Women's Organisation ). All these organisations should work hard to check the growing trend of commodification of women, vulgarisation in advertisements and to promote images and contribution of women and their right to life with dignity.

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## **6.6 RESERVATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT**

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The proposal to reserve 1/3 of seats in the Parliament and State Legislatures for women came to the forefront with general elections held in the year 1996. Although Bill was welcomed by all women's organisation, its implications are not made clear and the bill is not passed yet. On February 23, 1997, the Indian Association of Women Studies and the school of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, jointly organized a one- day seminar to discuss the 81st Amendment Bill 1996 i.e. 1/3 reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures. Founder of SEWA, Ela Bhat, noted academician Devaki Jain and feminist activists attended this seminar. The session was chaired by Mrs. Geetha Murkherjee, Members of parliament.

Ms. Bhatt asserted that industrialization and democracy had not done much for women, especially the rural poor who are mostly illiterate. She said that unified voice of women, a vision along with political action to correct injustice is imperative in the present context. She pointed out some of the problems women are likely to face as parliamentarians. Those are namely;

- (a) Women politicians, once elected cannot afford to represent only the women's issues.

- (b) Women could not act independently in parliament and they should follow their respective party line and convince their male colleagues to act in favour of women's issues.
- (c) Women's issues are macro- process of the existing system.

In the scholarly discourse presented by Devaki Jain, "Women's political presence and political rights" she put forward the following arguments :

- (a) The policy of reservation implies stigmatization of those taking part in the political process.
- (b) Reservation in other words would mean that women are weak.
- (c) Space for such privileges should be created through struggles.

The seminar ended on a positive note. Some of its major observations are:

None demanded reservation of seats for the O.B.C. men. It is opined that though there are a number of laws, their implementation is tardy. If 1/3 reservation is implemented it can be hoped that the sizeable women's lobby would bring pressure to implement the laws effectively.

The reservation of seats for women in panchayats is different because women are operating in their vicinity. It is not so in the case of Parliament and state legislature and it is apprehended that they may have to face more problems.

Some are of the view that women as yet are not capable enough to discharge their duties as parliamentarians. at present, there are 7% of women in the parliament and 93% are men.

The rotation method is envisaged to prevent the continuation of the same members as legislators. It would give chance for others to gain experience.

By fighting for social justice unitedly and also for all the section, the lot of S.C / S.T and OBC women could be imrved.

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## 6.7 SUMMING-UP

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Consciousness about rights develop in the course of protesting against their negation. "The Struggle of women has posed the question; what are the rights that belonged to her by dint of her womanhood". Violence against women is one of the most outrageous form of violation of human rights. Violence as an everyday threat looms over the heads of millions of women in India.

Women should enter the halls of power- in government bodies, political parties, labour unions and community organisations. In all the countries, women make up at least half the electorate. As Geraldine Ferro (vice- presidential candidate in the United state election in 1984) declared at the 1991 International women's Day event at the U.N.O., "What we need are not just a few women who make history, but many women who make policy".

According to Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the fourth world congress of women, "the level of participation of women in decision-making and sharing of power between men and women is still acceptably low and calls in question the basic principles of democracy".

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## 6.8 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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I. Answer the following Questions in 30 lines each.

- 1) Discuss the political behavior of Indian Women before Independence.
- 2) Discuss the political behavior of Indian Women after Independence.
- 3) Discuss about the organisations which are working for women's political empowerment.

II Write short Notes in 5 lines each.

- 1) Mahila Dakshata Samithi.
- 2) Young Women's Christian Association of India.

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## 6.9 RECOMMENDING BOOKS

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2. Women's Link Vol 5, No. 2 Women in (April 1-June 1999, New Delhi
3. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, et. al., 1939, "Awakening of Indian Women", Mdras.
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5. Kaplana Shah, 1984, "Indian Women's liberation and voluntary Action", Delhi.
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7. Sudi Tharu & K. Lalitha "Women Writing in India", Vol. I, Vol.II.
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11. "Women of India", 1957, (Repeat, 1990), New Delhi.
12. Bharati Ray, July 1985-January 1986 "Freedom Movement and Women's in Bengal, 1911- 1929", Vol. 12 No. 1-5, Vol.12 No.12 ICHR.
12. V.I.Lenin, 1933, "Women's Movement".

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## **UNIT-7 : WOMEN IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ**

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## **7.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The aim of this unit is to discuss about the structures and functions of Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Local Self-Government, Role of Women in these bodies, Political Policies, Government institutions and NGOs providing training to elected members.

After going through this lesson you will be able to describe -

- \* The structure and composition of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Self-Government.
- \* Role of women in these bodies
- \* Training provided by various institutions to elected women leaders.

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## **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Local Self-government means system of Management of local affairs by the people of the locality or their elected representatives. Local Self-Government forms the third tier of the government, the other two being the Union Government at the National level and State Government at the State level. Local Self-Government institutions serve as training centres for democratic leadership both at the state level and centre and facilitate active participation of local people in the administration and also their co-operation and the support. Local Self-Governments are of two types : Rural Local Self-Government and Urban Local Self-Government.

Rural Self-Government in villages is ruled through Panchayati Raj system with three tier Gram Panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samithi at the Block level and Zilla Parishad at the district level.

Urban Local Self-Government comprises institutions, which manage local administration of cities and towns like Municipal Corporations, Municipalities, Town Area Committees, Cantonment Boards & Port Trusts, Improvement Trusts and Notified Area Communities. In this unit we will study about the structure and participation of women Panchayati Raj Institutions in the urban Local Self-Government, constraints they face, and strategies for their active participation in these bodies.

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## **7.2 RURAL LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT (PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS)**

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After Independence the Government of India launched the Community Development Programme (1952) to accelerate rural development. In 1957 it set up a committee headed by Balwant Rai Mehta to review the Community

Development Projects and National Extension Services and assess the achievement in utilising the local initiative in bringing about social development. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee suggested that there should be adequate representation of women in these bodies for ensuring their political participation in the democratic process. The committee wanted rural women to be beneficiaries and also contributors of development and felt that they should be assisted to find ways to increase their incomes and improve their condition of life. It also suggested measures for carrying out the welfare programmes like appointment of women Social Extension Officers, Gram Sevikas and recommended the co-operation of women members to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It also recommended "that beside the 20 members of the Panchayati Samithi there should be two women who are interested in work among women & children as co-opted members. A similar provision was suggested with regard to village Panchayat".

### ***7.2.1 Structures and Composition of the tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions***

The Balwant Mehta Rai Committee recommended a three tier system of Panchayati Raj with the Zilla Parishad at the district level, Panchayati Samithi at the Block level or middle level and Gram Panchayati at the village level. Though the committee suggested a three-tier system no uniformity is followed in the states and Union Territories of India. "Sixteen (16) states and union territories have three tiers at the district, village and intermediary levels. Five states and union territories have two (2) tiers and eight (8) states have a one tier system, while 3 states and one union territory have no Panchayati Raj institutions at all".

Three-tier system : Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Two-tier system : Assam, Haryana, Orissa, and Manipur

One-tier system : Jammu and Kashmir, Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagarhaveli, Sikkim, Anadaman and Nicobar Islands, Pondicherry, Kerala, Tripura and Delhi.

### ***Absence of Panchayat Bodies :***

"Lakshadweep (U.T.) and Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland and the hill areas of Manipur where district councils operate or the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling where the Darjeeling Gorkha hill-council operates, the traditional village councils which are performing as local governments".

There are variations in the names of these bodies. The Panchayat Samithi, the middle institution at the block level, which plans and executes schemes of development is known by different names. In Gujarat it is the Taluq Panchayat, in Karnataka it is known as Taluq development board, Jan Pad Panchayat in Madhya Pradesh, Panchayat Union in Tamil Nadu, Kshetra Samithi in Uttar Pradesh, Anchal Samithi in Arunachal Pradesh and Mandal Praja Parishad in Andhra Pradesh.

Zilla Parishad the top tier at the district level is also known by different names. In Assam it is known as Mokhuma Parishad, in Tripura and Tamil Nadu it is known as District Development Council, in Andhra Pradesh it is known as Zilla Praja Parishad. The village Panchayat is also known as Gram Panchayat.

There are variations in the levels of tiers also. In Andhra Pradesh the tiers are at the village level, Mandal level and the district level. In Karnataka the tiers are at the Mandal, Taluq and district level. The Mandal tier in Andhra Pradesh is at the middle level and in Karnataka it is at the bottom level.

Though there was variations, the emerging patterns may be classified into two broad categories. (1) the Rajasthan model on the pattern of B.R. Mehta Committee with a strong Panchayat Samithi and an advisory Co-ordinating Zilla Parishad and (2) the Maharashtra pattern, the model based on the recommendations of the Naik Committee with a strong Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samithi acting as an executing agency.

### ***7.2.2 Composition of Panchayati Raj Structures***

#### ***Village Panchayats - (Lower Level Bodies)***

The members to the village Panchayat are elected directly. Seats are reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In West Bengal the state government exercises the power of nominating scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In all other states and union territories except in Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Sarpanch or Chairman is elected by direct election.

In Andhra Pradesh the Chairman's position is reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and based on population criteria and presiding officers' positions of Gram Panchayat are reserved for women.

#### ***Panchayat Samithis - (Middle Level Bodies)***

The Sarpanchs or Chairmen of Village Panchayats become members of Panchayat Samithis alongwith members of legislative Assembly, Legislative council (if the state has a council) and members of Parliament.

Seats are reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes on the basis of population criteria in some other states the number of seats to be provided to these sections are specified in the Acts. In Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka seats are reserved on population basis and in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan it is on the basis of Acts. The elected M.Ps and M.L.As of the areas are also members of Panchayat Samithis.

In all the states except Andhra Pradesh reservation of seats for women is guaranteed. A certain percentage of the chairmen's seats are reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh a certain percentage of chair positions (presiding officers) are reserved for women (9%).

### **Zilla Parishad - District Level Bodies :**

The presiding officers of Panchayat Samithis become the members of Zilla Parishad. Members of the Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council and Parliament of all the states except Maharashtra are ex-officio Members of this body. In Gujarat and Maharashtra seats are reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes on population basis and in other seats like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal the Panchayat Acts have specified the number of seats to be given to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. All the states except Nagaland and Punjab have reserved a certain percentage of seats for women.

In all the states except Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Nagaland the chairmen of these bodies are indirectly elected. In Andhra Pradesh, since 1987 the Chairman is elected by direct election. In Arunachal Pradesh the Chairman is nominated and in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland the collector becomes the Chairman.

Andhra Pradesh has reserved a certain percentage of chairmen positions for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, backward castes and women. It is the only state, which has reserved Chairmanship positions of Zilla Parishad for women.

### ***7.2.3 Recommendations of Various Committees***

In 1971 Government of India constituted a committee to study the status of women in India, which submitted the report "Towards Equality" in 1974. After reviewing women's role and status in the political process since independence it recorded that "All the indicators of participation, attitudes and impact came up with the same results. The revolution in social and political status of women, for which constitutional equality was to be their only instrument, still remains a very distant objective. Large masses of women continue to lack spokespersons that

understand their special problems and are committed to their removal in the representative bodies of the state." The committee recommended

(1) "that women should be represented by reservation and (2) establishment of statutory women's Panchayats at the village level with autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration for women and children".

The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) also recommended "reservation of two seats for women in Panchayats and their co-option in case they did not come through election". A number of states since then provided for reservation for women in Panchayats.

The National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 also made recommendations for reservations for women in Panchayat bodies.

The following are its recommendations :

1. The Government should effectively secure participation of women in decision making processes at National, State and Local training courses for women.
2. "fifty percent of all grass roots functionaries must be women. To facilitate its implementation, relaxation of minimum educational qualification is needed which can be supplemented by short training courses for women.
3. Reservation should be fixed at 30 percent in bodies such as these and to Zilla Parishad level and local municipal bodies for women. Wherever possible, a higher representation of dalits/tribals, women of weaker sections should be ensured.
4. 30 percent of executive heads of all bodies from village panchayat to district level and a certain percentage of chief executives of Panchayat Raj bodies at lower, middle and higher level must be reserved for women.
5. A more effective step would be to declare a certain percentage of constituencies in the lower tier of Panchayat Raj as exclusively women's constituencies and all executive positions in a certain number of territorial jurisdictions reserved for women candidates.
6. All women members of Panchayats and other executive bodies must be trained and empowered to exercise their authority. Both men and women members must be sensitized to women's issues. A committee should be formed to look into the training need of woman panchayat members and

to help in designing modules. Separate allocations may be made for this purpose. Particular attention must be given to the development of interpersonal communication skills among the trainees/community leaders.

7. Conscious efforts are needed to elicit participation of women through establishing links between the elected representatives and the development functionaries as being experimented in Rajasthan through Women's Development Programmes (WDP).

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### **7.3 CONSTITUTIONAL AMMENDMENTS :**

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In order to bring about structural and functional changes in the panchayat the Government of India introduced the following constitutional amendments:

#### **7.3.1 Constitutional (Sixty Fourth Amendment) Bill 1969**

This bill was introduced by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on 15th May 1989. The bill proposed to "make it obligatory to all states to establish a three tier system at the village, intermediate and district level and fill all seats at all levels by direct elections.

Members of the house of the people and of the legislative assembly and chairpersons of Panchayats at the lower level shall be provided with voting rights and fixed terms of 5 years".

"The constitution amendant bill proposed 30% of seats to be reserved for the women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities and that 30% of the total number of seats in Panchayati Raj bodies should be reserved for women. However, this 30% includes the number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes women. The number of seats reserved for women will be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat. The State Governments are left with the option of providing or not for the reservation of the office of chairpersons for S.Cs, S.Ts & women". It was defeated in the Upper House.

#### **7.3.2 Constitutional (Seventy Third Amendment) Bill 1993**

This Constitution (Amendment) Act came into effect in April 1993. This Amendment Act makes the provision of not less than one third of the seats to be reserved for women. (Including that of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes) and these may be allotted by rotation to different Constituencies of a Panchayat.

- \* "In proportion of the total population of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe to the population of the area, seats will be reserved for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe. There woule be reservation for women in these

seats allotted to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Not less than one-third of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes seats may be reserved for women.

- \* 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 Panchayats at each level.
- \* In addition there are certain general features which could be taken advantage of by women such as direct elections for membership and Sarpanch (President) posts at the local as well as at the intermediary level. (Block)"

This amendment act mandates a uniform system of Panchayati Raj throughout the country except specified tribal and hilly areas and a fixed tenure of 5 years. This amendment provided reservation of seats for the S.Cs and S.Ts in proportion to population and not less than one third of elected seats for women and reservation of one-third posts of Chairpersons at each level for women. This would be rotated among different Panchayats at each level.

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#### 7.4 WOMEN IN PANCHYATI RAJ BODIES

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Andhra Pradesh was the second state to introduce Panchayat Raj system in 1959 with three tiers, Zilla Parishad at district level, Panchayat Samithi at block level and Gram Panchayat at village level. In 1986 it implemented the mandal system and the middle tier was known as Mandala Praja parishad. The Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayats Act 1964 provided for "reservation of two seats for women if the total strength of the Gram Panchayat is 9 or less, 3 seats if the strength is between 10 and 15 and 4 seats if the strength is more than 15".

In the middle level bodies women's representation is governed by A.P. Panchayat Samithi and Zilla Parishads Act, which provided for "co-option of two women for each Samithi in addition to the possibility of women members finding membership through the electoral process. An amendment to the Act in 1963 stated that there should be a standing committee of 7 members called Committee for Women Welfare of which a majority should be women and a standing committee for education with at least one-women representative.

Women's representation at the Mandal level and district level is governed by the Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishads, Zilla Praja Parishads and Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandal Act 1986. "It has reserved a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 seats (25%) for women in Gram panchayats" and "9% of

the total number of offices of Chairmen of Zilla Praja Parishads and Presidents of Mandala Praja Parishads for Women”.

### **Bihar :**

The Bihar Legislature passed the Panchayati Raj Bill in August 1993 providing reservation for women as specified in the 73rd Amendment Act.

### **Himachal Pradesh :**

In 1992 Himachal Pradesh introduced reservation for women. “The percentage of reservation varied in different constituencies as it was fixed as per the total number of members on the Panchayat. For a Panchayat that had 5 members one seat was reserved, two seats were reserved for 7 members, 3 seat were reserved for more than seven members. In the latter two instances one of the women will be an S.C. member”.

### **Karnataka :**

The Karnataka Government Act made the provision that at least two seats should be reserved for women in each village panchayat. The Government introduced the Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluka Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act 1983 which indicated that “25 percent of the total number of seats should be reserved for women belonging to scheduled castes or scheduled tribes”. The Act also provides for representation of one woman in the Social Justice Committees at all levels. This act ensures representation of one-woman member in Nyaya Panchayats consisting of five members.

Karnataka had introduced the Consitution 73rd Amendment legislation in 1993 which provides for direct election to all the seats of Panchayats at all levels, with a fixed tenure of five years and 30% reservation for women.

### **Haryana :**

In this state, provision is made for the co-option of one woman member to the gram panchayat, one or two women members to the Panchayat Samithi and two women members to the Zilla Parishad.

### **Madhya Pradesh :**

Representation of two women in village bodies and block bodies and one at the district level wherever necessary by means of co-option was provided by Madhya Pradesh Panchayat legislation. In 1900”Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Adhiniya provided 20 percent of seat reservation for women in the Grams reserved for women int eh Zilla Parishads with one seat given to S.Cs and S.Ts”.



### **Maharashtra :**

The Maharashtra legislative adopted the Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samithi Act in 1961. By this Act Zilla Parishad is the important body. This act provides for reservation of two seats for women at the gram panchayat level. At the Panchayat Samithi level two women are co-opted to the Gram Panchayats. "In 1989 the election was marked by 30% reservation and it has the distinction of sending in all women Panchayats in 1984 and it has 9 all women Panchayats".

### **Punjab :**

The Panchayati Raj institutions in Punjab state are governed by Punjab Gram Panchayats Act 1952 and the Panchayat Act 1952 lays down that in every Panchayat there shall be at least two women members or panchas. "This act makes provision for inclusion of unsuccessful women candidates if there are no successful candidates. If there are no women contestants in the election, women's representation should be ensured by means of co-option". Provision of co-option of two women members in each Zilla Parishad and each Panchayat Samithi is made. In 1983 there were 81 women Sarpanchs in Punjab.

### **Rajasthan :**

Gram Panchayats Act of 1953 and the Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act of 1959 govern the Panchayat Raj bodies in Rajasthan. The Acts make the provision that two women should be co-opted to these bodies if there are no women members in them.

### **Tamil Nadu :**

In Tamil nadu the three-tier structure consists of village and town Panchayats at the lower level, Panchayat Union Councils at the Intermediary Level and District Development Councils at the District Level. Tamil Nadu panchayats Act 1958 governs these bodies. Which proves for reservation of one seat for women in the village and town Panchayats, 2 women should find representation in the Panchayat councils representing Panchayats not exceeding 12 in number; and 3 women in Panchayat Union Council consisting of 13 to 20 Panchayats and 5 if there are more Panchayats.

### **Orissa :**

The Orissa Panchayat Samithis Act of 1919 "makes provision of not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats for women and states not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats reserved for S.C. and S.T. should be for women".

### **Kerala :**

In the state of Kerala 30% of seats are reserved for women.

### **West Bengal :**

Under the West Bengal Panchayat Act "1973 there was a provision for co-opting 2 women and 2 scheduled caste and scheduled tribe members. The elections held in 1992 gave 1/3rd membership to women to be filled by elections".

### **All Women Panchayat**

The committee on the status of women in India suggested the setting up of women Panchayats as a measure to break through the traditional attitudes and facilitate them to actively participate in these Panchayati Raj bodies.

Maharashtra has the distinction of sending in all women Panchayats in 1984. There are 9 Women Panchayats in Maharashtra. In Andhra Pradesh also All women Panchayats were experimented upon but were found to be ineffective.

### ***7.4.1 The Constitution Seventy third Amendment Act (1992)***

The issue of reservation of seats for women in the decision-making bodies and legislatures had been raised even before Independence.

In the first Round Table Conference held in 1930 two Indian Women representative who were selected by the British Government as official representatives supported the Simon Commission's recommendation of reserving 2.5% of seats for women (Sudhir Verma, 1997). These women were against reservation of seats on communal lines. But women's organisations, which attended the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu, were against reservations for women. They wanted women to enter the legislatures without any reservation etc. Of the two women official representatives one was for reservation for women on communal lines and Mrs. Radha Bai argued for reservation of seats for Indian women.

Mahatma Gandhi who was a strong supporter of women's political participation was against reservations for women in legislative and decision making bodies. He demanded total equality for women. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and many congress leaders also supported Gandhi.

It is under the influence of Rajiv Gandhi that the stand on 'no reservation for women' by the Government was changed.

Before the 73rd Amendment Act efforts were made to bring women into Panchayat Raj structures through co-option. Two women could be co-opted as

members of Panchayat if none had been elected. If one had been elected only one could be co-opted. Similarly two women could be co-opted in the Panchayat Samithi as members. At the Zilla Parishad level also there was a provision of co-opting two women members if there was no woman as ex-officio member.

To strengthen the Panchayati Raj institutions and to provide 33.3% reservation for women the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act 1992 was passed. This Act came into force in April 1993. Part IX called the "Panchayats" was included in the Constitution of India. This Act provided for a fixed tenure of five years to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It also made a provision for reservation of 33.3% of seats for women. With the passing of this Act nearly 6.7 lakh women were expected to be elected to the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

The Constitutional Amendment also provided for the formation of the Finance Commission every five years and it established State Election Commissions.

Twenty-nine areas of development were identified for preparing plans and implementation of schemes in order to bring about economic development and social justice. A new Eleventh Schedule was added to the Constitution of India.

The passing of this Act led to amendments in Panchayati Raj Institutions in all the states.

Section 15 (2) - stated that not less than one third of the total number of seats reserved for S.Cs, S.Ts and backward classes shall be reserved for women of these categories, and

Section 15 (3)- further stipulates that not less than one third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayati Raj Institution shall be reserved for women.

Section 16 - provided for reservation for the offices of the Sarpanchs, Pradhans and Pramukhs and stipulated that not less than one third of the total number of such offices should be reserved for women.

Further it also provided that the number of offices reserved under this section should be allotted by rotation to different Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads.

Studies have shown that administrators are of the opinion that reservation of seats for women had been a step for women had been a step in the right direction, and rural women were coming out of their shells in participating in the PRI activities and expressing their views.

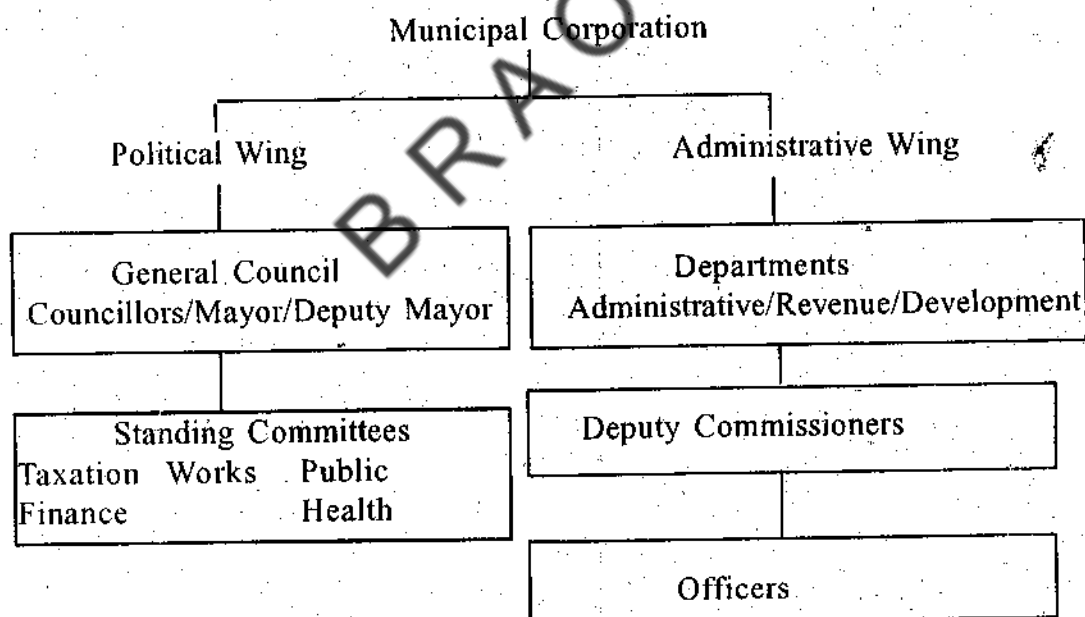
## 7.5 URBAN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

Urban local self-government includes municipal corporations, municipalities, town area committees, improvement trusts, notified area committees, cantonment boards and port trusts. Urban local government is not hierarchical. Here we will be discussing only Municipal Corporations and Municipalities.

### 7.5.1 Structure and Composition of Municipal Corporations

Municipal corporations are set up in big towns and cities where the population is in lakhs. The administration of the city under Municipal Corporation is entrusted to General Council, Standing Committee of the Council and the Commissioner or Executive Officer. The Mayor is the Chairman of the Corporation. The General Council consists of those members who are directly elected by the people of the city on the basis of adult franchise by secret ballot and some persons in the locality who are elected by those elected representatives of the people. Some seats are reserved for women and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

### STRUCTURE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION



Source : K. Sudha "Women in Local Self-Governance" (1194) (P34).

The General Council of the Municipal Corporation is the legislative body, which makes policies for the Administration of the Corporation. The Commissioner who is the chief Executive is appointed by the State government and is responsible for the implementation of Policies of the Government. Standing Committees are the bodies of the General Council, which perform the various functions like Public

Works, Health, Taxation, Finance, Education, Transport, Electricity, Water Supply and Sewerage Finance. The 'Mayor', the first citizen of the city, is the head of the Municipal Corporation and is elected by indirect election by the Councillors.

Municipalities or Municipal Committees are formed in cities, which are neither very large nor very small i.e. above 20,000. Municipalities are covered by the Municipal Acts of the state and comprise of a General body known as Municipal Council. The people of the city know the members of this body as Councillors who are elected. Seats are reserved for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Municipal committees elect the President or Chairman who controls the administrative and financial matters. The head of the Executive Wing of the Municipality is the Municipal Commissioner who is appointed by the state Government. Apart from the Commissioner there are other officers like Health Officers, Engineers, Tax Officers.

Municipal Acts govern the urban local bodies. Municipal this act and Municipal Corporations act governed by Municipalities and Municipal Corporation Acts. "Chairpersons or Councillors whether they are men or women have four important roles to play in urban local bodies viz. Policy, development, political and administrative roles". (Ravindra Prasad, 1997 P.8)

### ***Participation of Women in Urban Local Self-government***

Though there are no legal restrictions on women in contesting elections to the municipal corporations and municipalities very few venture to contest elections and enter these bodies. In India a very small percentage have won the elections. Women were reluctant to contest elections either because of the murkiness and violence that characterize electoral policies or fear of character assassination and finding it unsuitable for women.

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## **7.6 RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL BODIES**

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"After Independence provision was made for reservation of seats for women and other disadvantaged groups. Provision was made for making nominations to ensure their representation in the local bodies".

In 1971 the Government of India appointed the Committee on the Status of Women in India to evaluate the changes that had taken place in the status of women as a result of the constitutional, legal and administrative measures adopted since Independence and to suggest measures which would enable them to play their role in nation building. In its report (1974) it stated "At the level of municipalities, the principle of reservation of seats for women is already prevalent in certain states. We therefore, recommend that this should be adopted by all states as a

transitional measure. We also recommend the constitution of permanent committees in municipalities to initiate and supervise programmes for women's welfare and development. (Towards Equality Report 1974. GOI). In 1988 the National Perspective Plan for Women also proposed and recommended thirty per cent seats for women in local municipal bodies. For women an enhanced representation is likely to remove the isolation of women and give them visibility and strength to be more assertive and to take part in decision making. (National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988 P. 164).

Efforts were made to reserve seats for women in urban local bodies in different states. In the Municipalities Act 1965 there was no provision for reservation of seats for women but in 1981 provision was made to reserve for women five per cent of seats, which was later increased to 9 per cent. In the 1990s the Karnataka Government passed a bill reserving twenty five per cent of seats for women in urban local bodies. In Maharashtra in 1990 the government passed a bill to reserve thirty per cent of seats for women. Similarly thirty per cent of seats were reserved for women in local bodies.

#### **7.6.1 The Constitution (Seventy Fourth Amendment) Act 1992**

The 74th (Seventy Fourth) Constitution Amendment Act 1992 has made provision for the reservation of one third of seats as well as positions of Mayor and Chairperson to women and thus it has widened the base for the representation of women in urban local self-government. According to the All India Institute of Local Self-government Newsletter 1998 Municipal elections were held in all the major states. Only in Bihar and Pondicherry elections were not held. 60,000 were elected into the urban political stream, one third of them being women. Out of eighty-seven Municipal Corporations for which information was available, 22 women Mayors headed Municipal Corporations.

22 Women Mayors heading the Municipal Corporations are from the following cities - Kanndwa, Ujjain, Gwalior, Burhanpur, Dewas, Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, Agra, Allahabad, Kanpur, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Aurangabad, Pune, Navi Mumbai, Ulhas Nagar in Maharashtra, Baroda and Surat in Gujarat, Kota in Rajasthan, Tirunelveli and Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, Gulbarga in Karnataka, Warangal and Guntur in Andhra Pradesh (Nagarpalika Network News letter).

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### **7.7 ROLE OF WOMEN IN RURAL AND URBAN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT**

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Women representatives have four important roles to play - "Policy role, developmental role, political role and administrative role". Women can play a positive role in achieving equality, development and in the protection of human

rights. "The critical areas where women can play an important role are : eradication of poverty, removal of inadequacies and inequalities in education and training, ensuring access to primary health care, protecting women against violence and discrimination, access to economic resources, share in political power and decision-making structures, protecting the rights of children, particularly the girl child".

Women in decision making bodies as Councillors, Mayors, Chairpersons, Sarpanchs, Presidents can play an important role in the following areas

- Education :** to eradicate illiteracy among women and girl children. They can ensure access to education to all and improve access to vocational and technical training for skill development in women.
- Health :** they can increase access to quality health care and provide information about factors, which cause risks to health.
- Violence :** they can initiate measures for preventing violence against women, awareness generation on issues of violence against women.
- Employment:** they can promote women's economic right including access to employment, promoting appropriate working conditions and strengthening women's economic capacity through employment, market and trade networks.
- Political :** preparing women for leadership positions, ensuring their full participation at all levels of decision making
- Credit :** enhancing the access of women to economic resources by strengthening linkages with banks and other financial institutions and encouraging innovative savings, thrift and lending practices". (Ravindra Prasad 1997).

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## **7.8 CONSTRAINTS IN WOMEN'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE RURAL AND URBAN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING BODIES**

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Active participation of women in the rural and urban local decision-making bodies or grass roots political institution helps to plan and implement programmes accordingly.

According to Veena Majumdar "the participation of rural women is much less than their work participation. The masses of rural women who form the majority of women in our country spend most of their time engaged in the battle for survival. They have little or no time at all for political activities. Furthermore, their low status in society, their low levels of literacy and awareness of their legal rights and responsibilities, and their ignorance of the purposes and procedures of Panchayati Raj institutions are responsible for their low participation.

"Expensive elections, threat of violence and character assassination are some of the constraints faced by women participating actively in politics. Apart from these constraints Indian women's traditional roles which demand first and full attention to the family also prevent them from joining politics. Hence it is impossible for women to devote equal attention to the family and to political life. "Indian Culture also elaborates the psychological, social and moral implications of biological characteristics and governs the behaviour of males and females. Cultural norms also determine identity, expectations and demand of males and females". Physiology and culture assign women roles in the private sphere. The political field is the public sphere and hence it is said to be for men. Such a social environment results in a low level of political participation by women. Apathy of the political parties is also one of the obstacles in women's participation".

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### **7.9 STRATEGIES TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES**

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1. Attitudinal change should be brought about in the society to overcome the built-in resistances
2. Create awareness about their potential, their role as women
3. Training programmes must be conducted to educate women about the Panchayat Raj Institutions, their role in these bodies
4. Mahila Mandals can be used to give political training and to bring out the hidden potentials of women
5. Manuals should be developed in regional languages
6. Create channels by which women can compete equally with men and occupy positions in Panchayati Raj
7. Educate women to develop self confidence
8. They must be sensitized towards gender issues, which will help them to understand the needs of women, and play an important role in the implementation of development programmes meant for women.



## **7.10 POLITICAL PARTIES, GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND NGOS PROVIDING TRAINING TO ELECTED LEADERS**

The Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Janata Dal and other Political Parties in the States are providing training to women elected leaders.

### **Government Institutions**

The following institutions have been set up to train people to perform new roles and dispense their responsibilities towards self-governance.

1. State Institute of Panchayat (SIP)
2. State Institutes for Rural Development (SIRD)
3. Extension Training centres (ETC)
4. National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD)

Some of these institutions train officials and non-officials connected with Panchayati Raj and Rural Development. These institutions organise conferences, and seminars to promote creative thinking on Panchayati Raj and Rural Development.

To improve the performance of Panchayati Raj functionaries are given special training. Some institutions apart from conducting training are also ensuring women's participation in proportion to their representation, along with men in the Panchayats. Special programmes are also organised for women. Some institutions publish booklets and articles on empowering women for political action. Some institutions have undertaken research on participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Orientation cum training programmes for newly elected women members of the Panchayats is undertaken by some.

### **Institutions under Public Sector**

1. Administrative Training Institute, Mysore, Karnataka
2. All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Bombay
3. Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Institution, Jaipur
4. Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur

5. Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi
6. National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD)
7. National Institute of Rural Development, Guahati
8. State Institute of Panchayats, Kalyani, West Bengal
9. Women's Development Programme, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Women's Development Programme (WDP) of the Government of Rajasthan was launched in mid 1984. The main aim of WDP is to "empower women through communication of information, education and training and to enable them to recognise and improve their social and economic status. The WDP operates two major programmes called Ja-Jan (communication) and Shivar Meetings on issues concerning rural women's development are also conducted.

Apart from governmental organizations and political parties, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) are also involved in imparting training or creating awareness and giving political education.

1. Action for Welfare and Awakening in Rural Environment (Aware). Working among tribals and schedule castes of the Khammam and Mahaboobnagar districts. Since 1977 it has been focussing on women and demanded reservation of seats for women. Under Aware Programme they started Chaitanya Nidhi (chit Fund) in 1989. It has held two big conventions on women in 1987 and in 1990.
2. Centre for Development Studies and Action (CDSA), New Delhi
3. Centre for women's Development Studies, (CWDS), New Delhi
4. Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi
5. Institute for social and Economic Change, Bangalore
6. Institute of Social Studies Trust "Tharanga", Bangalore
7. Dr. Mandalik Trust, Bombay - Orientation programmes are conducted for newly elected women members
8. Mahila Samakhy - launched in 1989 in Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh - a registered society in the first two states.

9. Orissa Political Education Foundation, Bhubaneswar - aims to provide training and orientation programmes for the elected representatives like ward members, sarpanchs, Panchayati Samithi members and Municipal Councillors.
10. Prakriti (1979)
11. Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi
12. Sahjamoorthy Memorial Centre for Democratic Rights, Madras
13. Shetkari Sanghatana, Maharashtra
14. Sutra - Jagjitnagar, Himachal Pradesh
15. Team for Human Resources Education and Action for Development (THREAD) - it has a separate training centre for the training of village women called WIDE "Women initiative for Development Education".

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#### 7.11 SUMMING UP

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Panchayati Raj is an important political instrument, which serves as a forum for the promotion of local initiative. It also serves as a means of enhancing people's participation in self-rule. Women's participation in Panchayati Raj bodies is of great significance in the context of their visibility in decision making process. Participation of women in these bodies empowers them and also helps in better implementation of development schemes for women. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1992 became a watershed when it mandated their one-third minimum representation in these bodies. The elections after this amendment have brought women in large numbers together across caste, tribe class and regions. Most important, not only as members but also as Chairpersons. Such a major step is intended to enable a large number of women to get a chance to participate meaningfully in decision making and make their presence felt in political structures and processes. Reservations provide an opportunity to widen the basis of individuals participating in the electoral process and enable hitherto marginalised sections to enter into policy and decision making bodies.

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## 7.12 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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### I. Answer the following questions in 30 lines each.

1. Discuss the structure and composition of Rural self-government or Panchayati Raj in India.
2. Discuss the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional amendment Act.
3. Discuss the structure and composition of Urban Self-government in India.
4. Discuss the role of women in Municipalities.
5. Discuss the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts of the Indian Constitution.

### II. Answer the following questions in 10 lines each.

1. Discuss the Role of Women in Panchayats.
2. Discuss the constraints of women in entering rural self-government bodies.
3. Discuss the issue of reservations for women in Panchayati Raj bodies.
4. What is the three-tier structure of rural self-government?
5. What is the Role of NGOs in training women for self-government.

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## 7.13 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Majumdar, Vina (ed) "Symbols of Power : Studies on Political Status of Women in India", Bombay, Allied Publishers, 1979
2. Hazel, D'Lima "Women in Local Governments - A study of Maharashtra, 1983.
3. Manikyamba. P. and Pandey, Sumana "Women in Politics", Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 1990
4. Ranjana Kumari (ed) "Women in Decision-making, New Delhi, Vikas Publication, 1992
5. Shiftung, Friedrich Ebert "Women in Politics : Forms and Processes", New Delhi, 1992
6. Kanshik Susheela "Empowering Women for Politics" New Delhi, FES/ Har Anand Publications, 1993
7. Manikyamba.P. - women in Panchayati Raj Structure, 1989

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## **UNIT-8 : INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND EMERGING POLICIES**

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### **8.0 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit you will be able to describe -

- \* The constitutional provisions for Women
- \* About the efforts made for women in the plans
- \* Legislative measures for women

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## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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After India attained Independence it was decided to develop the Indian Economy in a planned way. It was planned to create a democratic just and prosperous society. (1) Constitution and legal reforms (2) State support to welfare activities and (3) planned development based on mixed economy were the three ways of achieving development. Framing the five year plans was the major step taken to realize the idea of a welfare state. With the launching of the First Five Year Plan on April 1, 1951 the process of planned economic development in India began, followed by Eight Five Year Plans, with intervening annual plans in 1967-69. The Planning Commission defined education, health and welfare as the major areas for women's development and policies and programmes were designed in these areas till the end of the Fourth Five-Year Plan. In these plans women were looked at as components of social welfare programmes and not of development. In 1971 the Government of India appointed a Committee on Status of Women in India (CSWI) which submitted its report "Towards equality" in 1974. The impact of this report was a shift in viewing women as targets of welfare policies to viewing them as critical groups for development. The post Nairobi decade led to a shift from development and Gender to participation and Employment. In this unit we will study about the policies initiated and implemented for women's development and the Constitutional Provisions provided by the Indian Government.

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## **8.2 THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN**

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The Constitution is the basic law for the governance of a Country. It defines the various organs of the state and specifies their respective functions and the field of their operation. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the Chairman of the drafting committee of the constitution. The other members were N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, Alladi Krishna Swamy Ayyar, Sayed Mohd. Saadulla, K.M. Munshi, B.L. Mitter and D.P. Khatan. After the death of B.L. Mitter, Madhava Rao was appointed and after the death of D.P. Khaitan T.T. Krishnamachary was appointed. The draft of the Constitution was presented to the President Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1948 and it contained 315 articles and 8 schedules. The Indian Constitution contains all the provisions contained in U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. Realising the unequal position of women, "the framers of the Constitution built into its preamble the declaration to secure to all its citizens, Justice-Social, Economic and Political, Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, Equality of status and opportunity and to promote among them all, fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation". (Reddy). The preamble, the fundamental rights and the Directive Principles of state policy

provide protection to women. (The preamble of the Constitution provides to secure to all citizens "Social, Economic, Political, Justice, Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunities, dignity of the individual and the unit of the Nation.)

### ***Constitutional provisions for Women***

The Constitution of India grants equality to women and empowers the state to adopt measures of affirmative discrimination in favour of women and impose a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. It provides the following fundamental rights to women.

**Article 14:** "The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India;

**Article 15:** "The state shall not discriminate any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

**15(3):** "Provides that nothing prevents the state from making any special provision for women and children;

**15(4):** "Permits the state to make special a provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward people;

**Article 16:** "Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state;

**Article 23:** "Provides for the rights against exploitation and prohibits traffic in human beings and begary and similar forms of forced labour".

Specific provisions to ensure the rights of women incorporated in the Directive Principles of state policy are as follows;

**Article 38:** (1) State to secure a social order for promoting of welfare of the people.

(2) Minimise the inequalities in income and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in state, facilities and opportunities.

**Article 39:** (a) The State grants to all the citizens both men and women equal rights to have an adequate means of livelihood.

(b) enjoins the State to direct its policy towards securing equal pay for both men and women.

- (c) protection of the health and strength of workers -men, women and children from abuse and entry into avocations unsuited to their age and strength.

*Article 41:* The State shall guarantee within its economic limits to all the citizens the right to work, to educate and public assistance in certain areas.

*Article 42:* The State makes provision for just and human conditions of work and maternity relief.

*Article 44:* Provides for uniform civil code. It emphasizes the need for codifying personal laws of different communities and evolving a uniform civil code.

*Article 48:* (a) Provides for safeguarding the forests (which safeguard women)

*Article 51:* (a) That it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

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### **8.3 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND WOMEN**

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Women's development in India is rooted in the Constitution. According to the Constitution equality of the sexes before the law is one of the most fundamental right. Policies were initiated and programmes were formulated by the Government, voluntary agencies were expected to deliver the benefits of social welfare to this group. Public policy to improve the conditions of women was initiated in the first five-year plan. The approach towards women was covered by the welfare orientation where women were seen as the passive beneficiaries of the development process or target of welfare policies. It was only in the seventies that the shift in approach from welfare to development emerged which viewed women as critical groups for development. The break-through came with the inclusion of a chapter on women and development in the sixth plan where there was an emphasis on the potential of women to become agents of development. In India the process of planned economic development began with the launching of the first-year plan in 1951. The aim planning was to modernize the of economy, increase the rate of economic development and raise the standard of living of the people of the country.

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#### **WOMEN IN THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS**

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##### **8.3.1 *The first five-year plan (1951-55)***

The major objective of the first five-year plan was to initiate a process of development, which would raise the standard of living. This plan envisaged welfare measures for women. In this plan attention was given to social services like health,



education, sanitation, housing and rehabilitation. In 1953 the Government established a Central Social welfare board. (CSWB) The Central Social Welfare Board, symbolized the welfare approach to women's problems. The CSWB was also reflective of the Community Development approach which envisaged for the first time the need for organising women into Mahila Mandals. This body frames policies, makes its own development programmes and, implements through its welfare Extension projects. There is a three tier structure for Welfare and development programmes with agencies at the central, state and local level. The major responsibility for implementing the programmes lies on various departments and other agencies of Governments. The main agencies for planning and implementation at the centre are the planning commission, Ministry of Education and Social welfare with its two specialised agencies - Central Social Welfare Board and National Council of Women's Education. Ministry of Health and Family Planning, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Employment also share the work implementation through their departments.

In the first five-year plan stress was on services which promote welfare like school feeding schemes for children, maternity and child health centres and family planning.

### **8.3.2 The Second five-year plan (1956-61)**

This plan aimed to achieve rapid industrialization and emphasized maximum production, full employment, and attainment of economic equality and social justice. The focus of this plan was on the problems of women workers. It recognised the need for organising women workers. The plan stated that women should be protected against injurious work, should receive maternity benefits and creches should be provided for their children. It also suggested speedy implementation of equal pay for equal work, and provision for training women to enable them to compete for higher jobs. At the end of the plan (1961) it was found that many employees were reluctant to employ women due to the necessity of providing welfare measures. This resulted in the decline in the participation rate of female working force.

### **8.3.3 The Third five-Year plan (1961-66)**

The third five-year plan incorporated the objectives of the previous plans. One of the major objectives of this plan was to achieve self-sufficiency. This plan focussed on expansion of girls' education as a strategy for women's development. Condensed courses for adult women, health, nutrition and family planning programmes continued. In social welfare, the largest share was provided for expanding rural welfare services and condensed courses of education.

The fourth plan could not be launched in 1966 due to the bad shape of the economy, annual plans were launched in the next three year period.

### **8.3.4 The fourth five-year plan (1969-74)**

The emphasis of the fourth five-year plan was on agriculture as it was recognized as a key factor to development. In this plan the emphasis was on women's education. The basic policy was to promote women's welfare within the family as the base of operation. The outlay of family planning was stepped up to reduce the birth rate from 40 to 24 per thousand through mass education. Priority was given to immunization of pre-school children and supplementary feeding for children, expectant and nursing mothers. Voluntary organisations were allowed to organise programmes of social welfare.

Up to the fourth five-year plan priority has been given to education, then to health and lastly welfare aspects.

#### **8.3.4 (a) Committee on the status of women in India**

During the fourth five-year plan (69-74) the Government of India constituted a committee on the status of women by a Resolution of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare on 22nd September 1971. This was done to examine all the questions relating to the rights and status of women in the country so that these would provide useful guidelines for the formulation of social policies. The appointment of this committee was an important landmark in the development of women in India. The committee had to -

- "examine the Constitutional, legal and administrative provisions with a bearing on the social status of women, their education and employment.
- to assess the impact of these provisions during the last two decades on the status of women in the country, particularly the rural sector and to suggest more effective programmes,
- to consider the development of education among women and determine the factors responsible for slow progress in some areas and suggest remedial measures,
- to survey the problems of the working women including discrimination in employment and remuneration,
- to examine the status of women as housewives and mothers in the changing social pattern and their problems in the sphere of further education and employment

- to undertake surveys or case studies on the implications of the population policies and family planning programmes on the status of women

- to suggest any other measures which would enable women to play their full and proper role in building up the nation. ("Towards Equality")

The committee submitted its report, which was titled "Towards Equality" in 1974. The findings of the committee revealed that -

- the majority of women are not enjoying the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them by the Constitution

- increase in the incidence of dowry which lowers the status of women

- women are ignorant of their legal rights regarding personal aspects marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance. They are also not aware about maternity benefits available for them

- though there has been an increase in the enrolment of girls in schools a wide gap exists between the enrolment of boys and girls

- disparities are seen in the educational progress of girls between rural and urban areas. Drop out rates are high among girls. There is a decline in sex ratio, which indicates that there is high rate female maternal and infant mortality. This is due to neglect of general public health services, maternity and child health services.

- Modernisation has displaced women from active participation in the productive process.

The committee pointed out that modernisation has created new imbalances and disparities and women have been affected adversely. It stressed that "disabilities and inequalities imposed on women have to be seen in the total context of the society where large sections of the population- male and female, adults and children suffer under the oppression of an exploitative system. It is not possible to remove these inequalities only for emancipation and development. Women have to form part of a total movement for removal of inequalities and oppressive social institutions, if the benefits and privileges won by such action are to be shared by the entire woman population and not to be monopolized by a small minority". In order improve the status of women, measures were suggested by the committee. The committee on the status of women in India devoted a full chapter on the political status of women. The committee observed that women's participation in politics increased in the elections and women's readiness to express their views on issues directly concerning their day to living has improved. But it felt that though women's

participation in politics increased the total impact on the political process was negligible. This was due to the inadequate attention paid to educate women politically by the political parties and also by the women's groups. The committee also pointed out that political parties looked upon women as appendages to men and they had no one to represent them in the decision making bodies of the state. The committee recommended that women's political rights should be made more functional and the true nature of social inequalities and disabilities which hamper women's participation in politics should be recognised. It also suggested that women should be provided opportunities to participate in decision making bodies. The committee also recommended the establishment of statutory women's panchayats at the village level as women constitute a critical input in national development. It suggested to give women's panchayats autonomy and resources of their own for management and administration of welfare and development programmes for women. All women panchayats were recommended to provide women opportunity to gain experience and confidence in managing their own affairs. This measure was suggested to break the traditional attitudes that inhibit women from participating actively in the decision making bodies. The committee also suggested that these panchayats should be directly elected by the women of the village and their representatives should be sent to panchayat samitis and zilla parishads. At the level of municipalities the committee recommended to constitute permanent committees in municipalities to initiate and supervise programmes for women's welfare and development. It also recommended that the political parties should adopt a definite policy regarding the percentage of women candidates to be sponsored by them for elections to parliament and state assemblies. It suggested that the percentage may initially be started with 15% and gradually it may be increased. It recommended that women should be included in all committees or delegations which are appointed to examine socio-economic problems. This report was placed before the parliament for discussion.

### **8.3.5 The fifth five-year plan (1974-79)**

The major objective of fifth five-year plan was to eradicate poverty and attain self-reliance. This plan emphasized the need to train women, specially women in need of care and protection, women from low-income groups and women with dependent children and working women. This plan concurred with the international women's decade (75-85). It also recommended a programme of functional literacy to equip women with skills and knowledge to perform the functions of a housewife.

Parliament after debating on the report submitted by the committee of the status of women in India (CSWI) unanimously passed a resolution and urged the Prime Minister to "initiate a comprehensive programme of legislative and administrative measures aimed at removing as far as possible, the economic and

social injustice, disabilities and discriminations to which Indian women continue to be subjected".

The out come of the report "Towards Equality" submitted by the Committee on the Status of Women in India was the "National Plan of Action" for women by the Government. "A significant outcome of the policy debates in the seventies was a shift in recognition from viewing women as targets of welfare policies in the social sector to regarding them as critical groups of development. "This recognition was reflected in the sixth five-year plan. And a chapter was included on women's development. To ensure a fair deal for women the National Committee was appointed in 1976. The national committee under the Chairmanship of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi endorsed the National Plan of Action. "This committee advises the Central and State Governments on the legislative and administrative measures necessary for removing discriminations against women and reviews the progress of programme implementation". After 1975 there had been a shift in the policy towards women's issues due to the pressure from two sources (1) the distributing findings of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1971) and the impact of international women's decade.

Women's Welfare and Development Bureau was set up in 1976 under the Ministry of social welfare to act as a nodal point within the Government to co-ordinate policies, programmes for women's development and to initiate measures.

In the Ministries of Labour and Employment and Rural Development special cells for women were established.

In the context of the preparation of the sixth five-year plan by the planning commission, Government of India setup a working group on employment of women. This group was set up to scrutinize statistics on women's existing programmes/schemes of the government pertaining to women, development of self-employment and Entrepreneurship among women, skill development and development of cadres for promoting employment of women. (NPP). This committee submitted its report in 1978. Similar working groups were appointed by the Ministry of Education to advise on Adult Education programme for women and also by the Ministry of Industrial Development to advise on self-employment for women.

### **8.3.6 The sixth five-year plan (1980-85)**

The sixth plan recognised women's lack of access to resources as a critical factor impeding their development. It emphasised educational advancement, access to health care and economic independence necessary for the women's development.

The sixth five-year plan contained for the first time in India's planing history a chapter on "Women and Development". It conceived a multi-pronged strategy for women's development.

- "employment and economic independence
- education
- access to health care and family planning
- support services to meet the immediate gender needs of women and
- the creation of an enabling policy, institutional and legal Environment"

A separate chapter devoted to women and development was included in this plan. In the earlier plans women's issues were lost in the general section on social welfare and emphasis was on the provisions of institutional services but it has now been shifted to preventive and development aspects. In the light of this shift the plan mentioned employment as a special goal for women especially in sectors hitherto denied to them. This was a departure from the earlier perspective, which emphasized women's role in home management. It recognised the needs of the majority of women in rural areas whose income generating capacity is impeded, in part, by lack of employment opportunities and skills".

In 1979-80 Government of India set up a national committee on "role and participation of women in Agriculture and Rural Development. The committee studied the changes in rural women and submitted its report with recommendation in 1980.

In 1985 a seperate Department of women and child development ws set up under the newly created Ministry for Human Resource Development.

A variety of programmes were taken up under different sectors of development to ameliorate the working conditions of women and to raise their economic and social status. Vocational Training centres and Industrial Training Institutes exclusively meant for women were set up.

Gender specific programme called Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA) were started in 82-83.

The Dwacra programme aims "to raise the income levels of rural women of poor households. It also tries to enable the organised participation of groups of women of poor households in programmes of credit, skill, training and infrastructural support for self-employment. Their access to basic services of

health, education, child care, nutrition, drinking water and sanitation is also sought to be improved. With the expanding role of self-employment, as the alternative to wage employment for the increasing numbers of men and women entering the labour force some other initiative have also been introduced to facilitate women taking up self employment apart from skill and vocational training".

The Dwacra programme aims to disseminate information to women about government schemes, including loans for various purposes to finance small income generating programmes. A significant aspect of program strategy is organising women in-groups to implement collective economic programmes.

In the sixth five-year plan it was stated that "a household rather than an individual approach will be followed, implying that the economic uplift of the household will be sought through a package of activities involving all working members with particular attention being given to economic programmes for women". The Integrated Rural Development Programme accorded priority to women heads of households; one third of the beneficiaries were women.

During this plan period non-formal education centres, exclusively for girls were set up. Girls belonging to schedule castes and schedule tribes were given scholarships. In the state of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka separate Universities for women were established.

The Ministry of social welfare, Government of India set up a working group on (1) personal policies for bringing greater involvement in Science and Technology (2) to review the participation of women in scientific establishments at different levels and their problems and constraints in their participation, and (3) to suggest measures for increasing their participation in science and technology. The committee submitted its report with some recommendations. Some of the recommendations were incorporated in to the programmes and schemes of the Government. A wide spectrum of activities such as smokeless chullahs, solar cookers, biogas plants, water purifier system etc. were taken up under the scheme "Science and Technology for women". To reduce the drudgery of women in day to day activities improved agricultural implements for better methods of sheep rearing, wool spinning, and food processing were undertaken.

Under the ICDS programme nutrition intervention to pregnant and nursing mothers belonging to weaker sections was given priority. Hostels for working women, assistance to women, assistance to women in distress, training cum production centres were some of the schemes of the Government. Voluntary organisations were provided financial assistance to implement the above schemes.

The programme providing Joint Pattas to men and women was initiated. In this plan, family rather than women remained the basic unit of development.

### **8.3.7 The seventh five-year plan (1985-90)**

Seventh five-year plan also specified that women would receive preference and women-headed households would comprise at least 20 percent of the beneficiaries covered under this programme. The basic approach of the seventh five-year plan was to inculcate confidence among women, to make women realise their potential for development, and to bring about an awareness of their rights and privileges. This plan emphasized the need to open a venue for women and recognises women as the crucial resource for the development of the country. It also recognised the need to organise women workers (unionization) so that they can demand their rights. It also emphasized training for women to take up economic activity and employment. Apart from providing women access to land, support through credit, marketing, training in skills was also included. The programme of providing joint pattas initiated in the sixth plan was extended in the seventh plan. In the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India established a separate department of women and child welfare. The department of women and child development plans and execute programmes for women. It also monitors the programmes meant for women in other ministries and departments. This Department implemented many programmes like providing short stay homes for girls and women in danger, institutes for rehabilitation of women in distress, victims of atrocities and exploitation, medical care, counselling and working women's hostels. In this plan few state Governments set up women's development corporations for providing training and employment to women from weaker sections. They were set up to play a catalytic role in identifying women entrepreneurs, and to provide technical consultancy, to facilitate availability of credit and for promoting marketing products of women and to strengthen women's co-operatives. Each government department was instructed to formulate programmes for women's development.

The Indian parliament adopted a National Policy on Education in 1986, which included a chapter on Education for women's equality.

The Twenty Point Programme launched by the government of India in 1975 was recast and redefined in 1982 and also in 1986. This twenty-point programme was introduced to eradicate poverty, raise productivity, reduce income inequalities and remove social and economic disparities and also improve the quality of life.

The Government of India in 1986 set up a national expert committee on women prisoners to study the drawbacks of existing facilities and services provided to women prisoners and to evolve a more human policy towards women offenders.



The report submitted by this committee suggested legislation, custodial, correctional and prisons reforms relating to women prisoners. The National commission for women monitors the implementation of there suggestions.

### ***National Perspective Plan for Women (1988)***

The women and child welfare development set up a core a group to evaluate the (1) impart of development set plans and programmes (2) to review the policies and programmes and (3) to draft perspective plans for 1988-2000. The National perspective plan (NNP) for women upto 2000 AD was released in 1988. This plan has made reviews of the situation of women in the following aspects rural development, and agriculture education, health, employment, legislation, support services, political participation and decision making and voluntry action and Media and communication and family welfare. It cacorporates many of the recommendations of the CSWI which have not been implemented. It stresses enforcement of laws new legal safeguards and support mechanisms for women in all spheres". It also made suggestions and strategies. On of the major recommendation made by this plan is to formulate national policies with specific objectives for increasing the participation of women in developmental plans. It suggested that the policies should aim to create more employment opportunities for women and also provide support services to enable them to participate fully in the development of the country. The perspective plan recognised the importance of women potential as human resources and critical input for development and training. This plan urged the establishment of an apex body for (1) providing training to women (2) to sensitize administrative machinery at all levels to the issues of women (3) to revamp the existing content, methodology and monitoring the training of catalyst functionaries.

The national perspective plan made the recommendation of appointing a commission for women's rights for the enforcement of law to ensure women their rights. It also suggested bringing in conceptual clarity on work, non-work and their economic value. It recommended that unpaid work contribution of women in the household and outside, be recognised. The plan formulated its own definition of political participation of women. The traditional definition of political participation included only electoral and administrative arenas and brought in voluntary acativities like voting, supporting political groups, communication with legislatures, dissemination of political views amongst the electorate". This plan defined political participation to include the aspects mentioned above and also to include an involvement in any from of organised activity that affects or seeks to affect power relationships. "It included protests, demonstrations as political participation. The plan stated that traditional forces which were parochial and basically patriarchal hampered political participation of women. It agreed to the

fact that voting had a tremendous impact on equalising and mobilising women. It pointed out that majority of women did not know why they should vote for a particular candidate of a particular party. It also pointed that political parties were reluctant to field women candidates and the cost of electioneering was an obstacle for women's political participation. The national plan made the recommendation of reservation of 30% seats in all elected bodies to ensure women an opportunity to enjoy equal political status with men. The plan made recommendations for strengthening of the minimum needs programme to include-

- (1) Women's access to productive resource such as land and credit inputs
- (2) to review property laws to ensure women access to property rights
- (3) Strengthening of women oriented waste land development programmes of social forestry
- (4) skill training for women in agriculture, animal husbandry and other areas of employment
- (5) unionizing of women, expansion of insurance cover, maternity and other benefits
- (6) special training programme for rural women Entrepreneurship, appropriate technology for drudgery reduction and enhancing productivity
- (7) support services for women in distress
- (8) legal aid centres, counselling centres, creche/day care facilities
- (9) special cells to enforce legislation on job security, working conditions, minimum wages, equal work etc. which should be extended to unorganised sectors
- (10) banning sex determination tests
- (11) strengthening ICDS programme to ensure girl child's equal access to health care, sex and family planning education in educational institutions, encourage folk media to reach women in rural areas
- (12) Uniform civil code for all citizens.

The plan recommended to educate and sensitize women, people in power to feel the need to get women into active politics and also on womens issues. It suggested that government should take initiatives for effective participation of women in decision making bodies at the state level, national level and local level specially in the core sectors of development. It also recommended for a 30%

reservation for women in panchayaty raj bodies and municipalities. It also emphasised on providing information and training to the elected women representatives. It made the suggestion that "the pattern of relationship between the government and the womens development programme functionaries in Rajasthan for a link between the elected representatives and government officials throughout the country". It also made the suggestion that political parties should themselves give 30% tickets to women and they should take initiative steps to politically educating women.

In 1987 the Government constituted the national commission for self-employed women and women in the informal sector to make a comprehensive study of the working and living conditions of poor women in poverty. This committee was constituted to

- a) "examine the present status of women in the self-employed sector with special reference to employment, health, education and social status
- b) assess the impact of various labour legislations on the self employed specially in respect of maternity benefits and health insurance
- c) identify the constraints on increase of productivity of self-employed women and the gaps in training, credit, up-gradation of skills and marketing
- d) survey employment patterns, including production relations and assess their impact on the wages of the self employed women
- e) undertake a survey of the effects of macro policies relating to investment, production and technology on the status of self employed women
- f) consider the link between the productive and reproductive roles of the self employed women with special reference to their health status
- g) suggest measures relating to all sectors for removing the constraints which adversely affect the integration of self employed women in the national development process".

The committee examined all issues cerning women working in the informal sector submitted its report in 1988 with the following recommendations:

- 1) "the commission recommended enlarging the definition of women workers to include all such activities, paid and unpaid, performed with in the home or outside, as an employee or on one's own account
- 2) it recommended the devising of strategies which can help to enhance the ownership of and the control over productive assets by these women

3) allocation of resources has to be enhanced in basic areas like education, health, rural and small industry, drinking water and housing

4) that is planing a basic strategy should be evolved with an objective to have an intergrated and holistic approach tackling women's issues to ensure fuel, fodder, water, strengthen their existing employment by providing appropriate support in the areas of skill, training, credit and marketing, protecting their employment where it is declining due to technological advancement, creating employment opportunities based on market, protecting women workers from canalization and contractualisation, provide support services like housing, tickets and child care and proper and effective implementation of industrial and protective legislations.

It recommended enalarging the areas of employment for women, improving their working conditions, to reduce their drudgery and to provide social security, a holistic and integrated approach to be adopted. It recommended recognizing the contribution of women to agriculture and the policy makers should make efforts to reflect this in the country's agricultural policy and programmes. It recommended that more resources be allocated to water shed management areas and projects, with involvement of women to increase their employment opportunities. It also recommended that the banking policy be implemented in favour of women withy greater amount of flexibility, set up an exclusive credit body for poor and self-employed women. It recommended a policy by which the actual producers and artisans have the first claim to raw materials. It also recommended provideng adequate and specially designed transport facilities provide market complexes, issue license to women vendors, set up training centres where the industries are set up, strengthen self employment programmes (Dwacra). Suggestions were also made with regard to women, health and work, poor women should be safeguarded by deliberate policy against exploitation and harassment by officials.

On the recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1974 the Government set up a National Commission for Women in order to bring down the growing incidents of crime. A bill on National Commission was introduced and passed in 1990 and in 1992 member of the commissions were appointed.

The National plan of Action for the Girl child (1991-2000) was formulated for the SAARC decade of the girl child and bulit upon a strategy of ensuring surviyal, protection and development of children in pursuance of the world submit of children and the plan of Action for the Girl Child were implemented in the 90s.

In the seventh plan the immunization scheme which was implemented in the earlier plan was universalized in a phased manner and 1990 covered all the districts in the country by this programme.

The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in 1988 with the aim of imparting functional literacy and numeracy, to imbibe the values of national integration, women's equality and small family norm.

In the 1991 census our attempt was made to capture women's work in the informed sector. To bring about change in the attitudes integrated multi media campaigns to project a positive image of women girl child to the community have been launched. Since 1991 orientation and training programmes to sensitize planners, policy makers and other development agencies have been taken up. To combat atrocities against women special campaigns have also been initiated.

### **8.3.8 The eighth five-year plan (1992-97)**

Welfare and support services, which were introduced in 1975, are still continuing. Support services like short stay homes, hostels for working women have been established; the integrated child development services (ICDS) scheme continuing.

The Government has formulated a "National Nutrition Policy" (1993) in order to fulfil the constitutional commitment to ensure certain minimum nutritional standards. This policy recognises that woman and children are priority groups, which need special attention. It suggested short term and long term measures necessary to improve the nutritional status of women and children.

In 1993 the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment Acts were enacted and implemented. This was an historic event in the advancement of women. These enactments ensure one third of total seats and positions of chairpersons in rural and urban elected bodies. It is estimated that with this amendments about million women will emerge as leaders / decisions makers at grass roots levels of these 75,000 will be chairpersons

In 1992 the women's legal literacy programme was launched. The National Machinery brought out Manuals for women legal literacy. "Our Laws" are a series of illustrated manuals, which are presented, in a simple language to create awareness about the existing laws concerning women's rights. These include personal laws, criminal laws and also provide information about law enforcing machinery and the procedures to interact with them.

The Government, in order to enable rural women to have control over their savings and other financial resources, has implemented the "Mahila Samridhi Yojana" in 1993. This provides rural women the facility to deposit small amount in rural post offices and offers attractive rates of interest.

The Government in 1993 set up the National Credit Fund for women with an initial corpus of Rs. 310 million. This was set up to redress the grievances of poor women who have no accessibility to formal credit systems. This credit is extended through non-governmental organisations, which are working in the rural areas. Reasonable rates of interest are charged. This fund is set up "develop a network of credit services for women in the informal sector, to boost self-employment and micro-enterprises/small business".

In 1992 the Government setup a National Commission for women as suggested by CSWI. This was in response to the growing incidence of crimes against women. This commission is set up to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women. It also reviews the existing legislations and suggests amendments. It also looks into the complaints made by women relating to deprivation of their rights. Some states have set up State Commissions with similar functions. The commission is monitoring the implementation of the recommendations made by the expert committee on women prisoners (1986).

The eighth five-year plan had adopted the strategy of employment and income generation for main streaming women into national development. The various departments set up by the government, which are working for women have reset their priorities to raise the status of women and are working towards creating employment, training and income generation activities.

The government has a programme especially for school drop out adolescent girls in 1993. This programme meets the various needs of adolescent girls i.e., nutritional needs, vocational employment and training and self image improvement needs.

To empower women the major strategies have been education, employment and awareness generation. This strategy has been implemented in 1986 and is still continuing. The policy commitments of "Educations for All" and "Employment for all" strengthen the above strategies. One of the strategies adopted in rural India is "participation management" in implementing various developmental programmes through women's groups.

In 1986 a special monitoring mechanism was setup to monitor the women specific and women related schemes. (27 Beneficiary Oriented Schemes - BOS). This unit directly reports to the Prime Ministers office. It monitors indicator relation of "Equality of women" in the priority programmes of the Government.

## 8.4 LEGISLATIVE MEASURES FOR WOMEN

### *Legal rights guaranteed to women*

The government of India in keeping with the constitution has passed a number of laws in various spheres so that women's status is raised. The various laws passed by the government can be classified as labour laws, criminal laws, family laws and other civil laws.

### *Labour laws*

#### *Maternity Benefit Act - 1961*

The equal Remuneration Act was passed as a token gesture to International Women's Year. This act was passed for providing for payment of equal remuneration to both men and women workers, the work by them being similar. Discrimination in transfer, promotion, training is prohibited.

#### *The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act) 1986*

This act was passed to guarantee the rights and entitlements of children.

There are some laws which are General laws but they are also concerned with women.

"The Workmen's Compensation Act - 1923

The minimum Wages Act - 1948

The Contract Labour System (Abolition) Act - 1976

The Inter State Migrant Workers Act - 1979

The Factories Act - 1948

The Employees State Insurance Act - 1948

Plantation Labour Act - 1951 (Country Paper of India 1994)"

"Some of the Criminal Laws including relevant Provisions in the Indian Penal Code, 1960 are as follows:

- |      |   |                                                                                     |
|------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 292  | - | Sale etc. of obscene books                                                          |
| 228A | - | Punishment for disclosure of the identity of victims of certain offences like rape. |

- 294 - obscene acts or songs
- 354 - outraging the modesty of a woman
- 509 - word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman
- 376 - rape
- 304B - Dowry death
- 361 - kidnapping from lawful guardianship
- 363 - punishment for kidnapping
- 366A - procreation of a minor girl
- 366 - kidnapping, abducting or abducting woman to compel her marriage
- 366B - Importation of a girl from a foreign country
- 372 - selling a minor for purposes of prostitution
- 373 - buying a minor for purposes of prostitution
- 498A - Cruelty by husband (Country Paper of India 1994)

#### ***The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act - 1986***

In 1956 the suppression of immoral Traffic in women and girls Act was passed to punish brothel keepers, pimps and other related to this profession and prevent prostitution in public places. In 1978 this act was amended and in 1986 the act was renamed as the immoral traffic (Prevention) Act.

#### ***The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961***

This act was passed in 1961 to punish anyone giving or taking dowry. This act was amended in 1984 and again in 1986 to make it more stringent.

#### ***The indecent representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986***

"This response to the public protests against the way the media was projecting the image of women in degrading and undignified ways, the parliament passed this act.



### ***The child marriage restraint Act 1929***

The Child marriage Restraint Act was passed banning child marriage of girl. In 1976 the act was amended and the minimum legal age for Marriage of girls was raised 18 years to protect them from the stress and strain of Marriage and family care.

### ***Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987***

The government passed a commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987 when Sati occurred in Deorala in 1987 when a young woman, Roop Kanwar committed Sati. This act while penalizing the glorification of Sati treats the act as suicide. The responsibility on the victim". (Leela Kasturi p.99).

### ***Family Laws***

Hindu personal laws were completely overhauled in mid 1959s to give women their right to inheritance, to adoption, to divorce and to impose monogamy.

### ***Andhra Pradesh State Government and Programmes for women***

The State of Andhra Pradesh has set up a separate department for women and child development During the first five year plan to fifth five-year plan the policies initiated were welfare oriented programmes for women, mainly focussed on women, adult education and improving the skill of poor women. State Homes, Service Homes, Rescue Homes and homes for Aged Women were established. In 1975 an integrated child Development Service (ICDS) was introduced to provide a package of nutrition health and educational support.

After 1975 there has been a change in the thrust of the programmes. "Andhra Pradesh women's co-operative finance co-operation" was established as a part of the directorate to cater to the credit need of self employed women and small entrepreneurs self belonging to the weaker sections".

After 79-80 there has been a shift towards developmental programmes within the sixth five-year plan the state government introduced skill development and training programmes for women. In the seventh five-year Telugu Bala Mahila Pragathi Pranganam was established to provide training, post training placement and credit and marketing linkages for those who opt for self employment.

"In pursuance of the central government policy of expanding technical training facilities for women to provide greater employment opportunities industrial training institutions (ITI) for women have been opened in the state in the seventh plan. Among the programmes for the Empowerment of women the Mahila Samakya was introduced in Andhra Pradesh.

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## 8.5 SUMMING UP

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In this unit we have studied about the various policies of the government of India since fifties the policies were welfare oriented and after seventies there was shift from welfare to Development and later to empowerment. We have also studied about the legislative measures, which were enacted for the benefit of women.

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## 8.6 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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### I. Answer the following in 30 lines each

1. Discuss about the constitutional provisions for Indian women.
2. Discuss the legislations passed for women's development in India.
3. Write about the government policy in 70's.

### II. Answer the following in 10 lines each

1. Seventh five-year plan.
2. Recommendations of the committee on the status of women in India.
3. Recommendations of the National Perspective Plan.

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## 8.7 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. National Perspective Plan for women 1988-2000 Govt. Of India 1988
2. Towards Beijing - country Paper, India 1994.
3. Government of India (1974) "Towards Equality, Report of the Committee on the status of women in India.
4. Desai, Neera and Patel, Vibhuthi (1985) "Indian Women: Change and Challenge in the International Decade 1975-1985. (Bombay Popular Prakashm)
5. National Commission on self-employed women and women in the informal sector (1988) shram sjhakti, a report.

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**BLOCK - IV : POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT  
OF WOMEN**

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## **UNIT-9 : WOMEN'S EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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- 9.0 Objectives
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- 9.2 Need for Political Empowerment of Women
- 9.3 Obstacles for Political Empowerment of Women
- 9.4 Women's Education a pre-requisite for Political Empowerment
- 9.5 Women in local Governments - A Step towards Equality
- 9.6 Reservation Policy for Political Involvement of Women - A Debate
- 9.7 Role of Women's Movements and Organization in Political Empowerment of Women
  - 9.7.1 Role of Voluntary Agencies
- 9.8 Summing-up
- 9.9 Model Examination Questions
- 9.10 Recommended Books

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### **9.0 OBJECTIVES**

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At the end of this unit you will be able to

- \* Know the present status of women in politics in India.
- \* Recognize the factors / obstacles preventing women from active participation in politics.
- \* Recognize 'women's education' as pre-requisite for political empowerment of women.
- \* Identify the strategies for political empowerment of women.
- \* Explain the role of various movements and organizations in political empowerment of women.

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the unit we shall discuss about the status of women in Indian society, their participation in various spheres, especially participation in politics and decision-making. We explained how the Socio-economic and cultural factors influence women's participation in politics. Now, in this unit we will focus on how the political empowerment of women could be achieved by over coming the constraints and encouraging women's education.

## 9.2 NEED FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

### Status of Political Participation

Political participation of women is a major dilemma, despite the constitution of India granting women equal rights through fundamental rights which provide for every citizen equal opportunity to contribute in the decision making process. The Indian constitution guarantees political equality through the institution of adult franchise. Article 15(3) empowers the state to make any special provisions for women and children even in violation of the fundamental obligation of non-discrimination among citizens on the basis of sex. This provision enables the state to make special provision for women. In spite of these constitutional provisions in our country women have always been relegated into second position in all walks of life in the society. For instance it is evident from poor participation and representation of women in the politics and decision making process (Table - 1).

TABLE - 1

### REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN MEMBERS FROM FIRST TO EIGHTH LOK SABHA

| Sl. No.              | Total Seats | No. Of women members | Percentage to the total |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. First Lok Sabha   | 499         | 22                   | 4.4                     |
| 2. Second Lok Sabha  | 500         | 27                   | 5.4                     |
| 3. Third Lok Sabha   | 503         | 34                   | 6.7                     |
| 4. Fourth Lok Sabha  | 523         | 31                   | 5.9                     |
| 5. Fifth Lok Sabha   | 521         | 22                   | 4.2                     |
| 6. Sixth Lok Sabha   | 514         | 19                   | 3.4                     |
| 7. Seventh Lok Sabha | 544         | 28                   | 5.1                     |
| 8. Eighth Lok Sabha  | 544         | 44                   | 8.1                     |

The representation of women in eighth Lok Sabha was 44 out of 544 seats i.e. 8.1 percent was the highest when compared to their representation in earlier Lok Sabhas.

The number of seats won by women to the Lok Sabha in 1993 was 35 seats in a House of 504 members and the Rajya Sabha had 28 women in a house of 245. Greater representation of women in Rajya Sabha was due to nomination. The pattern of women's representation at State Level is not very different. The all India total stands at 44 women elected though 1486 men were elected out of 8415 male contestants. The representation of women at grass root level politics is far better because of the reservation for women in local governments. In India among the 8 lakhs panchayats 7,70,000 women will be elected as members by virtue of the 73rd constitutional amendment which guaranteed 30 percent seats for women, a welcome step taken by the government. Among these women members 70,000 will be elected as "Sarpanches" and 15,000 women members will be elected as members of Mandals or panchayats and, 150 women members, as Zilla Parishad Chairman. In Andhra Pradesh in recent local government elections 73,513 women were declared as members, 6,846 as Sarpanches, 372 as Mandal Prajaparishad President and 7 Zilla Parishad Chairmen. Involvement of women in politics and decision making through special measures will definitely improve the situation of women. As many women at grassroots level in rural and urban area represent the women and raise womens issues and directly involved in implementation of development programmes and suggest improvements.

Women parliamentarians from 1950 to 1989 happened to introduce in all more than 150 Bills in both Houses of Parliament. Out of this at least 110 Bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha and about 40 Bills in Rajya Sabha.

In the First Parliament bills introduced by women such as dowry, children and women's institutions, suppression of immoral traffic among women, divorce, food, health etc. that are immediate concern to women. The economic, national and international issues were not given much importance. It is from the Second Parliament which was constituted in 1957 that women Parliamentarians started bringing bills regarding equal remuneration, working conditions of women, maternity benefit, taxation, hoarding, military and legal matters, property rights for women, technical training, industries employment etc.

Though the number of women Parliamentarians were very few, some of the issues pertaining to women were introduced. However, it was often complained that the women never could get adequate representation in the Parliament despite women constituting 50 percent of the population. This is recognized by the New Delhi Document on Women in Development (1985) that despite the growth of informal political activity by women, their role in the formal political structure had virtually remained unchanged. This recognition has given way to serious

debates and discussions for deifying the concept and identifying the indicators is an out-come of the Nairobi Conference of (1985) the Non-Aligned meet of the same year and the Forward Looking Strategies after Nairobi Conference. Subsequently issues related to the nature of political participation of women, problems faced by them and the strategies to be evolved have assumed importance in womens movements and organizations. Low political participation of women and considerable number of women as peripheral elements, inspite of their informal involvement in political work is not only the problem of India but also a global issue, which can be solved by growing awareness among women.

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### **9.3 OBSTACLES FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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The important factors/obstacles identified as responsible for poor participation of women in political activity and decision making are:

- \* Illiteracy and low education of women that resulted in lack of information, knowledge and exposure.
- \* Prevailing Socio-economic and cultural constraints
- \* Women's behavioral pattern,
- \* Their 'backward consciousness'
- \* Lack of political interest in public issues.
- \* Subordinate position of women in society as a structural constraint owing to the gender based division of labour in family.
- \* The existing political culture dominated by money and muscle power.

Most of these factors or constraints mainly stem from lack of education, information, training in skills, awareness and above all economic insecurity for women.

Hence the pre-requisite for women to be active participants in decision-making activities is the provision of facilities for literacy education, information and economic security.

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### **9.4 WOMEN'S EDUCATION: A PRE-REQUISITE FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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The main draw-back of women in India is high female illiteracy and low education of women which is a legacy of patriarchal society. Low status of women, gender equality is the consequences of the lack of literacy and education among majority of women in India.



A review of 'Women's education' in India gives us the poor status of women's education since ages. Educational Status of Women in India: Vedic Period: Historical researchers have established that the women held a position of equality with men during the 'Rig Vedic' period (1500-1000 B.C.). Girls and boys were required to undergo 'Upanayanam' ceremonies in order to be initiated to Vedic studies. Atharva Veda asserted that the success of women in her married life depends upon her proper training during the Brahmacharya. Some of the renowned Vedic women are Lopamudra, Maitrey, Viswavara Sikata, Nivavan etc. During this period the girl's marriage age was 12 to 16 year, after completion of her education. Having educated 'Rig Vedic' women had a voice in the selection of their husbands. In Vedas there is no mention of the practice of 'Sati'. Thus the status of women in early Vedic times was high which can be attributed to the education they received on par with the men and the equal status given to them.

The social changes which took place after 1000 to 300 B.C. led to the degradation in the status of women, the social scientist Altekar writes: "The discontinuation Upanayanam, the neglect of education, and the lowering of marriage age produced disastrous consequences upon the position and status of women".

In subsequent periods lack of education, child marriages increased the number of widows. The customs like 'Purdah', 'Sati' and polygamy made women's position worse. The dual standards of morality setup by Manu prevailed until the reformist movements initiated by Raja Rammohan Roy (1771-1833), Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1971), Dayananda Saraswathi (1827-1883), Kesava Chandra Sen (1838-1883), Maharshi Karve and Veerasha Lingam Panthulu. These reformist movements brought significant educational, social, legislative changes and paved way for the emancipation of Indian Women in the twentieth century.

### ***Colonial Period***

During the colonial period the Charter Act of 1813 entrusted the East India Company with the responsibility of educating the Indian people. But only the Education commission in 1882 discussed the problems of women's education with great insight and made several recommendations to open more schools for girls and also recommended the appointment of women teachers in the schools and special stipends for widows, who came for teacher training. These recommendations of 1882 Education Commission made possible the entry of women into the professions like teaching and nursing.s

The great Indian figures like Swamy Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Maharshi Karve, Ramabai Ranade, Madam Cama have contributed for women's education and emancipation. Swamy Vivekananda emphasized that women would be enabled

to solve their own problems by thinking independently. He took a stand of liberation of women and equality of treatment on the basis of vedantic ideals.

### ***Post-Independence Period***

In post independence period women's education has assumed special significance in the context of planned development. The planners and policy makers have put targets for development of women's education through different Five Year periods recognizing the importance of education as the most important instrument for human resource development.

#### ***First Five Year Plan (1951-55)***

The First Five Plan advocated the need for adopting special measures for solving the problems of women's education. It held that women must have the same opportunities as men for taking all kinds of work and this presupposes that they get equal facilities so that their entry into the professions and public services is in no way prejudiced. It further added that "at the secondary and even at the university stage it should have vocational or skill oriented courses as far as possible, so that those who complete such stages may be in a position, if necessary to immediately take up some vocation or other". Accordingly the educational facilities for girls continued to expand in the subsequent plan.

#### ***Second five-year Plan (1956-61)***

The second Five Year Plan (1956-61) continued the emphasis on overall expansion of educational facilities with special provision of large opportunities for education of girls and women. The major schemes undertaken during this period were elementary education, secondary education, and training women teacher to post in girl's schools since shortage of women teachers was one of the obstacles in the progress of women's education. The second plan recommended special scholarship schemes for girls to take up different courses. As a result of the measures taken during Second five-year Plan the enrolment of girls exceeded the estimated target fixed for the second plan period at all the stages.

#### ***Third Five Year Plan***

The Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) considered the need for increasing the proportion of women students in colleges and universities to take up different occupations. Third plan launched important schemes like Condensed courses for adult women, Balasevika training and child care programmes

#### ***Fourth Five Year Plan***

This trend continued in Fourth and Fifth five-year Plans. Incentives such as free textbooks and scholarships for girls were made to motivate the girl students.

Despite the large-scale expansion of facilities for education up to the Fourth Plan, vast disparities existed in the relative utilization of available facilities by boys and girls at various stages. Hence the major target in the Fifth Plan was to offer equality of opportunities as part of the overall plan for ensuring social justice and improving the quality of education imparted. To promote enrolment and retention in schools in backward areas and among underprivileged sections of the population mid-day meals, uniform, attendance and scholarships were given to girls. In spite of these incentives insufficient women teachers, resulted in low enrolment of girls. To increase the number of women teachers more women Teacher Training Schools were started.

### ***Sixth Plan Period***

Women's education has assumed the status of a major programme under women and development as an outcome of the publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of women in India. The report laid emphasis on universalisation of elementary education specially directed towards higher enrolment and retention of girls in schools. It was envisaged to promote Balvadis-cum-Creches attached to the schools to enable girls to attend classes who were responsible for their sisters or brothers at home in the absence of their mothers who went to work. To achieve greater participation of girls in science and technology, science teaching in schools was strengthened. Adult education was included as a part of minimum needs programme and the goal of reaching 100 percent literacy by 1990 was set up under New Twenty-point programme.

### ***Seventh five-year Plan***

The seventh plan envisaged the restructuring of the educational programme and modification of school curricular to eliminate gender by as Seventh and plan paved way for open learning system and correspondence courses to expedite education among girls. Financial assistance to voluntary agencies to run early childhood education (pre-school centers) as adjuncts of primary/middle schools are to be expanded particularly to help evolve innovative models suited to specific learned groups or areas.

### ***Eighth Five-year plan***

During Eighth Plan the major thrust areas in education sector are Universalisation of elementary education, eradication of illiteracy in the age group of 15 to 35 and strengthening vocational education so as to relate it to emerging needs of the urban and rural settings. For this purpose the strategy suggested was the utilization of formal, non-formal and open learning. Emphasis is made to strengthen National Open School and Open Learning System.

Despite the planned objectives and efforts the actual progress in upgrading the educational status of women has been slow. A glance at the female literacy rates and enrolment rates in school and higher educational levels give us the grim

picture of women's education in India (Table - 2).

**TABLE - 2**  
**LITERACY RATES - INDIA (1951-1991)**

| Year | Persons | Male  | female |
|------|---------|-------|--------|
| 1951 | 18.33   | 27.16 | 8.86   |
| 1961 | 28.31   | 40.40 | 15.34  |
| 1971 | 34.45   | 45.95 | 21.97  |
| 1981 | 43.67   | 56.50 | 29.85  |
| 1991 | 52.19   | 64.20 | 39.19  |

Source: HRD Report, 1993-94

*Note:* Literacy rates for 1951, 1961 and 1971 relate to population aged five years and above. The rates for the years 1981 and 1991 relate to the population aged seven years and above. The 1981 rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted. The 1991 Census rates exclude Jammu and Kashmir where the 1991 Census could not be conducted.

As per the 1991 Census all India literacy rate increased to 51.19% by 1991 from 43.67 in 1981 census. The literacy rate among males gone up from 56.50% (1981) to 64.20% in 1991, whereas the female literacy rate from 29.85% (1981) to 39.19% showing a grim picture of female literacy.

### **Enrolment**

**TABLE - 3**  
**SEX - WISE ENROLMENT BY STAGES/CLASSES SINCE 1951 SCHOOL LEVEL**  
(In Lakhs)

| Year     | Primary |       |       | Upper Primary |       |       | High/Hr. Sec |       |       |
|----------|---------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|
|          | Boys    | Girls | Total | Boys          | Girls | Total | Boys         | Girls | Total |
| 1950-51  | 138     | 54    | 192   | 26            | 5     | 31    | 13           | 2     | 15    |
| 1960-61  | 236     | 114   | 350   | 51            | 16    | 67    | 27           | 7     | 34    |
| 1970-71  | 357     | 213   | 570   | 94            | 39    | 133   | 49           | 17    | 66    |
| 1980-81  | 453     | 285   | 738   | 139           | 68    | 207   | 76           | 32    | 108   |
| 1990-91P | 581     | 410   | 991   | 209           | 124   | 333   | 140          | 69    | 209   |
| 1991-92P | 592     | 424   | 1016  | 214           | 130   | 344   | 142          | 70    | 212   |
| 1992-93  | 605     | 449   | 1054  | 237           | 150   | 387   | 150          | 77    | 227   |

Source : HRD Report, 1993-94

There has been all round increase in the enrolment of boys and girls at all the levels of education since the commencement of planned development. The discouraging feature about the enrolment of girls is that it decreases as they up from primary to secondary school and higher secondary; contrary to it, the percentage of enrolment of boys at secondary, and higher levels of education. For instance, the table 3 indicate that during 1992 - 93 the enrolment of boys and girls at primary levels is 605 (57.40%) 449 (42.60%) out of total 1054 lakhs (10.00%) enrolment. At upper primary level out of 387 lakhs (100%), 237 lakhs (61.24%) are boys and 150 lakhs (38.76%) are girls, whereas at high school level out of 227 lakhs enrolled 150 lakhs (66.08%) are boys and 77 lakhs (33.92%) are girls, the percentage of girls enrolment gone down from 42.60% (Primary level), to 33.92% at High School level where as the percentage of boys increased from 57.40% at primary level to 66.08% at high school level. This shows the high drop out rate of girls at secondary & high school levels. This grim picture of women's education needs to be attended, to empower women economically, socially and politically, by all means.

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## 9.5 WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A STEP TOWARDS EQUALITY

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Participatory development through group organizations has been successfully attempted in several innovative projects carried out by women organizations. It is a significant contribution of the voluntary organizations demonstrating the effectiveness of participatory development as a process of empowering women, to articulate their needs to take part in decision making. Hence participation of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions is considered to be the most effective instruments for equality and realizing the goals of economic betterment and social justice for the women.

One of the most important achievement of Panchayat Raj is that it increased the consciousness of people about their rights. Individual voters, especially women at grass root level become very conscious of their political role during Panchayat elections. The policy makers of Panchayathi Raj system desired that the rural women should not only become the beneficiaries of development, but contributors to it by active participation.

The committee on Panchayat Raj in 1978 recommended the reservation of two seats for women in Panchayat and co-opt women when they did not come through elections.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments are land marks in the history of political empowerment, which enabled women to enter into active politics. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act provided for 30 percent reservation for women

at all levels and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment act provided for 30 percent reservation for women in Urban Local Governments.

Effective leadership of women is essential for bringing women into the main stream. Studies have found that some women presidents of Mandal Praja Parishad in Andhra Pradesh are functioning as effective leaders. This reservation of key positions to women when purposefully utilized will yield good result. As pointed out in the National Perspective Plan for women, power and access to decision and authority are critical pre-requisites for women's equality in the process of nation building.

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## **9.6 RESERVATION POLICY FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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### ***A Debate***

Reservation of seats for women in the political institutions is considered to be an important instrument in political empowerment of women as it guarantees the representation of women in decision making bodies, but it is often subject to debate that reservation will not help in elevating the women from disadvantageous position. But in order to cover the disadvantaged position of women or to bridge the gap between the representatives of men and women in political institutions the reservation of seats for women in election is supported widely, otherwise it may take another half a century or century to get women aware of their rights and get the seats on their own amidst all the disadvantages in the society.

In 'Assam and Pacific Symposium of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) on women in Development' held from November 16 to 20, 1993 at Manila, Phillippines, it was agreed that - *"Every Effort Must Be Made For Women To Come Into All Levels Of The Formal Political Arena And To See That The Women's Agenda Is Articulated At All Levels. This includes the Recommendations for Reservations for Women In Terms Of Seats and Quotas in Other Decision-Making Bodies"*

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## **9.7 ROLE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND ORGNISATIONS IN POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

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The women's movements have been profound and powerful agents of empowerment for highlighting women's issues, for politicizing women and in many other cases. In an ancient social fabric like India with diverse cultures and customs, law alone cannot bring effective changes. Measures are to be taken by women's organizations and through women's movements for gender sensitizations. This would mean creating awareness among women and to bring about changes in women's perception about themselves and by creating and enabling environment

for women to get education, awareness, knowledge and skills for economic, social and political empowerment. The women's organizations and voluntary organisations have a responsible role to play to bring about the changes among women and men and in their attitudes and perceptions about social issues like education of girl child, marriages, dowry etc.

Though women are aware of their needs and development, lack of proper leadership and lack of dynamism clubbed with culturally imposed constraints have made women fearful rather timid of taking active part in public affairs and politics. Women's movement is a powerful means of articulating their problems.

The recent "Arrack Movement" led by women in Andhra Pradesh which left no option for the state government except to impose and implement 'Prohibition' in the state is an evidence of the strength of the women's movements. The women's movements, the powerful agents in bringing women out to fight for their rights should take a lead in sensitizing women at rural as well as urban areas to participate in politics and realize the power of right to franchise.

In India, limited adult franchise was given to women in 1937. In post-independence period the constitution of India granted equal rights after a prolonged debate and struggle. The right to vote is not being utilized properly by women which is evident from the following table showing the comparative participation of men and women in three election viz. 1984, 1989 and 1991.

| Year | Male<br>Percentage | Voting Percentage turnout of<br>Women voters |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1984 | 63.61              | 68.17                                        |
| 1989 | 70.90              | 43.90                                        |
| 1991 | 52.56              | 47.42                                        |

Women's participation in formal elections to a great extent depends on the general awareness among the community, importance of exercising franchise and overall political culture. Serious efforts are needed to mobilize women by women's movements and voluntary organizations to improve the political awareness and political culture among the women. Even the number of women contestants in Parliament and Assembly elections has not increased significantly over the years. The major constraint is the high cost of electioneering to most women candidates who are economically dependent.

In this state of affairs the role of women's movements and women's organizations, associations are identification of the barriers to women's full participation in politics and decision making and simultaneously taking measures to overcome these constraints and mobilizing women.

### ***9.7.1 Role of Voluntary Agencies***

The role of voluntary agencies in women's development is considered vital. Most of the voluntary agencies work at grass roots level in direct contact with local people examine their needs and taking measures to solve their problems. These organizations are more responsive to the people as their work is not bound by rigid bureaucratic procedures. The voluntary agencies are more effective, especially in the areas such as motivation, identification of problem, analysis and finding solution through innovative methods through constant involvement of community due to their commitment and spirit.

Voluntary agencies have contributed immensely for women's development. The role of voluntary agencies is commendable in creating awareness among women of their rights and mobilizing women by motivating them and creating leadership characters among women to lead the other women by forming 'women groups'. A number of innovative welfare and developmental programmes for rural, women and child development are based on the experiences and projects run successfully by voluntary organizations. The government programmes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth in Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Integrated Child Development Services Schemes (ICDS), and Adult literacy programmes etc. have, due to the involvement of voluntary agencies in implementation, received a useful feedback.

Beside this voluntary agencies can assist in

- \* Increasing the political awareness among women, and their participation in political process and decision making.
- \* Providing legal aid and legal education to women and rescue them from exploitation,
- \* Provide necessary support and training for women who are elected for Panchayats and in Mandal elections, for their effective functioning.
- \* Educating women about the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> reservations for women in local governments as a crucial component in the political empowerment process and ensure that constitutional provisions are made accessible to common rural woman.



- \* Ensure that women representatives actively participate in the decision making process of the Panchayat and Zilla Parishad institutions.

According to SEARCH, a voluntary organization involved in Rural Development in Karnataka the training strategy to empower women in Panchayat Raj institution include the following components.

- i. **Creation of space for women :** This is facilitated by and initiated by organizing women into small groups which voluntary agencies called as 'Women Sanghams'
- ii. **Mobilization:** It is through these women groups womens begin to share and discuss a whole range of issues centering around their lives like poverty, lack of employment, low wages, scarcity of drinking water, drunken behaviour of their husbands, how they have lost their girl child, how the men treat women and how they lack scope for their overall development. It is from here gradually that they are organized into a strong sangham, and some of them are transformed into wage earners' groups or occupation based groups.
- iii. **Social leadership:** The third area of women's empowerment has been the women's role of leadership relating to the dire community needs like drinking water, street lights, land patta, housing etc., who take up all these issues and put pressure on both the block and district authorities and solve these problems through their respective Sanghams.
- iv. **Economic Independence:** The fourth area of women's empowerment is reflected in the various economic activities initiated for them. Where the women are the owner's productive assets. The formation of thrift groups and the leadership of these programmes being totally entrusted with the local women is yet another indicator for the realization of women's economic development and economic independence which is a crucial component in the empowerment process.
- v. **Women's Personal Autonomy:** Culmination of all these processes gradually enable the women in their personal lives to assert themselves as women and fight for their personal 'justice' and 'equality' in their respective homes vis-a-vis their husbands, and to take care of girl children in their own families and simultaneously fight for the cause of 'gender justice' of other women in their villages through their Sanghams. Ultimately the women's Sanghams take up 'personal issues' of women as and when they occur in that area.
- vi. **Political Leadership:** Consolidation of women's empowerment should result in paving the way for the women's sangham members to participate in the

Panchayat elections. This is one of the important areas where women's empowerment would be reflected with their participation in the self-governance through the Panchayat Raj institutions.

To sum up, the women's empowerment process is being initiated and realized in terms of personal assertion and confidence building of women as individuals in their personal lives and their ability to protect themselves as women. Opportunities are provided for attaining economic independence as well as ownership of productive assets, beside the ability to handle small capital as revolving funds, providing leadership to both women related issues as well as community related issues at the village and Panchayat level. All these empowerment processes give the direction and the confidence to establish their autonomy in the sphere of political self - governance at their village and Taluk level.

It is this kind of process, which could be called the empowerment process. The voluntary sector has been facilitating at the grassroots, forming village Sanghams, women's groups and people's organisations. It is the expertise that could be utilized for strengthening women who get elected to the Gram Panchayats.

### ***The need for training Support:***

It is important to recognize the fact that a large number of women who have got elected into the Panchayati Raj Institutions, have done so because of crucial legislative intervention of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment. Having continuously experienced secondary positions in family, community and in society at large the situation may not be very different within the Panchayat Raj Institutions. It is crucial to provide an impetus to the women who have got elected to the Panchayath Raj bodies to function to their fullest capacity in an empowerment that may not be quite supportive to enable them to realize their full power. Therefore, processes for training could unfold latent potentials, enhance their leadership development, and provide management skills to equip them to realize their full strength. Such a process requires a well-developed set of methodologies and special skills in facilitation.

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## **9.8 SUMMING UP**

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The poor representation and participation of women in politics and decision making is indicative of their low political awareness due to lack of education, knowledge and economic independence. It is imperative to alter this situation through economic, social and political empowerment of women by overcoming the obstacles. Literacy, education and training in vocational skills for women are the primary inputs for awareness building, economic independence and socialization.

The Constitutional provision of 30 percent seats reservation for women in local government as a measure of equality and equal opportunity for women is a real break through in political empowerment of women. This provides an opportunity for many women to represent the problem issues of women and to take policy decision for the overall development of women.

These Legislative guarantees may not make much difference unless women folk are educated and sensitized about their rights, abilities, issues and problem in group activity and mobilization. The women's Organizations, Womens movements and voluntary agencies have to strive for economic and political empowerment of women through innovative measures for women development with commitment.

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## 9.9 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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I. Answer the following questions in 30 lines each.

- 1) Discuss the need for political empowerment of women.
- 2) Discuss the obstacles for political empowerment of women.
- 3) Discuss the role of education in the empowerment of women.

II. Answer the following questions in 15 lines each.

- 1) Reservation the following questions in 10 lines each.
- 2) Role of voluntary agencies in empowerment of women.
- 3) Need for training for political empowerment of women.

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## 9.10 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Government of India, 1998 "National prespective Plan for Women" Department of Women and Child Development.
2. Ramchander M., Lakshmi K., 1993 'Women and Politics' Hyderabad, Booklinks Corporation.
3. Manikyamba P., 1999 'Women in Panchayat Raj Structures', New Delhi, Gain Publishing Housing.
4. Chopra J.K., 1993 "Women in the Indian Parliament", New Delhi, Mittal Publications.
5. Robin Jeffery, 1993 'Politics, Women's Well Being' Delhi, Oxford University Press.

6. Mathew P.M., Nair M.S., 1986, 'Women's Organisations and Women's Interests', New Delhi, Ashis Publishing House.
7. Subbamma Malladi, 1994, "Women's Movement and Associations: Regional Perspective (1860-1993)", Hyderabad, Booklinks Corporations.

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## **UNIT-10 : ROLE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS, ORGANISATIONS AND ISSUES ON POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT**

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### **CONTENTS**

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Origin and growth of Indian Women's Movements
- 10.3 Women's organisations
- 10.4 Role of Voluntary Organisations
- 10.5 Issues needing attention
- 10.6 Recommendations
- 10.7 Government initiatives
- 10.8 Summing up
- 10.10 Model Examination Questions
- 10.11 Recommended Books

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### **10.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After you going through this unit you will be able to explain

- the origin and growth of women's movement in India,
- the role played by various women's organisations in women's upliftment,
- the role of voluntary agencies in empowerment of women,
- the issues needing attention for political empowerment of women and
- the government initiatives in empowerment of women.

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### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Theoretical definition of a movement is a collective effort to seek change. Movements are generally seen as a means of aggregating and articulating interest in order to effect state policies. Movement like interest groups are contenders for influence the govt. decisions and policies - movement is completely anarchic rather unorganised where as interest of groups is characterised by the stable organisation and formal interest action with govt. In this unit you will study about the role of women's movements, organisations in the empowerment of women.

## 10.2 ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF INDIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The women's movement in India has its origin in Indian Freedom Movement. The participants in the Indian women's movement initially hailed mostly from the small group of the urban educated families. A vast majority of women joined the national freedom Movement and participated in the swadeshi, Non-co-operation, and the Civil Disobedience and Quit India movements, along with their fathers/husbands, influenced by various reformist movements, and by the call given by Mahatma Gandhi. The women's movement has its origin in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in India.

During the period the launching of the women's associations and active in the main contest of the Hindu reformist of the community association, the Brahma Samaj founded by the Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1882) for the religious reform later on the Brahma samaj in the main contest of the society association in schools and many more schools for girls and the started a women's and the for the cause of women's education. Rama Krishna missions in the main contest of the society of the association in the state educational institution for the women.

The swadeshi period also the marked of the main formation in the several women's organisation, in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century M.G. Ranade asked for the govt. funds for the girls high schools (1882) and legal authority to discourage the child marriage (the law of consent Act (1891). formed in the main national social conference (NSC) in 1887 to provide an all India forum for discussion of social reforms. As a result of the growing influence of the revivalist of the closeness several local organisations came into existence. Among them the notable were "Hindu ladies social and literary Club" (1902), founded by the Ramabharati ranada, the widows home (1913) founded by the Subbalaxmi ammal, and the Mahila Seva Samaj (1913) of Mysore in the north India, Rameshwari Nehru women's magazine in Hindi, 'Stri Darpan' and the organised Mahila samithies in Allahabad in 1909. During the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century the role of the western women such as Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins in Indian women's movement is important.

The Indian women often moulded their activities on the lines of western women's association. The women's movements of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries reflected four characteristics.

1. Male direction
2. A concept of complementary sex roles,
3. Absence of a radical onslaught on patriarchal bases in Indian culture and
4. Orientation towards elite representation and not mass mobilization.

The important event of early 19<sup>th</sup> century was the establishment of All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927 by Margaret Cousins and others. AIWC became a permanent organisation with regional constituent organisations and regional constituent conferences and annual sessions. All India Women's Conference was founded as an educational conference, but from its first session focussed on both social and educational questions.

**Ideology of the Indian Women's Movement of pre and Post Independence:**  
During the revivalist ideology (1901-1918) the approaches or ideologies adopted by Indian women's movement were, "women's uplift" i.e., to enable the women to play a more constructive role in the society by reforming social practices. Second, providing equal rights for men and women. Equal rights meant extension of the civil rights enjoyed by men in the political, economic and familial spheres to women. The important spokespersons of the early women's movements were Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu. Their speeches at several meetings and women's organisations and writings inspired Indian women. They pointed out that the decline of Indian civilization was because of the decline in the status of women. They said that an improvement in the status of women was necessary for India to achieve greatness. The women's upliftment plea made by Besant and Sarojini Naidu made use of this revivalist concept in order to legitimize the participation of women in public life in the twentieth century.

These women's movements of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were instrumental for female political representation, and female adult franchise which was considered as a powerful stimulus for social reform and women's political participation in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Women's Movements of 20<sup>th</sup> Century:**

In 20<sup>th</sup> century women's movements and organisations assumed greater importance, as their basic aim was economic, social and political empowerment of women.

The basic differences between these women's movements and organizations is essentially the emphasis of the issues they took up. For instance the urban based movements or organisations focused on issues of rights and equality and the others with both urban and rural components emphasized empowerment and liberation. However, the basic thrust of almost all organizations is to bring social change, first by transforming the consciousness of women and men to understand that women in contemporary India occupy an inferior position relative to men economically, socially and politically and to make them realize that this status of women is unjust unacceptable and hence need for altering the position of women

and to bring them into mainstream so that they will contribute their might and have a sense of belonging to the society and the country.

The women's movements have been profound and powerful agents of empowerment for highlighting women's issues, for politicising women and in many other cases. In an ancient social fabric like India with diverse cultures and customs, law alone cannot bring effective changes. Measures are to be taken by women's organisations and through women's movements for gender sensitization. This would mean creating awareness among women and to bring about changes in women's perception about themselves and by creating an enabling environment for women to get education, awareness, knowledge and skills for economic, social and political empowerment.

Though women are aware of their needs and development, lack of proper leadership and lack of dynamism clubbed with culturally imposed constraints have made women fearful rather timid of taking active part in public affairs and politics. Women's movements are a powerful means of anticipating their problems.

The declaration of UN's decade for women (1975 to 1985) and the influence of feminist movements of west have their impact on several countries. The development agencies and the governments of different countries increasingly realizing those women are a significant part of the community and are valuable political force and hence they cannot be ignored.

In the past two decades of contemporary social history the perception about women's problems has been changed and since eighties the women's problems are seen as problem of the country.

There has been a reshaping of the whole paradigms of human development. 'Women in Development and "Empowerment of Women"' are the recent slogans. Social and economic empowerment of women is considered as the pre-requisite to the attainment and full participation and enjoyment of political rights. The empowerment movements and organisations are urban as well as rural based. Although the goals of the urban and rural women empowerment movements and organisations are similar, there are differences in their origin. The urban women empowerment movements and organizations are similar, there are differences in their origin. The urban women empowerment movements and organizations share some common features. They will have connection with notably individual leaders who are experienced in party or union work. In contrast the rural movements spring entirely from different roots - ideology, poverty, exploitation and other social evils such as alcoholism, gambling etc.



### **Chipko Movements:**

One of the early women's movements that served as an inspiration for many women activists is the "Chipko Movement" in Uttarakhand region of Uttar Pradesh. The indiscriminate deforestation by unchecked commercial interests had created an economic crisis for the local people of those forests who drew their livelihood from them. The impact was especially greater for women of that region as it is women who mostly do the cultivation and gather fodder, fuel and water.

The "chipko Movement" was organised under the leadership of C.P. Bhatt and other male Sarvodaya workers organised as Dashauli Gram Swaraj Mandal (DGSM) with the initial demands like local participation in the management of the forests and limits on exploitations. In 1973, DGSM successfully prevented the Forest Department from allotting rights for a set of ash trees to a company from the plains, which used the wood for making tennis rackets. In 1974 the government made plans to allow 2,500 ash trees in the Rain forest to be cut. Bhatt suggested that when the time came the people will hug the trees ('Chipko' mean "to hug") to protect them. When the lumber company arrived at the forest, the men of the community were all away and it was the women of the area who quickly mobilized and confronted the contractor men and forced them to go back. Subsequently the U.P. Government declared that the Rain forest should become a protected area. It was this action of women that caused 'Chipko' movement to be known as a Women's movement. The Sarvodaya workers realizing that women were a valuable political force started programme to educate them and involving them in public activities. The women who had been never before attended the village meetings are to attend them and to demand a voice.

The recent "Arrack Movement" led mostly by rural women in Andhra Pradesh with no option for the state government except to impose and implement 'prohibition' in the state is an evidence of the strength of the Women's movements.

### **Arrack Movement:**

The 'Arrack movement' originated in Andhra Pradesh in a small village by name Dhubagunta in Nellore district. The adult women learners of that village in 'Akshara Deepam' project got inspired by a story where a village woman by name Seetamma with the strength and co-operation of other village women stops evil of the liquor in their village. This story prompted the women of Dhubagunta to take up the issue of prohibition liquor in that village. They met the village mandal officer and informed the same and submitted a petition to the government for prohibition of arrack. Slowly the 'arrack movement' picked up and spread like a wild fire in hundreds and hundreds of villages. The agitating women burnt the liquor shops, led the street processions with slogans and songs. It assumed the

status of a big movement and lakhs of women planned a signature campaign and some men also joined. The women stopped the auction of 'arrack with strong and great will which finally left by no option for the government to yield to the demands of "arrack movement" led by the women of Andhra Pradesh and the government declared prohibition first in Nellore district and later stopped the evil of liquor consumption where about 200 crore worth of liquor was consumed by poor village men. This arrack movement by poor led by rural and urban women made the government realise that women have become a major power

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### **10.3 WOMEN ORGANISATIONS:**

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The basic aim and objectives of almost all women's organisations is an attempt to modernize India by improving status and lives of women. The 'right wing' of women's organisation urge the state to pass and implement laws that give women equality in those matters, subject to legislation such as inheritance, marriage, divorce etc. To take action to improve the women's health and access to education and material well being to move towards equality in employment and to pass and implement legislation with regard to rape and dowry that will free women from violence.

Though the women's organisations strive for empowerment of women their diversity lies in their structures, modes of operation and particularly the affiliations with political parties and electoral parties or independent social services agencies.

The women's organisations that have political party affiliation are Janatha party's Mahila Dakshata Samiti, the communist party of India's National Federation of India women and the All India Democratic Women Association and All India co-ordination committee of Working women both of which are affiliated with communist party of India (Marxist). These women's organisations work within the policy frame work of the party they are affiliated to.

The other group of women's organisations are independent social services agencies, such as the All India women's Conference (AIWC) which has historical connection with the Congress party and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) which have long history of action on behalf of women.

Some of the women's organisations are also hierarchally structured. Urban organizations are consequently expanded their outreach into rural areas. For instance Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat sponsors a number of rural development projects. SEWA had its beginning in the labour union movement of Textile Labour Association (TLA) women's wing of TLA subsequently resulted in the formation of SEWA in December 1971. The goal of SEWA which is run on Gandhian principles is to gain visibility, protection and a

fair deal for women worker of the unorganised sector i.e. self employed women workers. In 1972 SEWA became a registered trade Union of self-employed women workers overcoming the objections of Labour Commission and Gujrat Labour Department. SEWA has grown into an organisation with about 70,000 members. SEWA also provides women with the resources necessary to gain a sound economic footing. It bargains with contractors and moneylenders on behalf of their members and acts as an interest group with regard to economic development of their members. The union (SEWA) operates a legal aid division that represents individual complaints and faces the challenges of police harassment, court cases, etc. On behalf of it's women members, most importantly SEWA has created economic cooperative through which women obtained supplies, organize production and market their goods. SEWA has established a SEWA Co-operative Bank whose recovery rate of loans is ninety eight percent. SEWA Mahila Trust has provided the women with health care, maternal benefits, economic assistance for widows, life insurance and some day care facilities.

Similarly 'Working women's Forum' founded in Madras in 1978, expanded to rural Tamilnadu as well as to cities and towns in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It is equal effective in empowering women. This forum (WWWF) has about 40,000 members.

Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM) of Bombay is also like SEWA and WWF. It was founded by Jaya Arunachalam because of her organizing skills, political experience and political connections. The political awareness and experience as Congress Party activities and also the social services rendered through voluntary organisation called Vidya Bharathi Trust for which she was the executive secretary. In all these capacities and through such practical skill and extensive network of connection with women in poorest neighborhood of Madras.

One common feature of all these independent social services agencies is they are started by urban based women activists who are highly educated with extensive prior experience in politics, whose backgrounds are strikingly similar to those of leaders of right wing. We may say that education and awareness is the basic requisite for leading the organisation movements.

In this state of affairs the role of women's movements and women's organisations assume greater importance, identification of the barriers to women's full participation in politics and decision making and simultaneously taking measures to overcome these constraints and mobilizing women.

## 10.4 ROLE OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

The role of voluntary agencies in women development is considered vital. Most of the voluntary agency work at grass roots, level, is in direct contact with local people, examining their needs and taking measures to solve their problems. These organizations are more responsive to the people as their work is not bound by rigid bureaucratic procedures. The voluntary agencies are more effective especially in the areas such as motivation, identification of problem, analysis and finding solutions through innovative methods through constant involvement of community due to their commitment and spirit.

### **Andhra Mahila Sabha:**

The voluntary service rendered by Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh for the cause of girls/women's education, and upliftment by starting 'Andhra Mahila Sabhs' a voluntary organisation is a living example of the role of voluntary agencies. In the autobiography of Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh titled "Chintamani and I" she explains the origin of Andhra Mahila Sabha and her contributions.

Andhra Mahila Sabha was started by Smt. Durga Bai Deshmukh along with some other social workers in 1937 as an independent voluntary organisation for the cause of women, having separate aim from Andhra Maha Sabha which was established in Madras which was essentially a club and its members were largely men and its activities were tailored to suit to their needs, Mrs. Durgabai and others felt after some time that they should function as an independent body, with the name of Andhra Mahila Sabha mainly to work for womens programmes, admits challenges. The important activities planned to start with, were a condensed course of education for adult women of the kind of coaching given to women to appear for matriculation examination or secondary school Leaving Certificate. Most of the women joined Andhra Mahila Sabha have not even completed 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> class. Most of these women were destitute, deserted, widows, and were in need of some skill or education to earn their living. They were drop outs, having discontinued their education after marriage in their early teens. Many women approached Andhra Mahila Sabha were helpless and needy who could not afford to study. They had to earn some money immediately to meet their need to two meals a day. In order to provide some immediate income to them they started the familiar trades, sewing, tailoring and embroidery, spinning, weaving, hand-made paper, bamboo, cane work and mat weaving.

In the year 1942, the first batch of students were sent to appear for examination at Banaras. Out of the students sent for examination 90% passed, having faced some problem in getting admission for intermediate in Madras University, Durgabai decided to start intermediate classes in 1943 with 8 women students. Another

activity of Andhra Mahila Sabha was publication of 'Andhra Mahila' a monthly magazine. Andhra Mahila Sabha established its own press in Madras three years later. Thus between 1937 and 1946, Andhra Mahila Sabha grew from its small beginnings.

Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh, a Planning Commission member, and incharge of education mobilized many courses for women in health and education for women. She was responsible for drawing a separate section on "Women's Education, in the first five-year plan. She was appointed in 1959 as Chairman of National Committee on Girl's and Women's Education constituted by Government of India. She made several recommendations like establishment of National Council for Women's Education, which was accepted and she became the first Chairman of National Committee for women Education and training (NCWET).

She was instrumental in establishing central Social Welfare Board. The central social welfare Board came into existence in August 1953 to administer the programs of grants in aid to existing voluntary welfare organizations and to sponsor and assist the development of new welfare services through non-official organisations. As a Planning Commission member she allotted 40 million rupees for CSWB for helping the voluntary social welfare organization. Later in 1954 towards the end of plan period in order to implement the schemes originally started by Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh, She became the full time Chairman of CSWB at the instance of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister. She took special interest in the welfare of rural women.

More and more voluntary organisations came into existence, serving for the cause of women and to serve for the overall development of an area and its people.

'Andhra Yuvathi Mandali' started by Smt. A. Syamala Devi is another such voluntary organisation, which is working for the cause of women's education, betterment of their lives.

Voluntary agencies have contributed immensely for women's development. The role of voluntary agencies is commendable in creating awareness among women of their rights and mobilizing women by motivating them and creating leadership character among women who can lead the other women by forming 'Women groups'. A number of innovative welfare and developmental programmes for rural women and child development are based on the experiences and projects run successfully by voluntary organisations in the government programmes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth in Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA), Integrate Child Development Services schemes (ICDS), and Adult literacy programmes etc. Involvement of voluntary agencies in

implementation has given a useful feedback to the government for better implementation.

***Besides voluntary agencies can also assist in:***

- \* increasing the political awareness among women, and their participation in political process and decision making
- \* Providing legal aid and legal education to women, to rescue them from exploitation.
- \* Educating women about the 1/3rd reservation for in local governments as crucial component in the political empowerment process and ensure that constitutional provisions are made accessible to common rural women.
- \* Ensuring that women representatives actively participate in the decision making process of the panchayath and zilla parishad institutions.
- \* Providing necessary support and training to women who are elected for Panchayath and Mandal elections for their effective functioning.

According to SEARCH, a voluntary organisation involved in Rural Development in Karnataka the training strategy to empower women in panchayati raj institution include the following components,

- i. **Creation of space for women:** This is facilitated by; and initiated by organising women into a small groups which voluntary agencies called as women groups Sangams
- ii. **Mobilisation:** It is through these women groups women begin to share and discuss a whole range of issues centering around their lives like poverty, lack of employment, low wages, scarcity of drinking water, drunken behavior of their husbands, low wages how they have lost their girl child, how the men treat women and how they lack scope for their overall development. It is from here gradually that they are organized into a strong sangam, and some of them are transformed into wage earner's groups or occupation based groups.
- iii. **Social Leadership:** The third area of women's empowerment has been the women's role of leadership relating to the dire community needs like drinking water, street lightings, land patta, housing etc., who take up all these issues and put pressure on both the block and district authorities and solve these problems through their respective sangams.
- iv. **Economic independence:** The fourth area of women's empowerment is

reflected in the various economic activities initiated for them, where these women are the owners of productive assets. The formation of thrift groups and the leadership of these programs being totally entrusted with the local women is yet another indicator for the realization of women's economic development and economic independence which is a crucial component in the empowerment process.

- v. **Women's Personal Autonomy:** Culmination of all these processes Gradually enable the women in their personal lives to assert themselves as women and fight for their personal 'justice' and 'equality' in their Respective homes vis-a-vis their husbands, and to take care of girl children in their own families and simultaneously fight for the cause of 'gender justice of other women in their villages through their sangams. Ultimately the women's sangams take up 'personal issues' of women as and when they occur in that area.
- vi. **Political leadership:** Consolidation of women's empowerment should result in paving the way for the women's sangam members to partake in the panchayat elections. This is one of the important areas where women's empowerment would be reflected with their participation in the self-governance through the panchayati Raj institutions.

To sum up, the women's empowerment is being initiated and realised in terms of personal assertion and confidence building of women as individuals in their personal lives and their ability to protect themselves as women. Opportunities are provided for attaining economic independence as well as ownership of productive assets, besides the ability to handle small capital as revolving funds, providing leadership to both women related issues as well as community related issues at the village and panchayat level. All these empowerment processes give the direction and the confidence to establish their autonomy in the sphere of political self-governance at their village and tank level.

It is this kind of process which could be called the empowerment process, the voluntary sector has been facilitating at the grassroots, forming village sangams, women's group and people's organisations. It is this expertise that could be utilised for strengthening women who get elected to the Gram Panchayats.

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## 10.5 ISSUES NEEDING ATTENTION:

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In the National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 A.D. the core groups set up by the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in 1958 has identified the issues needing attention for facilitating women's effective political participation and decision making.

During the last decade, and particularly in the last two years, certain deliberate efforts have been made to implement some of the decisions taken at the conferences of nonaligned and other developing Countries, in April 1985 and at Nairobi World Conference in July, 1985 as forward looking strategies for the advancement of women. Even then, it has not been found possible by political parties to field the number of women candidates that they had planned, and by elected governments in the Center and States to appoint the minimum number of women to ministerial positions. One significant step has, however, been the formation of the Department of Women and Child Development which is part of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The constitution of a separate Department of Women has helped in focusing programmes for women's development; Efforts are also being made to reach out to the women in the poverty sector through various welfare schemes and programmes.

**1. Non-implementation or limited implementation of development measures:**

The incorporation of Equality for women as No.12 in the Twenty Point programme of development enunciated in 1986, and certain special schemes like legal literacy programmes, Awareness Generation Programmes, Prevention of atrocities Against women are evidences of conscious attempts made by the government to empower women to handle complex situations. The setting of the National Expert Committee on women prisoners and the National Commission on self-Employed Women are significant steps in the right direction. The most formidable hurdle in the programmes and policies of the Governments has been non-implemendations or very limited implimentation of these measures. Before recommendations to remedy the situation are suggested, it would be useful to have a brief discussion on why women's participation in political affairs is limited.

**2. Backward consiousness among women:**

As mentioned in the non-Aligned Document. "Understanding of obstacles to women's effective participation in political life has generally been clouded by various assumptions regarding women's behavioral pattern, their "backwardconsciousness", lack of interest in public issues, or biological deferences in their mental make up. An assessment of the situation at the end of decade with all the shortfalls in reliable data suggests that, though the visibility of women in the political and developmental process has increased because of great efforts to obtain first-hand information, the search has also helped to identify powerful, sometimes hidden, forces of resistance that obstruct the march towards the goals of the decade".



### **3. Equal role of women in decision making ;**

On the question of peace, since women are one of the most vulnerable groups in a region effected by armed conflicts, special attention has to be drawn to the need to eliminate obstacles. Women's equal role in decision making with respect to peace and related issues should be seen as their basic right and as such should be enhanced and encouraged at all levels. Women would be able to participate actively in decision making processes related to the promotion of regional, national and international peace and co-operation. Nonetheless, it should not imply that women's ability to support causes is restricted only to specific issues.

### **4. Less interest among women toward matters "Political":**

One of the arguments for participation has been that the women willfully place themselves in marginal positions toward matters "Political". The crucial problems are that women find themselves by standards. One standard is of femininity, of the private world which regards them as nurturing, passive, emotional, home oriented and subordinated to men. The other standard is that of their modern role which is the standard of the public world which expects women to be rational, active, achievement oriented, ambitious and competitive. Women in such a situation have two options. Either they follow the rules of the game of politics and are called unfeminine or act in politics guided by the standards of femininity and are seen as peculiar.

### **5. Active participation of women in political debates:**

The observation that women when elected do not participate in the debates or women elect those candidate whom their men wish to support, have been proved wrong with more and more research findings. Women do raise relevant issues on a wide range of subjects, and studies on voting behavior suggest that the secret ballot system helps considerably in exercising individual preference, though these findings/revelations are underplayed by policy makers and political scientists due to gender biases.

### **6. Gender based division of labour - a structural constraint:**

Subordination of women in society acts as structural constraint to their participation in political activities. Owing to the gender - based division of labour in the family, women have to bear the full responsibility of household chores. It is the women's duty to bring fuel, fodder and water and to cook. They have to look after the rearing and education of children besides socialising. These constraints operate more or less for all classes and communities of women.

## **7. Political culture:**

Another significant deterrent factor is that of the political culture which prevails today. Not only have the political processes become complicated but also many decisions are made behind the scenes. It has also become very expensive and difficult for women, who have little control over resources. Further, the atmosphere of growing violence, character-assassination and unscrupulous struggles for power, have been a serious deterrent to women's participation in an effective manner.

## **8. Increasing supportive structures:**

In mass movements, which are issue-oriented and aim at achieving concrete objectives, Women are able to participate, leave the chores of the house to someone and suffer the hardships and privations of political confrontations. But when an activity requires routine, continuous work which is often complicated to follow, women find it difficult to participate due to lack of supportive structures.

## **9. Need for deliberate effort to educate women politically:**

Another important factor which has to be considered is that much of the political participation today requires information, Knowledge and exposure to the various experiments, strategies and models. In a country where only 24.82 percent of women are illiterate and where only 3 percent of women in the age group 17-21 are in the higher education stream, it would be futile to expect women to participate effectively. An understanding of political-policies, strategies and action requires some training education and constant interaction. This requirement is very difficult to be fulfilled even by men. It is a much more challenging task for women. If women's participation has to be encouraged, a more conscious and deliberate effort to educate them politically has to be made. The working of intermission events, the interrelationships of various systems in society, implications of political actions and policies and many such issues need to be explained to women that they participate intelligently and consciously.

## **10. Education and economic security for women:**

If women have to become integrated fully into political life, cultural change is necessary. In the past few centuries, the world has been divided into separate spheres of the public and private. While women are no longer restricted to "private" activities related only to their families, the outside activities "privatized" by men and society at large. Another pre-requisite for women to be active participant's decision-making activities, is the provision of facilitates, like education, training, information and above all, economic security.

## **10.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the issues raised in the core of the report of the core group (The national perspective plan for women 1988-2000) has made the following recommendations.

### **1. Free Universal Education up to the age of 14:**

It has been observed through various studies, that education of citizens not only builds up knowledge and information but also helps the citizen understand the complexities of the political process. It is, therefore, recommended that the programme of free universal education up to the age of 14 should be vigorously implemented. Further, serious attention needs to be paid to the encouragement of education. The courses of studies and the textbooks should inculcate values of gender equality, self-respect, encourage independence etc., which would help develop the personalities of women.

### **2. Spreading legal literacy:-**

In order that women be able to participate fully, it is necessary to spread legal literacy not only among the elected representatives, modules can be included in existing non-formal educational programmes for this purpose.

### **3. Increasing political awareness among women:**

The working of international events, the inter-relationship of various systems of society, implications of political actions and policies, economic and other such issues need to be highlighted to women.

Men and women in positions of power should be sensitized to women's issues.

### **4. Involving women in decision making:-**

Government should effectively secure participation of women in decision-making processes at National, State and local levels. This would imply use of special measures for recruitment of women candidates.

\* More women need to be inducted in ministries at the center and state governments and they must be allowed to function in areas suitable to their capacities and not be restricted to 'soft' sectors.

\* The planning commission and all ministries and government departments must have a women's cell.

- \* All government delegations to international meetings must include at least one or more women members.
- \* Where Government sets up a committee or commission for any purpose, 30 percent of its representation must be of women.
- \* The Union and All state level public Service commissions must have women representatives.
- \* The planning commission and state planning Boards must have adequate representation of women.
- \* 50 percent of all grassroots functionaries must be women. To facilitate its implementation, relaxation of minimum education qualifications is needed, which can be supplemented by short training courses for women.
- \* Reservation should be made of 30 percent seats at panchayat to zilla parishad level and local municipal bodies for women. Wherever possible, higher representation of dalits/tribals, women of weaker sections should be ensured.
- \* 30 percent of executives heads of all bodies from village panchayat to district level and a certain percentage of chief executives of panchayati raj bodies at lower, middle and higher levels must be reserved for women.
- \* A more effective step would be to declare a certain percentage of constituencies in the lower tier of panchayati raj as exclusively and all executive positions in a certain number of territorial jurisdictions reserved for women candidates.

#### **6. Training women elected to local government:**

All women members of panchayats and other executive bodies must be trained and empowered to exercise their authority. Both men and women members must be sensitized to women's issues. A committee should be formed to look into the training needs of women panchayat members and to help in designing modules separate allocations may be made for this purpose. Particular attention must be paid to the development of interpersonal communication skills amongst the trainees/community leaders.

#### **7. Facilitating effective participation of women in development:**

Conscious efforts are needed to elect participation of women through establishing links between the elected representatives and the development functionaries as being experimented in Rajasthan through the women's development

programmes (WDP). The whole experiment is based on a decentralized structure. Plans of action should be formulated through frequent meetings and discussions. Further the prime need is to see that the representatives have to be made answerable to the electorate. WDPS in other states must also be linked with panchayat local functionaries for more effective participation of women in development.

#### **8. Representatives of Women Organisations in Advisory Comities:**

Standing Advisory Committee at Central, State, District, Block and wherever possible at village level should be formed consisting of representatives of important women's organisations.

#### **9. Executive bodies of trade unions must include more women.**

#### **10. Reducing election expenditure:**

One of the greatest hurdles in contesting elections is the exhorbiant expenditure. This factor not only makes it difficult for women, who have very limited independent resources to participate but completely eliminates women in the poverty sector from entering the arena. This situation leads to prominence of upper castes, upper classes, and urban women in the political sphere. To counteract this inequity situation, serious steps must be taken to reduce election expenditure. Further enormous amounts needed for election, lead to corruption and various nefarious practices. If steps are taken to decentralize the political machinery, then unnecessary expenditure in reaching out to a very large electorate could be avoided.

#### **11. Provision for support services:**

A major step needed to facilitate women's participation both in formal and informal political process is provision of support services. In all kinds of public participation as well as in seeking opportunities for self-development, the primary responsibilities of women for looking after home and children always come in the way. Unless arrangements are made for child care and other domestic responsibilities, sustained participation of women in the public sphere is not possible without the integration of men in the private sphere. This not only means that men share the familial responsibilities but a new value needs to be given to this joint sharing both in public and private spheres which would ultimately lead to a better quality of life.

#### **12. Facilitate participation of more women in political parties:**

In a democracy, political parties have a very significant role to play. The parties should take such measures, which would facilitate participation of women.

All political parties must be urged to ensure that it should be examined if the election commission can be empowered to enforce this.

**13. Imparting political education to the people by the parties:**

It is the duty of political parties to provide political education to the people. They should organize study circles in which not only political understanding of the complex situations is provided, but controversial issues which have implications on gender relations is also analyzed.

**14. Women members of the political groups should be vigilant about their rights and contribution:**

Whenever sexist attitudes are exhibited sex discrimination is practiced; women members should build up solidarity and oppose such practice. They should also press for implementing whatever has been promised to women: whether the question is of allocation of seats or of providing a creche or taking a stand in parliament.

**15. NGO's should play the role of pressure groups:**

In generating a participatory political system, the role of voluntary organisations - or non-government organisations is very crucial. There is evidence that when NGOs are active and play the role of pressure groups the representatives also become alert. Through raising the awareness of the community, NGOs can help in fielding candidates who are responsible to the people. They can focus the attention of people on crucial issues facing women and elect members who understand those issues and are working towards it. Organizations and grassroots women's group have in fact effectively drawn the attention of the government to atrocities perpetrated on women, to custodial rape, to harassments for dowry, to plight of the women in the unorganized Sector, and so on. NGOs can also provide training for future women leaders. They can organize legal literacy programmes and study circles for political education as well as develop participatory methods of working, and thus serve as a participate training center for effective political participation by women they should not adopt a beneficiary or welfare approach while working with their target groups. Even if a few NGOs play their role adequately and with courage, a new climate of commitment and responsibility could be generated. NGOs should work as pressure groups or political action groups to press for the fulfillment of promises. They should also provide support to the elected women representatives, when they are presenting women's cases in the deliberative bodies. In short, there should be a very strong link between women representatives and those organization working with the community.

#### **17. Media should play a productive role in enhancing women's participation.**

It should give wider coverage to various activities and measures taken by women and should highlight the problems of women. In order to project women's issues and achievements, perhaps mainstream media system could portray women's struggle and experiences, help generate values which encourage gender equality and justice, and build up a positive image of women participating in public life.

#### **18. Networking among women groups:**

For politicization of women networking and creation of pressure groups representing genuine issues and felt needs are essential.

19. A massive awareness campaign aimed at eliciting the support of electors (both male and female) around causes will have to be undertaken.

The government has accepted many of the recommendations for implementation among which 30 percent reservation for women in rural and urban local government (73 and 74 constitutional amendments) is a major step towards political empowerment of women in the rural area, about million women are going to emerge as leader/decision makers at the grass roots level and enter into public life through the existing 0.25 million bodies. Of these, about 75,000 will be the chairpersons of local institutions at the village, block and district levels as per the Act.

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### **10.7 GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES;**

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Since 1985 government has taken initiatives which will be broadly categorised into

- a. Policy initiatives
- b. Programme interventions
- c. Institutional support.

#### **10.7.1 POLICY INITIATIVES:-**

1. The National Perspective Plan (NPP) for women up to 2000 AD is a set of recommendations aimed at welfare and development guided by the principals and directives relevant to the development process. It is linked to the national target up to the end of the century. Some are already under implementation and are under process.

2. **Shramashakti:** The report of national commission for self employed women and women in the informal sector. The commission has submitted a report with

many valuable recommendations for improving the status and working conditions of women in the informal sector, including those self-employed women, which are being considered for implementation.

**3. The national plan of action for the girl child (1991-2000):** A national plan of action for the SAARC decade of the girl child (1991-2000 AD) was built up a strategy of ensuring survival, protection and development with specious focus as the girl child and street girls.

**4. The national expert committee on women prisoners (1986):** The expert committee studied the conditions of women prisoners in the criminal correctional justice system and made a series of recommendations suggesting legislation custodial, correctional and prison reforms relating to women prisoners. Implementation of these recommendations by the central and state government is being mentioned by the national commission for women.

**5. National nutrition policy (1993):** The government has formulated national nutrition policy in fulfillment of the constitutional commitment to ensure certain nutritional standards. It is in the process of operationalization and suggests both short term and long term measures necessary to improve the nutritional status of the country. The policy recognizes both women and children as priority to receive special attention.

**6. Reservation for women at grass root level democratic institutions (1993):** The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 mark historic event in the advancement of Indian women as they ensure 1/3 of the total seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies, rural areas and urban areas. In the rural areas, but 1 million women are going to emerge as leaders/decision makers at the grass roots level and enter into public life through the existing 0.25 million bodies. Of these about 75,000 will be the chairpersons of local institutions at the village, block and district levels, as per the Act.

### **10.7.2 PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS**

#### **Empowerment of women (continuing since 1986):**

Education, employment and awareness generation have been the major strategies of empowering women in India. Education for women's equality is the most powerful instrument in implementing these strategies. The policy commitments of education for all and employment for all strengthen these strategies. Participate to management implement various developmental programmes through women's groups is now the common strategy adopted in rural India, especially in terms of organizing literacy, employment and credit programmes



### **Legal literacy manuals for women (continuing since 1992):**

Women's legal literacy programme was taken up in 1992 when the national machinery brought out a legal literacy manual for women. (Purpose is to create awareness among semiliterate and neo literate women about the existing laws that concern women's rights viz those of working women, personal laws. Criminal laws and procedures to interact with the law enforcement machinery.)

**Making the 'invisible' women visible (1991):** for the first time in the history of the demographic record of India, an attempt was made to capture women's work in the informal sector in the 1991 census. The 1991 census on workers and their distribution has shown that there was a substantial increase in the female work participation rate, from 19.7 in 1981 to 22.3 in 1991.

### **Welfare and support services (continuing since 1975):**

India strongly believes in providing support services as a strategy for promoting women's development. Therefore in close collaboration with NGOs the government runs a network of such welfare services. They include hostels for working women to provide greater mobility for women in the employment market. 687 hostels with attached day care centers for 45,000 working women and their dependent children have been sanctioned. 7000 creches for the children of both working and ailing mothers have been set up. Short stay homes for women and girls facing moral danger have also been established in the field of child development, and nutrition, the government administers the world's largest programme called the Child Development Services (ICDS).

### **Gender sensitization and Awareness generation (continuing since 1986):**

Great importance has been attached to bring about changes in social attitudes towards women and girl children to this end, integrated media campaigns for projecting a positive image of women and the girl child to the community have been launched. Further, to sensitize planners, policy makers and implementing a country wide gender sensitization programme has been taken since 1991. Most of the states have been covered through this exercise. Special campaigns to combat atrocities against women have also initiated with the law enforcement machinery.

### **Thrust on employment-oriented programmes (continuing since 1986):**

The eighth five year plan has adopted the strategy of employment and income generation for mainstreaming women into national development. Accordingly, both women specific and women related departments have been set their priorities towards creating employment-cum-training-income generation activities for women to raise their status. Simultaneous efforts boost employment for educated

unemployed has also been initiated to create 3 million additional jobs. Of these, women's claim will be to the extent of 30 percent.

#### **Mahila Samridhi Yojana (1993):**

To enable rural women to have control over their savings and financial resources, the Yojana offers rural women facilities for small deposits, with attractive rates of interest through the extensive network of rural post offices.

#### **National Credit Fund of Women (1993):**

To redress the grievances of poor, asset-less women relating to non-accessibility to formal credit systems, the government of India has set up a National Credit Fund for women called Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, in 1993. The fund was set up with an initial corpus of Rs. 310 million. It will extend credit to poor women at reasonable rates of interest through non-governmental organisations working in the rural areas. The ultimate objectives of the fund is to help develop a national network of credit services for women in the informal sector to boost self-employed and micro-enterprises/small business, as recommended in Sharam Shakthi referred to in (ii) above.

#### **Programme for adolescent girls (1990):**

Adolescence is critical period of growth from physiological as well as psychological point of view. This is more so in the case of poor adolescent girls for whom very often these represent the wasted years. Therefore government has recently started a programme specially aimed at school drop out adolescent girls with a view to meeting their nutritional, health, self image improvement, vocational training and employment related needs. It is presently targeted to cover 45,000 adolescent girls in rural areas.

### **10.7.3 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**

#### **National Commission for Women (1992)**

In response to the growing incidence of crime and atrocities against women, government has set up a National Commission for Women with the mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the Constitutional and legal safeguard provided for women, review exiting legislation and suggest amendment wherever necessary and look into complaints involving deprivation of the rights of women. Similar commissions are also being set up in the states. They act as ombudsmen on women's rights.

## **Mechanism for monitoring programmes for Women (1986 - continuing)**

A special monitoring mechanism was set up in 1986 to monitor the 27 Beneficiary Oriented Scheme (BOS) which are 'women-specific' women-related to report directly to the Prime Minister's Office. The Unit also monitors indicators relating to 'Equality of women' in the priority programmes of the government. Such monitoring helps focus special attention on gender perspective and the process itself raises consciousness within government structures and personal.

## **National resources Center for Women**

The government has finalised a proposal to set a National Resource Center for women which will act as an apex Resource center for women's issues and gender perspectives including efforts of gender sensitisation, training information dissemination and networking.

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## **10.8 SUMMING UP**

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- The purpose of movement is to seek to convert-to move people both to new consciousness about an issue and to mobilize people to attract and transform power relation in their social and political lives.
- The women movement in India has its origin in the Indian Freedom Movement. Several organisations came in to existence as a result of influence of revivalist consciousness during pre-Independence period.
- The approach or ideology of Indian women of pre and post Independence Movements was Women's upliftment i.e. to enable the women to play a more constructive role in the society by reforming social practices.
- The urban women empowerment movement and organisation share common features and will have connection with notably individual leaders who are experienced in party or Union work.
- The rural movement entirely form different roots- ideology, poverty exploitation and social evils such as gambling etc. Chipko movement in U.P and arrack movement in Andhra Pradesh are such examples.
- In the 20 century a number of women's organisations were started. They assume grater importance in identifying of the barriers to women full participation in politics and mobilising women.
- Voluntry agencies are playing a vital role in women's development. Most of roots the voluntary agencies work at grass level in direct contact with local people.

The voluntary agencies creating awareness among women of their right and mobilizing women group voluntary agencies are involved in implementation of the various rural development programme like IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCA and ICDS and give a useful feedback to government and better implementation.

- The issues that need attention for full participation of women in politics and development are.

- a. effective implementation of development measures
- b. removing the backward consciousness among women
- c. ensuring equal role of women in decision making
- d. Increasing the interest among women toward political matters.
- e. Active participation of women in political debates
- f. Effort to remove cultural structural constraint
- g. Reform in political culture dominated by money and muscle power
- h. Education and economic security for women.

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## 10.10 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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I. Answer the following Questions in 30 lines.

1. Briefly explain the origin and growth of India Women's movements.
2. Discuss the role of women's organisations in women's empowerment.
3. "The role of voluntary agencies in women's development is considered vital decision
4. Explain the issues needing attention for women's political empowerment and decision making.

II. Answer the following Questions in 10 lines.

1. What are the organisations that contributed for women's upliftment during 19th century?
2. Write short answer on 'Arrack movement in Andhra Pradesh'.
3. What is SEWA
4. List out the contributions made by voluntary agencies for women's development at grass roots level.

## 10.11 REFERENCE BOOKS

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## **UNIT-11 : RESERVATION FOR WOMEN**

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### **11.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this lesson you will be able to-

- \* Describe the women's movement for political representation
- \* List out the different Constitutional provisions for women
- \* Explain the need for reservations in legislatures
- \* Discuss the provisions in different Amendments related to provision of reservation for women.

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### **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The Constitution of India gave the franchise to all men and women of the country who were above the age of 21. When compared with western women, Indian women are fortunate in securing their political rights within a short period

of time. However women discovered that inspite of the rights to vote, many women are not aware of their rights. Those women who are aware of their right to vote are not free to vote according to their choice. Participation of women in elections is not an end in itself. They need to struggle to achieve participation in decision-making processes or decision-making bodies. Realizing this they have been constantly struggling for direct political participation in the various elected bodies. Women have realized that political field continues to be a male domain and that reservation is a means to achieve their objective of political participation in decision-making bodies. After Independence when Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister, several legislations were passed affecting women's right. During his term, a policy decision was taken to give 15 percent seats to women. Women constitute 50% of the population but their number in decision-making bodies is low. Women's Organizations have been suggesting a system of reservation for women.

In this unit we will study about Indian women's movement for political representation and different provisions made by the government for political empowerment of women.

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## **11.2 WOMEN'S MOVEMENT FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION (1917-37)**

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The 19<sup>th</sup> century Reform Movement initiated the process of improving the status of women. The period saw the birth of women's organizations such as the Women's India Association, National Council for Women and All India Women's Conference for improving the status of women. The Indian women's Movement for political representation which started in 1917 had two issues (1) Female enfranchisement and eligibility for the legislature and (2) Liberalization of the terms of enfranchisement and increasing female representation in legislature.

During the initial stages of the women's movement for political participation, the number of participants were very few and they had access to the Indian Political elite and the British authorities. In the year 1917 Edwin Montague, the secretary of State of India and Lord Chelmsford, the Governor General and Viceroy of India, were visiting India to study the conditions for introducing reforms in Indian Administration. Taking this opportunity, Margaret Cousins, founder of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) along with other delegates and with Sarojini Naidu as their spokesperson submitted a memorandum to Edward Montague. In this memorandum they asked for women's franchise on the same basis as men, improved facilities for women's health care and education under Indian conditions. The idea of women's franchise was considered as unrealistic and it was dismissed. In 1918 the women's movement leaders lobbied at the provincial and national

conferences and passed resolutions in support of women's suffrage. In 1918 the British Government appointed the South Borough Franchise Committee to study and examine the question of franchise. In its report it had mentioned the reasons why the British Government rejected the demand for women's suffrage. One of the reasons was the "practical difficulty of women voting where, Purdah is practiced and large proportion of them require education in the use of responsible vote which would affect the Indian political stability". Stability was an important goal of any franchise policy. The Government of India Act 1919 left it to the Indian Provincial Legislatures to decide the question of women's suffrage. Women's organizations were disappointed and meetings were held, resolutions were passed and protests were held all over the country.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1919 in Bombay a women's meeting was held to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that when women could vote intelligently in Municipal and other elections they could vote in higher bodies. It was not premature in any way to give the franchise to them and their sexes should not disqualify them. It was demanded that sexes disqualification should be removed. In this meeting a resolution was passed and sent to England urging the Government of India and the British Government to reconsider the question of removing sex disqualification. The Indian women's movement sent four representatives. Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Herabai Tata and Mithibai Tata to London to submit a statement to the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament supporting female franchise. The parliament left the decision to the Indian Provincial legislatures by calling it "domestic subject in the Government of India Act 1919".

In 1920 the Legislative Council of Madras gave women the right to vote followed by Bombay in 1921, the United Provinces in 1923, Assam in 1924, Central Provinces, Bengal and Punjab in 1926 and Bihar and Orissa in 1929. Assam not only enfranchised women but also gave them right to stand for elections.

The number of women qualified to vote was small. Next women demanded the right to be elected to legislatures.

By 1929 women in India had the right to vote but they could not be elected or nominated to the Provisional Legislative Council or the Imperial Legislature. Women's organizations held meetings and passed resolutions. At the meeting at Bombay a resolution was passed requesting H.E. Governor to recommend to H.E. the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India to revise the rules of the Reform Act which disqualified women from membership of the legislative and Imperial Councils and amend the Bills.

In 1926 the Government of India amended the bill which gave women the right to stand as candidates and sit in the legislatures. Two women Mrs. Kamala



Devi Chattopadhyay and Hawan Angelo were the first women who contested in the election. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya lost the elections. In Madras the Women's India Association influenced the government to nominate a woman candidate to the Legislative Council. As a result Dr. S. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy was nominated to the Legislative Council and was elected unanimously as the vice President of the legislative council; She was the first women legislator appointed to the Madras legislative council in 1927. She however resigned the post in 1930 when Gandhi was arrested.

The basis of enfranchisement under the Montagu Chelmsford reform was the property qualification for both men and women. Under the Hindu legal system women had very limited property rights; hence very few had the requisite eligibility. There was a wide gap between the numbers of male and female voters.

In 1927 the Simon Commission was appointed to examine the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford reform scheme. The commission, in order to see a substantial increase in the existing ratio of voters, proposed to add two qualifications to the existing qualifications.

1. being the wife, over 25 years of age, of a man who had a property qualification to vote and
2. being a widow over that age whose husband at the time of death was so qualified
3. educational qualification should apply to women over 21 as well as to men. Women who could read and write in any language were to be given right to vote. (R.K. Murthy page20).

In 1931 the British Government held the Second Round Table Conference in London and the Government of India nominated Radhabai Subramaniam and Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz to represent India Women at the conference. The three women's organizations - Women's India Association (WIA), N.C.W.I and A.I.W.C jointly under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu drafted a memorandum known as "Memorandum I" with the following features :

1. No sex disqualification in voting, candidacy, public office or employment
2. Adult suffrage
3. Rejection of special expedients to ensure women's membership in legislatures".

Sarojini Naidu, Radhabai Subramaniam and Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz

attended the Second Round Table Conference and presented the memorandum. Radhabai Subramaniam and Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz spoke about the awakening of women and their leadership in promoting social change. Nothing the British observtion with pudah they claimed this custom would decline if women gained the vot. They demanded for adult franchise. They asked for the amendment of the qualifications for women so that more women could get the suffrage. If it was not possible they demanded reservation of seats for women in all the legislatures for two elections. During the sessions the questions of franchise and representation never came up for discussion. Muthulakshmi Reddy, Margaret Cousins, (WIA) Mrs. Hamid Ali and Ran Rajwade from the (AIWC) and Tarabai Premchand from the NCWI, and Sarojini Naidu issued a joint memorandum supporting universal adult franchise. The demand for adult suffrage was rejected by the British government, but it offered the vote to the wives and widows of property owning men.

In 1931 the British Government appointed the Indian Franchise Committee under the President-ship of Lord Lothian known as "Lothian Committee". The Lothian Committee in its final report rejected adult franchise because of the country's size, lare population, high level of adult illiteracy. This committee agreed that more women should be enfranchised and recommended increasing the ratio of female to male voters from 1 : 20 to 1 : 5 (Geraldine forbes). This committee recommended the following qualifications for the provincial franchise

- "1. Lower property and educational qualifications for men and women
2. "Wife-hood qualifications for women whose husbands met the 1919 property qualifications and literacy for women.
3. "the female voters claiming the special qualifications were required to make an application to the authorities concerned". (Murthy p.93)

This committee recommended that 2.5 percent reservation for women in the provincial councils or legislatures.

The communal award was announced in August 1932 and the British Government applied communal principles to women's franchise. The communal award reserved 3% of the seats for women on communal lines. There was a very strong protest from the All India Women's Organizations. In the year 1933 the joint parliamentary committee Report which was known as "White Paper" was published. The proposals of this committee were inadequate and unsatisfactory to the women's associations. According to the "White Paper" "all persons enfranchised through educational qualifications would have to apply to be put on the electoral rolls and the special literacy qualification for women was abolished

and identical educational qualifications for men and women were established. As the members of the three women's organizations were dissatisfied with the recommendations they met once again and drafted a second joint memorandum known as "Memorandum II". Three representatives - Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Dr. S. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy and Sheefat Hamid Ali were nominated to submit the memorandum to the joint Select Committee of Parliament in London. The following are the proposals of Memorandum II:

1. "the necessity for the specific recognition of women's inherent right to citizenship and equal opportunities for service by the inclusion in the declaration of fundamental rights a statement that sex shall be no bar to any public employment, office, power or honour and in the exercise of any trade or calling was again strongly pressed.
2. Until such time as the ultimate goal of adult suffrage is attained, it was proposed that women should be enfranchised on the following manner:
  - a. By the mere literacy test which would enable about 12,55,000 women to become voters whereas the upper primary standard recommended would only enfranchise 5,00,000.
  - b). By the same property qualifications as men and their eligibility to vote at elections to both provincial and federal legislatures in order to enable about 20,00,000 women to be enrolled.
  - c). By adult suffrage in urban areas which would enable approximately 4 1/2 million be enfranchised.
3. Strong exception was taken to the proposed system of indirect election to the Federal Assembly.
4. The reservation of seats on a commercial basis was again stoutly opposed
5. A system of joint Electorates was strongly supported as before so that women might be permitted to give the lead in a matter which was of vital concern to the true welfare of the nation.
6. Direct election was advocated everywhere." (Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, 1993, page 74).

In the Government of India Act 1935 the proposals of the women's representations with minor changes were incorporated. They are:

1. Literacy qualification for women was extended to four additional provinces and to the remaining two provinces.

2. Wife-hood qualifications were the primary mechanism for female enfranchisement and

3. 41 seats allocated among the communities were reserved for women.

The Government of India Act of 1935 increased the number of enfranchised Indians. It allowed proportional suffrage rights of women and relaxed some of the previous qualifications. All women over 21 could vote provided they fulfilled the conditions of property and education.

#### *Seats allotted women in the upper house of the federal legislature*

In the central legislature 15 seats were reserved for women, 6 seats were given in the Federal Council of the States- The provinces of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United provinces, Punjab and Bihar had one each. The women's seats for Bombay and United Provinces were to be filled for three years, for Madras and Punjab for six years and in Bengal and Bihar for nine year; women chosen by the persons who hold seats in the chamber of the legislature.

#### *Lower House of the Federal Legislature*

Nine seats were reserved for women in the Federal Assembly. Special electorate of women who were members in the provincial Legislatures elected women. Out of these nine seats two seats were for Mohammedan and one for Indian Christian. Bengal, U.P., Punjab, Bihar and Central Provenience had one representative each and Madras and Bombay had two women representatives.

#### *Provincial Assemblies*

41 seats were reserved for women in the Provincial Assemblies in the following manner:

|                                      |         |           |              |                    |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Madras                            | 8 seats | 6 General | 1 Mohammedan | 1 Indian Christian |
| 2. Bombay                            | 7 seats | 5 General | 1 Mohammedan | 1 Indian Christian |
| 3. United<br>Provinces               | 6 seats | 4 General | 2 Mohammedan | -                  |
| 4. Bengal                            | 5 seats | 2 General | 2 Mohammedan | 1 Anglo Indian     |
| 5. Punjab                            | 4 seats | 1 General | 2 Mohammedan | 1 Skh              |
| 6. Central<br>provinces<br>and Berar | 3 seats | -         | -            | -                  |

|           |                   |              |   |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------|---|
| 7. Assam  | 1 seat 1 General  | -            | - |
| 8. Orissa | 2 seats 2 General | -            | - |
| 9. Sind   | 2 seats 1 General | 1 Mohammedan | - |
| 10. Bihar | 4 seats 3 General | 1 Mohammedan | - |

Great women of Modern India by Virendra Grover and Ranjana Arora.

Source: (Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur 1993)

Apart from these reserved seats women were not excluded from contesting other seats in any general election for any House.

In 1937 election 41 women were elected from reserved constituencies, 8 from general constituencies, 80 women entered legislatures of the provinces and states (Sharma). Though women have been participating in political processes, the New Delhi Document on Women's role in the formal political structure has not changed and the number of contestants in elections has not increased. This is because political parties are reluctant to field women candidates and secondly electioneering is a costly affair.

To improve the status of women the following legislative measures were introduced between 1937 and 1938.

- a). Hindu Woman's Right to Property Bill.
- b). An Amendment to the child marriage Restraint Act.
- c). A bill to allow intercaste marriage.
- d). The Hindu Woman's Right to Divorce Act.
- e). The Muslim personal Law Bill.
- f). The Prevention of Polygamy Bill.

g). The Muslim Women's Right to Divorce Bill and in the legislatures anti dowry bills, marriage laws to allow women to inherit were introduced. (Geraldine forbes).

### **11.3 CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN**

It is due to the efforts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar that efforts were made in the Indian Constitution to secure maximum political advantage and protection to the disadvantaged sections of the society. While drafting the Indian Constitution the drafting committee, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as its Chairman felt the need of providing special provisions for women and children, which would ensure a new social order. The Indian Constitution contains all the provisions, which were in the U.N. Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Indian Constitution guarantees equal political rights, including the right to vote and guarantees equal political status to women. The following constitutional provisions concerning women have been incorporated in the constitution. Article 14: provides that the state shall not deny any person equality before law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15 (1) provides that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

Article 15 (2) they can make special provisions for the benefit of women and children.

Article 16 (2) Prohibits discrimination against women in employment.

Article 39: Provides that the state shall direct its policy for security of the citizens, men and women (a) equal right to an adequate means of livelihood (b) equal pay for equal work (c) preservation and promotion of health and strength of workers, men, women, and children against abuse. (d) securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Article 326; This article provides universal adult franchise for all citizens both men and women.

Under the universal adult suffrage the Constitution granted political rights to women on equal terms with men irrespective of caste, class, religion, educational qualification and property qualification. The Constitution recognized the need for active political participation of women and anticipated that women's political empowerment will enable them to contribute to the development of the country.

The Constitution thus recognized free and active political participation of women on equal terms with men. By providing these political rights it has politically empowered women, which enables them to contribute to the building of a new nation and also for

their own development. Research findings of various studies on political process in India show that the political status of women had not improved and they are exploited, harassed and are victims of atrocities. They suggested that participation of women in the political processes in large number might sort out the problems of women.

The government of India, after independence, decided to develop the country in a planned way. Welfare policy initiated in the first five-year plan. Women were seen as the passive beneficiaries of the development policies. It was in the seventies there was shift from welfare policy approach to development. Measures like infrastructure support and protective legislation, education, employment and income generation undertaken. These development strategies and processes did not bring about gender justice. Instead lead to social catastrophes and atrocities on women. These measures did not bring about gender justice or guarantee women's human rights. The results of various elections showed the absence of enough number of women in decision-making bodies and also in the implementing levels. The absence of women in the policy making bodies and also in the implementation has been viewed as responsible for the lack of proper understanding of women's issues and their needs. The absence of women in decision making bodies and leadership positions have led to an increase in number of crimes committed on women. There is need to mobilize more and more women to contest as candidates, so that more and more women occupy politically powerful and socially visible leadership positions. The increase in the number of politically power-ship and leadership positions will enable them to influence the governmental policies and programs and legislation in favour of women. Women need to be politically empowered so that they emerge or occupy decision-making bodies. In the Indian society a number of obstacles like patriarchy, religion, caste system prevents them participating in political activities. They make them politically powerless sections of society. They need measures like reservation or quota in the political bodies.

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#### **11.4 RESERVATIONS FOR WOMEN : RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

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Though the Constitution provides equal rights for men and women, the participation of women in political arena and also in the decision-making bodies is not in proportion to their population which is about 50 percent. The following tables give a clear picture of women's membership in Lok Sabha and Rajaya Sabha.

TABLE-I

Women in Lok Sabha

| Lok Sabha | Year | No. Members<br>Elected | Total Women<br>Contested | No. Of Women<br>Members | Percentage |
|-----------|------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| First     | 1952 | 499                    | 51                       | 22                      | 4.4        |
| Second    | 1957 | 500                    | 70                       | 27                      | 5.4        |
| Third     | 1962 | 503                    | 68                       | 34                      | 4.7        |
| Fourth    | 1967 | 523                    | 66                       | 31                      | 5.9        |
| Fifth     | 1971 | 521                    | 86                       | 22                      | 4.2        |
| Sixth     | 1977 | 544                    | 70                       | 19                      | 3.4        |
| Seventh   | 1980 | 544                    | 142                      | 28                      | 5.1        |
| Eighth    | 1984 | 544                    | 159                      | 44                      | 8.1        |
| Ninth     | 1989 | 529                    | 189                      | 28                      | 5.29       |
| Tenth     | 1991 | 544                    | 325                      | 42                      | 7.72       |
| Eleventh  | 1996 | 540                    | 599                      | 39                      | 7.22       |
| Twelfth   | 1998 | 543                    | 252                      | 41                      | 7.1        |

Source: Women Parliamentarians in India

In the first Lok Sabha out of 499 total number of seats there were only 22 women members and in the Eleventh Lok Sabha out of 540 seats there were only 39 women members, which is only 7.22 percent of the total number of seats. The Rajya Sabha situation also is not any better.



**TABLE-I****Women Members in Rajya Sabha**

| Year | No. of Members<br>Seats | No. of Women<br>Members | Percentage |
|------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 1952 | 216                     | 15                      | 6.9        |
| 1954 | 219                     | 17                      | 7.8        |
| 1956 | 232                     | 20                      | 8.6        |
| 1958 | 232                     | 22                      | 9.5        |
| 1960 | 236                     | 24                      | 10.2       |
| 1962 | 236                     | 16                      | 7.6        |
| 1964 | 238                     | 21                      | 8.8        |
| 1966 | 240                     | 23                      | 9.6        |
| 1968 | 240                     | 22                      | 9.2        |
| 1970 | 240                     | 14                      | 5.8        |
| 1972 | 243                     | 18                      | 7.4        |
| 1974 | 243                     | 17                      | 7.0        |
| 1976 | 244                     | 24                      | 9.8        |
| 1978 | 244                     | 25                      | 10.2       |
| 1980 | 244                     | 29                      | 11.8       |
| 1982 | 244                     | 24                      | 9.8        |
| 1984 | 244                     | 24                      | 9.8        |
| 1986 | 244                     | 28                      | 11.4       |
| 1988 | 245                     | 26                      | 10.2       |
| 1990 | 245                     | 24                      | 9.7        |
| 1992 | 232                     | 17                      | 7.2        |
| 1994 | 236                     | 20                      | 8.4        |
| 1996 | 238                     | 18                      | 7.5        |

**Source:** "Reservation for women in legislatures" by V.S. Rama Devi, Narla Memorial endowment lecture 1996 Dr. B.R.A.O.U., Hyderabad.

There are number of reasons for the low participation of women in politics, especially as contestants. The political parties are reluctant to choose women as candidates. They think that by choosing women candidates, male candidates will be deprived of their chances. Women, because of their household responsibilities are not able to participate in political activities. In India contesting elections is expensive, complicated, violent and dirty.

One of the obstacles for women's active participation as candidates is the increasing expense of elections, threat of violence and character assassination. The traditional role of Indian women demands first and full attention to the family and hence it is impossible for women to devote equal attention to family and political life. Indian culture which elaborates the psychological, social, and moral implications of biological characteristics and governs the behavior of male or female cultural norms determine the identity, expectations and demands of males and females. The physiology and culture assign women roles in private sphere or domain and political and power is in the hands of men who are assigned roles in the public sphere. Such social environment results in low level of political participation of women. A look at the number of women in the parliament indicates that there has not been any substantial increase in the number of women parliamentarians. Even in state legislatures there has not been any change in the number of women legislatures. Apathy of the political parties to nominate women to contest elections necessitated reservations for women. Fifty years of Indian experience indicates that unless reservations are made for women in political institutions it is impossible for women to enter political fields. Reservations for women in political institutions will bring about a substantial difference in their composition. Entry of a large number of women representatives into political institutions will enable them to play active role in the development of the country.

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## **11.4 RESERVATIONS FOR WOMEN : RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEES.**

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### **11.4.1 *Recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Women in India***

The committee of status of women (1971) was constituted by the Government of India to study the impact of the Constitutional, legal and administrative provisions on the status of women. During their tour the committee received a demand for the reservations for women in the decision making bodies from women's groups and scholars who undertook studies to examine women's role in the political process.

#### **Women's organizations stated : -**

Women experienced difficulties in obtaining adequate representation and

spokes persons of their bodies. The declining trend in the number of women legislatures is due to the apathy or reluctance of political parties to sponsor women candidates. The political parties reflect the established values of male dominated society. It is very difficult to bring about structural changes in socio-political setup. The political parties with policy of tokenism have few members in the political institutions. This minority and dependant status of women is an obstacle in their acting as spokesperson for women's rights and opportunities. Women's organizations stated that if this process continues over a period of time women will lose faith in the political process and majority of them would opt out of it. They suggested for a system of reservation of a proportion of seats for women in legislative and executive bodies of the government. As this would provide an impetus to women and political process to give a fair deal to half the population of seats for women in legislative and executive bodies of the government. They started that if women enter into political institutions in large numbers, the present inhibitions that are there as a result of their minority positions might disappear. Reservation of seats increases women legislature's sense of responsibility and concern for the problems affecting women. It will ensure the presence of a body of spokesmen of the women's cause in the representative bodies of the states. It will enable women's representatives to articulate their views. A system of reservation will also increase the degree of political mobilization of women in politics. Scholars have also suggested a system of reservation of seats of women in political institutions. They are of the view that Indian women entering politics is slow and halting because Indian culture is a political and the force of tradition is against women entering politics. They suggested thirty p.c. of reservation for women in the legislative and executive bodies. They stated that reservations for women, "these bodies will compel political bodies to change their strategies and induce them to allot women their share of seats. Reservation of seats for women does not lead their becoming isolated pockets in the nations but will increase women's participation in politics. It will motivate them to share political responsibilities. Increase in the number of women representatives broadens the base of women's representation in political institutions. It will help women representatives to direct and the type of changes in the status of women.

The committee on the status of women recommended the establishment of village panchayats at the village level with autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration of developmental programmees meant for women. This will ensure greater participation of women in the political process. The committee also recommended the adoption of the principle of the reservation of seats of women in municipalities, which is already in some states, by all states. It also recommended including women in all-important committees, commissions or delegations that are appointed to examine socio-economic problems.

### **11.4.2 Recommendations of the National Perspective Plan for Women**

According to the National Perspective Plan (1996) the number of women contestants in the parliamentary election has not increased significantly over the years. This is because political parties are reluctant to field women candidates and secondly the cost of electioneering is very high. In 1988 a National Perspective Plan was published, which stated that it was to give a broad definition of the term necessary to political participation and emphasized gender equality for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure of democracy suggested the following recommendations to improve the political status of women.

Recommendations of the National Perspective Empowerment of women:

1. The Planning Commission and all ministers and government departments must have a woman's cell.
2. The government delegations to international meetings must include at least one or more women members.
3. Wherever government sets up a committee or commission for any purpose, 30 percent of its representation must be of women.
4. The union and all state level Public Service Commission must have women representatives.
5. The Planning Commission and State Planning Boards must have adequate representation of women.
6. 50 percent of all grass roots functionaries must be women. To facilitate its implementations relaxation of minimum educational qualifications is needed, which can be supplemented by short training courses for women.
7. Reservation should be made of 30 percent seats at Panchayat To Zilla Parishad levels and local municipal bodies for women. Wherever possible, higher representation of dalit, tribble and women of other weaker sections should be ensured.
8. 70 percent of executive heads of all bodies from village Panchayat to-district level and a certain percentage of chief executives of Panchayati Raj bodies at lower, middle and higher levels must be reserved for women.
9. A more effective step would be declare a certain percentage of constituencies in the lower tier of Panchayati Raj as exclusively women's constituencies and all executive positions in a certain number of territorial jurisdictions reserved for women candidates.

The perspective plan for women recommended 30 percent reservation should be made for women in all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj and also in the local municipal bodies. It is also recommended that 30 percent of women should be represented in all committees and commissions and urged the political parties to ensure that 30 percent of the candidates fielded for elections are women.

#### **11.4.3 Fourth World Conference on Women : Beijing (1995) :**

The Fourth World Conference on women was held at Beijing in September 1995 for which the United Nations Prepared a document entitled "Platform for Action" (PFA) for the advance men of women. One of the important areas of concern was regarding the inequality between men and women in sharing of power and decision making at all levels. It gave priority to the political empowerment of women. In order to promote the objectives mentioned in the platform for action, the Indian Government prepared the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women. The policy laid down strategies and action points to bridge the gap between the constitutional and legal equality enjoyed by women.

For empowering women, particularly on their role in decision making bodies, the policy declares:

1. Women's equality in power sharing and achieve participation in decision making including political decision making at all levels and in all process will be endowed for the achievement of the goal of empowerment.
2. All measures will be taken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in all decision making bodies at all levels in the private and public sectors, including the legislative, executive, judicial, local street corporate, statutory bodies, as also advisory commissions, committees, boards, trusts etc.
3. Affirmative action such as reservation/quotas including in higher legislative bodies will be considered. Judicial, Local corporate, Statutory bodies, as also advisory commissions, committees, Boards, trusts etc.
4. Affirmative action such as reservation/quotas including in higher legislative bodies will be considered whenever necessary, on a time bound basis.

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#### **11.5 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACTS FOR RESERVATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL AND URBAN LOCAL BODIES**

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Participation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions was recognized as an important instrument to achieve developmental goals i.e. Economic Development and Social Justice Development in order to be successful, needs maximum

participation of people at the grass roots level, and participation of women is of vital significance, specially in their visibility in decision making processes. "The CSWI report suggested the establishment of all women Panchayats at village level with autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration of welfare and development programmes for women and children. This was suggested as a measure to break away from the traditional attitudes which inhibit women in articulating their problems and participating actively in the local bodies". m ( Perspective Plan 2000 p.156 ). Participation of women in Panchayati Raj bodies helps in their empowerment and in bringing into focus the women's perspective in planning, formulating and executing of various rural developmental programmes. In 1978 the committee on the Panchayati Raj institutions has recognized participation of women in these bodies as a step towards equality and recommended the reservation of two seats for women in Panchayats and co-opting women members in case they did not come through elections. The co-opting of two women members into the Panchayati Raj bodies had not helped them to participate effectively and independently in the political processes and in decision making bodies. Keeping this in mind legislation was passed for providing 30 percent reservation of seats for women. By reserving seats for women and removing co-option women would not contest these elections which will put an end to nomination of favoured candidates by political leaders.

#### **11.5.1 *Seventy Third and Seventy Fourth Amendment Act (1992)***

The Constitution Amendment Acts (73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup>) 1992 were passed in order to empower women in the rural and urban local bodies.

1. Articles 243 D and 243 T of the Constitution provide that not less than one third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the schedule caste or as the case may be to the schedule tribe.
2. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the schedule caste and the schedule tribes of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct election in the local bodies shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the local bodies.

The Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendment Acts to the Constitution provided for one-third reservation of seats for women in Panchayats and in Municipalities. One-third of seats of Chairpersons, positions were reserved for women.

This act will enable women to participate in the decision making process at

the lower levels of administration and women will get an opportunity to be Chairpersons of the local bodies in the Panchayati Raj. This message of Political support for women has encouraged an increase in the number of women's groups which are working for the empowerment of women - for e.g. In the area of saving and credit, promotion of literacy, curbing of alcohol abuse.

Reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies are aimed at active involvement of women in socio-economic development. In India women are reluctant to contest elections because of the violence that characterize electoral policies. They also have the fear of character assassination. The political parties are reluctant to field women candidates which is evident from the statistics of women in National and State Legislatures. Women are considered inexperienced in politics and are categorized as socially disadvantaged groups. Several research studies have indicated that without reservations it is difficult for women to enter politics and play positive role in the development of the country. Hence reservations become imperative.

The 72nd and 73rd constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 are historic events in the advancement of Indian Women as they ensure 1/3 of the total seats and positions of chair persons in rural and urban elected bodies. It is estimated that about one million women will emerge as leaders decision makers at grass roots levels of these 75,000 will be chairpersons in the rural areas. (Country paper).

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## **11.6 EIGHTY FIRST AMENDMENT BILL (1996)**

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India achieved independence in 1947. Even after 50 years of independence and with various provisions for women we find that their representation in Legislative bodies and parliament is low, when compared to their numerical strength. Several women's organizations and scholars who under-took research studies suggested and demanded for a system of reservation for women in the legislative bodies in the States and in Parliament. The women's organizations felt that political parties were reluctant to field women candidates and hence the number of women legislators is declining. They suggested a system of reservation, which would enable a large number of women to enter these legislative bodies and shoulders their political responsibilities.

In the year 1996 on March 8th it was resolved in both Houses of Parliament to suggest steps for improving the status of women including reservation of seats for women in higher legislative bodies including Parliament.

President, in his address on March 8th International Women's day in the Parliament of India, declared that "necessary legislative and other steps to provide for reservation of 33% of the seats for women in all elected bodies, including

State Assemblies and Parliament, would be taken up. The Constitution (seventy third and seventy four) Amendment Act (1992) deals with reservation of seats for women in Panchayats and Municipalities. In the same way the constitution (Eight First Amendment) Bill has been proposed which intends to introduce new articles 330A and 332A into the Constitution is under discussion in the Parliament. As per this Amendment Bill:

(1) not less than one third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (2) of the Article 330 will be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes. This clause would however not apply in case of a state or union territory if the number of seats reserved under clause (2) of Article 330 will be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. This clause would however, not apply in case of a state or union territory if the number of seats reserved in the state or union territory for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes is less than three.

In 1990 the Constitution (Eighty First amendment) bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha and it is being discussed.

(2) Not less than one third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes ) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election to the Lok Sabha in a state or union territory will be reserved for women.

(3) Such seats would be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a state or union territory. However this clause will not apply in relation to a state or union territory if the number of seats allotted to such state or union territory is less than three. The 81st Constitutional Amendment bill had been reformulated as the 84th Amendment Bill in the twelfth Lok Sabha by the present BJP Government. The cabinet had approved the bill and it is yet to be introduced.

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## 11.7 SUMMING-UP

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Indian woman now can vote and stand for elections. In the first assembly there were one 2% women elected to the assemblies including Masnma Begum, Renuka Ray, Durga bai, Deshmukh, Radha Bai Subbarayam were included.

After India achieved independence on August 15th 1947 it had adopted democratic Constitution and granted political rights to woman equal to man so that they can actively participate in political activities and contribute the nation building. The results of various elections showed that the participation of women as contestants to decision making bodies was meager. In 1996 out of 238 members



in the Rajya Sabha only 18 are women, which is only 7.56 percent. Through the Constitution provides equal rights to vote and contest elections their number in parliament is very low when compared to men. Even in the State Legislatures the percentage is very low. The data regarding women's representation in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha is totally insignificant in terms of their numerical strength. In the 11th Parliament there are about 7.22 percent women members in the Lok Sabha and 7.56 percent women members in the Rajya Sabha.

To empower women the method of reservation has been suggested. The enactment of 73rd and 74th Amendment bills provided reservation by the seats in Panchayats and municipalities and also Chairpersons positions. 84th Amendment Bill is yet to be introduced. Political empowerment helps women to fight for their rights, to influence policies and programmes and laws in their favour.

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### **11.8 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS**

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**I. Answer the following Questions in 30 lines.**

- a) Discuss about the women's movement for political rights before Independence.
- b) Discuss the constitutional provision for women's rights.
- c) Discuss about the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts.

**II. Answer the following Questions write short notes in 10 lines.**

- a) Obstacles for Women's participation in Politics
- b) Reservation for women in Panchayats.
- c) Reservations for women in Municipalities

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### **11.9 RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

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- 1. Muralidhar C. Bhandare : The World of Gender Justice
- 2. Kaushik Susheela (ed) : Participation of women in Politics 1993.
- 3. Swarnakar G.P. : Women participation's Rural Development 1988

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## **UNIT-12: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS**

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## 12.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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By the end of this unit you will be able to discuss-

- \* The Rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration
- \* International endeavours for Women's Rights
- \* Indian Constitution and Women's Rights
- \* The Discrimination against Women and Violation of Human Rights

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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Right to food, right to freedom of expression, thought, right to be free from discrimination, right to live and earn are some examples of human rights. All human beings born on this earth have fundamental rights, which have to be respected and protected. Differences in sex, colour, race do not change the rights of human beings. The world was stunned at the disastrous results of Second World War, which has shaken the moral, legal and political foundations of the world community. The world community felt the need to re-establish the human rights. The Human Rights Movement was started in 1940's to reestablish and promote human rights throughout the world and the United Nations Organisation was born. The aim of this Organisation is to achieve international cooperation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. In this unit we will study about the universal declaration of Human Rights, International endeavours for women's rights, Indian constitution and women's rights, and violation of women's rights.

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## 12.2 UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (1948)

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The results of the two world wars compelled mankind to establish an International organisation for preserving international peace and security. In 1943 the foreign Ministers of Britain, United States of America, Soviet Union and China met in Moscow and confirmed the necessity of forming an international organisation for peace and security. This body laid the foundation for the establishment of United Nations Organisation and it was on the 24th October 1945 that this organisation came into existence officially with the following aims.

- \* "To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war;
- \* To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human persons, in the equal rights of men and women of nations large and small.
- \* To promote justice through the application of international law and

- \* To promote social progress and better standards of life."

The United Nations Organisation consists of the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of justice and the Secretariat. The General Assembly helps in the realization of human rights. The United Nations Organisation guarantees protection of human rights through five legal instruments:

United Nations has been working hard since 1945 through its International instruments to advocate the principle of equality between men and women. It proclaims in its preamble the determination of the people of the United Nations to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women". United Nations, during the second half of the century played an important role by providing a platform for dialogue for government, women's movement so that shared consensus could be evolved.

The Universal Declaration of human rights is a statement of principles with an appeal to every individual to promote and respect the rights and freedom it defines. The General Assembly approved the Declaration of Human Rights on 10th December 1948. This declaration states that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of equal rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of Freedom, Justice and peace in the World". The declaration was adopted as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations. The Universal declaration of Human Rights contained an elaborate list of Human Rights which are listed below. Everyone is entitled to all these rights and freedoms and everyone has to strive to promote respect and help in their effective implementation.

#### **Universal Equality of all Human Beings:**

1. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights
2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the declaration "Without any distinction of any kind such as race, colour sexes, language, religion, social origin and birth status.

#### **Civil and Political rights:**

3. Right to life, liberty and security of person;
4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude and slave trade shall be prohibited in all forms;
5. No one shall be subjected to torture, degrading treatment or punishment;

6. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law;
7. The right to recognition every where as a person before the law;
8. The right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution or by law;
9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;
10. Right to full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charges against him;
11. Everyone charged with a penal offence had the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law;
12. Right to protection of law against interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence or to attack upon his honour and reputation;
13. Right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state;
14. Right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution;
15. Right to nationality;
16. Right to marry and to found a family;
17. Right to own property alone as well as in association with others;
18. Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
19. Right to freedom of opinion and expression;
20. Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;
21. Right to take part in the government of his country directly or through freely chosen representatives.

**Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:**

22. Right to social security
23. Right to work and free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment. Everyone without any discrimination has right to equal pay for equal work, right to just and favourable

remuneration ensuring for insert and his family and existence worthy of human dignity, right to form and joint trade unions;

24. Right to rest and leisure;

25. Right to standard of living, adequate for the health and well being of self and family and the right security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood and old-age;

26. Right to Education;

27. Right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community;

28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration can be fully realised;

29. Everyon has duties to the community in which alone be free and full development of personality is possible ones;

30. Nothing in this declaration may be interpreted as implying for any state, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein. (Muralidhar Bhandare)

Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the important achievements of the United Nations Organisation. After adoption of this declaration efforts were made to codify them and give legality to them or legal form which led to the emergence of covenants which are legal instruments. States, which are members of U.N. organization have signed the declaration and incorporated them into their Constitutions. India, Which is a party to human rights declaration has incorporated the human rights into Constitution. Now let us see the efforts by the United Nations for women's rights.

### **12.3 INTERNATIONAL ENDEAVOURS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

The U.N. has been actively working for Gender Justice or women's rights and it has set up a commission on the status of women in 1946 with the task of making recommendations for the ECOSOC which is dealing with the promotion of women's rights in all countries. In 1966 The Commission on the status of women suggested that programme for the rights of women should have the following objectives:

1. "To promote the Universal recognition of the dignity and the worth of the human person and of the equal rights of men and women in accordance with the Charter and the Universal declaration of human rights;

2. To enable women to participate fully in the development of society so that it may benefit from the contributions of all its members;

3. To stimulate an awareness among both men and women of women's full potential and of the importance of their contribution to the development of society". In 1970 the above mentioned recommendations by the Commission on the status of women were adopted by the UN General assembly. A programme of international action for the advancement of women was formulated. The commission on the status of women also laid down the target to be achieved during 1971 to 1980. In 1972 the U.N. general assembly declared 1975 as the International Women's Year. The strategy adopted by the UN general assembly: during the International womens year was

a. "Full inclusion of women into the total development effort.

b. Ratification of or accessation to International conventions relating to the status of women.

c. Enactment of legislation to bring national laws into conformity with relevant International Instruments, in particular Declaration on the Discrimination against women.

d. Assessment of women's contribution to the various economic and social sectors in relation to their country's over all development plans and programmes and

e. Study the effects of scientific and technological change on the status of women".

The year 1975 (International Women's Year) was devoted for promoting equality between men and women. Efforts were also made to ensure the full integration of women in the total development efforts and to recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development.

In 1952 the General Assembly adopted the U.N Convention on the Political Rights of Women. This was the first instrument of International law, which was aimed at granting and protection of women's rights throughout the world. It has also set up the Commission of Human Rights. "To codify the legal rights of women and to ascertain the discrimination that existed in law and in practice the U.N. had undertaken world wide research. The findings of this research work has become the basis for global standards incorporated into the international law through treaties and conventions". It has conducted four World Conferences for Women and in 1976 established the United Nations Development Found for Women.

### **12.3.1 Convention on the Political rights of Women (1952)**

In 1952 the General Assembly adopted the UN convention on the political rights of women, which was the first instrument of international law. It was aimed at granting of protection of women's rights on the worldwide basis.

The convention on the political rights of women was opened for signature and ratification by the General Assembly in 1952 and the same came into force on 7th July 1954. This convention recognized "that every one has the right to take part in the government of country directly through freely chosen representatives. It also recognised that every one has the right to equal access to public service in country and desiring to

equalize the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights, in accordance with the provisions of the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." It framed the following articles for the benefit of women:

- Article 1: "Women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.
- Article 2: Women shall be eligible for election to all public elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men without any discrimination.
- Article 3: Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination".

### **12.3.2 First World Womens Conference held in Mexico (1975):**

UN declared 1975 as "International Women's Year" and the first International Conference for Women was held in Mexico. The theme of the conference was "equality, development and peace". The decade 1975-1985 was declared as the UN decade for women. During this decade the focus which was on women's development needs shifted to the recognition that women are essential contributors to the development process. In the first World Conference it was concluded that women like men, should and could contribute to the progress of their country. Women were also recognized as the factors and beneficiaries of development. The United Nations collected statistics about the status of women of different countries which gave evidence that women's equality and rights were essential to the well being and development of societies. The Declaration of Mexico conference contains 17 principles and it has also given the meaning of equality. The Declaration stressed the responsibility of the state to find ways and



means to integrate women into the development process. The declaration specified the responsibilities of men in the context of family life. The conference prepared the World plan of action for implementation with the objectives of the international women's year. It contains guidelines for improving the status of women, recommendations and targets to be achieved on the following aspects; (a) "increase in women's literacy, equal access to the different levels of education, vocational training in basic skills, (b) employment opportunities, employment and pay, (c) laws to guarantee equality in political participation, (d) health education and rural services, (e) parity in civil, social and political rights such as marriage, citizenship and commerce, (f) recognition of women's traditionally unpaid work in the home and domestic food production". The plan of action called for a convention on the elimination of discrimination against women with effective procedures for its implementation.

### Mexico World Plan of Action:

The Mexico World Plan of Action pointed out the differences in political status of women and men. It urged for equal access of women to the decision making bodies at all levels in government and also in the field of employment. "It pointed out that discrimination against women was incompatible with the human dignity, with the welfare of the family, the society and prevented their participation on equal terms with men in the political, social, economic and cultural lives of their countries". It also pointed out that discrimination was an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities of women. It stressed that greater and equal participation of women at all levels of decision making bodies would contribute to the development of the country and in the maintenance of peace. The conference felt that restructuring world economic relationships would offer greater possibilities for women to be integrated into the main stream of national life. It suggested to the nations to provide necessary resources to enable women to participate in the political life of their countries and emphasized that active participation of women at decision making level as a prerequisite to the full exercise of equal rights.

The Mexico World Plan of action exhorted the national government to take the following actions:

1. "Government should ensure that women participate in public and political life at all levels and should be made aware of their responsibilities as citizens, also of the problems affecting them as women and also of society. Participation in political life included participation as voters, selected representatives, lobbyists, trade union and public officials in various branches of government, including judiciary.
2. "Where legislation does not exist to guarantee women the right to vote, to be

eligible for election and to hold all public offices, efforts should be made to enact Laws.

3. Where special qualifications for holding public offices are required they should apply to both sexes equally.
4. Government should establish goals, strategies and time-tables for increasing within the decade 1975-85 the number of women in elective and offices functions at all levels.
5. The Plan suggested the following special efforts to achieve these objectives:
  - a. The reaffirmations of wide publicity for the official policy is concerning the equal political participation of women.
  - b. To issue special governmental instructions for achieving an equitable representation of women in public office. Compilation of periodic reports of the number of women in the public service and also their levels of responsibilities.
  - c. Organize studies to establish the levels of economic, social and political competence of women compared to men for recruitment, nomination and promotion.
6. Special efforts and campaigns should be initiated to enlighten women electorate on political issues and on the need for their active participation in the political processes.
7. Educational and informational activities should be undertaken to enlighten the public about the role of women in the political processes and the need to promote their participation in the political processes.
8. Special drives should be undertaken and increase the participation of women and girls in rural communities, youth development Programmes and in political activities."

The Mexico Conference also resolved to request the Governments to consider the rights of women as eminently political requiring urgent and concrete solution. It suggested that they should undertake structural reforms in the political field to enable women to participate equally in the political sphere. The resolutions of the world conference and the world plan of action were endorsed by the general assembly in 1975.

### 12.3.3 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW (1979))

Additional means for protecting the human rights of women were seen as necessary. The mere fact of their humanity has not been sufficient to guarantee women the protection of their rights.

In 1979 the General Assembly adopted the convention on the "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)" an international bill of rights for women. This came into force in 1981. The state parties to the convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women noted that Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed "that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and have rights. The convention noted the various resolutions, declarations and recommendations adopted by the United Nations promote equal rights for women. It also recognized that in spite of various instruments, discrimination against women exists throughout the world and women still do not enjoy equal rights with men. The convention was convinced that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for women's dignity and it is an obstacle to the participation of women on equal terms with men in the social, economic, political and cultural life of their countries. It also recognised that Discrimination against women hampers the growth and prosperity of the family and the society and it is an obstacle in the development of women's potentialities. It stated that for the full and complete development of the country, for the welfare of the world and for the cause of peace, maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields is required. The convention recognized the contribution of women to the family and to the society and stated that the role of women in procreation should not be taken as a basis of discrimination. It suggested that changes in the traditional roles of men and women in the family and society should be brought about to achieve full equality between men and women. The convention identified many specific areas i.e. marriage, family and political rights where discrimination against women is still existing. It has spelt out specific goals and measures that are to be taken to facilitate the creation of a society where women enjoy their human rights. It emphasized that state parties should implement the principles set in the Declaration on Elimination of Discrimination against women and adopt required measures to eliminate discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. A committee has been set up which monitors the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women and provides information reported by state parties of the convention.

The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against women contains the following articles;

**Article 1:** Gives meaning of the term discrimination. The term "discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economical, social, cultural, civil or any other field".

**Article 2:** Condemn discrimination against women in all forms and evolve a policy to eliminate discrimination and undertake-

- \* to include the principle of equality of men and women in the Constitution and to ensure that this principle is realized through legislation or through any other means;
- \* to adopt legislative measures prohibiting discrimination against women;
- \* to take all measures to modify or abolish the customs, practices, laws that discriminate women;
- \* to repeal all national penal provisions which discriminate women;

**Article 3:** to take appropriate measures, including legislation to ensure advancement and development of women and guarantee them enjoyment of human rights and freedoms equal with men.

**Article 4:** adopting temporary special measures aimed at accelerating and those measures aimed at protecting maternity contained in the convention shall not be considered discriminatory.

**Article 5:** take all appropriate measures

- \* To modify the social and cultural patterns of conducts of men and women in order to eliminate prejudices, customs and practices which are based on inferiority and superiority of either of the sexes or stereotyped roles of the sexes or stereotyped roles of men and women.
- \* To ensure that family education included a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of upbringing of children as the responsibility of both parents.

**Article 6:** take all measures, including legislation to suppress traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

**Article 7:** take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and ensure women the right:

\* To vote in all elections and to be eligible for election to all public elected bodies;

\* To participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy and to hold public office at all levels

Article 8: take measures to ensure women represent their government at the international level.

Article 9: grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality.

Article 10: take measures to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure equal rights in the field of Education.

Article 11: take all measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment to ensure same rights to women as men, in particular the right to work, right to same employment opportunities, right to choose profession, right to social security, right to equal remuneration, right to protection of health and safe working conditions, right to prevent discrimination on the grounds of marriage or maternity, prohibit dismissal on the ground of pregnancy or of maternal leave, to introduce maternity leave with pay, to encourage to provide support social services, to enable parents of combined family obligations with work responsibilities, provide special protection to women during pregnancy and to revise, repeal protective legislation.

Article 12: take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care.

Article 13: take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the economic and social life in order to ensure women the same rights as men - the rights to family benefits, bank loans, financial credit and right to participate in recreation activities.

Article 14: take into account problems faced by rural women, take measures to eliminate discrimination in rural areas and to ensure equality of men and women, to participate in formulation and implementation of development planning at all levels, have access to health care, obtain training and education, to organize self help and cooperative groups in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities, to have access to credit, loans, technology, marketing facilities and to enjoy adequate living conditions.

**Article 15:** accord to women equality with men before the law

**Article 16:** appropriate measures to ensure equality in matters relating to marriage and family relations. To ensure the right to enter into marriage, freedom to choose a spouse, rights and responsibilities during, marriage and at its dissolution. To ensure the right to decide on the number of children, rights and responsibilities with regard to guardian ship, adoption of children, right to choose family name, right in respect of ownership, management and enjoyment and disposition of property.

**Article 17:** for the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present convention there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women (CEDAW).

**Article 18:** state parties undertake to submit to the Secretary General of the United Nations for consideration by the Committee a report on the measures which they adopted and the progress made.

**Article 19:** the Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure and elect the officers for a term of two years.

**Article 20:** the meetings of the Committee shall be held at United Nations headquarters or at any other convenient place.

**Article 21:** the Committee through Economic and Social Council report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and may make suggestions and recommendations.

State parties which are members of U.N. and which have signed the declaration have to submit their reports to the Committee which monitors the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women.

#### **12.3.4 Second World Conference on Women held in Copenhagen (1980):**

In 1980 U.N. organised the second world conference on women at Copenhagen. This conference adopted a programme of Action for the second half of the U.N. Decade for women and emphasized Education, Employment and Health.

The second world conference on women which was held in Copenhagen in 1980 stressed that mere provision of equal rights and opportunities in the statutes will not by itself help women. It suggested that the United Nations and its

organizations in cooperation with national governments to develop strategies for increasing full and effective participation of women at all decision making levels in the development process. This would need availability of more time with women for which the burden

of tasks traditionally performed by women need to be reduced through appropriate technology. Women need to be provided occupational training for upward mobility in the employment sectors.

#### 12.3.5 Third World Conference for Women held in Nairobi (1985):

The Third world conference on women was held in Nairobi. This conference reviewed the achievements made, the obstacles encountered during the international women's decade 1976-85. The Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women to the year 2000 which were adopted by consensus provided a framework for Action at the international level and also at the national level to promote advancement of women.

The participants at the Nairobi conference emphasized the need for political parties to nominate women in the constituencies where they had the chance to succeed. They stressed the importance of governmental and non-governmental organizations in educating women to exercise their political rights. They also stated that in this process of consciousness raising efforts would have to be made towards fixing definite time bound targets and the fixing of quota system. They stated that women by virtue of their gender, experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to the power structures that control society. "In this conference it was noted that for true equality to become a reality for women the sharing of power on equal terms with men must be a major strategy."

Non-governmental organizations, which met at this conference, suggested that:

- a. Opportunities should be provided for women to increase their awareness of how national and international economic political forces work.
- b. National NGO's should develop closer association with an advocacy for women's perspective within political parties, trade unions and national development plans.
- c. Political parties should be urged to adopt affirmative actions, policies and increase participation of women in parliamentary and in legislative bodies.

"In 1990 the UN commission on the status of women suggested to attain the critical threshold to make participation of women effective 30% should be the

minimum share in the decision making bodies for women”.

#### 12.3.6 The World Conference on Human Rights (1993):

The world Conference on Human rights held in Vienna was an important event in which women's rights emerged as a major concern at the international level. Women's groups were determined to consider women's rights as human rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted by the World Conference on Human rights on 25 June 1993. It urged the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by women. It reiterate the objectives established on global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development set forth in the Rio declaration on Environment and Development. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action gave importance to the integration and full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process. The World Conference stressed that equal status of women and human rights of women should be integrated into stet main stream of United Nations activities. It also stressed the importance of working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, trafficking in women. It also stressed towards working for the elimination of gender bias in the administration of justice and the eradication of traditional and customary practices. It also urged the General Assembly to adopt the draft declaration on violence against women. The Vienna conference on human rights was one of the main turning points in womens rights, emerging as a major concern at the international level. Women's groups who were attending this conference were determined to make women's rights as human rights and they were successful in their efforts. The world conference on Human Rights urged the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by women and the eradication of all types of discrimination against women. "It urged the governments and international organisation to facilitate the access of women to decision-making posts and their greater participation in the decision-making process".

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action stressed that United Nations should encourage the goal of Universal ratification by all states of the convention the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the year 2000.

It recognized the importance of the enjoyment of women of the highest standard of Health both physical and mental throughout their life span. It reaffirmed women's right to accessible and adequate health care, family planning services, and access to education at all levels. The conference on Human Rights welcomed the decision of the commission on Human Rights to consider the appointment of special rapporteur on violence against women at its fifth session. Article 18 of the Vienna declaration and programme of action states "The human rights of



women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of Universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community - The human rights of women should form an integral part of the U.N. Human rights instruments relating to women".

#### 12.3.7 Declaration On Elimination Of Violence Against Women (1993)

The General Assembly recognized the need for the universal application to women of their rights and principles with regard to equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings. These rights and principles are enshrined in various international instruments i.e.

- a. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- b. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- c. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- d. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and
- e. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The General Assembly declared that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relation between men and women". It also recognized that violence against women is one of the social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate position. It also stated that women belonging to minority groups, rural women, destitute women, women prisoners, female children, old age women are more vulnerable to violence. It was concerned about the limited opportunities women have to achieve equality and society. It was convenience that there is a need for a definition of violence against women and a statement of rights to eliminate violence against women. It also recognized the need and commitment violence against women. It also recognized the need and commitment by states and by the International committee to eliminate violence against women.

In the same year the General Assembly adopted the Resolution on the Elimination of Violence against women. It was concerned that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. It constitutes a violation of the rights and freedom of women and impairs their

enjoyment of their rights. The General Assembly proclaimed the declaration on the elimination of violence against women and urged governments to make necessary efforts to eliminate it.

The Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women recognized that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. It recommended a set of measures to eliminate violence and suggested to the full implementation of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It affirmed that violence against women constitutes a violation of right an freedom of women. It recognized that it is a manifestation of historically unequally power relation between men and women and this has led to the domination of one over the other and discrimination against women by men. Violence against women is considered as a mechanism by which women are forced into a subordinate position. Recognizing that violence against women is an obstacle, which prevents their advancement, it proclaimed the "Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women". It urged the nations to make efforts to eliminate violence against women. This declaration contained six articles. The first article gives the meaning of the term violence against women. It stressed that woman are entitled to the enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms. The rights of women include protection under law, free from all forms of discrimination, highest standard of physical and mental health, favourable conditions of work, not to subject to torture in human treatment or punishment. It urged the various agencies of United Nations system to contribute to the recognition and realization of the above mentioned rights of women.

The declaration gave the meaning of the expression 'violence against women' in the following way'. "Violence against women means any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical sexual or psychological human or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

#### **12.3.8 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (1995):**

This was followed by the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, China, 1995. The fourth world conference on women discussed gender issues and gender relationships between men and women for achieving "equality, peace and development" for all women. The stand of women was to defend their rights. It was clear that women came to defend their rights and to treat women's rights as human rights. The fourth world conference recognised that though the status of women improved in some respects, inequalities between women and men have persisted. It resolved to work for the full implementation of the human rights of

women and of the girl child. It also recognised that women's empowerment and their participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society is essential. Their participation in the decision-making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace. Treating Women's rights as human rights, to provide opportunities and access to resources are necessary. Involvement of women in economic and social development by providing them equal opportunities was considered significant ... Women's equal participation as agents and beneficiaries in people centered sustainable development policies and programmes was considered as essential. It was also recognised that women's participation and their contribution NGOs and other community based organisations was equally significant.

It has been decided to make efforts and take actions to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in general and the girl child in particular. It also resolved to promote women's economic independence and eradication of poverty and promotion and protection of all human rights of women and girls. 20,000 government delegates and 30,000 women from non-governmental organisations and civil societies attended this Conference. The fourth world conference came out with the Beijing Declaration and a Platform of Action to be followed by Governments, and International Organisations. "The Beijing Declaration includes women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of human rights. It acknowledges women's rights as human rights". The platform for Action emphasized human rights of women and the need to mainstream a gender perspective in all sectors and all levels of policy making and planning to achieve gender equality.

#### ***Beijing Platform of Action:***

The Beijing platform of Action expressed concern that the target of having 30% of women in positions at the decision-making levels by 1995 as endorsed by the economic and social council had not been achieved anywhere. It emphasized the human rights of women and the need to mainstream gender perspective at all levels of policy making and planning to achieve equality. It suggests to strengthen factors needed to achieve full and equal participation of women in power positions. It listed out a number of action points for governments, political parties, NGOs, trade unions and various other organizations.

The following action points were suggested to be followed by the governments:

- \* To Implement measures with commitment for achieving a general balance in government organizations, public sectors and judiciary with specific targets;

- \* To Take measures to encourage political parties to achieve gender balance in elective and non-elective policies;
- \* To Ensure that men and women participate equally in political activities and women have equal membership in political parties and trade unions;
- \* To Reform the electoral system if it is coming in the way of women to participate in politics;
- \* To provide support to NGOs and research bodies and research studies;
- \* To Encourage involvement of indigenous women in decision making;
- \* To Ensure gender balancing in government and other organizations;
- \* To take steps to encourage men share work at home and provide women an opportunity to come out of their homes;
- \* To Nominate equal number of women as representatives in the UN bodies;
- \* To consent monitoring and evaluation of data about women's representation at all levels of decision-making bodies.

The following action points to be followed by the political parties:

- \* To Examine the bottle necks in the party structure which prevent women from participating in political activities;
- \* To Take initiatives to involve women in the decision making bodies of their party;
- \* To Include gender issues in political agenda.

The following action points were to be followed by the United Nations:

- \* To ensure parity in employment with various United Nations agencies;
- \* To promote more women into the senior positions;
- \* To constantly analyze gender dis-aggregated data on men and women and their position in decision-making levels;

The following action points, were to be followed by NGOs:

- \* To strengthen solidarity among women;
- \* Advocacy to make women influence the decision making bodies;
- \* To make the elected representative accountable to gender concerns;
- \* To keep data on qualified women for their appointment in the government and other bodies.

General Actions to be followed:

- \* To develop strong mechanism to monitor womens access to decision making bodies;

- \* To review the criteria of appointment to senior position to find whether they are discriminatory towards women;
- \* To encourage NGOs to achieve parities of sexes in the ranks as well as the decision-making levels;
- \* To enable public debate on the new gender roles in the society as well as in the family;
- \* To restructure recruitment and career development programmes to provide equal access to women

The conference exhorted the governments, political parties and other organizations

- \* To encourage self esteem of women and girls;
- \* To develop a system of monitoring in experienced women;
- \* To develop mechanisms and training to encourage women to participate in electoral and political process;
- \* To provide gender sensitive training to both men and women to have a non-discriminatory and balanced relationship at the work place.

The Commission on the Status of Women was given the responsibility of monitoring and implementing the platform of Action. The United Nations, since the fourth World Conference on women, has been committed to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all its activities and also in all its policies.

Many member countries signed the various instruments and governments have made efforts to incorporate them into their Constitutions. India, which is a member country, has incorporated the articles of U.N. Declaration into its constitution.

## **12.4 INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

After India achieved independence Constitution was framed. India decided to include political, civil, economic, cultural and social rights into the Constitution. The rights were divided into two -

- (1) Political and Civil rights and
- (2) Social and Economic rights.

These rights are enshrined in part III of the Constitution, Directive Principles of state policy are enshrined in part IV of the constitution.

### 12.4.1 Fundamental Rights:

The following are the fundamental Rights:

1. Right to Equality (Article 14,15,16)
2. Right to six freedoms (Article 19) Freedom of speech and expression, assemble peacefully, form associations or unions, move freely throughout the territory of India, practice any profession or any occupation.
3. Right to life and personal liberty (Article 20,21,22)
4. Right to freedom of religion (Article 25,26,27 & 28)
5. Cultural and Educational rights (Article 29 & 30)
6. Right to property (Article 31)
7. Right against Exploitation (Article 23 & 24)
8. Right to Constitutional remedies (Article 32)

Part IV of the Constitution contains cultural, social and economic Rights under the Directive Principles.

- a) Right to adequate means of livelihood (Article 39 (a))
- b) Right against economic exploitation (Article 39 (b))
- c) Right of both sexes to equal pay and equal work (Article 39 (d))
- d) Right to work (Article 41)
- e) Right to leisure and rest and
- f) Right to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness (Article 41) for the well being of women. Indian Constitution prohibits the state from discrimination against any citizen on-grounds of sex. It empowers the state to make special provisions for women.

Article 14: The state shall not deny to any person equally before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15: The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children.

**Article 16:** Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matter relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

No citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of sex, cast etc. in respect of employment.

Directive Principles of State Policy that contain provisions to ensure rights to women:

**Article 38:** 1.State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people;

2. Minimize the inequalities in income and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities.

**Article 39 (a)** The right to an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally;

(b) Equal pay for equal work for both men and women;

(e) Protection of health and strength of workers, men, women and children from abuse and entry into avocations unsuited to their ages or strength

**Article 41:** Right to work, education and public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement and other types of undeserved wants.

**Article 42:** Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

**Article 43:** Provision of work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure etc.

**Article 44:** Uniform civil code for citizens.

India granted political rights to women on equal standing with men under the universal adult suffrage, irrespective of caste, class, religion, place of birth, education or property qualification. It further recognized the need of political participation of women an equal measure with men. It anticipated that political empowerment of women will help them to contribute to the development of the country.

#### 12.4.2 Legislations:

Apart from these enshrining rights and directives in the Constitution legislations were enacted for the benefit of women.

Family Laws:

##### Hindu Marriage Act 1955:

In the mid 1950's the Hindu personal law was completely overhauled to give women the right

- a) Impose monogamy (b) to divorce (c) to adoption and (d) to inheritance

##### The special marriage act 1955:

##### Labour laws:

1. Maternity Benefit Act 196
2. Equal Remuneration Act 1976
3. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986

Some of these laws though they are not gender specific are concerned with the status of women:

- a) The workmen's compensation Act 1923
- b) The Minimum Wages Act 1948
- c) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970
- d) The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976
- e) The Inter-State Migrant Workers Act 1979
- f) The factories Act 1948
- g) The Employees State Insurance Act 1948
- h) Plantation Labour Act 1951

The Criminal Law contains the following provisions in the Indian Penal Code, 1860:

228A - Punishment for disclosure of the identity of victim of certain offences like rape



- 292 - Sale etc. of Obscene Books
- 294 - Obscene acts or Songs
- 354 - Outraging the modesty of a woman
- 509 - Word, Gesture or Act intended to insult the modesty of a woman
- 376 - Rape
- 304B - Dowry death
- 361 - Kidnapping from lawful guardianship
- 363 - Punishment for kidnapping
- 366 - Kidnapping, abducting a woman to compel her marriage
- 366A - Procurement of a minor girl
- 366B - Importation of a girl from a foreign country
- 372 - Selling a minor for purposes of prostitution
- 373 - Buying a minor for purposes of prostitution
- 498A - Cruelty by husband [Country Paper 1994]

The Government has ratified various international instruments. In 1991, it ratified the U.N. Charter on the Rights of the Child and in 1993 the convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women signed in 1979.

#### **12.4.3      National Commission for Women:**

In 1990 the Government of India enacted the National Commission for Women Act to ensure that the legal safeguards reach women. This committee examines the various laws, investigate the complaints and participate in the planning process of the government. This commission has set up a legal unit and three Expert committees to examine the existing laws, scrutinize the delivery system and make suggestions. In the 1970, legal aid was started and in 1979 a commission implement legal aid services was set up. Family courts were set up in 1984 to expedite cases. To provide speedy and cheap justice Lok Adalats or People's Courts were set up. Apart from these the Government and NGOs prepared and disseminated legal literacy material.

#### **12.4.4      Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights:**

The Government of India passed the protection of Human rights Act in 1993 for protection of Human Rights. The Act provides for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission [NHRC] and a Commission for each state.

This National Human Rights Commission [NHRC] has given priority to:

1. Protection of Civil Liberties;
2. Review of legislations repugnant to Human Right Principle;
3. Reforms in Civil and Police Administration to usher in Human Rights;
4. Reducing with a view to ultimately eliminating custodial violence and rapes;
5. Re addressal of Human Rights grievances of S.Cs and S.Ts;
6. Concentration on Human Rights women and children

The NHRC seeks to promote and protect all of the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution. It also focuses on other human rights issues. One of the areas of study of the Commission relates to legislation affecting the rights of women. The National Commission for Women, which is represented in the National Rights Commission through its chairperson, has been working for the rights of women.

#### **National Human rights Commission (NHR)**

The objective of the protection of Human Rights Act 1993 is to provide for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Courts at the Centre and State Human Rights Commission at the State Level. The Commission and Human Rights Courts are constituted for the Protection of Human Rights.

The Commission comprises of the following members:

- a) a chairperson who has been chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- b) one member who is/or has been a Judge of the Supreme court and
- c) one member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court
- d) two members to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of or practical experience in matters relating to human rights

e) the chairpersons of the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the National Commission for women are deemed to be members of the commission for the discharge of the various function assigned to it.

The President, on the basis of the recommendations of a committee comprising the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, the speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Home Minister, the leaders of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as members appoint the Chairperson and members of the commission.

**Functions of National Human Commission:**

The function of the National Human Rights Commission are:

1. Inquire, suo motu on a petition presented to it by a victim or any person on the persons behalf, into complaints of (a) violation of human rights or abatement thereof or (b) negligence in the prevention of such violation by a Public Servant;
2. Intervene in any proceedings involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court with the approval of such court;
3. Visit under intimation to the state government any Jail or any other institution under the control of the State Government, where persons are detained or lodged for purposes of treatment, reformation or protection to study the living conditions of the inmates and make recommendations thereon;
4. Review the safeguards provided by or under the constitution or any law for the time being in force for the protection of human rights and recommend measures for other effective implementations;
5. Review the factors, including acts of terrorism that inhibit the enjoyment of human rights and recommend appropriate remedial measures;
6. Study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and make recommendations for the effective implementation;
7. Undertake and promote research in the field of human rights;
8. Spread human rights literacy among various section of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars, and other available means;
9. Encourage the efforts of non-governmental organisations and institutions working in the field of human rights and

10. Such other functions as it may consider necessary for the promotion of human rights

### **State Human Rights Commissions:**

The National Human Rights Commission urged all the states and union territories to set up state Human Rights Commissions. Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal have decided to set up State Human Rights Commission.

The National Human Rights Commission has also urged the states to establish Human Rights Courts in each state.

The same functions are performed by state human rights commissions set up in West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Assam.

Apart from these commission three are non-governmental organisations which are working in the field of human rights implementation. The Amnesty International (AI), the Human Rights Watch/Asia (HRWA) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) are prominent international NGOs which are working in the field of civil and political rights.

"There are a number of Indian NGOs which perform useful work in various fields of human rights - social welfare, old age care, health and community medicine, assistance to depressed classes, women's welfare, child welfare, rehabilitation of bonded labour, rehabilitation of people uprooted by economic development projects, welfare of the disabled, consumer rights and so on".

Human Rights Teaching and Research Programme (HURITER) was launched by the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Universities, Schools have incorporated "Human Rights" into the curriculum.

Another Non-Governmental Agency "The Institute for World Congress on Human Rights (ICHR)" was established in 1990. This institute's objectives are to promote observance of the respect for human rights and to seek implementation of all international instruments of human rights adopted by the United Nations and its specialized agencies especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International covenants of Human Rights in all parts of the world and various activities to create awareness among people.

Media the press, the radio and the television, play an important role in promoting and implementation of Human Rights.

## 12.5 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN:

In spite of various declarations at many international conferences like the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights 1993 the UNDP Human Development Report of 1995 shows that women continue to be marginalised in the political and the administrative jobs. Women still constitute 70% of world's poor and 2/3 of the world's illiterate. "They occupy only 14% of managerial and administrative jobs, 10% of parliamentary seats and 6% of cabinet positions. Women work for longer hours than men but much of their works remain unvalued, unrecognized and unappreciated and the threat of violence stalks their lives from cradle to grave". (UNDP report 1995). In India only 7% are in the parliament when compared with other developing countries average of 10% it is low. In the same way in the administrative and managerial positions only 2.3% are in the above posts which is below the average of world percentage. The table below indicates statistics regarding women in the decision making levels or bodies.

**TABLE - 1**  
**WOMEN AT DECISION - MAKING LEVELS**

| Country     | Seats |      | Administrative<br>And Managerial % |      | Female<br>Literacy rates |
|-------------|-------|------|------------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
|             | 1982  | 1994 | 1982                               | 1992 | 1992                     |
| Sweden      | 27.5  | 33.5 | 16.4                               | 38.9 | 99                       |
| Norway      | 25.8  | 39.4 | 10                                 | 25.4 | 99                       |
| Finland     | 30    | 39   | -                                  | 23.9 | 99                       |
| Denmark     | 27.4  | 33   | -                                  | 14.7 | 99                       |
| Canada      | 5.7   | 17.3 | 5                                  | 40.7 | 99                       |
| Newzealand  | 8.7   | 21.2 | 8.5                                | 32.3 | 99                       |
| Netherlands | 17.3  | 29.3 | 6.8                                | 13.5 | 99                       |
| U.S.A.      | 4.5   | 10.3 | 28                                 | 40.2 | 99                       |
| Austria     | 19.1  | 21.1 | -                                  | 16.4 | 99                       |
| Italy7      | 13.0  | -    |                                    | 37.6 | 99                       |

| Country   | Seats |       | Administrative<br>And Managerial % |      | Female<br>Literacy rates |
|-----------|-------|-------|------------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
|           | 1982  | -1994 | 1982                               | 1992 | 1992                     |
| U.K.      | 3.6   | 7.4   | 13                                 | 22.7 | 99                       |
| China     | 21    | 21    | -                                  | 11.6 | 69.9                     |
| France    | 5.7   | 5.7   | 16.4                               | 9.4  | 99                       |
| Peru      | 5     | 8.8   | -                                  | 22.1 | 80.9                     |
| Ecuador   | 45.3  | 4.2   | -                                  | 26   | 87.2                     |
| Thailand  | 2.6   | 3.7   | 16.5                               | 22.2 | 91.4                     |
| Indonesia | 6.2   | 12.2  | 5                                  | 6.6  | 76.4                     |
| Brazil    | 1.2   | 5.5   | -                                  | 17.3 | 81.3                     |
| Zambia    | 4.8   | 6.7   | 10.5                               | 6.1  | 67.4                     |
| India     | 4.0   | 7.3   | -                                  | 2.3  | 35.2                     |

Source : Sudhir Varma 1997

Though Constitutions of various countries of the world guarantee equal rights to all citizen and forbid all forms of discriminations the provisions are not implemented and laws, which are passed protecting women, are not enforced.

Statistical evidence of countries shows that the status of women is still low. Their average life expectancy is less than 50 years and majority of them can neither read nor write. Women constitute majority of the poor accounting for more than 70 percent of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty. Though women struggled hard to achieve their rights for improving their lives still their access to education, employment and health care is limited. Access to political influence is also limited. All this is because of their gender. Women in many parts of the world live in societies where religious laws, customs, traditions create barriers to their rights i.e. education, employment, health and political rights.

Naomi Neft and Ann D. Levine in their book about where women stand, have summarised and discussed the status of women in 140 countries in the following way.

"Although female enrolment in school is higher than ever and literacy rates are rising-

\* Women make up nearly two thirds of the world's 960 million illiterates

- \* Girls dropout rates are higher and accountant for two thirds of the 100 million children who drop out of primary school in the first four years.
- \* Women teachers predominate in schools and are minority in the colleges and universities and rarely attain the rank of professor.

### **Personal Rights:**

Although women have the right to marry who they choose and have legal access to divorce and inheritance, still there are parts of the world where-

- \* A husband is the legal head of the household, with complete authority over his wife and children;
- \* A married women cannot work, obtain a passport, buy or sell property, secure a bank loan or open a bank account without her husband's permission;
- \* A widow is entitled to only a small fraction of her husband's estate and customary law may even reward the entire estate to the husband's family, leaving her destitute.
- \* Adultery is defined differently for women and men.

### **Women and Health:**

\* Although women throughout the world are healthier than ever, their life expectancy rates are rising,

\* There are seventeen countries where women's average life expectancy is less than 50 years;

\* In some countries particularly where sons are favoured over daughters it is not unusual for baby girls to die of neglect or even to be killed by their parents.

\* 70,000 to 200,000 women, including teenage girls, die every year as a result of unsafe, illegal abortions;

\* Women now account for nearly half of all new cases of HIV infection.

### **Employment Status:**

Although more women than ever are working outside the Home and makeup one third of the world's labour force, they are -

- \* concentrated in the least skilled and lowest paying jobs;
- \* occupy less than 6 percent of top managerial positions;

- \* more women work in part time jobs than men and are not eligible for maternity, health insurance and other benefits;

- \* generally earn one half to three quarters of men's wages for same amount of work;

- \* usually have higher unemployment rates than men and take longer to find new jobs;

- \* tend to be the ones hired, the first ones to be fired.

### **Violence against women:**

Although many countries have enacted laws; specially aimed at Prohibiting Acts of Violence against women-

- \* in some societies physical abuse of wives is an accepted part of marriage;

- \* in most countries marital rape is not considered a crime;

- \* the great majority of rapes and other assaults are never reported;

- \* in some Islamic countries women are beaten and sometimes even killed for not wearing the traditional Muslim head covering;

- \* in war torn countries around the world, thousands of women and girls are victims of mass rape and torture. (Naomi Neft Ann D. Levine 1998).

#### **12.5.1 Violation of Human Rights of Women in India:**

Inspite of Constitutional guarantee of equality before law by the frames of the Constitution inequalities between the sexes are visible. Discrimination against women in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption persists. The Hindu personal laws are biased against women.

In India majority of Hindus do not follow the codified Hindu Law as represented by the Hindu marriage acts passed in 1955. Customary laws which are prevalent in their kin group are followed by them though the child marriage Restraint Act of 1929, Which was later amended in 1978 sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 for girls and at 21 for boys. Girls are married before the legal age. Muslim community also favors early marriage for girls. Another custom, which is still prevalent in societies, is arranging marriage of girls by parents. In countries like China, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea and India marriages of girls are arranged by parents.

In India a son is considered a co-parcener or equal owner of the family's



joint property. A daughter on the other hand cannot be co-parcener in the family property. When the property is divided a daughter gets a portion from the father inherited property. A married woman has no right to maintenance from the family property. Even widowed daughters, divorced daughters have no right to maintenance from the family property. The Hindu Succession Act provides equal inheritance rights for Hindu women, but married daughters are seldom given a share in the parental property. Among Muslims, the Islamic law recognises women's right of inheritance, but it specifies that daughter should be given only one half of son's share.

Domestic violence in the context of dowry violence is a serious problem.

One of the marriage customs practiced in many parts of the world is dowry. Dowry is given of gifts in the form of cash, gold jewelry, land, clothing and other items to the bridegroom's family by the bride's family. Dowry is practiced in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Lebanon, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Korea, etc. In India from the time a girl is born some parents start saving for her marriage. In India the expenses towards marriage of girls which includes dowry and lavish wedding ceremony as desired by the bride groom's family has lead to heavy debts in many families. If the in-laws are not satisfied with the dowry given by the bride's parents, the newly married bride is harassed leading to suicide by the bride or sometimes she is killed by her in-laws. Statistics show that there has been increase in the number of dowry deaths. In 1961 the Government of India had passed the Dowry Prohibition Act which imposes stiff fines and a minimum of five years imprisonment for a person giving or requesting dowry. The act has been amended in 1968 but the Act is not strictly enforced hence the practice is still continuing. Some countries have the custom of bride price where the bridegroom's parents pay some amount in the form of cash, clothing, and valuables to the bride's parents for the girl. In other words the girl is treated like a commodity. This practice is commonly found in Central African Republic, Chad and other parts of Africa and some Tribal Communities in India. Bride price custom transfers the rights over the girl for the father to the husband.

The personal state laws of the Religious Communities discriminate against woman. Under the Indian Divorce Act of 1869, a Christian woman may demand divorce only in the case of spousal abuse and a certain category of adultery while for man adultery alone is sufficient to divorce his wife. "A Muslim husband under Islamic law may divorce his wife spontaneously and unilaterally, there is no such provision for woman." Islamic law prohibits polyandry but permits polygamy. According to Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act the father is the natural guardian of the child (over the age of five years). On separation or conflict between the spouses the father has the right over the child and the mother has to struggle

to prove in the court that the child's father is unsuitable to be the child's guardian. According to the 1955 Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Acts a married woman cannot adopt a child in her name.

"Religious Laws in many countries prohibit wives from owning or inheriting property, even though the country's legal code may permit them to do so. As a result widows are often left destitute, stripped of their possessions and even their children" (Naomi Neft and other 1997.)

The Constitution of India has made provisions for protection, development and welfare of children. "Article (e) and (f) lay down that the state shall direct its policy in such a manner that the tender age of children is not abused and children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and childhood is protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment". Education has been given importance. "Article 45 lays down that the state shall provide free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14 years". The various Acts like the Juvenile Justice Act, the Child Labour (Protection and Regulation) Act 1986, the immoral Traffic entilements of children guarantee rights to the children. Government of India in 1974 adopted a National Policy for children. In spite of all these provisions the girl child in India has been given equal status and she is discriminated against right from her birth and this continues throughout her life. The various customs, rituals and traditional practices that are part of the cultural heritage of the Indian Society deny opportunities required for their growth and development. In the family they are given a meager share of the family's affection and resources, health, nutrition, education. Gender discrimination and work distribution starts in the family and continues throughout her life. Malnutrition in girl child continues live through leads to various complications and mortality during pregnancy and childbirth. In the rural areas girls are forced to discontinue education to assist in house hold work and family occupations. In spite of Child Labour (Protection and Regulation ) Act 1986 girls below the age of 14 years are employed in industries like incense-making, papad preparation, beedi industry, gem polishing industry, cotton pod shelling, groundnut pod shelling, hand embroidery etc. They are also employed as domestic workers. They are often victims of rape and molestation.

Gender discrimination is one of the most pervading forms of deprivation existing in the present Indian Society. The persistence of an adverse sex ratio, which has declined from 934 females per 1000 males in 1981 to 927 females per 1000 males in 1991, is an indication of this deprivation. Gender violence continues both in the family and Society.

In India crimes against women have increased.

Table Crimes against women

| Sl. No. | Crime                    | 1989  | 1990  | 1991  | 1992  | 1993<br>1993 | %Variation           |              |
|---------|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
|         |                          |       |       |       |       |              | 1993<br>over<br>1989 | over<br>1992 |
| 1.      | Rape                     | 9150  | 9518  | 9793  | 11112 | 11242        | 22.9                 | 1.2          |
| 2.      | Kidnapping<br>&Abduction | 11673 | 11699 | 12300 | 12077 | 11837        | 1.4                  | 2.0          |
| 3.      | Dowry death              | 4215  | 4836  | 5157  | 4962  | 5817         | 38.0                 | 17.2         |
| 4.      | Torture                  | 11603 | 13450 | 15949 | 19750 | 22364        | 90.2                 | 11.7         |
| 5.      | Molestation              | 20497 | 20194 | 20611 | 20385 | 20985        | 2.4                  | 2.9          |
| 6.      | Eve teasing              | 9934  | 8620  | 10283 | 10751 | 12009        | 20.9                 | 11.0         |
|         | Total                    | 67072 | 68317 | 74093 | 79037 | 83954        | 25.2                 | 6.2          |

Source : Dr. S. Subramanyan, Human Rights, International Challenges 1997.

In India crimes against women have increased by 37 percent in the last few years. This is only regarding the cases which are reported to the police. There are other crimes, which are not reported like Sati, infanticide, foeticide, physical and verbal abuse of women in the family. The Indian Constitution guarantees equal employment opportunities and equal pay for equal work. The equal Remuneration Act 1975 makes this provision. However this law does not apply to a majority of women working in the agricultural sector, textile industry, construction work. In India women are entitled to maternity benefits under the Employment State Insurance Plan. But in practice women are deprived of these benefits and employers fire them when they become pregnant.

In the family planning system the population control methods that impose the responsibility for human reproduction and nurturing are solely on women without granting them corresponding autonomy and authority over their bodies. This amounts to violation of their basic rights.

Destruction of forests denying the rights of woman and other vulnerable sections to the means of livelihood is also violation of human rights.

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## 12.6 SUMMING-UP

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Every human being has rights, which are sometimes violated. United Nations Organization guarantees protection of human rights through five legal instruments. The Universal Declaration contains an elaborate list of Human Rights. States, which are members of United Nations organization, have pledged to observe and respect the Human rights enshrined in the declaration. India, which is also a member, has agreed to promote Human Rights and incorporated them into the Constitution.

Violation of Human Rights of women is found in almost all nations. In India poverty, illiteracy and other social customs aggravate the violation of Human Rights. Despite the Constitutional guarantees of equality before law by the framers of the Constitution, inequalities between the sexes are visible. Discrimination against women in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption continue. Violence against women both in the family and Society has increased.

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## 12.7 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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I. Answer the following Questions in 30 lines.

1. Discuss the Rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Discuss about the resolutions of the first world conference on women.
3. Discuss the different areas of discrimination.
4. Discuss about the Vienna Conference on Human Rights.

II. Answer the following Questions in 10 lines.

1. Discrimination against women in India.
2. Legislations for women.

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## 12.8 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Dr. S. Subramanian "Human Rights" International Challenges Vol. I & II
2. Dr. Asgher Ali Engineer "The Shah Bano Controversy"
3. Naomi Neft and Ann D. Lenine - "Status of Women" 1998
4. Government of India "Towards Equality" Report of the committee on the status of women in India, Department of Social Welfare, New Delhi, 1974
5. Dr. Muralidhar C. Bhandare "The World of Gender Justice" 1999

6. Government of India "Fourth World Conference on Women", Beijing 1995, Country Report, government of India, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resources Development August 1995.
7. Human Development Report UNDP Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995.
8. "World Action Plan for the Decade for Women" Mexico. July 1975. Quoted in Rural Women's Claim to Priority. A Policy Debate. Selected Debated. Selected Documents from International and Indian Archives, 1975 - 1985. Compiled and edited by Shati Chakraborty, Centre for Women's Development Studies, India.
9. Government of India "National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000 AD". Report of the core group set up by the Department of woman and Child Development. Ministry of human resource Development, 1985.
10. Report of the world Conference of the UN Decade for Women Equality, Development, and Peace, Copenhagen 14-30 July 1980, UN 1980.
11. Sudhir Verma "Struggle for Political Space" Rawat Publication, New Delhi 1997.

BRAOU

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**BLOCK - V : WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND  
EMERGING ISSUES**

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BRAOU



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## **UNIT-13 : TRADITIONAL & AUTONOMOUS MOVEMENTS**

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(ii) Right to hold property (iv) Standard of life

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#### **(D) POLITICAL TIGHTS**

- (i) The Right to be the Head of the Family
- (ii) Succession (iii) Guardianship
- (iv) Adoption
- (v) The Problem of Dowry

13.8 Let us sum up

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### **13.0 OBJECTIVES:**

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In this unit an attempt is made to analyse the force leading to the reversal of women's movement and also to examine the consequences of adoption and accommodation on the women's status. How the women's movements, after independence were different from the Independence struggle period? What were the issues raised by these movements? But before going into the details, it is important here to define what we mean by a movement and also discuss different types of women's rights.

By the end of this unit you should be able to :

- \* define movement and the pattern of women's movements in India
- \* before and after Independence of India :
- \* Prepare list of women's rights and be aware of their rights.

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### **13.1 INTRODUCTION:-**

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History provides ample record of man's tyranny against man, but man's quiet and subtle oppression of woman has attracted public notice only recently. At any rate discrimination against woman has become a political issue of major importance only in this century. The concern for women's status is indeed part of the larger concern for human rights.

A certain degree of freedom has doubtless come to women with modernization, but modernity has not sloved the problems of women exploitation or harassment. It is therefore in the fitness of things that attention be paid to the status and role of women, their active participation in different social and political movements.

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### **13.2 DEFINITION OF MOVEMENT:-**

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The dictionary meaning of the word 'Movement' is a series of actions and endeavours of a body of persons for a special object. Heberle while discussing the sociology of social movements defines "social movement as an attempt of certain people to bring about fundamental changes in social order, especially in the basic institutions of property and labour relationship". Joseph Gusfield defines social movements as "society's shared demands for change in some aspects of social order. It also has ideological component that is a set of ideas which specify discontent, prescribe solutions and intensity change. On the other hand ranks after analysing the use of to concept by various thinkers believes that forms of behavior in panic, riots, crazes, outbursts, should be distinguished from social movement because they are in the sense socially constructive but constitute rather, social responses to situations of stress. Banks therefore, feels that there is a distinction between socially creative organisations - socially movements and other forms of collective partisanship which are no more than social protests. Thus, there are various issues involved in defining this concept. One perhaps can agree to what Gail Omvedt says that "a women's movement is the organised effort to advice the goals of equality and / or liberation for women. It includes some kind of ideological understanding or analysis of how these goals could be achieved and it mobilizes women in terms of demands conceived of as steps towards the ultimate goal".

Having considered various elements of social movement an attempt could be made to discuss what has been the pattern of women's struggle in India.

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### **13.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS**

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The position and status of women of India was viewed by Indian and British reformers and politicians as one of the indices by which to measure the extent of modernization and traditionalism of a nation. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries important trends in thought and ideology such as Westernization, revivalism, with the question of women of India. The Indian Women became a political issue and the focus of debate, controversy, accusations and counter accusations. The two opposing sides were of course the British and the Indian, the latter was not a unified group with a defined ideology, but comprised of a medley of opinions and attitudes claiming orthodoxy and conservative to liberal and progressive.

Interested British scholars, missionaries and bureaucrats had offered European standards and values in judging position of women of India. They described Hindu women as being tradition bound, religious and subservient, who functioned in

condemned customs and conventions of traditional Hindu society relating to women as peculiar, antiquated and inhumane. Particular aspects of a Hindu woman's life raised their special curiosity, concern and scorn, such as the custom of child marriages, life of Hindu Widows, prohibition against widow remarriage and the widespread illiteracy of Hindu women. Against Britishers, Indian reformers and nationalists described the life of a Hindu women in completely different terms. They pointed out that the extended Hindu family provided women an opportunity to interact and communicate with women of their class, caste and community.

Social reformers of the early 19th century had provided leadership to the women's movement by frankly acknowledging their degraded position in Hindu society. Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy compared Hindu practices unfavourably with the treatment of British society of their women, and held the latter as an example for Indian society to emulate. By the late 19th century, however, nationalism had gained ground and intellectual thought emphasised the necessity of change based on indigenous social institutions and ideology. Reforms accepted that a few select practices such as child marriages were unduly harsh on women, but other than that idealized the position and status of women in Hindu society as a whole.

A portrait of the woman based on mythology, literature and history was drawn up by the social reformers. This was expected to serve dual purposes. The idealized version of a Hindu women's life provided an answer to the critics of Hindu Society about its treatment of women. The virtues of Hindu womenhood as sanctioned in the 'Smritis' described some of the popular Hindu practices and social customs which were being debated at that time. The reformers, in emphasizing modules and tradition from the 'Smritis' had tried to introduce change without disrupting the social structure of society.

The evolution of women's role from a private to public life was influenced by westernization, directly and indirectly, although the leaders among women and traditionalist argued that the movement was of indigeneous growth. Western liberal ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as humanitarianism, egalitarianism and rationality influenced the perception of elite Hindus towards the position of women in Indian society - the image of the ideal Hindu women, however, continued to correspond closely to Hindu beliefs and values. The westernization of elite Hindu male is significant in discussing the women's movement. Though most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was men who provided the leadership to the movement to improve women's status in the family and society. The perception of the elite towards the role of women and the oppressiveness of otherwise of customs and conventions relating to them determined the direction of the women's movement. During the nationalist movement the initiative to include women as

active political participants came from male leadership, particularly by Mahatma Gandhi. Women as a group were manipulated by him for political reasons, although he was genuinely concerned with their welfare and position in Indian Society.

### **1.3.1 NATIONALIST MOVEMENT:-**

The nationalist movement had mobilised women as congress members and executives. Such activities of women were not in any way in defiance of the male authority in their families, but was rather supported and encouraged by male family members and Congress Leaders. In families such as the Nehru's several members were involved in nationalist activity; as the men were more experienced in politics it could be assumed that their attitudes and opinions influenced their wives, sisters and daughters. The educated elite not only generated leadership for the women's movement but also provided sympathetic and positive response touch activities. They supported movement such as the prohibition of Sati, the education of girls and the various issues related to marriage and widowhood.

Women's participation in the nationalist movement was not a major force in the history of this period. This however, does not suggest that their participation was not significant or negate the individual woman's movement or achievement. The nature and extent of female participation in the nationalist movement can be categorised at three levels. First, women as part the general mass of people who joined the 'sothyagrahas'. Such women were enthused over a particular issue or were caught up in the excitement generated by any one satyagraha. They were not involved with the congress or with any locals or provincial organisation. A large proportion of women who participated in the nationalist movement were simply part of the general crowd. Secondly, a small group of women were committed to one particular aspect associated with the nationalist struggle. This would include women who took part in social reform activity allied with Gandhian Politics such as living in ashrams or being involved in a campaign for khadi and village industry or with the Harijans. Their involvement was limited in terms of issues and its geographical locale. The next category consists of a very small number of women who participated in all aspects of nationalist activity. This was an elite group of women whose allegiance was not limited to the politics of a particular province but were attracted to the movement in its entirety. Elite women were expected to take part in the political activity of different provinces, were regularly incarcerated, and could be described as politicians. However the number of women who were totally committed to nationalist activity was not in equal proportion to male politicians or even to the total female population. Women in leadership roles were very few and were given special privileged status in the movement. The anti-colonial struggle attracted women from various castes and communities. The issues involved in the discussion of women's presence and role in politics-such as the

desire to counteract criticisms of Hindu social expectations, of the question of role definition-were problems associated with Hindu conventions and traditions

A handful of British women such as Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins were involved in the various issues of this period. The exceptional case like that of Annie Besant's participation in the nationalist movement did indicate to Indian society that political roles were available to women. British women in India did not provide role-modes for Indian women and the experience of British and Hindu women in the nationalist movement was necessarily different.

The question of Muslim women's involvement in the movement is quite different from that of the British women. Hindu and opposition. The Indian National Congress had both Hindu and Muslim leaders and Gandhi's leadership and propaganda had strong religious (Hindu) customs. However his religion was liberal and more humanitarian than narrow and sectarian. His 'Ramrajya and Swaraj' stood for 'Ideal state and self sufficiency' at village level onwards. Wives of Muslim politicians did participate in a limited way in politics. A direct attempt to mobilise Muslims to join politics was made by the Muslim League in the 1940s. A large number of Muslim women like Bi Amma, the mother of Mohammad Ali participated in the movement for the formation of Pakistan.

### **13.2 PARTITION OF BENGAL:-**

If the intelligentsia in other parts of India were experiencing disillusionment with the British rule gradually, in Bengal they were woken up with a rude jolt by the partition of Bengal brought about by Lord Curzon. This explains the widespread drive and propaganda against British goods and the promotion of indigenous products. Bengali men sought women's help in the movement, they took care not to conjure up a foreign model of womanhood. Nationalism required sustenance from the past, from the traditions, customs and institutions of one's own country. And, therefore, the nationalists advocated the indigenous Indian concept of women as the embodiment of love, patience and virtues and the one who transmitted tradition and preserved what was good in it. Moreover, the nationalist leaders subtly connected the socio-economic struggle against the British into a worship of the motherland, which was in its form transformed into a Mother Goddess. Rabindranath Tagore, in a song written during this period portrayed Bengal as Goddess Durga who had appeared from within the heart of the land. Rabindranath Tagore represented India as Bharatmata (Mother Goddess India) in one of his famous contemporary paintings.

#### **13.2.1 Direct participation.**

One of the direct participation in the movement, Sarala Debi Choudhurani

(b. 1872) was the first Bengal woman leader in the Indian National Movement. Daughter of Swarna Kumari Debi (b.1855), this remarkable woman made her debut in to political arena, through the medium of music. The song composed by her and sung by over fifty girls assembled from various provinces evoked great response and enthusiasm at the Congress session in Calcutta (1901).

Apart from Sarla Debi, there were a number of women in Calcutta mofussil towns who were drawn into the political struggle were Lilabati Mitra (b. 1864). Along with her husband Krishna Kumar Mitra, the noted editor of 'Sanjivani' actively helped and later courted imprisonment during the Civil Disobedience movement in the 1930s, joined the Swadeshi Movement and persuaded her husband and family to give up the use of foreign goods. Through out Bengal women observed 16 October 1905 - the Five hundred women gathered in Calcutta to watch the foundation of the Federation Hall. Women's journals, especially Suprabhat, edited by Kumudini Mitra (b. 1882) gave publicity to swadeshi brands. The entire emphasis was on the indigenous character of goods, for example, 'manufactured entirely with Bengal's capital and Bengal's labour'.

### 13.2.3 Indirect participation

Direct participation was not feasible for women in the 'Biplabi' (revolutionary) movement that broke out during the last phase of the Swadeshi movement. Women did not directly participate in the samitis or revolutionary associations but gave their support while remaining in the background. Sarala Debi Choudhurani and Sister Nivedita maintained close links with the biplabis. Kumudini Mitra organized a group of dedicated Brahmin women to serve as messengers between different biplabis, these women were kept under cover by the police. The Daily Telegraph of London commented that women of the type of Russian ribaists and English suffragists had appeared in Bengal - and that the Bengali ladies were 'the most obstinate and most dangerous antagonists of the British.

In Bengal the Chief women's organization to fight for the franchise was the 'Bangla Nari Samaj's (Bengali woman's Association, 1921) guided by Kumuduni Bose, Kamini Roy (b. 1864) Mrinalini Sen (b.1879) and Jyotimoyee Ganguly (b.1889). This body attempted to mobilize support for their cause from the male intellectual elite and political leaders such as Ramananda Chatterjee, Surendranath Banerjee and Bipin Chandra pal. In 1925 the Bengali Legislature approved a united female suffrage and in 1926 Bengali Women acquired the right to vote for the first time. The pioneering Women's organization at the all-India level, the Bharat Stri Mahamandal (all India Women's Organization) was initiated in 1910 by Sarla Debi Chudharani, who may be regarded as the front feminist of modern Bengal as well as the first woman political leader in modern times. It was the first

organisation run by women to be clearly committed to augmenting women power. Another organization, the Bengali women's Education League, (1928) was formed consequent to the Bengal women's Educational reform. Sarla Debi Choudharani, Kumudini Bose and Mrinalini Sen, were its enthusiastic members along with the two sisters, Abala Bose (b.1864) and Sarala Roy (b.1859).

#### **13.3.4 WOMEN IN ANDHRA:-**

The last one hundred and twenty years constitute an important period of the social and cultural history of India in general and of the Andhra region in particular. The period witnessed a series of movements which by their far reaching achievements have changed in the customs and habits of people.

Though the general condition of the Andhra woman in the middle of the last century was gloomy and unhappy, still they were the very embodiment of culture. The lead in Andhra reform movement was given by Kandukuri Veeresha Lingam Pantulu who is regarded as the "Morning star of the great movement for the emancipation of women". He believed that unless woman were free from the age old bondage of social disabilities and were restored to their rightful state in society, all programmes of social progress would come to halt.

He was very much influenced by the Brahma Samaj Movement which attempted a splendid synthesis of Western Scientific thought and the spiritual heritage of the Upanishads. He was attracted by the un-comprising emphasis of the Brahma Samaj on monotheism and social reform, particularly emancipation of woman. He protested against 'Kanyasulkam', the custom of compulsory widowhood and child marriages. He emphasised the need for education of woman, eradication of prostitution, concubinage, and Harijan uplift. He was particularly interested in widow remarriage and his phenomenal success in this field earned the approbation of the great social reformer, Mahadev Govind Ranade, who called him 'Dakshina Bharata Vidya Sagar'. Among the followers of Veeresalingam who continued his activities, Raghupathi Venkataratnam Naidu deserves special mention.

Women of Andhra can never forget the yeoman services of Dr. Mrs. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy as one of the most important women leader of this country. As member of the Legislative Assembly she was responsible for the enactment of fundamental laws concerning the education and the health of woman, the abolition of the Devadasi system, and the suppression of the brothels and immoral and immoral traffic in women. She became the honorary Counselling Doctor to the Widow's Home and the Social league organised by lady White Head in 1916.

The youngest among the great pioneers in Andhra Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh,



in whose valuable services we see a fulfillment of the work of her great predecessors like Pandita Ramabai, Mrs. Anni Besant, Mrs. Margaret Cousins and others. From an early age she came under the magnetic influence of Mahatma Gandhi, and took a prominent part in the salt satyagraha movement and set a heroic example for the women of Andhra. She was the founder of the Andhra Mahila Sabha which became a premier institutions in the field of social service in the country. The schools and hospitals in Madras and Hyderabad are examples of her dedication to work in the field of social service.

Desahbakta Venkatappaiah and Unnava Laxminarayan together founded the Sarada Niketan at Guntur as a sort of orphanage and widow home open to all unfortunate members without consideration of caste, community or creed. The institution trained women as patriots and selfless workers. R.S. Subbalakshmi, a child widow was the first brahmin matriculate in the Madras presidency who was greatly inspired by the zeal of missionaries working in the educational institutions. She contemplated to transmute the scorned life of the Hindu widow into a life of useful service to society. Like this so many woman participated in Andhra for the emancipation of Women.

#### 13.4. WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT:-

For the first time in the human struggle for emancipation, for total liberation, women rose in revolt in the U.S.A. during the latter part of the 1960s come to be called, "Women's Liberation Movement (Women's Lib)." Perhaps this was one of the most effective women's movement exclusively launched by women themselves in the entire human history.

The women's Libration or Feminist Movement of the latter part of the 1960s conceptualised women's problem rooted in sexism, which was manifested as the power of men over women. It is the biological phenomenon of sexism, which feminists thought, is the prime cause of women's oppression by many though the Ages. In order to achieve their mission, the radical feminists developed principles of political action. One of their principles was 'Feminism'. The Feminism implored that women were the oppressed group; that they could gain nothing from the cooperation of their oppressor (men); that women's problems were political; and that they must be solved by revolutionary struggle. In the light of these ideologies and objectives the feminists adopted the protest methods which were novel, multipronged and very effective in drawing attention of their male counterparts.

Now coming to the nature of the protest of the Liberationists, in the summer of 1970, an army of woman marched through the crowded New York streets and placed what they called 'Freedom Trash Cans' at strategic points. In this they threw brassiers, cosmetics, detergents and false galoshes. Through these protest

demonstrations, protagonists of women's Liberation or Feminists' Movement were fighting the male tendency of presenting woman as a sex object. They raised the slogan : 'Marriage is Legalised Rape'. They argued that life-long marriage is not an absolute virtue that women were seeking an end of 'domestic slavery' and legalised rape'. They further demanded the end of beauty contests and stormed the places where such constests were organised. They attacked mass media which used women's bodies to sell everything. In order to bring sexual egalitarianism women liberationists carved a new linguistic convention and pleaded for the liquidation of the traditional English Language Convention of name - giving to women. The radical feminists demanded 'equal work' and decried 'Unpaid labour' for the women in the family.

In Germany, women's Lib shouted, the slogan : "Our Bellies belong to US and demanded the legislation for which they took out a procession on the streets.

Women in the United Kingdom lost nothing in raising their own voice of Women's Lib and carried placards displaying : 'Missued', Miss Conception and Miss guided'. In the women's Lib conference held in Oxford, the posters were demonstrated saying: "Phalluses are Fascist, End Penal Servitude"

In Ireland, women's Lib members opposed birth control powers of the Catholic dominated Dublin Government. And the protest method they adopted was, indeed, dramatic enough to draw attention : housewives, salesgirls, secretaries and students showered condoms, loops and pills on customs officials when the train from Belfast steamed into Dublin and the supporters shouted slogans : "Women are Baby, Machines' and Arrest me I am as the Pill "

A close look at the targets of women's wrath reflects that the Liberationists have launched their attacks at three levels among others : (i) at the level of patriarchy, family and private sphere, (ii) at the extended barrier or expected or technical level, and (iii) at the mass media level.

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### **13.5 U.N. DECLARATION, 1975:-**

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The declaration of 1975 as the International Women's Year and 1975-85 as the United Nations Decade for Women by the international community is perhaps the single most important factor which represented a turning point. It was recalled at this juncture that "discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth and the prosperity of society and the family, and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and humanity". And, that "... The full and

complete development of country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields". It was felt that women were speaking of the problems affecting more than half of the world's population and that "the problem of women are problem of society as a whole. "An unprecedented amount of research, programs and policies addressed to problems of women have sprung up since then.

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### **13.6 COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA (CSWI) :-**

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In the light of international commitment, Indian Government adopted progressive policies for women's welfare and encouraged women's studies. The International women's decade in India witnessed unprecedented efforts from various sectors-to reassess the roles of women, to enlarge the information base, to search for alternative strategies for women's equality and development, and to develop policies and programmes addressed to women's specific problems.

Another notable development in the country was the appointment of the committee on the status of women in India (CSWI) by the Government in 1971 to undertake a "comprehensive examination of all the questions relating to the rights and status of women". The Committee's focus was on diagnosis of social trends and response to the principle of equality, with a view to identifying more effective strategy for its realization. It has submitted its report - Towards equality in 1974, that is, at the beginning of the International Women's Decade. This has reflected in the Sixth Five Year Plan ( 1980 - 85 ) Which contains, for the first time in India's planning history, a chapter on "Women and Development". Indian council of social science research (ICSSR) organised several studies and, initiated a programme for women's studies. The Planning Commission directed the National Sample Survey (NSS) to obtain better information on women. The census of India, 1981 introduced a new strategy of 'marginal workers'. All this triggered the social debate on women's issues. Some of the older women's organizations are All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) founded in 1926 and National Council of Women in India in 1925. Most of the new women's organizations emerged as recently as the late 1970s or the early 1980s : Manushi in 1979; Karmika in 1979, Saheli in 1981. At the office level the National Committee of woman was constituted in September 1976 the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister to ensure, "a fair deal for woman". A women's welfare Development Bureau was established in the Ministry of Social Welfare to service the National Committee. Another important organisation was Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in 1980 in efforts to promote women's access to science and technology.

Varieties of movements that erupted during the early 1970s created enough awakening among women. For instance, there were many movements against pricerise and corruption, the J.P. Mandal in Bihar, and the student agitation in different parts of the country. In the early days of independence, the radical working class and peasant women participated in the various militant movements particularly in the Kissan Sabhas (peasant leagues) in Bihar and Bengal and between 1946-95 in the Telangana armed struggle, Liquor movement, Narmada Bachavo Andolan. In the process of organization of the rural poor at the grass roots, the oppression of women was highlighted.

The Demand for wage parity among the sexes was raised. Protests were made against sexual harassment by the landlords of employees. Women assumed violent postures against husbands, alcoholism and wife-beating. Some talked even of the double burden working women had to bear at home and at field. The illiterate, untouchable (Schedule casts) and tribal (Adivasi) women took lead in the aggression class struggle. As women's issues began to be highlighted, women in large numbers participated in socio-economic changes. Many gave a lead, be it in Chhatra Yuva Sangharsha Vahini's struggle for land amongst the Bhuiya Harijans in both Gaya or in Shramik Sangathan and 'Kashtakari Sangathan' active among tribals in Maharashtra. There was 'Chipko Movement' against the deforestation in U.P. Hills by contractors and forest officials, the night patrollers of Manipur marched with torchlights, protesting against alcholism and police atrocities.

Another strand in the process of creating awakening on women issues was the emergency experience of 1975-76. It sensitised the middle-class, Harijans, tribals, and landless men, women towards civil rights. Awareness of the democratic rights of the deprived brought with it an awareness about atrocities against women and the down trodden.

A new trend of participatory development is underway. The new organizations lays stress on the ideology of participatory development and on women's rights to equality, dignity and social justice. This has led to the emergence of a new concept of 'intermediaries', like educational institutions, research institutions and voluntary organizations at the state and national levels which act as support groups between women's organization at the grass roots level and the agencies responsible for development of woman recognizing the valuable role, The Ministry of Social Welfare initiated in 1983, an experimental programme for establishing women's development centres in selected women's colleges in Delhi and elsewhere.

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### **13.7 WOMEN'S RIGHTS : -**

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Change has to be effected more in the mentality of the women than in the laws. The women's struggle does not cease with just recognition of the women's

rights. It has to extend to securing competence and opportunity for self determination in all matters including important political issues. Women's rights are part and parcel of human rights. Women constitute half of human society and hence human rights are also applicable to them.

### **13.7.1 HUMAN RIGHTS - WOMEN :-**

With the influence of French revolution (1789), in India certain rights were proclaimed as 'Fundamental Rights' in our constitution. 'Directive Principles' also placed in the Constitution depends upon the duties of the state. We can divide human rights with relation to women as social, economic, political and cultural categories.

#### **(A) Social Rights**

##### **(i) The Rights to Found a Family :-**

Every human individual has a right to found a family of his or her own. Article 16(1) of 'Human Rights' states that 'men and women of full age without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion have the right to marry and found a family. Article 16(2) runs thus "marriage shall be entered into only with free and full consent of intending spouses". Article 16(3) declares that the family is the natural and fundamental group of society and is entitled to protection by the society and the state. The word 'family' herein used denotes a nuclear family of husband, wife and children. This right has not been denied by the Indian Constitution. The constitution of India did not lay down that every individual should marry. It means that a person has the right not to marry also. There are tens of thousands of unmarried women in India. But let it be noted that the society is denying the right to several women. It accepts and propagates the notion that marriage is the sum bonus of life for a woman. It looks down upon the unmarried women.

##### **(ii) Right to divorce :-**

When married life becomes painful and disgusting every woman should have the right to get the marriage dissolved by divorce. She shall not be pressurized or forced to continue that relationship or not. It is for the woman either to enter into a marital relationship or not. It is also her right to put an end to it whenever she desires. Separate personal laws do exist to deal with marriage, divorce, maintenance, adoption, minority, guardianship, right to property and succession for different religious groups. Thus the Hindus, Muslim, Christians and Parsis have their own personal laws to regulate their lives.

Hindu marriage Act came into existence in 1955. The dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act took legal shape in 1939. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act is of

1936. The Christian Marriage Act dates back to 1872. The Indian Divorce Act applicable to Christian is as old 1869. The special Marriage Act of 1954 gives opportunity to men and woman of different religious groups to marry under it.

The recognition of the right to divorce is one thing and the provision for obtaining the same is another. A Hindu marriage can be dissolved by filling a petition in the court. The Muslim women has to file a 'suit' for getting divorce. This procedure entails long delay and much expense. The dissolution of the Christian Marriage is more difficult. A petition has to be confirmed by a Bench of the High Court of the State. This involves horrible delay.

### **(iii) Right to Maintenance :-**

A married women is entitled to obtain maintenance either at the time of judicial separation or at the time of divorce or during the pendency of the dispute in a court of law. The Muslim law prescribes that maintenance shall be payable only during the period of Iddat. Muslims have been taken away from the purview of Sec. 125 of the Cr. P.C. that is meant to avoid destitution. Her right to maintenance is recognised, but the enjoyment of the same is made very difficult if not impossible.

### **(iv) (a) The Right to Motherhood :-**

The woman has certain capacity and power which a man does not possess. It pertains to conception and delivery of children. In addition, she has to be provided with some facilities and amenities relating there to. Her wishes in this matter of motherhood have to be respected. The woman shall enjoy supreme right over her body.

### **(b) Right to Abortion :-**

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971, popularly known as the law of Abortion, States that under certain circumstances, the Indian women can resort to abortion in hospital maintained by State or with the aid of the State. In order to appreciate this newly accrued right, one has to remember that even in Canada, a fairly industrialised country abortion is illegal.

This Abortion Law is a great Victory of Women's movement. This shows the way for emancipation of the women from sexual slavery.

### **(V) Child Marriage Restraint :-**

The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 has undergone many modifications, and the last one is of 1978. The bride must have attained the age of 18 years : the bride groom must have completed the 21st year of his age. If these conditions are

violated punishment to the bride, groom and the parents of either party is prescribed. The pity of it is that the Hindu and Muslim Personal Laws do not invalidate a child marriage.

A Muslim woman who is married at an age below 15 years is entitled to repudiate the marriage before she attains the age of 18 years, provided the marriage has not been consummated. As per the amendment of 1976, the Hindu Women can repudiate the marriage in similar circumstances, irrespective of the marriage being consummated or not. As per Sec. 19 of the Christian Marriage Act of 1872, any Christian, male or female should have completed 21 year of age at the time of marriage. Of course, in the case of a widow or a widower, this rule does not apply.

#### **(vi) Right of a Married Woman over her body :-**

This right is accepted in principle by one and all. But, in the name of the sacredness and peculiarity of the marital relationship and rules of married life, the husband is being given right over his wife's body. The tradition that gives sanction for the above criminal acts against the women's body and mind, constitutes a threat and danger to the individuality and the women's personality. This state of affairs shall not be allowed to continue any longer.

#### **(vii) Women's Choice in respect of her place of residence :-**

Every person has a fundamental right to choose his or her place of residence, as per the Constitution of India, of course, subject to considerations of law and order. Yet the woman is denied that right, that she should go to the home of her husband or the parents-in-law rule of conduct that governs her case. Tradition custom and even the laws indirectly justify the above principle. This right takes away from woman her freedom to choose her place of residence.

#### **(viii) Torture and Cruelty :-**

Art.5 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This principle has been accepted in the Constitution of India. There are so many husbands who go into raptures in inflicting mental agony on the wives. Certain personal laws have gone to the extent of prescribing the physical punishment that ought to be meted out to the wife or for that matter, the thickness of the cane which has to be used for punishment. All this is violation of her fundamental right to her person.

#### **(ix) Individual :-**

Art.6 of universal declaration of Human Rights specifically and categorically

lays down that 'everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law'. This principle has to be applied to women also. That means every woman is an individual person. She has to be identified as a particular person and not as a daughter or wife of a particular man. The women need not be described as say Miss, Mrs, etc.,

## **B. ECONOMIC RIGHT :-**

### **i) Employment :-**

The women should have security of employment. Art.23(1) of Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that, 'everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment. "Art.23(ii) reads, "everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work". In practice, the equal payment for men and women is not implemented. Thus the women are not able to enjoy the right to get equal pay for equal work.

### **ii) Right to hold property :-**

Art. 17 of universal Declaration of Human Rights says that, 'every one has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others'. 'No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property. It is clear that no person is entitled to forcefully seize a woman's property. When the Constitution was framed, the right to property was mentioned as a fundamental right, but at present it is only a statutory right. The right to hold property is being violated almost continuously by several countries. There are several husbands in our society who become irritated at the fact of opportunity to grab them. So, the right that was granted by law to the women, does not become effective.

### **iii) Standard of life :-**

It may be pertinent to refer to Art, 25 of the Declaration of Human Rights. It is to the effect that, 'every one has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and the family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". This right does not find a place in the list of Fundamental Rights. If we consider the position of woman in the family in the respect of food, clothing and medical facilities the woman stand in the last row.



## **C) CULTURAL RIGHTS :-**

### **i) Freedom of Speech & Expression :-**

Every Indian Citizen is entitled to freedom of speech and expression. This right is one of the most valuable Fundamental Rights reiterated in our Constitution. It may be noted that the right to information is not specifically mentioned in our Constitution. The Constitution of USA takes care to include the freedom of press in Fundamental Rights. Art 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that, 'every one has the right to freedom to hold opinions, experssion; this right includes freedom to hold opnions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers "Naturally this principle ought to apply to women too. In practice, this is denied to women.

### **ii) Right to Education :-**

Art.26 of the Universal Dedication of Human Right reads that, 'every one has the right to education; education shall be free; at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be equal by accessible to all on the basis of merit. The Right to Education is not mentioned by the Constitution of India in the list of Fundamental Rights. It is particularly mentioned in the Directive principles of state policy that the state shall strive to provide compulsory education up to the age of 14 years. This law declares that even women can have the Right to Education on a par with men. It is becoming increasingly difficult to implement the right of the women due to certain notions prevalent in the society. The majority of Indian people seen to feel that women not go in for education.

### **iii) Right to Participate in Cultural Life :-**

Art. 27 of Universal Dedication of Human Rights says, "everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting in any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author". The Constitution of India does not provides any facilities for the enjoyment of the above mentioned cultural right but does not createhurdles in the way. This is a right common to both men and women. There are several impediments to a woman seekiong to learn these arts and take it up as profession.

### **iv) Work at Home and Right to Rest :-**

The woman of our country, by and large, are working both inside as well as outside the home. They have to cope up with house work at home and office work

outside. We must find a way out from this horrible state of affairs. Every person has got a right to leisure and rest. As per the Art. 24, this issue can be settled only one way. Both the Husband and the wife must share the household work and also look after the tending of the children.

#### **D) POLITICAL RIGHTS :-**

The Indian Constitution has not denied the women their Political Rights. The woman has a right to vote and has the right to be elected. Similarly she has the right to occupy the highest position in the government.

The women of our country have rights to participate in governance of the country either in a direct democracy. Art. 21 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads that i) everyone has the right to take part in the Government of this country directly or freely through freely chosen representative, ii) everyone has the right of equal access to public service in one's country, iii) the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the Government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by a secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. It is correct to state that there are no legal impediments for women to join public service. Only a few women with a great many opportunities, say persons like Indira Gandhi, are able to occupy high seats of power and responsibility. Such women could gain a high place in the society only because of the special facilities they could command. Art. 7 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights observes that, "all are equal before Law and entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the Law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination". Art. 14 & 15 of the Constitution of India are the same lines. All are equal before the law with regard to reason, conscience and morality. They have to conduct themselves in a spirit of fraternity.

All the citizens are entitled to claim that the principle of equality be implemented in all walks of life. Even the women can demand such a right. Men and women are equal, though there appear to be certain anatomical differences between men and women there cannot be difference in respect of either intellect and discretion or in efficiency relating to employment or occupation.

##### **i) The Right to be Head of the family :**

When men and women are deemed to be equal the man need not necessarily be the head of the family. The members of the family are all equal. Therefore, the leadership must go to women also.

ii) Succession :-

The son has a right by birth in the Hindu Mitakshara Coparcenary Property. The daughter does not enjoy such a right. This is the law that is prevalent in most of the country except in Bengal where Dayabhaga is prevalent (in Andhra Pradesh) the daughter also got the right by birth as per the recent enactment among the Parsis the daughter gets only half of the share of the son.

iii) Guardianship :

It is the woman that carries the child in her womb for nine months and odd. In Hindu families if the father is not present the mother is the natural guardian. The guardian to her children is the father, person appointed by the father through his will.

iv) Adoption :-

There is scope for the prevalence of adoption among Hindus. In the Muslim and Christian societies there is no such practice. Only fosterage exists. Even in the Hindu society, Hindu woman obtained the right to adopt after the Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956. It is also correct to say that it is now laid down that no man can adopt any person without the consent of his wife. But then another fact stares us in the face that no married woman has the right to adopt a boy or daughter even with the consent of her husband. The Status Committee bitterly criticised this state of affairs.

v) The Problem of Dowry :-

When men and women are said to be equal, when the marriage is necessary to both the parties, when working class women also earn sufficient amount for the sustenance of the family, when middle class ladies happen to be salaried employees, then why should a woman be forced to give dowry to purchase a husband. It is wrong and crime to violate the principle of equality if we follow and give dowry.

Incapacity of the women to demand and enjoy the rights given by the laws is proverbial. The present day laws cause two kinds of injustice to women. Firstly, either by statement or by interpretation the laws are maintaining the discrimination between men and women. Secondly, the human rights have been the go by. Hence it is obviously necessary to the study of our laws with deep insight and to point out their deficiencies.

The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act of 1946 and the Hindu Married women's Right to Separate Residence and Maintenance Act of 1946 belong to one category. They were enacted on the eve of attainment of Independence. The

Bombay prevention of Hindu Bigamous Marriages Act of 1946, The Bombay Hindu Divorce Act of 1946 and the Madras Hindu (Bigamy prevention and Divorce) Act of 1949 were the results of provincial Autonomy as enumerated in the Government of India Act of 1935. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce act of 1936 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act of 1939 partake of the spirit of the reform of that period. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 was amended in the years 1956, 60, 76 and 78. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 and the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act of 1956 can be said to be progressive measures.

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### **13.8 SUMMARY :-**

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The unit covers the following topics :

Social role and status of women: Traditional and autonomous, economic, legal and political status, gender, caste and class & Historical Perspective: Women's Movement in India, definition of Movement, Post - Independence India and Women's Rights, women's - Human rights, Personal laws and women and development.

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### **13.9 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS:-**

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I. Answer the following Questions in 30 lines each

- 1) Describe the Nationalist Movement.
- 2) Describe the women's liberation Movement.
- 3) Discuss the Rights of women

II. Answer the following Questions in 10 lines each

- 1) Partition of Bengal
- 2) U. N. Declaration - 1975

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### **13.10 SUGGESTED BOOKS :-**

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- (1) DHARMVIR AND MAHAJAN, Kamalesh, (ed.)

Contemporary Indian women : Collected Works. Delhi : New Academic Publishers, 1996.

- (2) PUTALI KRISHNAMURTHI. The Changing condition of women in Andhra  
( From .... ) Hyderabad :

- (4) RAMAKRISHNA, V. Social reforms in Andhra (1848 - 1919)  
U.P. : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1983.
- (5) RANJANA KUMARI and ANJU DUBEY. Women parliamentarians: a study in the India context. New Delhi.
- (6) RAJAPRUTHI and RANISHARMA BALA. Trend in women studies. New Delhi : Anmol Publications Pvt.Ltd, 1995.
- (7) JHA, Uma Shanker and PREMLATA PUJARI. Indian women today: Tradition, modernityand challenge women's liberation and social changes  
VI. New Delhi : Kanishka Publishers, 1996.
- (8) AGNEW, VIJAY. ELITE women in Indian Politics. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1971.

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## **UNIT-14 : GENDER, CASTE AND CLASS**

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#### **14.6 Suggested Books.**

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### **14.0 OBJECTIVES:**

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By the end of this unit you will be in a position to now:-

- a) Social role and status of women - traditional, women in Andhra and economic, legal and political status and
- b) Gender, caste and class structure.

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### **14.1 INTRODUCTION:-**

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One of the most distinctive features of women's studies as an academic discipline is that many of the scholars in this discipline have been attracted to it by deeply personal question regarding the status of women. Most of these

questions are born out of their own painful encounter with life, as battered wives, unwanted daughters or toiling mothers, as women discriminated against, oppressed or exploited within and outside their homes. However, frequently, they also occur as a less tortured but equally committed response to the powerful statements of Feminism.

In India, the Constitutional provisions, the legislations of the government, particularly after independence, the democratic polity, the awakening on the part of certain sections of women, the influence of the feminist movements in the west - all these have helped to sow the seed for women's liberation in India. But we have miles to go before we can claim that there is gender justice in India. And that Indian women are liberated. In spite of all the efforts to promote the welfare of woman, we have to admit that even now Indian women are not treated with dignity and they are neither allowed nor encouraged to enjoy their basic rights.

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## 14.2 SOCIAL ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN:

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By 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the position of women in India was terribly unbearable. Marriages of Young girls of six and below 12 years to old men was rampant, and the conditions of child-widows were heart breaking. The terrible custom of Sati was in practice. The cultural values of Hindu society had completely women morally and even spiritually. When socio-economic and political conditions come to such dead-ends, restlessness, riots and a revolutionary atmosphere gradually arise and envelop the society. During the times of political revolution leading to new and radical changes in social order, men and women work together zealously as equals and develop close partnership.

These new social relations are bound to have deep impact on the new social order. The more radical the revolution the greater the emancipation of women. In the neo set-up women acquire equality in socio-economic and political spheres to the extent of radicalism of the revolution.

The history of revolutions in many countries likes U.S.A., France, U.S.S.R, China and India, where political revolutions led to marked changes in political structure, which in turn led to Socio-economic changes, had deep impact on relations of women and men and status and position of women in the society. By the 18th and 19th centuries in India many thinkers had been emphasizing the vital links between social progress and position of women in society. Because of the interaction during French Revolution between emerging labour movement and workers unions and extraordinary ideas of Utopian thinking about women's position, a number of women emerged in France and other western countries with new concepts of their own worth and dignity.

This gave them confidence to express themselves and courage to formulate new ideas about their own possibilities which would have been quite inconceivable earlier. Historically, the Transcendentalist, Feminist and Republican Margaret Feller, connects the first hope of emancipation of women with French Revolution. Mary Wollstone Craft's book 'Vindication' was a brilliant expression of these ideas, which changed the very basis of people's thinking about women's emancipation.

Marx and Engels left an important commitment to the liberation of women politically as a human beings and connection of this commitment added greatly, to an understandings of the nature of women's oppression in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both in anthropological and in economic sense. The impact of these ideas were seen in revolutionary Russia after the revolution, the most extraordinary transformation came in the life of Russian women. Six weeks after the revolution the former ecclesiastical control of marriage was replaced by civil registration. A new matrimonial code established before law a complete equality of rights of husband and wife and it dissolved the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children. The husband's legal domination in the family was ended and women could decide their own names and citizenship. Divorce was made easy and a relationship could become marriage simply by mutual agreement between the two partners, equally mutual agreement could end it. The 1926 Family code attempted to secure the rights of peasant women and housewives by regarding all property as jointly held. Women were admitted with full rights into the working class. An essential principle of women's equality of work was established and a completely different criterion was introduced for redundancy. A department for the protection of motherhood and infancy was established functioning in close co-operation with social welfare. Russian women secured two important aspects of emancipation, right to work and education. Women have invaded those occupations and vocations, which were formally considered "masculine domains", like engineering and science.

The revolution in China brought about changes in the position of women. In traditional Chinese society the status of woman was one of hopeless subordination. Most of the women worked ceaselessly and yet they were beaten and sometimes killed by men no hope of redress. Bride-price and wife-selling was normal. So too were polygamy and concubinage. All women were subject to the authority of husbands, brothers and finally sons. After the nationalists were defeated and communists took over the power in China, the beginning of women's liberation started. Article Six of the Constitution adopted in Sept. 1949 declared: The People's Republic of China abolishes the feudal system, which held women in bondages. Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural and educational and social life and freedom of marriage for men and women shall be enforced. The important right that Chinese women valued most was the right to



have share in landed property. The marriage law was published along with land use in 1950. It secured monogamy and equal legal rights. It was declared that "bigamy, concubine, child exhibitions, betrothal, interference with the remarriage of widows and offering of money and gifts in connection with marriage shall be prohibited". Husband and women had a full choice in occupation, and participation in social activities with gradual improvement of education, training and work conditions women found greater independence. The development of communes provided real social security and economic Independence. Firstly payments in the communes were to individuals on the basis of work. Secondly communes provided a truly social environment, which through communal restraints; creches; house of respect for old, gave women the opportunity to play an active role in social and political life. The images of women in China are "Iron girls, holding up half the slay" to borrow an expression from Mao Tse Tung. The true education of women in China began after revolution. It was not only going to schools and colleges. But it was more in the process of organizations, discussions, finding of solutions and forcing this solutions on unwilling men and older generations.

Gradually the revolution secured for women, economic independence, equality within family, social welfare, improved working conditions but most important of all, it enabled them to occupy independent status and social roles in society at large when they found their voices.

As in other countries the leaders of Indian revolution were the vital connections between the freedom and progress of the nation as related to emancipation of women. The process of thinking on these lines had started as early as the second half of 19th century. When Raja Ram Mohan Roy conducted a campaign against 'Sati' and Pandita Rama Bai thundered against the evil customs of child marriages and dowry system etc. Some expressed ideas that emancipation of women is inextricably related to the liberation of the country. That "country and that nation", wrote Shri Aurobindo, "which do not respect women have not become great, nor will ever be in future."

Gandhi also wrote and spoke for proper status of women in society "woman has rightly been called the mother of the race" he added. "We owe it to her and to ourselves to undo the great wrong that we have done to her". Similarly Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru sent a message to All India Women's Conference in 1945. "I have long been of opinion that a nations' progress depends on the positions of women there. The fall of India from high status was partially at least due to the deterioration of the status and position of women in India. So the first and primary duty of every one is to do his or her utmost to free the country". In a later address Panditji emphasized the importance of women's education in national progress. During the freedom struggle Indian women actively participated as equals with

men. This had created a new awareness of women's status in society. Under the radical ideas and ideals projected by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal, Union parliament and State Legislatures passed new laws for Socio-economic political equality of women. However, in a society with thousand of years of traditions and customs of subordination and subjugation of women, such laws were bound to create tensions. The very process of economic development threw up challenges demanding structural changes in society. Education as the key factor created stresses and strains.

In order to understand some of these stresses and strains one has to study the age old traditions and customs in regard to the status and position of women in society and the image of women created by these ideas and ideal.

#### **14.2.1 Traditional Role of Women**

We delineate a person's culture by assessing his conduct, learning, talents, artistic excellence, and skill and capacity. Likewise we determine a society's culture by the qualities of modesty, discretion, tradition, character and genius of the individuals in that society. Hence it is but proper to describe the situation of the Indian woman on the basis of her position and status in the Indian culture keeping these values in mind.

The image of a woman in Indian society arouses mixed and yet intensely complex feelings of ambivalence; ranging from sheer contempt, hatred, disgust, hostility all the way to deep fascination; at times in admiration to attachment devotion and even veneration. To a certain extent, the image and role of women would vary according to the caste and religion or even social class to which she would belong to. Often, it has been found that the higher the status of the caste group lower the status of women in it. On the other hand as women work in the fields amongst the agriculturists they enjoy better image and status. On the other hand, women play important role in economic activities and social life amongst the untouchable caste and tribes.

Amongst the Muslims on the Other hand women have to hide themselves behind purdha or burkha; which restricts their movements and freedom to participate in socio-economic activities and public life. Mythology has been moulding people's ideas about the image of women in Indian society in a very subtle and un-obstructive manner for thousands of years. In the rural communities any number of mythological stories are orally transmitted from generation to generation. This uncsciously created the image of a woman as self-sacrificing, meekly serving and gladly suffering great hard-ships for the sake of her husband and family. Besides Sita, Savitri there are interesting stories of women suffering great hardships like Damayanthi, Taramati, Draupadi etc. who are considered

"Pativrata Sati" However, as in all societies, there were exceptional women like Gargi and Saraswathi who distinguished themselves as highly learned scholars, Razia Sultana and Ahalyabai who were enlightened rulers of their people, Tani Laxmibai who fought bravely in battle fields. It was inspite of all norms of social behavior pattern laid down for women that they made their mark.

The ancient Indian scriptures played prominent role in giving high status to women during Vedic period but in denigrating and lowering the image of women in Indian society in Smrities & Shastras. The tenets of Manu the ancient Hindu Law giver have fostered a deep-rooted belief in the intellectual and others about inferiority of women. In Indian society, religion has deeply effected and grievously damaged the image of women. The spiritual concept of "Yoga" for self-development often regarded women as detrimental to men's spiritual progress. Adi Shankaracharya the great founder of Advait philosophy called women as "the gateway to hell". Due to this kind of attitudes of great religious 'Gurus' and teachers women were denigrated and debarred from reading or reciting of 'Vedas' which were considered then ultimate in Hindu religious thought. Buddhism recognized broad parity between man and woman in matters of religion. Both the sexes being charged alike with the duty of upholding 'Dharma'. Women were allowed to become Bhikshuni (Nuns) Nirvana is possible for both men and women. Sikhism condemns formal ritual, idolatry, and superstition, and emphasizes simple devotion to god. In the pursuit of religion both men and women have a place as individuals. Sikhism, emphasized the householder's deal and demands respect for woman as man's helpmate and share in his domestic life. Except in Kerala and parts of Karnataka, the Jains are patrilineal and are governed by the Hindu personal law. As a way of life Jainism lays greater stress on self denial, restraints of passion and a life of renunciation, for both men and women. In India there are less than 100,000 Parsees, who follow Zoroastrianism, one of the oldest religions of the world. Migrating to India over 1300 years ago, the Parsees adopted Gujarati as their language, and while retaining most of the customs and elements of their religion, they could not escape some influence of the indigenous populations. Zoroastrian women enjoy a position of honour in the family and in the society. The evils of polygamy and child marriage, which had crept in under Hindu and Muslim influence, were fought and removed by the Parsee Panchayat in the 19th Century. In Zoroastrian women are entitled to both religions and secular education.

There is one disability in Zoroastrianism which women suffer compared to men, i.e., a Parseeboy's marriage with a non parsee girl is accepted with greater grace, although the non Parsee wife is never accepted in Zoroastrianism, which is not a proselytizing religion.

Tribal religions in India do not constitute a single homogeneous system. The

social structures and cultural system of the tribes are reflected in their system of beliefs and ritual practices. Women have role only in looking after the family. Quran emphasised modesty, decorum and chastity for women and advised women not to display their beauty or ornaments. This led to veiling, purdah and burkha for women and lost their right to participate in communal prayer or public activities. Marriage in Islam is a contract, but it gives very unequal rights to man and woman but at present this is changing rapidly. At present though the scenario is changing fast, Indian society with its own women role models.

#### **14.2.2 Women in Andhra Pradesh**

It is said that women enjoyed high status in the earlier phase. But from the early period of the Smriti's (500 A.D.) Women receded into seclusion and withdrew from public life. As time passed they became ignorant and superstitious and came to enjoy a secondary position to man in society. Thus as in all parts of India, in the Andhra area also the position of women became highly deplorable, particularly so from the middle of the 19th century. There were no facilities for the education for women and not even one in a thousand was literate. Their married life was routine, colourless and monotonous. There was also the evil custom of child marriage, which sometimes, resulted in the death of the husband even before the child wife attained majority and enjoyed the pleasures of married life.

Though the general condition of the Andhra woman by the middle of the last century was gloomy and unhappy, still there were here and there some streaks of life. In spite of all their backwardness, Andhra women were the very embodiment of culture. Such was the position of women in the Andhra area by the middle of the last century when the first impact of restless and sceptical western culture shook Indian society to its very foundations and helped to bring about a radical and welcome change almost a transformation in their status throughout the country. Beginning with the advent of the Portuguese towards the close of the 15th century and with East India Company preference was given to educational reforms especially 'English Education'. A number of English medium schools, colleges and universities came into being in course of time and the flood gates of Westernisation were thrown wide open. It helped to enable people to become acquainted with the different movements of enlightenment in Europe. It also created a new class of courageous social reformers, who, in spite of the reluctance of the British Government to interfere in matters of religious in India succeeded in bringing about a Socio religious transformation. Among the beneficiaries of these efforts were the women of Andhra along with women in the other parts of the country.

Another factor, which gave an impetus to the social revolution of those times,

was the spread of Christianity. The Christian Missionaries with the objectives of reaching the masses for protestizing set an example for selfless social service by running hospitals, welfare centers, homes for women and such other social service institutions. They were the pioneers in the field of education. The yeoman service in this regard and particularly in the field of women's education, was noteworthy. The economic impact was also partially responsible for the new reforms in the economic and social life of the Indian people. The growth of industries from the second quarter of the present century, created opportunities for employment in the fields unknown before and this resulted in the migration of people from the sparsely populated villages to the new industrial towns and cities and new urban areas. The life of the new factory employees amongst whom there were both men and women, varied a very much from the traditional ways of life in villages and created a new sense of freedom and enabled workers to set at naught old ideas, and ideals to which they clung so long over the centuries. Unlike the women in villages, these factory women enjoyed considerable freedom of movement, which gave them a new sense of independence and of their own importance in the family economy. The lead in Andhra reform movement was given by Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu who is regarded as the "Morning star of the great movement for the emancipation of women". He emphasised the need for education of women, eradication of prostitution and concubinage, and Harijan uplift.

He was particularly interested in widow remarriage. Dr. Annie Besant, Mrs. Margaret Cousins, Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy were some of the social workers through whose services Andhra women were benefited. In course of time as the earlier reluctance and unpreparedness gave way, women were convinced of the need for reform to improve their condition. They came to the forefront and added strength to the movement for the emancipation of women, which led to far reaching results.

#### **14.2.3 Economic, Legal and Political Status :-**

The socio-economic position helps an individual to assert his or her position in the society. Educational levels, occupational position, income and earnings do influence the behavioural pattern of individuals. Social indicators like place of birth, age, religion, cast, education and economic indicators like property, employment, income and other variables like exposure to mass media determine the personality make up of an individual. Mostly, Indian women are rural based, have low educational and economic status. In majority of the cases women have neither personal property nor have income of their own.

The strategies to improve the conditions of women need to be broad in their sweep but work basically through five strongly interrelated variables which influence one another and influence the overall status of women in society. These

factors are health and nutrition, fertility, employment, education and political and legal status. Programmes to affect these variables must have a strong educational and motivation bias. It is not enough to merely provide better and more elaborate services; the women must be induced to use these services and, initially at least, the women be induced to permit their women to avail of them. Statistics pertaining to women's participation in the labour force conceal more than they reveal. They grossly under-represent the number of women actually, engaged in productive work and they under estimate the value of this work.

This is particularly true of third world countries where women have been described as the invisible labour force of rural economies. Census figures on women's economic activity frequently exclude large numbers in agricultural workers who labour regularly in the fields but are not counted as 'economically active' or 'gainfully' employed'. Often they ignore millions of women engaged in part time or secondary handicraft activity. The UN Commission on the Status of women found a strong inverse relationship between the education level of the mother (both in formal and non-formal programmes) and her family size.

In recent years most third world countries have made some efforts towards legislation to prevent discrimination against women. The striking exception is of course that aspect of Islamic Law which still permits polygamy for men. Many Muslim countries - such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh - have introduced reforms of varying degrees to control the abuses of polygamy. As the committee on the status of women in India points out, to translate these legal rights granted to women into reality is the task of other agencies. The Judiciary and the executive have a major role to play in this. In any case, as a foundation and support for change in women's status, legal equality is crucial. Laws mandating equal rights give people. The tool for fighting discrimination and place behind the ideal of equality, the compelling power of the state.

There are very few countries today (most of them orthodox Muslim States) where the national law excludes women from those political process which are open to men. Though 99.5% of the women in the world are legally entitled to participate in the political process, the number of women in public office remaining appallingly low in most countries. In India women have never exceeded of the total candidates standing for election.

As far as women's participation in the Panchayat Raj is concerned it is not upto the mark. It is observed that mere reservation will not solve the problem unless women members are given commensurate powers to function effectively. However, in this regard the following steps have been suggested:

- i) All women members of panchayats and other executive bodies must be trained and empowered to exercise their authority.
- ii) Particular attention must be paid to the development of interpersonal communication skills amongst the trainees/community leaders.
- iii) Efforts are required to elicit participation of women through establishing links between the elected representatives and required to elicit representatives and the development functionaries.
- iv) Programmes meant for women's development should be linked with panchayat/ local functionaries for more effective participation of women.
- v) Despite being members of these democratic bodies or even their head, women's political participation may be severely constrained by various socio-economic pressures. It would, therefore, be necessary to supplement formal representation in industrial structures with other measures such as mobilisation of women and involvement of panchayats on specific socio-economic issues; and
- vi) There is need to organize women workers either in a cooperatives or any other forms where by production and marketing are intergrated. Government institutions or voluntary welfare organisations must come forward to organise women who are self-employed and reduce their exploitation and active participation in Panchayats.

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### 14.3 GENDER, CASTE AND CLASS :-

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The question of gender is a vexed one within sociological debate, in which it tends to be raised as a central concept in analysis concerned with 'inequalities' in contemporary societies. In terms of such 'conventional' analysis the specific class position of women can never be considered, for a social category defined in terms of the theoretical frame work adopted relegates women to 'second-hand study its impact must obviously be very great, particularly when it is considered how much funding is received for sociological work and stratification.

The starting-point for an analysis of women's class position lies in the transformations which have occurred within the division of labour, and that it is the question of the proletarianization of certain sectors in the economy which needs to be addressed. The importance of this analysis to the location of women with regard to class relations stems precisely from the fact of their widespread employment in the white-collar sectors of the work force, and a consideration of the specificity of the sexual division of labour is predicated in an examination of the implications of this situation.

It is not unusual to note that the relationship of women or sex to certain basic sociological phenomenon has tended to be regraded as irrelevant or non-problematic.

#### **14.3.1 The class system and Female Labours:-**

The conventional argument on women's class position, which in effect accords women class by proxy, revolves around the old 'truth' that the family is the unit of the class system: it concerns the implications of marriage and assumptions about both the critical significance of male as opposed to female labour and the shared class position of women and their men. Now, whatever the basis for the view that the family is the unit in the class system, and however acceptable it is to use an argument about shared class to disprove the notion that women are a class, it does not follow - as is often assumed - that women do not occupy an independent or indeed particular place in the class structure, nor that sexual divisions make no contribution to this. Women, or for that matter any other group, do not need to constitute a separate class in order to have a class position in their own right or having their own specificity, as they might. It should be noted that even if the family is the unit of the class system, this does not necessarily entail the notion that women's class position is determined through their families.

In the conventional literature, two assumptions are seen as integrally related, mutually reinforcing, yet it is the latter which is the most theoretically problematic. First, the family is seen as the unit of the class system because it acts as a 'placement agency' ensuring continuity in the reward position of family limits and thus stratification rather than just inequalities firstly; it is the family which is the major limit for reward and second, the allocation of economic and social rewards, though in general, deriving from the occupations order in the case of women, however is seen to be determined primarily by the position of their families, and in particular by the occupations of their husbands or fathers, not their own.

#### **14.3.2 Women's Place in the Class Structures:-**

Women have a specific place in the class structure because of their actual or potential 'dual role'. This is true whether we are merely concerned with the way women's participation in production and the labour market is affected by their position in the family, or with the way in which the material relationships of domestic labour imply that women have specific class interests. In other words, we cannot grasp the specificity, of women's class position unless we also have an understanding of what women's place in the class structure actually is.

Women constitute such an underclass because they are sexually disqualified from 'primary' job & in the labour market as a result of prejudice and interruptions



in labour availability due to marriage and childbirth. They, thus tend to monopolise 'secondary' job, those which have a low economic return, and limited security, lack other economic benefits and chances of promotion.

### **2.3.3 Women-Economic Empowerment:-**

Indian development planning has always aimed at removing inequities in the process of development to ensure that the fruits of development are an equal privilege of all. In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that women are lagging behind to a great deal both in availing of the benefits of development due to several socio-economic-cultural-political impediments. This has become a cause for concern since women number several million and constitutes nearly half of our population.

In the early years of planning the concern for gender looked at welfarist perspective which manifested itself in the forms of grants, subsidies and freeships for girls and women in a few relevant programmes. But these concessions did not elicit the required level of participation. In the later half of the 1970's the focus shifted from merely welfare to development and created emphasis on integration of women into the mainstream of social and economic development. In due course, many social and economic programmes like Non-Formal Education in GMs, Integrated Rural Development programmes ... were evolved exclusively for women or with the percentage set aside solely for them. The benefits derived from these programmes had to be sustained and this was posing a challenge. It is in this context, if empowerment and given the vulnerability and powerlessness of the individual woman in the existing socio-economic set up that 'Group' strategies acquire great relevance. The programme for development of women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), launched in 1982-83, inaugurated an era for systematically organising woman in groups for enhancing their earning & on a self-sustaining basis and increasing their access to and utilisation of services like health, child care and adult education, among others. Formation of Thrift and Credit groups of women for self-help and economic self-reliance has also been encouraged by the government. A Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) was set in 1993 for extending credit with low transaction costs to poor and needy women and women's groups through Non-Governmental Organisations. At present (as in July, 1996), the scheme is being implemented in the fifteen states - A. P., Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharastra, M.P., Manipoor, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, U.P. And W.B. - through a network of one hundred and four Non-Governmental Organisations.

### **14.3.4 Non - Discrimination:-**

Gender discrimination is so firmly imbedded in the history of humanity that

it is often not perceived as discrimination. Because women have always been burdened with unpaid household work and kept away from public life this is deemed to be a natural state of affairs - this is the way it has always been.

The challenge to inequality is inherent in the very notion of human rights. The main postulate is that all human beings have equal rights, which are properties inherent to human beings. The most important change was attained by the women's convention which demands not only that women should be accorded rights equal to those of men, they should be able to enjoy all these formally accorded rights.

Non-discrimination entails corrective and compensatory policies in favour of those categories that are vulnerable to discrimination and those that governments have an obligation to undertake 'affirmative action designed to ensure the positive enjoyment of rights'. Such affirmative action may consist of laws, measures or actions needed to remedy discrimination in fact; i.e., to redress de facto inequalities, in order to enable people to enjoy and exercise their rights as on equal footing, differential treatment is necessary and therefore action needed to correct discrimination, in fact, is a case of legitimate differentiation.

Non-discrimination requires governments to undertake direct action to ensure the practice of non-discrimination by all public authorities and in all public services, that is, in all the areas, which are under direct control of the national authority. The protection of women workers is one of the most thoroughly regulated area of international human rights protection. The number of specific international standards, their defected provisions and effective supervision make this area a notable success of the international community. Its impact on women's lives in other areas necessitates further and strange national measures to apply protection to women.

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#### **14.5 SUMMING UP:-**

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The strategies described in this unit would empower the women in the people's sector and bring them in the mainstream of economic reforms and development. Even before a demand is made to make the Planning Body address itself to gender issues, certain prerequisites need to be stressed. Firstly, despite the vast number of the sample surveys and despite the enormous amount of literature produced by various universities, institutions, individuals, voluntary associations, Government and non-government bodies etc., there are various aspects of the economy, but very little of this get reflected in the plan document. Secondly, over the years, the implementation of the plans has ceased to be the responsibility of the Planning Commission or rather it never was in the first place. The feasibility of such action and the consequent administration changes, if any, that would be required for

particular policies to be implemented within a time frame are not discussed in the Plan Document.

#### 14.5.1

The planner should think of this, one is not seeking the mere inclusion of women as a row, column or chapter in the plan but a thorough reorientation of the plan document from a quality of life angle which includes the lives and living conditions of women as citizens of this country, as individuals or professionals in their own right, as members of their family, etc.

The implications of macro policies relating to technology, industry, agriculture, and policies relating to employment, education, child care etc., would necessarily have to be worked out not only gender-wise, but also class-wise and caste-wise keeping in mind the diverse character of the Indian Society. Planning Commission should take the complete responsibility of correct implementation of plans.

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**BLOCK - VI : WOMEN IN POLITICS**

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## **UNIT-15 : WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTIES**

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### **15.0 OBJECTIVES.**

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- \* By the end of this unit you will be able to discuss:
- \* The Historical Background of women's political Participation.
- \* Political empowerment of women.
- \* Reservation of seats for women.

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## 15.1 INTRODUCTION.

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This distinctive feature of a political party is to be found in its goal of electing candidates to public office in order to control or influence policies of governments. Political party serves as a vehicle through which like-minded persons associate in the expectation that their views will achieve the stamp of legitimacy through elections and lead to authoritative determination of government processes. The three major tasks of political parties, in democracy are (a) nominating candidates (b) defining issues and (c) running or opposing the government

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## 15.2 POLITICAL PARTIES.

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Political parties are connecting links between the society, consisting of various groups and the individuals who act as voters. They perform certain important functions in the political system.

- (1) In democracies, political parties perform an important function namely, formulation of policies and carrying on political propaganda in order to influence public opinion.
- (2) Political parties are the chief mechanism of informing and influencing the electorate.
- (3) Political parties serve as "brokers of ideas".
- (4) They provide the main source of political leadership in almost all the countries.
- (5) They shoulder the responsibility of the government.
- (6) They also provide the continuing link between the government and the people.
- (7) They become the chief source for political education and socialisation.

The entry of Indian Women into active political process is a by-product of their participation in the freedom struggle. However, their political status and the quality of their participation in politics are appallingly low when compared to their proportion in population. Women's participation in politics "resembles the shapes of a pagoda. The higher the level the fewer the women". There are few women in the mainstream politics. As there are only a few or no women at the higher level of parties there are few women contestant

Today we find an over Whelming approval for the participation of women in electoral politics. Most national parties promise about 33% of electoral seats for women .This proposition is not put into practice. Every political party intentionally



pursued double standards, of lip service and rhetoric for alleviating the marginalized socio-economic and political status of women. The reasons for the less number of women candidates in the elections are many, lack of money power for elections, fear of intimidation, violence, slander, character assassination and the overall 'dirty' politics. Women's inclusion in politics is retarded because.

- (1) male domination or patriarchy stands as an impediment ;
- (2) public opinion favours that political leadership is a masculine activity. Historically also politics gave preference to men ;
- (3) Indian political parties consider women as a liability. This is because
  - (a) Women have no time to spare for politics
  - (b) It is opined that women are not genuinely interested in politics
  - (c) Lack of proper orientation or capacity.
  - (d) Her capacities are restricted to the private domain of the household
  - (e) Socio-cultural norms/ taboos, religious behavioural training
  - (f) Her limitations on physical mobility and socialisation.

Therefore discriminations are manifested in personal, cultural, situational and structural differences between men and women. For anybody's candidature some political party should sponsor women. Only then the question of being elected will come into picture of those who contest in the election - several women are being defeated. For example in the Andhra Pradesh assembly elections in 1983, 31 women and in 1994, 64 women contested independently and none of them was successful. Except in rank and file, women are not seen among the top brass of decision-making. More over allotment of party tickets in the elections have become totally centralised and it depends upon the whims and fancies of the High Command of the parties. In addition the selection of candidates is not an easy task. Special qualities are expected from the candidates i.e., the candidates should maintain close relations with the power brokers, have strong patronage, ability for backdoor dealings etc. honest and committed people have hardly any place in the political process today.

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### **15.3. DIMENSION OF INFORMAL PARTICIPATION:-**

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Political participation should not be linked only with elected politics. Most often than not, the involvement of women at the grass roots mass movements,

provide channels of participation and thus influencing the state policy. The participation of women in mass movements or their leading role made them to get into contact with politicians. All India organizations are providing channels for participatory democracy rather than involvement in actual politics.

Now the problem is women have to represent their share of about half of the population in Indian democracy. If we want to pursue the principles of equality or gender justice, a fair amount of representation should be given to women. Another important factor that we have to bear in mind is, if socio-economic decisions are taken without the inputs from women, then there is a danger that their issues will continue to be neglected. There is a wide spread opinion that women are free from corruption, selfless in motivation and committed to the cause of humanity. This would definitely transform the face of a government into an ideal one. In that case, the induction of women into the main stream politics becomes imperative. Party sponsorship, the only way of political success, invariably succumbs women to party ideology and policies. The social issues of the parties, are quite different from women's issues. Then, the question is, what is the use of women's participation in politics? The only way to involve women in politics is through the statutory reservation, which will ensure a certain proportion of seats.

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#### **15.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS:-**

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During the freedom struggle there were mass arrests of women and brutal Lathi charges on them. Even firings at times on peaceful crowds and gagging of their voice, beating and harsh treatment of women were frequent occurrences witnessed during the freedom struggle. It is necessary to know the background for their participation in the struggles of this type.

In 1919, the first women's deputation met Mr. E.S. Montague the then secretary of state for India, to demand for women's political rights. The deputation was led by Smt. Sarojini Naidu along with fourteen others drawn from all over the country. Smt. Margaret Cousins initiated the move as the secretary. Earlier, Mrs. Cousins worked for the Irish women's suffrage movement and later was a suffragist in England too. They demanded that women may be recognised as "people" along with their men. Their demand was approved by the Calcutta session of Indian National Congress which said that women should not be disqualified on the basis of gender and they should be eligible for all elective bodies as men do. All these efforts culminated in 1929 by giving the right to vote for women in the elections for the provincial legislatures.

Spurred by this achievement, Mrs. Margaret Cousins had initiated the demand for women's suffrage. She commented, "The vote is one of the links making Indian womanhood as a vital unit in the life of the single nation of India." She appreciated that Indian men showed great statesmanship, understanding of democratic values, a sympathetic vision of the aspirations of the women and they took a bold step which was unknown their previous political history. Thus, to all the provincial legislatures were thrown open to accommodate women as members.

There was tremendous wave in favour of women. But Margaret Cousins lost her seat just by a margin of 5 votes. She then became the secretary of All India Women's conference. Smt. Sarojini Naidu referred to this loss by remarking that "the loss of a single seat is now the gain of the whole country". Later, Dr. Muttu Lakshmi Reddy, noted medical practitioner and a social worker, became the member of Madras provincial legislature. She was the first woman in India to hold that position. She also became the Deputy Speaker. Women became members in the Indian National Congress, since its inception from 1885. Twice the Indian National Congress was headed by women between 1917-1923. Mrs. Anne Besant launched the Home Rule league movement in South India.

Political parties are essential in a democracy. They are expected to motivate people and elect suitable candidates to the legislatures to represent their grievances and work for their redressal.

Political parties are the instruments through which people express their problems. The process of their origin and development, however, was not done in a systematic manner. It was only by 1952, when the first general elections were held in Independent India, that they emerged in a somewhat systematic way. Before Independence, there were only two well-organised political parties, they were Indian National Congress and Communist Party of India. The Congress party, strictly speaking was not a political party before 1947. It was heading the National Movement and served as the mouth piece to voice the demands of people to the colonial state. It encompassed different sections of the Indian political spectrum and was thus a United Political force. After Independence, Indian National Congress became a political party and along with it, several other political parties of India with the liberal political parties of other democracies. We find some unique features in our system of political parties.

They are:

1. Institutionalised structure
2. Internal democracy
3. Popular leadership

4. Sharp ideological difference between political parties.
5. Group conflicts

A particular feature of Indian political parties is that there are a number of similarities in their principles and programmes. This appears to be true at least among the major parties.

Socialism is the goal of the Communist Party of India. The Congress party promised to establish a welfare state along with the ideal of socialistic pattern of society. In 1960, the Swatantra Party formed. Individual liberty, independence of judiciary and private enterprise were the goals of this party. But it became, in course of time, a bastion of interests of rich land lords, ex-princes and big industrialists.

In the present scenario, the Congress, C.P.I., C.P.I.(M), B.J.P., and its democratic alliance and the Janata Dal, to name only a few major parties, declared that their goal is socialism with subtle variations. Democracy, as a form of government constitutes a major segment of their policies.

Introduction of adult franchise into the working of Indian society both symbolised and provided the dynamic core of the manifold institutional innovations which have shaped the Indian polity since independence. This process got crystallised through political scene of India since independence. It introduced political and administrative decentralisation. For the first time, the process led to political consolidation at all levels. The deliberations of the Congress Parliamentary Party were no longer internal to that party alone. There was a larger political context in which such developments in political communications and public accountability became possible.

The position of women in politics has always been miserable. As mentioned earlier, although women constitute half of the population, their participation in all spheres of life has been negligible, despite the growing consciousness among them since the struggle for freedom.

It has been found that women's participation in politics, at the global level, has been of a very low degree. Factors like improvement in education, exposure to mass media, effectiveness of local and socialisation process and growing political consciousness have greatly influenced women voters. Despite the increasing women's participation in politics, their influence over the male dominant power structure, both at legislature and party organization levels, has been far behind their participatory strength. It is high time to pay attention to this aspect, if women have to improve their status in society and in other walks of life.

**TABLE - ONE**

Turn out of women voters in the Lok Sabha elections

| Year | Total voting Percentage | Percentage turn out of Female voters | Difference Between Male & Female Voters |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1962 | 54.76                   | 46.63                                | 15.42                                   |
| 1967 | 61.33                   | 55.48                                | 11.25                                   |
| 1971 | 55.35                   | 49.15                                | 11.85                                   |

The difference between percentage turn out of men and women voters has been decreasing

**TABLE No. 2**

**Women Contestents for the Lok Sabha**

| Year of General Election | Total Seats Contested | No. of Women Contestents | Percentage | Number of Women Elected | percentage of Winners |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1                        | 2                     | 3                        | 4          | 5                       | 6                     |
| 1962                     | 491                   | 65                       | 13         | 33                      | 50.6                  |
| 1967                     | 515                   | 66                       | 13         | 28                      | 42.4                  |
| 1961                     | 518                   | 86                       | 17         | 21                      | 25.9                  |

If we take state wise number of women constents the number has been generally in accordance with the total number of seats allocated to the state. The maximum number was in the U.P., except in 1971 and the next largest state was Bihar. The record of Madhya Pradesh is also high except in 1971. This indicates that there is no corréletion between the general level of women's participation and their demographic strength. We know the selection of women candidates is done by the parties concerned. In Punjab women's participation rate has outstripped that of men in urban areas. Kerala, Maharastra show a slow increase in the number of candidates and in West Bengal a sudden rise in 1971. However the most visible and constant trend is stagnation. Karnataka did not put up a single woman candidate in 1967 elections. One candidate contested and elected

in 1962. Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland and most of the Union territories never put up a single woman candidate.

Women in Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Orissa are particularly vocal in criticising the political parties for sponsoring very few women in the elections. At the level of participation rate, Women of Scheduled Castes and other intermediary groups reveal a higher participation rate. In terms of voting participation, the rural-urban difference seems to be narrowing down.

### **Political Parties and Women:-**

The election manifestos of the parties indicate that women constitute a backward section of the society and special consideration should be shown to bring them on par with men. All political parties should have positive approach and promote women's cause by putting up more women candidates.

### **THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS:-**

The Indian National Congress had pledged to implement the Constitutional norms regarding women. The party emphasised the development of women's education and employment.

However, the number of candidates sponsored by the Congress party remained much below its stipulated target of 15% of the total candidates. Its working committee comprise 21 members and out of them 3 are women. Among the 4 general secretaries 2 are women. Some of the State Committees have women presidents where as some do not have even a single member.

There was a split in the Congress Party and the one led by Indira Gandhi was known as Indian National Congress. Subsequently this faction was given recognition as INC by the Election Commission.

The Congress Party was in power for more than 45 years. Though it sponsored some women as candidates in the Assembly and Parliamentary elections, the women's position in the party hierarchy is not impressive. Even during the undisputed leadership of Indira Gandhi the position of women in the elected bodies and the party organisation was not noteworthy.

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee did not have a single woman member till 1972. The Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee had only 19 women members out of a total of 442, while its state executive had only 3 out of 54 members. In West Bengal women formed approximately 18% of the Congress.

The Congress Mahila Front has been active in mobilizing women in support of the party. There is a feeling among women political workers, that the Congress

party did not provide opportunities to develop the leadership qualities. Another significant, but regrettable factor is that in all the decision-making bodies women are generally excluded.

### **15.5.2. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (CPI):-**

The Communist Party of India believes that in a capitalist system complete equality of women is not possible. Women have to play significant role in bringing out the social revolution. According to the election manifesto, the party stands for equality of women in every sphere of national life. The party's demands are.

1. Equal pay for equal work
2. Removal of restrictions on employment of married women
3. Extension of maternity benefits to the employed women
4. Social Laws to improve women's status
5. Adequate financial allocation for women's equality with men

Out of its total membership of two and half lakhs, women are estimated to form about 5%, among the National Council members, Only 4 are women. In spite of its declared manifesto, the party did not encourage the women candidature in a big way.

### **15.5.3. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST) CPI (M):-**

The CPI (M) also believes in social revolution and equality can be realised in the process of socialistic transformation of society. It opposes discrimination against women. It is critical about the poor progress of women in all spheres, literacy, enlightenment and employment. The irony is that women constitute 1% of the party membership.

The Central committee has only one woman out of a total membership of thirty one. In West Bengal there are six women members out of a total of seventy. In the state executive there are three women. It serves no purpose by giving 1% of the representation. In the absence of economic independence, women are as good as property. Hence, the ultimate aim of the party is education and employment of women. In the absence of land and basic economic security and literacy, rural women have been unable to enjoy their rights. They made a few suggestions to the committee.

1. Mass education mass employment and through that emancipation;
2. Free education to girls at all levels;

3. Equal pay for equal work and also removal of other disabilities;
4. Equal share of land, job opportunities for rural women;
5. Implementation of Constitutional rights and war against orthodoxy, conservative attitudes, social evils and superstitions;
6. India should maintain close relations with socialist nations.

Theoretically the above agenda sounds good. It has all the suggestions, but they are incapable of implementing them and hence, their futility.

#### **4. BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP):-**

This party is keen for the advancement of women. It is prepared to remove social and educational disabilities to enable them to discharge their responsibilities in all spheres. The party promises to provide substantial rights like right to property.

The central executive of the B.J.P. contains five women members of whom one is the vice-president, the all-India council has 83 women members. The president of the Kerala state committee and vice presidents of seven state committees are women. Two state committees have women as joint secretaries. The district committees elect one woman to the state council.

It is felt that there is need to increase the consciousness and political participation of women without which the constitutional guarantees would remain unimplemented. Political awareness of women will foster a sense of national pride and political awareness and consciousness are the essential requisites to improve the lot of women folk. The governmental and non-governmental agencies should develop their independence and individuality, so that they can prove their mettle in every sphere of life. The twin problems of illiteracy and unemployment are the main causes for their low position.

There was one vice chairman of the Rajya Sabha and several in the panel of chairmen of both the Houses of Parliament. Some members also became members of Parliament, had previous experience of holding political offices in their respective states. Very few people have become governors and chief ministers. Very few have held cabinet rank positions. On the whole members in the legislatures were not that low. Women members of the Constituent Assembly which functioned as the central legislative council before the first general elections were held, were the veterans of freedom struggle. They worked for women's welfare and development. They were the spokespersons of the legislative body. They brought out social legislations for improving the legal status of women. A number of women freedom fighters attained national stature and they were found



in the seats of central and state governments. These women belonged to the political elite of the country. These M.P's and M.L.A's were concerned with the problems of general nature. Very few women championed the cause of women as such though there were discussions on women's issues. An analysis of debates and deliberations in the legislatures indicate that major attention was paid to women's problems, the interest evinced by the leaders in women's problems remained only for a few years. Later, women members were showing less interest in these problems, because of the lack of backing for an active women's movement. Even as legislative bodies, they are not taking active interest in the decision-making and policy formulation. That is because of their inhibition and failure to voice the problems of women. They concentrate on social objectives. But, since its inception, it has stood for equal rights for women. Since independence, the party has been focusing its attention primarily on the welfare and relief of women and children. Similarly, there are many national councils of women which came into existence like national council of women in India, Bharatiya grameen Mahila Sangh, National of Indian women, Sthri Shakthi Jagaran. Despite, several limitations women's participation in the political process has shown a steady increase, both in the elections and in their readiness to express their views on issues concerning their to day life. However, their participation has not produced the desired impact on the problems.

Our society is a male-dominated society which is bound with patriarchal values. Further, the large masses of women are facing exploitation and injustice.

The political parties have used women as instruments of campaigning and objects set forth for women's welfare. Women ministers were appointed as ministers only for portfolios such as women and child welfare. Rural women and women in small towns do not get the same attention from the political parties as in the case with city women. Studies on the efficiency of mass media establishes that interpersonal contacts and public meetings are more effective with women than the mass media programmes.

In all the general elections women constituted more than 50% of the electorate. Unfortunately, they do not know their own strength and political parties are not in a position to evaluate their strength.

The status of women was not improved and equality is limited only to the Constitution. The large masses of women continue to lack spokespersons to ventilate their special problems. Still economic equality eludes women on which depends the political and social equality. In spite of special powers provided by Article 15(3) of the Constitution, no efforts have been made to redress the unequal status of women in different walks of life.

## **15.6. RESERVATION OF SEATS FOR WOMEN IN DISTRICT AND LEGISLATIVE BODIES:-**

By the 73rd amendment of the Constitution women are able to secure equal powers in the district administrative bodies. Political participation is of two kinds.

- a. mobilized participation
- b. voluntary participation

The former is the characteristic of the authoritarian political system and the later is of open and democratic systems. Voluntary political participation seems to be a phenomenon which some times lends violence to the political culture of India. However, mere physical participation is not enough. Women need to assert and claim their share in their political empowerment.

Strategies for promoting women's issues in formal politics are:

(1) Participation of women in elections and support to women's candidature involves huge election campaign expenses. The political parties should have an open mind in these issues and they should respect woman's candidature and provide the required expenditure.

(2) women's rights cannot be imposed by anybody. They should be encouraged in women at all levels. Starting from the grass roots level there is an urgent need to facilitate the creation of for women.

(3) A crucial need also exists for the networking amongst womens groups, women wings of political parties, trade unions etc. To monitor the political events in every area and formulate appropriate strategies, women MLAs should concentrate on gender issues, which are relevant in playing a role in spreading awareness on women's issues. In this net workng, class, caste, religion, should not play any role. Through joint efforts women need to change into the "culture" of political participation and their participation in the decision-making processes.

The question of reservation of seats for women in the legislative bodies as per the proposed Eighty First amendment of the Constitution is the major question confronting women today. There is every liklihood of this issue being settled in favour of women. This step would surely pave the way for the empowerment of women.

The following table gives the particulars of women candidates who contested and won in the general elections from 1952-1998.

| Year | Total Number of Candidates stood for the Elections | No. of women candidates that Won the elections | Women candidates Percentage |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1952 | 449                                                | 22                                             | 4.41                        |
| 1957 | 500                                                | 27                                             | 5.4                         |
| 1962 | 503                                                | 34                                             | 6.6                         |
| 1967 | 523                                                | 31                                             | 5.9                         |
| 1971 | 521                                                | 22                                             | 4.2                         |
| 1977 | 544                                                | 19                                             | 3.5                         |
| 1980 | 544                                                | 28                                             | 5.1                         |
| 1984 | 544                                                | 44                                             | 7.00                        |
| 1989 | 517                                                | 27                                             | 5.3                         |
| 1991 | 544                                                | 39                                             | 8.1                         |
| 1996 | 544                                                | 40                                             | 8.2                         |
| 1998 | 543                                                | 43                                             | 7.9                         |

For the 13th Lok Sabha elections held recently (1999) On behalf of B.J.P.23 candidates contested and 5 became ministers. Congress I had 70 women candidates but the result was very low. Like wise in 1999 Lok Sabha the allocation of seats by various political parties in Andhra Pradesh are as follows.

|      | <u>T.D.P</u> | <u>Congress</u> | <u>B.J.P.</u> | <u>C.P.I.</u> | <u>C.P.M.</u> |
|------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1994 | 3.2%         | 6.2%            | 5.7%          | 0%            | 6.2%          |
| 1999 | 12.6%        | 9.2%            | 0%            | 4.2%          | 4.5%          |

The following table shows the percentage of seats allocated by different political parties, in 1999 Andhra Pradesh Assembly election.

|          |    |                                    |
|----------|----|------------------------------------|
| T.D.P.   | -- | Telugu Desam Party                 |
| Congress | -- | Indian National Congress           |
| B.J.P.   | -- | Bhratiya Janata Party              |
| C.P.I.   | -- | Communist Party of India           |
| C.P.M.   | -- | Communist Party of India (Marxist) |

### Allocation of Seats in A.P. in 1999

|             |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|
| Congress    | -- | 27 |
| T.D.P.      | -- | 33 |
| B.J.P.      | -- | 0  |
| C.P.I.      | -- | 2  |
| C.P.I.(M)   | -- | 2  |
| Anna T.D.P. | -- | 9  |

There were also 31 women Independent Candidates in 1983, 64 Independent candidates in 1994 but none of them was elected. In the past women who won the elections in A.P. were as follows.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>No. of Contestents</u> | <u>Won</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1983        | 72                        | 12         |
| 1989        | 67                        | 18         |
| 1994        | 125                       | 12         |

The leaders of the political parties are not very sure of the success of women's candidature as against men's candidature. If the same process continues there is no scope for a system of reservation if a proportion of seats for women in parliamentary and assembly bodies of the political parties are not in a position to give a favour deal to nearly half the population in the various units of the government. Women should take the responsibility and challenge at least in the next election period to achieve their share in their representation. The educated and responsible should undertake the task and motivate the women at all levels and improve the political status of women in the country. The failure to look up on women's participation with sympathy and understanding is a retarding factor in political socialization of both men and women. Thirty three percent of seats in the legislative bodies for women will definitely alter the very character of our legislature. If women are ready to form a political party of their own then they might win more seats. Other wise women will have no chance to come to power. This should be realised by all the political parties and translate this idea into action.

The women's cause in India has always been championed by all progressive elements. Men as well as women's interests cannot be isolated from economic, social and political interests. The problems connected with the status of women are linked with formulation, articulation and modalities of the realization of other

interests Women have been competing with men as equals since the national struggle for independence. When women are successful in panchayats, panchayat samities and Zilla Parishads, they will be successful in the legislative bodies also. The selfishness of the men is standing against the success of women, in their empowerment both in state governments, and the central government. The Andhra Pradesh government behaved in a magnanimous way and allotted 3 cabinet ranks and one state ministry after the 1999 elections. It is going to fight for 33% reservation even in central government also. They should also be included in all important socio-economic problems. Women around the world share a common condition i.e., they are not felt as equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. The top decision making positions remain largely male-dominated spheres where women have little influence. In a period of increasing democratization on a global scale, women comprise more than half of the voters in almost all countries. If equal representation has not translated into action, it has to be referred to United Nations Economic and Social Council. Their voices are missing from key decisions on national budgets and their skills and view points often remain unheard, unrepresented or ignored.

"The struggle for women's rights, and the task for creating a new United Nations, able to promote peace and the values which nurture and sustain it, are one and the same. Today more than ever the cause of women is the cause of all humanity", stated the Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his message sent on March 8, 1993, International Women's Day.

United Nations and its organizations are placing greater emphasis on initiatives that propel women into all levels of decision-making. There is growing pressure on governments to secure the effective participation of women in the decision-making and administrative measures. All sections of society must work together actively to bring out the advancement of women.

#### **15.6.1. 81st Amendment of the constitution:-**

If a woman can live independently and build up her own personality then we can gauge progress in every sphere. For the attainment of this goal, she needs liberty and independence. Then only she will be useful to the society and to the nation. That means she alone should have control on her life on her body on her mind and on her heart. In the evolutionary process some women have come up to the to most level but their achievements are limited to a few women. As Chalm. Telugu writer said that "woman is a life less social slave".

After the advent of 52 years of independence, and celebrating Golden Jubilee functions, women who constitute almost half of the population of this country have taken up movements in a brisk manner and striving hard to run several

struggles. To increase the participation of women in politics and to establish egalitarian order in the society untiring war is waged in the national and International spheres. U.N.O declared its decision in the International women's Conferences. Accordingly in 1973-74 amendments to the Constitution gave reservations for women and they proved their mettle and capacity in the local-self government elections. Deva Gouda, the ex-Prime-Minister of India brought out 81st amendment of the constitution. Both in administration and in policy making women are expected to take equal participation, according to this amendment.

In any international movement, women's empowerment and autonomy and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and sustainable development in all areas of life. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is impossible to bring a real integration which is reflected in the policy making. The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be the barriers to women's participation in public life. Women in politics and decision-making positions in the respective governments and legislative bodies contribute to define political placing new items on the agenda to reflect and address women's gender-specific problems, values and experiences. It will provide new perspective on the main stream political issues. Otherwise, from local to international levels will continue to reflect structural and attitudinal barriers, the net result is that talents of half of the population in the world will not be utilized as top level managers, policy makers, diplomats and negotiators. It is the main responsibility of the government to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes.

After the advent of independence women fought for their rights and for transformation of society in social, political and Economic sectors. New problems are cropping up for women in capitalistic society. Still, the traces of feudalism are found in the society.

Capability comes by experience. Hitherto only very few women worked as M.Ps, M.L.As, Ministers, Governors and Prime Minister in our country. The proposal to reserve 1/3 of the seats in Parliament and the State Assemblies for women came to the forefront with general elections in 1996. It was a part of the election promises of most major political parties at that time and the women members in both the Houses of Parliament evinced keen interest in its success. This 81st Amendment of the Constitution will have far reaching effects not only on the National policy. But on the lives of Indian Women, in general.

The idea of such reservation, was mooted suddenly and so far its implications are still not clear to which type of women it is going to apply. There is strong resistance to the Bill from male members of Parliament.

Indian Association of Women Studies, Jadavpur University and the Eastern Regional Centre of the Indian Council of Social Science Research financed the Seminar on the issue in Calcutta on February 23, 1997. Ela Bhatt, Devaki Jain, Malini Bhattacharya, (former M.P. from West Bengal), Samit Sen, Geeta Mukherji, (the then Member of Parliament) Bharati Ray (member, Rajya Sabha and Director, Women's Studies Research Centre, Calcutta University)-all these people who have strong commitment to the feminist cause, with sharply analytical minds attended the seminar and contributed a lot in this connection.

The 81st Amendment to the Constitution would provide seats in parliament, the power to make enough of a dent in politics or policies. What women require at this juncture was a unified voice as women, a vision, along with appropriate political action to correct injustice outside parliament. A more sustainable change would be if, women were to fight for 50% in all political parties or formation of women's party irrespective of the interference of political parties. At present, no political party had more than 12% women members. Bhatt pointed some of the problems women would face as parliamentarians.

They were:

1. Women politicians once they come to power could not afford to represent only the women-related issues.

2. Women could not vote directly, but they should be in line with the political party which they represent.

3. Women's issues are most often a part of the process of the existing systems. We need to infiltrate all the democratic organizations in the country, trade unions, Chambers of Commerce and Industry co-operatives, various other federations. There was opposition to the Bill from all parties as they felt that upper caste women would corner the seats at the cost of SC/ST/OBC Communities.

On the issue of women's capability, Half felt that any woman who would go to the government would eventually develop required capabilities. Men do not like to share power. Parties have begun to view women as a political vote bank, if not a political force.

According to Jain, Reservation policy was as old as the freedom movement itself. She expressed some of the arguments commonly made against reservation, such as:

1. By reservation, stigmatization of women would lead to make them dummies in the political process;
2. When women's acceptance of Reservation Policy will be taken as weaklings, their capability will be reduced;
3. It is just claiming our place through struggle;
4. How representative are women in terms of vision is a very important question.

Devaki Jain stressed that the central issue was that of a empowerment of women which should happen first in the house domain. It depends the leadership of women's movement to enhance the political process. Reservation was only an initial step but for feminist power, for, restructuring political process, it is imperative to have the feminist advocacy. Jain felt that the 'promise betrayal' was a positive gain for women's movement. "Women have to fight this ganging up of men, the muting of political leadership. Her proposal was to set up a women's political courses of the women MPs and this should be confined to the women in politics only. Reservation should not be considered as a reserved space but as claiming our own right in political arena.. Oppressed and privileged should be given more space and voice so that, it is going to become an added strength to the women's movement. Negotiating political instruments like.

1. women as opinion-makers (2) Political lobby for certain concerns should be deveoped. All women should understand the importance of political empowerment. Devaki Jain opined that reservation should be seen as a necessary shock treatment to break the hard rock of partiarchy. Women leadership should be carefully nurtured and self-consciously underpinned by the commitment of feminism.

How the male members are contemplating about reservation:

1. family life can be preserved only if a woman confine herself to the home domain;
2. Legislative assemblies and parliament are not like panchayats. They require different type of orientation and mind set which is lacking in women-folk in our country;
3. Monopoly of the family occurs among male politicians. If women turn themselves as active politicians, who will take care of children. still feudal aberrations are working in the minds of the male members.
4. It would hurt the interest of the OBCL and other minorities and reduce their opportunities for candidature. Our answer to this question is why should they



apply this to women candidates alone. When 1/3 reservation is there definitely all women irrespective of any other considerations will represent all the sections automatically.

5. Does reservation strengthen the democracy in India or not is the question of faith. Women comprise half of the population of our country. In that case is it not undemocratic that 50% of them are neglected?
6. The government must ensure an enabling environment to enable political empowerment of women.
7. Electoral reforms must be introduced to check the money and muscle power that hinders the participation of women.
8. A regular dialogue between elected representatives and grass root level activists should take place so that, women's concerns get prioritised.
9. Political participation of women should not be limited to political field alone it would be extended to criminalisation and communalisation of politics?
10. Today more than ever the cause for women is the cause of all humanity.

The emergence of women into the public arena from the circumscribed world of the home and the family has essentially been a battle for human rights. As Gertrude Mongello, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on women said "Women will change the world when they lead it, but they will change it with men as their partners". A partnership between men and women, rights to the same privileges, responsibilities and opportunities. As Geraldine Ferraro, on 1991 International women's Day event at United Nations said "What we need are not just a few women who make history but many women who make policy".

The world wide movement for democratization has created conditions for political participation. The continuing rise of the global women's movement has sustained pressure on governments and international organizations to increase women's participation in decision-making. Women are pooling their efforts to influence public policy and rally support for women in political, social and economic decision-making. Then only through united efforts can women bring about genuine change. Electing women to high position is a crucial role that women everywhere can accomplish. By casting their votes, women can bring about not only political change, but changes in public policy, in the economy and in society at large. The rights of women that belong to woman by dint of being human what belongs to her by dint of her womanhood.

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### **15.7. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S ISSUES IN POLITICS:-**

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1. - Actively promote the participation of women in elections and support women candidates.
2. Awareness of women's rights must be encouraged in women at all levels, starting with the grass-roots.
3. An urgency to work for the networking amongst women's groups, women's wings of political parties, trade unions etc to monitor the political events in every area and formulate appropriate strategies.

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### **15.8. SUMMARY:**

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In this unit we have discussed about the different political parties and their contribution to the political empowerment of women. By 73rd amendment of the constitution women are able to secure equal power in the district administrative bodies & 81st amendment to the constitution will provide seats in parliament.

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### **15.9. MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS:**

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**I. Answer the following in 30 lines each.**

- 1) Discuss about the different political parties
- 2) Give an account of the historical back ground of women's participation
- 3) Discuss the role of political parties in the political empowerment of women

**II. Answer the following in 10 lines each.**

- 1) 81st Amendment of the Constitution.
- 2) Strategies for promoting women's issues in politics.

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## **UNIT-16 : WOMEN IN POLITICS**

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### **16.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this lesson you will be able to discuss about

- \* the reform movement in India;
- \* the political status of women in the struggle for independence;
- \* eminent women leaders and their role in the freedom struggle.

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## 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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Women participated actively in national struggle and various other struggles. The Women's movements were instrumental for female political representation, female adult franchise. They were considered as powerful stimulus for social reform and Women's political participation in the 20th century. In this unit you will study about some of the women who actively participated in the freedom struggle.

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## 16.2 REFORM MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

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Women's question became a focal point in colonial ideology, which condemned Hindu Civilization as a whole for the abject conditions to which Women were subjected. Long before the emergence of political nationalism, the Women's question led to the crystallisation of cultural nationalism. Feminine identity underwent a change and the society expected women to sacrifice and even die to save the reputation of husband, family and community.

Most cruel of the socio-religious evils was 'Sati'. Raja Rammohan Roy condemned this ritual and brought out legislation with the help of Lord Bentick to rescue women. He became the father of Social reform movement in India. Mere legislation, unsupported by popular consent, could not do away with such practices. According to Roy, Hindu widows burnt themselves, not on account of religious belief, but due to insults and slights to which they were daily subjected to. Once a woman said "yes" in her agony of grief, her relations made it impossible further to change her mind. So, we can say that Sati sacrifices were generally not voluntary but women were forced to immolate themselves.

People believed that women Hinduhood was thus superior to all other models of womanhood. Some of the issues commonly associated with social reform movement were the evils of 'Purdah', the ideal of companionate marriage, the hardships of widowhood etc. The widowhood was the horror, which the women suffered and it was the barbarity of a society that treated them so brutally.

The emancipation of women occupied a pivotal place in the activities of social reform movements. Women were denied property rights and there was no scope to develop their individuality and self-esteem. Women suffered due to (1) lack of freedom, (2) child marriage (3) polygamy (4) forced widowhood and (5) lack of education. As Kamala Devi Chatopadhyaya declared, "Deprived of all education, confined within the four walls of the house, seeing little of the world and knowing little of it, immersed in superstition and opposed by customs, our shame be it said-are no better than slaves".

Strong opposition and apathy existed among people towards education. There

was a feeling in the society that education would bring misfortune to the families in which they were educated. There was a deeprooted prejudice in the society that education, music, dance and other arts were meant only for Devadasis who were dedicated to temples.

The reconstrution of womenhood in the past to serve as a symbol for the greatness of Hindu civilization, for national regeneration was the work of men. By the end of the 19th century nationalism and feminism became some what divorced in terms of concerted action. Pandita Rama Bai, in Maharashtra, analysed the sub-ordination of women in Hindu society and reforming her status was the twin features of her pro-feminist career. She Focussed all her energies on crusading against oppression of women. Pandita Rama Bai was perhaps the only feminist that the 19th century produced. She was convinced that British were hardly bothered about the oppressiveness of patriarchal laws if 'British profits were not going to be endangered there by'. She was a legend in her own life time. Memoirs of her life (My testimony, 1907) had been the main source for half a dozen biographies on her. Her Home 'Sarada Sadan' was an inspiration to many Social reformers and exposed their hypocrisy who mouthed sympathy for women but did nothing to erase oppression against women.

Around the end of the second decade of the twentieth century there were two significant events, which we have to take note of. First Catherine Mayo's 'Mother India' movement and secondly Altkar's 'position of women in Hindu civilization' were the two primary works on women's movement.

The colonial administration of Europe plundered the colonies and amassed wealth. Resistance accompanied the process of colonial conquest of India to the British rule to liberate the country from foreign yoke. Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, Hazarat Mahal, Rani Chennamma of Kiltur paricipated the most wide spread armed uprisings which shook the foundations of British rule in India in the year 1857. Another important incident was when Madam Cama unfurled the flag of free India, designed by her, at the Stultgari second International Congress in August 1907.

The Women of middle classes wanted to adjust themselves to new situation and they did not like to remain forever isolated and away from the main stream of national struggle. Woman slowly became aware of the gender inequalities in Indian society and her urge for freedom from the grip of prescribed belief systems, taboos and role models operated against their interests. In this context, we have to bring to the notice of our student's three fundamental assumptions.

They are:

(1) The deep-rooted sexual asymmetry built on the minds of people, there is a mind set in a patriarchal system that men have hegemonic ideas in relation to

women. This is a global phenomenon that has led women into an ideology of subordination.

(2). In man-woman relationship the asymmetry has been reinforced by an artificial dichotomization of providing a male space of public and a female space of domestic domain. For example women is confined to the domestic cores like unpaid job in the house and child bearing and child rearing activity. Man to his advantage utilizes the reproductive process. Hence, degradation of woman's status in society and created scope for domestic violence. Like wise women's entry into public life is denied by man thinking that it is space and will undermine the severe unnatural dichotomization of two separate spheres. Once women crossed this sacrosanct line, their consciousness went under a metamorphosis. Women's participation in politics acted as a catalyst for a wider change in their Socio-cultural perspective.

(3) The growth of women's awareness attacked the bias in the traditional patriarchal structure that meant all her problems like suffrage, rights, duties and her struggle against the age old oppression and prejudice, all being interconnected with each other.

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### **16.3 WOMEN'S POLITICAL STATUS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE**

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19th century's contradictions were resolved in 20th century. New forces, new influences, new experiences shaped the contours of Indian womanhood. Western feminists like Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins were the women who introduced western feminist ideology into our country and even the urge for education generated new ideas. As Bharati Roy stated that the 19th century Social Reform Movements were for the eradication of Social evils like Sati, child marriage, bride-price, widowhood, Devadasi system etc, where as 20th century struggle brought a complete shift in women's image. Bengali Women's participation in the Gandhian Movement from 1920's onwards according to Bharati Roy had three distinctive characteristics:-

(1) Identification of the freedom movement with "Deshpuja" (worship of Mother land) and invocation of "Shakti", even Sarojini Naidu's concept was the same.

(2) Gandhiji's emergence as the national leader helped the women's cause. His assertion that women were better suited morally to enshoulder the responsibility of non-violent struggle than men.

(3) Bengal produced political leaders like Chitta Ranjan Das, Bipin Chandra Pal who politicized women with leadership qualities. Basant Devi (1880), the wife of

C.R.Das and Hema Prabha Majumdar helped to arouse consciousness among women. In fact, this was an all India phenomenon and new women leaders emerged and took cause of national struggle.

As our first Prime Minister of Independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his "Discovery of India" about Gandhiji, "For millions it is an eternal vigil or a trance." His ambition, Nehru said, was "to wipe every tear from every eye". Thus Gandhi became the symbol of India's Independence and militant nationalism and symbol that people gathered and accepted his leadership. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made women stretch themselves and take deep breaths. His heroic fight for South African Indians and his novel method of Sathyagraha had yielded good results. "Swadeshi" was his watch word.

He influenced millions of people in India with his two-fold programmes namely (1) challenging and resisting foreign rule (2) struggle against the social evils which hampered the development of the lives of many people, including women. When women were still in the thralldom of ignorance and tradition, Bhirajima worked outside the borders of India.

The first Indian Woman that entered into active politics and fought for the attainment of freedom was Sarojini Naidu. In the early decades of the 20th century, one can observe that many women contributed a lot to the emancipation of women. Sarala Devi Choudharani, Sarala Ray, Lady Abala Bose, Vidya Gouri, Nilkanth, Sarada Ben Mehta, Begum Hamid Ali, Begum Mother of Bhopal, Sister Subbalakshmi, and Muthu Lakshmi Reddy of Madras are a few names in this regard.

The victims of police lathis and bullets included a large number of women, young, old and children. Within a short time 320 satyagrahis were severely wounded and two were killed. "At times spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into bloody pulp", sickened the American reporter Webb Miller, an eye witness to the situation. On the Dandi March (1934), "That was a marvelous sight of thousands of women, sheltered women, gentle women, many of whom have against their skin nothing more than rough texture of cloth. These women came out unafraid, fear had died, they stood side with men, their husbands, their fathers, brothers, sons and grandsons. Young girls, old women, widows marched from their tragic shadows of their widow-hood and made every effort towards the nation's passion for freedom. For example, there was a news item, which appeared in the Bombay Chronicle on 11th April 1930. The city police Deputy Commissioner Comasji Petigarra made a sudden sweep on the Congress house on Thursday evening to dismantle the salt factory. 200 police men with 30 police officers armed with revolvers, came all of a sudden, just on the eve of the meeting. 5000 people gathered around the house resisted the police people with the loud cries of



"Gandhiji Jai", "Down with the union jack", "Hindu-Muslim Bhai Bhai" were the slogans they raised in high pitch. They arrested the leaders and kept them in the Hamington Road police lockup. Mrs. Kasturiba Gandhi and Kamala Devi Chitpadhyay were arrested. Swarnap Rani, Kamala Nehru and other women made salt in Allahabad. In many places movements took place and many women leaders arrested and a girl of 13 years was killed due to police firing in Karnataka. She died a martyr's death at the altar of people comprising children.

Swarnakumari Devi, founder of Shakti Samiti, editor of the Journal 'Bharati', participated actively in the freedom struggle. Kadambini Ganguly, first woman delegate to the Congress (1839), first woman graduate of the medical Sciences participated in the national movement. She took part in the proceedings of the Congress. During the non-operation movement, and, even more so, in the civil disobedience movement, women "suddenly thrust aside every consideration. They broke out, risked their lives, received blows, injuries, insults and went to prisons. They acted independently and freely as if they had been emancipated for generations". The Indian National Congress recorded its homage and admiration for the womanhood of India. Women freedom fighters like Matangiri Hazra, Karnataka Barua and others were shot dead while fighting against the British rule. Aruna Asaf Ali and Usha Mehta remained underground throughout the period of quit India movement.

In Andhra Pradesh Digubarte Janakamma, Chukkamma, Vasireddi Hanumaiah, Kannagarti Nagarathnamma, Duggirala Kamalamba, Dasarai Krishnavenamma, Arikapudi Manikyamma, Suguna, Mahalakshamma, Vallabhanini Mahalakshamma, Kambhampati Manikyamma, Bharati Devi Ranga and several others contributed towards national struggle for India in a big way. In Maharashtra Rama Bai Saraswati, Ramabai Ranade, Kahibai Kanikar, Malatibai Bedekar, Geeta Sen are only a few examples in this regard.

In Assam, there were many women leaders like Pushpalatha Das, Anna Prabha Boruah, Sudha Ratha Dultta and others who faced military and the armed police. In the same state at Bajalli, 3000 women assembled together to celebrate the Independence Day. The meeting was presided over by Chandra Prabha. It was "open rebellion". Kumari Kamal Lata Tuljeswari and others laid down their lives and attained martyrdom.

J.B. Bhattacharji wrote about the role played by Rani Gaidinli in the Zeliangrong movement. During the 20th Century, in the North East India, Rani Gaidinli emerged as the grassroots leader of the Zeliangrong to liberate the area from an oppressive alien rule. Jawaharlal Nehru described her as "the Rani of the Nagas".

When Women marched to jails, in the gloomy cells, little babies first saw the light of day, and these babies are called 'victor babies', 'war babies. Women volunteers were abused in filthy language and were subjected to harsh treatment. These Satyagrahies were taken away in police vans and left off at distant places or in jungles away from their homes. It was reported that the police splashed on women coloured water and water mixed with pigs' refuse, rubbish, and chilly powder and some times with tar and irritant juices. Toddy was thrown on the face of these Women picketing liquor shops. Married Women were not allowed to wear kumkum. The glass bangles worn by women were broken and were forcibly taken away from them. The jailors asked them to wear white sarees generally worn by Hindu Widows. The utter callousness of the police could be seen in the way how Durgabai Deshmukh was treated in the Vellore jail. Not only the jail officers separated her from her mother but, transferred her to Madhurai jail where she suffered all the hardships of solitary confinement. That is the reason why Gandhiji once wrote, "To call Women the weaker sex is a libel; it is men's injustice to women". He opined that woman had more moral strength, excellent intuition, self-sacrifice, greater courage and without her, man could not survive. The role of the women in the epic struggle for freedom as Gandhi observed "will be written in letters of gold".

Police did everything to stop the propaganda of Congress ideology and the campaign for satyagraha. In spite of police vigilance, the Congress news sheets and bulletins issued regularly reaching the people all over the country on time. Women took the responsibility of distributing the prescribed literature. Women proved successful collaborators and they used to keep the duplicators in kitchens and police could not probe into these details. The walls and pavements served as boards on which the news of the day were transcribed. These women were very resourceful and they proved to be nimble and cautious than male members. This movement had contributed greatly to the mass social emancipation of Indian Women. This was one of the positive aspects.

Gandhiji obtained largest collections from the Women of Andhra. Maganti Annapurnamma was the first Women to give up all her gold ornaments. Similarly, many women volunteered and gave costly gifts to Mahatmaji. Thus, Andhra women had been in the vanguard of freedom movement and women plunged into the non-cooperation movement. Their courage and energy gave strength to the struggle.

The leaders who participated in the non-cooperation movement in Andhra were Duvvuri Subbamma, Vedantam Kamala Devi, Durgabai Deshmukh, Unnava Lakshmibayamma, Manikyamba, Ponaka Kannakamma, Oruganti Mahalakshmma, Maganti Annapurna Devi, Tallapragada Viswasundaramma and many others.

In the civil disobedience movement Durgabai, Vedantam Kamala Devi, Duvvuri Subbamma, Peddada Kameswaramma, Unnava Lakshmi Bayamma, Rukmini Lakshmi pathi, Khambhampati Manikyamma, Darsi Subhadramma and many others played a prominent role.

'Quit India', 'Bharat Chhodo' - this simple but powerful slogan launched the legendary struggle which was also known as August revolution (1942). In this struggle, the people of India demonstrated heroism and militancy. Apart from British obstinacy there were other factors like rising prices, war time shortages, high handed government actions all mounted up and generated enthusiasm and Gandhiji's speech in the Bombay congress meeting had the most electrifying impact. The repression was very severe as it was done under martial law.

During the Quit India movement underground networks were being consolidated in various parts of the country. An All India underground leadership with prominent leadership like Achut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Ram Manohar lohia, Sucheta Kripalani, Chhotubhai Puranik, Biju Patnaik, R.P.Goneka emerged. This leadership kept up popular morale by providing a line of command and a source of guidance and leadership to other activists all over the country.

The leaders who involved in the underground activity received both financial and moral support abundantly. For example, Sumati Morarjee, who later became India's leading woman industrialist helped Achyutapatt wardhan every possible way and others provided hideouts. Students acted as couriers. Villagers did not reveal secrets to the police. Pilots and train drivers delivered bombs and other material. The organizers disrupted the communications by blowing up bridges, cutting telegraph and telephone wires. Quit India movement was a movement of spontaneous outburst and violence was used by some.

In Andhra many training camps were organized and Andhra Mahila Sanghams grew into bigger mass organizations of women. Dr.Komaraju Achamamba, a noted medical practitioner became the president of this Sangham.

Dr.Laxmi Swaminatham from Madras became the commander of the Rani Jhansi Regiment in the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose. A ladies camp was organized in Singapore. It consisted of 600 volunteers. Young and elderly women, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs from every nook and corner of India joined the camp.

Leaders like Bi amma (Mother of Ali brothers), Basanti Devi, Padmasini Ammal, earned the recognition of their legitimate place in the Secular, spiritual counsels and active participation in the Indian freedom movement.

In the resolution of expressing gratitude, the Indian National movement recorded its "homage and admiration for the womanhood of India, who in the hour of peril for the motherland-----stood shouldert o shoulder with their men-folk in the front line of India's national army to share with them the sacrifices and triumphs of the struggle". It was the missionary zeal that made them carry out the constructive programme of the congress to the villages.

Sakuntala Devi of Gonda was arrested in individual satyagraha. Dr.Muthu Laxmi Reddy, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Hansa Mehta, Rukminilakshmipathi, Radhabai Subba Rayan, Ammu Swaminathan were the legislations. Kamala devi Chatopadhyaya, Bharati devi Ranga, Suhasini Jambekar led the left movement. Avantika Gokhale, freedom fighter from the time of champaran Satyagraha, founded the Desh Sevikadal in Bombay during civil Disobedience movement.

Thus, Woman of India did not care for thousands hurdles in the home domain or outside, disregarded a thousand dangers with the hope to make mother India free from foreign yoke.

15th August 1947 dawned revealing the dual reality of Independence and partition. Gandhiji's close follower, Mridula Sarabhai consoled him for the pathetic situation of partition of India and its repercussions like abductions, murders and rapes. "Nehru's eyes were on the light on the horizon, the New Dawn, the birth of free India". It was a glorious fight, hard-fight and hard won, in which many men and women fell martyrs and countless others made sacrifices for the "stroke of the midnight hour when the world sleeps India shall awake to light and freedom". That day came, but women's problems still remain unsolved.

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## 16.4 SOME WOMEN PARTICIPANTS THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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### 16.4.1 *Pandita Ramabai*

Helen S. Dyer wrote the life of Pandita Ramabai, her vision and her mission. Pandita Ramabai started an institution "Sharada Sadan" or "Abode of wisdom". She was a brahmin widow baptized as a member of the church of England.

First she took up forty pupils of the age group of 10 to 12 years who were cursed under the cruel ban of widowhood. Home was her first abode of learning and her mother was her first teacher. She found that extraordinary religious acts, which help a woman to get into the way of getting salvation, are utter abandonment of her will to that of her husband. During that time the 'low caste' people were looked upon as the lower species of animals, such as pigs and had no chance of salvation. After visiting many Homes at Fulham, she found a real difference between Hinduism and Christianity. She was baptized in the year 1883 at Wantage.

Rescued girls them and kept them in 'Sarada Sadan'. Ramabai wrote a story of her first widow, Thaku bai, whom she befriended when she was a young widow living in Poona. Thakubai was a poor brahmin orphan, deserted by her relatives. Married at the age of five, her mother-in-law called a demon who swallowed her husband. Some bad boys, who chased her and threw stones and mud, had cruelly persecuted her. She told Ramabai that she would rather die of starvation than wander about begging for food. Ramabai's kind heart made her to do some thing for the poor forsaken widows. Her daughter who studied up to high school in England and also in America returned to India to help her in running the institution. Wrote "the prayer on child widow"

I'm a little child, yet none will save,  
 When five years old betrothed to age,  
 To age with one foot touching the grave,  
 Yet when he dies the family rage.  
 The family storns, and curses, and swears;  
 The little wife has caused his death!  
 How shall I tell how widows fare?  
 O God, I have not power nor breath.  
 Sold into bondage, a helpless slave!  
 One hundred rupees! The paltry sum  
 My parents took; the old man gave,  
 And I was his, whe'er might come!

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 Come, oh my God! And set me release

A missionary, friend who visited the Sadan in 1901 wrote "Here are nearly 2000 girls and women in this home of safety, purity, and peace". He mentioned some noticeable features of the institution.

(1) "The happiness", "The order and discipline", "the Sacredness of the place", All this was possible because Ramabai was a daughter of India, an Indian widow, moved by the spirit of God, was the humane instrument in this mighty endeavour.

Rev. William Franklin of the American Christian and Missionary Alliance "Mission", said "We are now seeing the results of god's will in transfigured lives---," and helped her institution. She was called "The Moses of her people" and Ramabai translated the Bible in Marathi language.

Thus, Pandita Ramabai has a permanent place in the annals of the history of the world as a Saviour of child widows and destitute women. In the sense, she was the pioneer of rescuing Indian Womanhood and was the first feminist. She inspired thousands of Indian women to take up the path of freedom struggle. Her autobiography, 'My Testimony' (1907) has been the source for the half a dozen biographies on her. Thus Ramabai was a reformer who helped mainly the helpless and destitute women and her reformatory work among women brought an enlightenment among them which led to political consciousness later.

#### 16.4.2 *Annie Besant*

Home Rule League was led by Lokamanya Tilak and Annie Besant. Annie Besant joined Indian National Congress and was keen to arouse nationalist political activity. She came to India in 1893 to work for theosophy from her headquarters in Adyar, a suburb of Madras. Educated members of many Communities joined her league. She wanted to enlarge the sphere of her activities to include the building of a movement for Home Rule on the lines of Irish Home Rule League. For this, she realized it was necessary both to get the sanction of the Congress as well as active cooperation of extremists. She devoted her energies to persuade the moderate leaders to open the doors of the Congress to Tilak and his fellow extremists. Tilak and Besant decided to revive political activity on their own.

In early 1915, Anne Besant launched a campaign through her two newspapers 'New India' and 'Commonweal' and organized public meetings and conferences to demand that India be granted self-government on the lines of the white colonies after the war. In 1915 through her efforts the extremists were allowed to join the Congress. Congress and Muslim league did not approve her idea of setting up the Home Rule League.

In September Annie Besant announced the formation of her Home Rule League, with George Arundale, her theosophical follower, as the organizing Secretary. Tilak took the lead and set up the Home Rule League at the Bombay provincial conference at Belgam in the 1862 year soon the Home Rule movement attracted the governments' wrath.

The turning point in the movement came with the decision of the government of Madras in June 1917 to arrest Mrs. Besant and her associates. The tremendous achievement of the Home Rule movement and its legacy was that it created a generation of ardent nationalists who formed the backbone of the national movement in the alter years.

Annie Besant was a great educationalist. She felt that in addition to Western education and technology, religion and patriotism should form a part of education.

In 1898, she established Benaras Hindu College and made arrangements to study Hindu religious books. Later this college became Benaras Hindu University in 1916 with the active support of Madan Mohan Malaviya. There was no discrimination between castes, religion or classes in that University. She established schools for backward classes and for scheduled caste students. She was honoured with Honourary Doctorate from that University in the year 1921.

Annie Besant advocated political equality for women. She supported Women's Indian Association and became the first president of that organization. She, along with Sarojini Naidu, submitted memorandum to Montagu and Chelmsford in the year 1917. She worked against child marriages. She encouraged widow marriages and travel abroad by crossing the seas. She condemned caste system and superstitions.

She was a reputed national leader. She motivated many people who became national leaders. But, she was opposed to extreme nationalism. She joined hands with the Congress for the sake of achieving independence of India. She was arrested and detained at Ooty. Many protest meetings, processions took place and attempts were made for her release. She came out of jail and became the National Congress President in 1918.

Her physical self, its beauty, its grandeur, its simplicity and its nobility were reflected in her concrete work. Her strong mind, her sympathetic imagination, her earnest and constant longing for the betterment of the lot of her fellow men and women, children and animals on earth were admirable. Her commitment to the work and human values and her appreciation of values of men motivated to the freedom struggle was remarkable. She died in 1933. She wrote many inspiring books and left a rich legacy.

#### **16.4.3 Sarojini Naidu**

As early as 1903, Mrs. Naidu, India's pioneer national leader among women, said to the college students that 'you will ever be national'. Her chief aim and interest in life was to bring about unity in India and to make up the varied life into a strong unbreakable chain that no internal or external forces could break. Smt. Sarojini Naidu was born in 1879 at Hyderabad. Her Father Sri. Aghoranath Chattopadhyaya was Principal of Nizam college.

Mrs. Naidu, one of the greatest women of the century in the world, apart from being a poet, and politician every word she uttered was based on sincerity and love of fearless truth, making her one of the top leader of the country.

Margaret Cousins, Irish by birth, had been one of the founders of the Irish women's suffrage movement and later an active suffragist in England and courted

imprisonment. She became an ardent supporter of the Indian Women's rights. Margaret Cousins who had initiated the demand for women's suffrage said "The Vote is one of the links making Indian womanhood as a vital Unit in the life of the single nation of India". In England Sarojini Naidu explained the position of British rule in India and the massacre of Jalianwala Bagh.

Sarojini Naidu was very much emotional and decided to help Gandhi in the freedom struggle. Gandhi asked her to take up the leadership of women's movement in India. She was called as the "Nightingale of India" for her poetic powers.

In 1921, Sarojini plunged into the movement and became the disciple of Gandhiji.

She was at the top of the movement. In Bombay, foreign clothes worth about 3 Crores value were burnt by Gandhi, Mohammad Ali and Sarojini Naidu. She propagated non co-operation in the whole Country. All-important people were arrested. At first the British Administration was hesitant to arrest women folk. But, later repression was unleashed against them.

In 1923, Sarojini Naidu became the President of Bombay Provincial Congress. In 1924, the Congress delegated Sarojini Naidu to go to South Africa and remind (him of) the treaty with Smuts. She said, "I heard Smuts was rigid, I am more rigid than Smuts". In 1925, she became the President of the All India Congress. She focussed on women's problems in the session. She pleaded for unity. She was a member of Bombay Corporation and also became its Mayor. She introduced the familiar symbols of birds and animals pasted on the ballot boxes, so, that the illiterate and ignorant people could easily recognize them. Gandhi decided that Abbas Tyabji and Smt. Sarojini should take up Salt Satyagraha.

When Sarojini Naidu was going to attend the Round Table Conference, she said that Hindus and Musalmans should forget their religion and fight unitedly against British. She became the member of the Committee on Minorities. She advocated for the special representation of women in legislature. When minorities claimed that they should have proportionate representation, she told Macdonald that Gandhiji was wrong in estimating the number of minorities and women. She stressed that 50% of women should have representation accordingly.

In the Round Table conference, nothing new happened and Gandhiji and Sarojini returned to India. In 1932, they were arrested and she was released towards the end of the year.

On the annual day of All India Women's Conference at Madras Sarojini Naidu said, "Every woman should become an expert in some field or the other and



pledged that she would see the society without any social difference and that women were full-fledged citizens and nothing would come into their way". She also worked for the eradication of untouchability. Sarojini Naidu said, "There is none in this world that could stop the progress of women." Thus she wanted to work for the full-fledged development of women. In 1937, the Congress decided to participate in the elections. Sarojini decided to participate in the elections. Sarojini Naidu took active part in the campaign throughout the country.

In the Year 1939, Second World War broke out and the Congress ministries resigned. In 1940, Sarojini Naidu was again arrested at the age of 60. Her courage, enthusiasm, patriotic zeal, sacrificing spirit and adventurous attitude made her to work even at the age of 60. She was arrested in 1940 and released in 1941. In 1942 Quit India Movement was launched. Again she was arrested. On her request, she was put in the Agha Khan palace along with Gandhiji. Her sense of humour and engaging conversations gave life to Gandhiji. She arranged 74 lights without the knowledge of Gandhiji and celebrated his birthday. After their release, Gandhi embraced her and said, "My dear friend, My dear friend". It was such an association that Sarojini Naidu had with Gandhiji. Asian Countries convention held in 1947 was presided over by her. She was made U.P. Governor after the advent of Independence in 1947. It was her spirit that she could not stay in ivory tower when the country was groaning under foreign rule. The feminist movement was just in an embryonic form and a few women had taken the lead, Annie Besant being one of them.

In Sarojini, we find a leader who combined the women's struggle for emancipation into one united effort with the battle of freedom.

#### **16.4.4 Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy**

Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy was born in the Year 1886 in Tamil Nadu. Her father was S. Narayan Swamy and mother Chandrammal. Her father was the Principal of Maharaja's College in Pudukkottai. She was educated in spite of objections by orthodox people. Her father was a Brahmin and mother came from Vellala Caste, that is the Community from which Devadasis came. The Maharaja of Pudukkottai provided her with scholarship and books and she did her M.B.B.S. Winning medals and honours. In 1914, she set up a clinic in Madras. In the same year she married Dr. T. Sundar Reddy, F.R.C.S. and later became the mother of two children.

Dr. Reddy was introduced to Annie Besant and also she met a well known poet of Tamil Nadu, Subrahmanya Bharati. She was inspired by Annie Besant, and Sarojini Naidu and became a social worker. She opened a Widow's Home in 1912.

Dr. Reddy joined the Social Service League at Madras. She waged a struggle for the franchise for women in municipal and legislative bodies. She was the first member of Madras Legislative Council and first in India itself. She worked as the Honorary Secretary of 'Children's Aid Society', for 12 years. She attended International conference on 'Women Suffrage'. Mrs. Subba Rayan, Mrs. Swaminathan Ammal, Mrs. Rukmini Laxmipathi, Mrs. Anandam, Mrs. Syam and Mrs. Barry also attended the same conference.

As stated, she became the member of Madras Legislative Council in 1926 and later, she became its Deputy Chairman. She was instrumental in enacting many measures for women. Her efforts to abolish Devadasi System by Law gave her name and fame. She started the Avvai Home in 1930 and took care of the destitute women.

Mrs. Reddy urged the government not to embark upon curbing the area of women's education, work and welfare. Some are great, others have greatness thrust upon them. A few achieve greatness against heavy odds by sheer merit, ability, integrity and character.

Muthu Lakshmi Reddy should be placed in the third category. To achieve her goals, she had to struggle against several odds and social taboos which hampered the physical and mental growth of women in the late 19th and 20th Centuries.

While we look at her life and work, we cannot but get impressed by the multifaceted personality that she was. She verily a great hope and succor to the destitute, to the deserted and the orphaned. Although she passed from mortality to immortality on July 22nd 1968, she did everlasting work, which inspired thousands of women in the freedom Struggle.

#### **16.4.5 Durgabai Deshmukh**

Durgabai Deshmukh was born on July 15th 1909 to Sri Rama Rao and Smt. Krishna Venamma at her grand father's Place. Monoharam was a police officer of high rank. Rama Rao was running a technical Institute by the name "Victoria Technical Institute", imparting training to Youth in professional courses.

Durgabai was active from childhood. She drew inspiration from her mother. Her house was like an inn, twenty-four hours her mother engaged in kitchen work devoid of rest and other interests.

Durgabai was married to Subba Rao, a rich person. It was a child marriage and she did not remember anything about it when she grew up. She said that after she came of age, she could not confine herself to four walls and could not lead a

life of luxury. She opined for freedom and she could not lead an idle life in the zamindar family of her late husband. Rama Rao realised the mistake and confessed that it was not a marriage at all and told his wife that Durgabai should be given freedom to marry according to her choice. After the death of her father, they settled down in Kakinada. The Socio-Political and cultural conditions of Kakinada left a deep impression upon her. Singing songs and interior decoration were her two hobbies.

Durgabai started her career by teaching at home. Her mother was her disciple. In 1923, she trained 600 Volunteers for the All India Congress Conference held at Kakinada, she was just 15 years when that Conference took place and hence not allowed to be a Volunteer herself. Konda Venkatappaih, the leading Congress leader instructed her not to allow anybody into the Conference hall. She stopped Pandit Nehru entering the hall without an entry pass. The Leaders visited her Hindi School. Jamanlal Bajaj promised her school financial assistance.

There were no heights which Durgabai could not reach. "The little Ladies of Brindavan" her Hindi school was the first seed and foundation stone to the mansion of her Social work.

The second aspect that turned a new leaf in her life was Gandhi's visit to Kakinada. She wanted to bring the plight of Devadasi women, women in Purdah to the notice of Gandhiji. She collected five thousand rupees for the Congress Fund and got the permission from Konda Venkatappaih to meet Gandhiji. Two minutes of Gandhi's interview continued for two hours and all the assembled women gave their gold ornaments to Gandhi on that occasion. Later for all the meetings she became the translator of Gandhi's speeches. Gandhi said that Durgabai should become the leader of the people in his absence. She went to jail three times. Even in the jail, she could not be quiet. She questioned the classification of ABC Categories in the jail and attributed this to the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British. She insisted that lady Lawyer and Lady doctor deal with women Prisoners. She was put in solitary confinement.

Durgabai was influenced and inspired by Bapu, who said, "hate the sin but not the sinner". She was the "dictator" of Salt Satyagraha at Madras. With the arrest of Tanguturi Prakasam and K.Nageswarao pantutu, the Satyagrahis became desperate. Under her leadership more than a hundred satyagrahis, inclusive of women started a procession from the Swaraj office. The police stopped and Lath-charged them. Durgabai, Varahamma and some other Satyagrahis resisted the police and the ladies were taken as prisoners.

Durgabai was elected to the Constituent Assembly. She was regular to the Assembly sessions and it was considered as political schooling. Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru, Vallabhai Patel, Gopalaswami Iyyengar bestowed their attention to include civil rights, standard rules and regulations. B.N.Rao was a Constitutional expert and used to analyze the different Constitutions of the world. Dr.Ambedkar took the responsibility of drafting the Constitution. Rajkumari Amritkaur, Renuka and Durgabai used to participate in the discussions. Durgabai was the steering committee member. She introduced at least 750 amendments. She worked along with experts like Santhanam and Ananta Sayanam Iyyengar. The Constituent Assembly was like a provisional parliament. Matrankar, the speaker used to give chances to Durgabai to preside over the meetings. During her president-ship, the Bills of Benaras Hindu University, were accepted. There were several occasions to discuss the Hindu code bill. But, the Hindu code Bill was not passed because women were not progressive at that time. Only five items were accepted. In 1952, Hindu code Bill was discussed in the Parliament. The status of women and issues such as marriage were discussed. Women's inheritance Act and Anti-dowry Acts were passed though they were not implemented properly.

Thus, Durgabai was described in 'New India (weekly) editorial as a symbol of feminine militancy in Freedom struggle as well as feminine march to the citadels of power in free India. She was a great example of Indian Womanhood. She was the founder and foster mother of several institutions in Madras, Hyderabad and Mahaboob nagar. Her contribution to the progress of Andhra in education and social Welfare was monumental.

C.D.Deshmukh, the great economist and Scholar invited Durgabai for tea. While walking in the garden he expressed the feeling that he was very much tired and wanted to come out of the Planning Commission. He requested her help and he expressed the feeling that 'she could fill the gap in his life'. Both were the members of the Planning Commission at that time. Durgabai requested Nehru to relieve her from the responsibilities of the Planning Commission.

The marriage of Durgabai and Deshmukh was performed on 22nd January, 1953. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sucheta Kripalani, Durgabai's brother Narayana Rao signed the documents. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Krishna Huthi Singh and Indira Gandhi attended the marriage. Twenty Six years of their married life was enjoyable and there was not even a single difference of opinion between them. Both of them were active in public life of India and abroad. She was a member of many committees in the U.N.O.

Durgabai passed away on 9th May 1981. Her friend Ayesha Abdul Khader said that she was living in the hearts of people and her values were permanent and her activities were stable.

Thus a remarkable and dynamic lady contributed a lot to our country and especially for its women folk.

#### 16.4.6 *Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay*

It is believed that in the primitive society women enjoyed advantages denied to their sisters of so-called civilized society. They were more autonomous in their habits and attitudes.

Woman in the modern times is reduced to the status of reproductive machine and wild man's sphere is expanding that of woman is contracting. She has become the private property of man. Double standards of morality now come to be recognized in the Society. A woman is perceived to be preserver of Society.

The political awakening among woman received a tremendous impetus in 1930's when the Indian National Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. Long oppressed, the work freedom worked like magic on women. Lack of educational facilities reacted on the social environment and viceversa.

Child marriage is not only an evil in itself but brings a whole multitude of miseries in its train. Kamala Devi gave the figures of married girls at that time.

|          |     |      |      |
|----------|-----|------|------|
| Age      | 0-5 | 5-10 | 1-15 |
| Per 1000 | 30  | 193  | 381  |

43.7% of girls were married below the age of 15. Associated with early marriage, another evil was frequent maternity. As Kamala Devi said, "One hundred out of every thousand girl wives were doomed to die in childbirth". Purdah, another social evil was prevalent. In a country where people demand democracy, Purdah is anachronism. Trafficking of women and children was another problem which women's organizations and international bodies tried to take up (League of Nations). Prostitution is essentially an economic question, even today it is prevalent throughout the world. Another problem prevalent among the Muslim women is polygamy.

Women's movement made history in our country. Kamala Devi was one of the pioneers of the movement. She had not only the gift of eloquent exposition but she contributed immensely to the progress and reform of women folk of India. She was the leader of their conscious awakening and in guiding women. She wrote a book on "the Awakening of Indian Women". In writing this book Margaret E Cousins, Sakuntala Thampi, H.H. Maharani Indira Bai Holkar of Indore, Shyam Kumari Nehru, Jaya Shriben Raiji also contributed articles on different aspects of Women.

Kamala Devi took a prominent role in our political struggle. She was one of the intellectuals of the Indian Socialist party. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan wrote about her that, "she has the intelligence to think, the eloquence to transmit great ideas to her readers".

Kamala Devi stressed the need of training girls in various fine arts and crafts like spinning, weaving embroidery, flower and other decorations. The concept of Womanhood was contrived at the sacrifice of all other human qualities, rights and obligations to the family and society. This virus seeped so deep down into the women's very being. In spite of her education and economic independence, still woman continues to feel subordinate to man, seek permission, leaves decisions to him.

Kamala Devi discussed at length the marriage system and its loopholes. She wrote about the contributions of social reform movement, which helped the women-folk in solving their problems. She discussed all their issues in her book, "Indian Women's battle of freedom". In this she wrote about Indian women's demands for political rights and need for their reform in social problems. She was a close associate of Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu. Mrs. Grace Lancaster and quite a galaxy of noted women lent their names and participated in many public meetings. The London contacts for the Indian Women had expanded further. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur was invited to join the International Women's delegation to wait on the President of the League of Nations to plead for the cause of India.

After the close of world war II, the Indian Women's Conference tried to build links with its agencies. Stress was on the raising of the economic standards of the people, the spread of social education and a general reorientation of the basic principles according to which the life style of people should be planned.

#### **16.4.7 Aruna Asaf Ali**

In the year 1942 in the month of August revolutionary movement emerged in the country. Durgabai, Pritilata, Binadas worked in the front line and a large number of others worked in the background and carried the message. They gave shelter to a number of revolutionary activities.

In the Quit India Movement, women activists like Matangi Hazra, Kanakalata Barva and others were shot dead while leading the movement. Many like Arun Asaf Ali and Usha Mehta remained underground for years to carry on the struggle.

Women, especially college and schoolgirls, played an important role. Aruna Asaf Ali and Sucheta Kripalani were the two leading Women organizers of the underground movement. Usha Mehta, an important member of the small group, ran the underground Congress radio.

Peasants of all strata, well to do, as well as the poor, were the heart of this revolutionary movement, especially in east U.P. Even Zamindars maintained neutrality. Government authorities at the lower levels of the police and administration generally gave assistance. They gave shelter, provided information and helped monetarily. Jail officials tended to be much kinder to the prisoners than during the earlier period.

Aruna Asaf Ali worked for women's suffrage in India. The suffragists acquired greater strength with the support of Sarala Devi Chowdharani, a feminist who worked for the Women's suffrage. The police commissioners cryptic comment was that men in Bengal were taking 'shelter the skirts' of Women. The zeal of the women unnerved the British bureaucracy.

Thus, Aruna Asaf Ali was a Woman's suffragist and underground revolutionary leader who participated in the Indian freedom struggle. She also waged a war against many social ills in the society and opined that women should come forward and fight against their economic hardships too.

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## 16.5 SUMMING-UP

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In this unit we have studied that Women participated in the national struggle very actively. The first Indian Woman who entered active politics and fought for the attainment of freedom was Sarojini Naidu. Sarala Devi Choudharmai, Sarala Ray, Lady Abala Bose, Vidya Gouri, Nilkanth, Sarada Ben Mehta, Begum Hamid Ali, Sister Subbalakshmi and Muthulakshmi Reddy were women leaders who contributed towards the emancipation of women. Briefly we have studied about Pandita Ramabai, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Muthulakshmi Reddy, Durgabai Deshmukh, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay and Aruna Asaf Ali.

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## 16.7 MODEL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

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### I. Answer the following in 30 lines each.

1. Describe the movements in which women participated actively in India.
2. Discuss the political status of women before Independence.
3. Discuss the contribution of Sarojini Naidu in the freedom struggle.

### II. Answer the following in 10 lines each.

1. Muthulakshmi Reddy
2. Durgabai Deshmukh
3. Aruna Asaf Ali

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## 16.7 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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1. Devaki Jain, ed., 1975, "Indian Woman", New Delhi (International Women's Year)
2. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya et. al., 1939, "Awakening of Indian Women", Madras.
3. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, 1983, "Indian Women's Battle for Freedom", New Delhi.
4. K.Sarwani, 1993, Dr.Mutha Laxmi Reddi "Contribution to Society" (1886-1968) (Un published Ph.D. This is submitted to Madras University 1993).
5. K.Janki, 1999, "Role of Women in Freedom Struggle in Andhra", Hyderabad.
6. Ramalakshmi Arudra, 1987, "Durgabai Deshmukh", Hyderabad (National Book Trust, India, Telugu Academy, Hyderabad (Joint-Publication).
7. Helen S.Dyer, "Pandita Ramabai: Her Mission and Triumph of faith" London.
8. M.K.Gandhi



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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**Department of Sociology**

**P.G.Diploma in Women's Studies**  
**SYLLABUS**

**Course V : Women and Politics**

- Block -I** : Conceptual Frame Work of Power and Politics  
Unit 1 : Power - Politics as Struggle for Power  
Unit 2 : State and Civil Society
- Block - II** : Political Thought and Women  
Unit 3 : Trends in Ideology  
Unit 4 : Feminist Perspectives of Power & Politics
- Block - III** : Political Participation of Women  
Unit 5 : Indian Society and Women's Participation  
Unit 6 : Women in Political Processes  
Unit 7 : Women in Local Self Government and Panchayati Raj  
Unit 8 : Indian Constitution and Emerging Policies
- Block - IV** : Political Empowerment of Women  
Unit 9 : Women's Education and Empowerment of women  
Unit 10 : Role of Women's Movements, Organisations and Issues on Political Empowerment  
Unit 11 : Reservation for Women  
Unit 12 : Women's Rights as Human Rights
- Block -V** : Women's Movements and Emerging Issues  
Unit 13 : Traditional and Autonomous Movements  
Unit 14 : Gender, Caste & Class
- Block - VI** : Women in Politics  
Unit 15 : Women in Political Parties  
Unit 16 : Women in Politics

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**P.G. DIPLOMA IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**COURSE - V : WOMEN AND POLITICS**

**ASSIENMENT - 1**

**Time : 2 Hour**

**Note :**

1. Do not copy the answer directly from any of the books.
  2. As far as possible, try to answer the questions independently in your own words.
  3. If it is necessary to quote from any source, give the correct reference.
  4. Use our own foolscap pages for writing the assignment
  5. Leave sufficient margin for the comments of the evaluator
  6. Completion of this assignment normally should not take more than two hours time.
- 

**Part - A**

**Max Marks : 15**

**Min Marks : 6**

**I. Answer any one question in about 30 lines**

- 1) Discuss the role of state and civil society.
- 2) Discuss the different trends in ideology

**Part - B**

**II. Answer any own question in about 15 lines**

- 1) Indian women's participation in politics.
- 2) Women in local Self Government.

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**ASSIENMENT - II**

**Time : 2 Hour**

**Note :**

1. Do not copy the answer directly from any of the books.
  2. As far as possible, try to answer the questions independently in your own words.
  3. If it is necessary to quote from any source, give the correct reference.
  4. Use our own foolscap pages for writing the assignment
  5. Leave sufficient margin for the comments of the evaluator.
  6. Completion of this assignment normally should not take more than two hours time.
- 

**Part - A**

**Max Marks : 15**

**Min Marks : 6**

**I. Answer any one question in about 30 lines**

- 1) Discuss the role of education in the empowerment of women.
- 2) Discuss about Women in Politics.

**Part - B**

**II. Answer any own question in about 15 lines**

- 1) Traditional movements.
- 2) Reservation for women.

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**P.G. DIPLOMA IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**COURSE - V : WOMEN AND POLITICS**

**Model Examination Questions**

Time : 3 Hours

Max Marks : 100

Min Marks : 35

**Section - A**

**I. Answer any four of the following eight questions in about 30 lines each. Each question carries 15 Marks.**

4 X 15 = 60 Marks

- 1). Examine the relation between Power and Politics
- 2). Examine the relation between State and Civil Society.
- 3). Discuss Liberal and Marxist Feminism
- 4). Describe the ideology of eco feminism.
- 5). Discuss the Socio Economic and Cultural Factors that hindered women's participation after Independent-
- 6). Discuss the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of the Indian Constitution.
- 7). Discuss the legislations past for women's development in India.
- 8). Discuss the role of education in the empowerment of Women.

**Section - B**

**II. Answer any five of the following 10 questions in about 15 lines each. Each Question carries 5 marks.**

5 X 8 = 40 Marks

- 9). Trace the causes for the backwardness of women in education.
- 10). Discuss radical feminism.
- 11). Discuss the fundamental rights of women.
- 12). Discuss the recommendations the committee on the status of women in India.
- 13). Discuss the contribution of Smt. Pandita Ramabai and the freedom struggle.
- 14). Discuss the role of political parties in the empowerment of women.
- 15). What is the role of United Nations in the development of Women.
- 16). Discuss the recommendations made by the national perspective plan for women.
- 17). Discuss obstacles for political empowerment of Women.
- 18). Discuss the women's role in Local Self Government.

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