**WOMAN STUDIES**

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**The Emergence of Woman's Studies**

Women's Studies stands as a beacon of intellectual revolution in our contemporary age. At its core, Women's Studies magnifies the entirety of women's experiences through the lens of scholarly inquiry. It subjects these experiences to the most advanced scientific methods available within the academic realm. This chapter explores how researchers meticulously uncover facts, cultivate insights, and how educators and students, spanning a multitude of disciplines, collaborate to refine and enrich these findings. With its comprehensive perspective spanning the natural sciences to the arts, Women's Studies boasts unparalleled breadth, drawing from the diverse expertise of scholars and students alike to propel the field forward.

**A Global Mosaic of Exploration**

Women's Studies is an endeavor that transcends borders, uniting minds across the globe. Simultaneously birthed in various corners of the world, this academic pursuit rapidly gained momentum. Ewha University in Seoul, South Korea, led the way by initiating its inaugural Women's Studies program in 1977. In the United States, Women's Studies programs were introduced at Cornell University and California State University, San Diego, in 1969. Over time, the United States witnessed the growth of Women's Studies from isolated courses in individual universities during the late 1960s to a staggering landscape of more than 600 degree-granting majors and programs today. India, too, embraced Women's Studies with fervor during the early 1970s, establishing itself as a global frontrunner in exploring the dimensions of women's experience and thought. Yet, the remarkable growth of Women's Studies only scratches the surface of the ongoing enthusiasm that propels its practitioners.

**Pioneering Indian women**

1. **Jhansi Rani Lakshmi Bai**

Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi, lived in the Jhansi area of Uttar Pradesh, India, during her reign as the Maratha princely state of Jhansi from 19 November 1828 to 18 June 1858. She was a key player in the 1857 Indian Rebellion and became a stand-in for Indian nationalists' opposition to the British Raj. Rani Lakshmibai was born into a Marathi Karhade Brahmin household on November 19, 1828, in Varanasi. She went by the name ManikarnikaTambe and went by Manu.Her mother was Bhagirathi Sapre (Bhagirathi Bai), and her father was Moropant Tambe. Maharashtra is where her parents are from. When she was four years old, her mother passed away. Her father served Peshwa Baji Rao II of the district of Bithoor. She was given the Peshwa's humorous nickname, Chhabili. Her studies included shooting, horsemanship, fencing, and mallakhamba with her childhood pals Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope. She was educated at home, was literate, and was more independent as a child than other children her age. Many of the patriarchal cultural expectations for women in Indian society at the time were contrasted by Rani Lakshmibai. Between the palace and the temple, Rani Lakshmibai was used to travelling by horseback with a small entourage, though occasionally she was carried by palanquin. Sarangi, Pavan, and Baadal were some of her horses. According to historians, when she fled the fort in 1858, she was riding Baadal. The Rani Mahal, Rani Lakshmibai's palace, has been transformed into a museum. It houses a collection of artefacts dating from the ninth to the twelfth centuries AD. In honour of the Hindu deity Lakshmi and in accordance with custom, Manikarnika was renamed Lakshmibai (or Laxmibai) after her marriage to Gangadhar Rao Newalkar, the Maharaja of Jhansi, in May 1842. In 1851, she gave birth to a son who was later named Damodar Rao but who passed away four months later. The day before he passed away, the Maharaja adopted Anand Rao, the cousin of Gangadhar Rao, who was given the new name Damodar Rao. A British political officer who was present for the adoption was given a letter from the Maharaja instructing that the child be treated with dignity and that his widow be given control of Jhansi for the rest of her life. The British East India Company, led by Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, used the Doctrine of Lapse following the death of the Maharaja in November 1853, dismissing Damodar Rao's claim to the throne and annexing the state to its territory. This was done because Damodar Rao (born Anand Rao) was an adopted son. When she heard this, she exclaimed, "I shall not surrender my Jhansi" (Main apni Jhansi nahi doongi). Rani Lakshmibai was given a pension of Rs. 60,000 per year in March 1854 and instructed to leave the palace and the fort. Before breakfast, the Rani would practice weightlifting, wrestling and steeple chasing, according to Vishnu Bhatt Godse. She was a smart, understated woman who conducted business like. She fought for territory and martyred.

1. **Annie Besant**

Annie Besant was a British socialist, theosophist, women's rights advocate, author, speaker, educator, and philanthropist who lived from 1 October 1847 to 20 September 1933. She was a fierce advocate for human freedom and self-rule in both Ireland and India. She was a prolific writer, having written over 300 books and pamphlets. She was a pioneer in education, helping to build the Banaras Hindu University. At the age of 20, Annie wed the clergyman Frank Besant, and the two became parents of two children in 1867. However, their formal split occurred in 1873 as a result of Annie's increasingly strange religious beliefs. She later rose to prominence as a speaker for the National Secular Society (NSS), a writer, and Charles Bradlaugh's close friend. They faced legal action in 1877 as a result of their publication of a book by birth control activist Charles Knowlton. Their notoriety as a result of the incident led to Bradlaugh's election as Northampton's M.P. in 1880. She then got involved in union activities, such as the Bloody Sunday protest and the 1888 London matchgirls strike. She was a prominent spokesperson for the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Fabian Society. Despite the fact that few women were eligible to vote at the time of the 1873 separation, she won the election and was appointed to the London School Board for Tower Hamlets. She later rose to prominence as a speaker for the National Secular Society (NSS), a writer, and Charles Bradlaugh's close friend. They faced legal action in 1877 as a result of Charles Knowlton, a proponent of birth control, writing a book. Their notoriety as a result of the incident led to Bradlaugh's election as Northampton's M.P. in 1880. She then got involved in union activities, such as the Bloody Sunday protest and the 1888 London matchgirls strike. She was a prominent spokesperson for the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Fabian Society. Despite the fact that few women were eligible to vote at the time, she also won the election for Tower Hamlets to the London School Board. After Besant met Helena Blavatsky in 1890, her interest in theosophy increased while her interest in worldly issues decreased during the following few years. She joined the Theosophical Society and rose to prominence as a speaker on the subject. She visited India for her theosophical-related studies. She contributed to the founding of the Central Hindu School in 1898 and the Hyderabad (Sind) National Collegiate Board in Mumbai, India, in 1922. She founded Le Droit Humain, the International Order of Co-Freemasonry's first lodge outside of the United States, in 1902. She opened lodges throughout the course of the following few years throughout the British Empire. She was elected president of the Theosophical Society in 1907, while its world headquarters were still in Adyar, Madras (Chennai). She joined the Indian National Congress and was interested in politics in India. She assisted in the founding of the Home Rule League, which fought for Indian democracy and dominion status inside the British Empire, after World War I broke out in 1914. As a result, she was chosen to lead the Indian National Congress in late 1917. Jiddu Krishnamurti, who Besant claimed to be the new Messiah and Buddha's incarnation, and she moved to the United States in the late 1920s. In 1929, Krishnamurti disputed these assertions. She persisted in advocating for theosophical causes and Indian independence after the war until her death in 1933. 3. **Sarojini Naidu**

Indian political activist and poet Sarojini Naidu (née Chattopadhyay; 13 February 1879 – 2 March 1949). She played a significant role in India's fight for independence from colonial control as a supporter of civil rights, women's emancipation, and anti-imperialist beliefs. Naidu acquired the moniker Nightingale of India for her poetry. Naidu was schooled in Chennai, London, and Cambridge before being born into a Bengali family in Hyderabad. After working as a suffragist in England, she was lured to the Indian National Congress' campaign for the country's independence from British domination. She joined the Indian nationalist movement and adopted Gandhi's swaraj philosophy as her own. The first woman to assume the position of governor in the Dominion of India, she was chosen as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1925 and then elevated to that position in 1947 to become the Governor of the United Provinces. Children's poems as well as poems with more sombre subjects like tragedy, romance, and patriotism may be found in Naidu's poetry. She published "In the Bazaars of Hyderabad" in 1912, and it is still one of her most well-known poems today. She was wed to general practitioner Govindarajulu Naidu and they had five kids together. In a heart arrest on March 2, 1949, she passed away.

1. **Indira Gandhi**

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi was a prominent member of the Indian National Congress and the country's first and only female prime minister until recently. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, was the father of Indira Gandhi. She was the second-longest-serving Indian prime minister after her father, in office from January 1966 to March 1977 and again from January 1980 till her murder in October 1984. When her father was prime minister between 1947 until 1964, Gandhi worked as his personal hostess and aide. In 1959, she was chosen to lead the Indian National Congress. Upon her father's death in 1964, she was appointed as a member of the Rajya Sabha (upper house) and became a member of Lal Bahadur Shastri's cabinet as Minister of She was appointed to the Rajya Sabha (upper house) upon the death of her father in 1964, and she later joined Lal Bahadur Shastri's government as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. She defeated Morarji Desai in the Congress Party's legislative leadership contest held in early 1966 (after Shastri's passing), and as a result, Shastri's position as prime minister of India was filled. Gandhi's political intransigence and unparalleled consolidation of power during her tenure as prime minister were well-known. She engaged in conflict with Pakistan to support the independence cause and East Pakistan's battle for independence, which led to an Indian triumph, the founding of Bangladesh, and a rise in India's power to the point where it became the leading regional power of South Asia. Gandhi imposed a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977 during which basic civil liberties were banned and the press was censored due to separatist aspirations and a call for revolution. Throughout the emergency, atrocities were committed on a large scale. After transparent elections in 1980, she reclaimed her position as leader. Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984, by her own bodyguards and Sikh nationalists after ordering Operation Blue Star to take military action against the Golden Temple. Indira Gandhi won the title of "Woman of the Millennium" in a 1999 BBC online vote. Gandhi was listed by Time magazine as one of the 100 most influential women of the 20th century in 2020.

**Women During The Pre Independence Period**

Women in the years before independence Male chauvinism has become firmly entrenched in traditional Hindu society as a result of the lack of self-assurance and economic illiteracy of women. The majority of families and society viewed women as objects to be bought and sold. They were not given any respect or freedom in their daily lives. In the nineteenth century, as western philosophy and education proliferated, men began to worry about how the other half of society was doing. The reformation movement's primary goal was to purge society of immoral behaviours. The dissemination of female education was the next and most crucial stage. The leader of social reforms for women, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was adamantly opposed to these cultural vices that were practised at the time. He is the one to whom the legal abolition of this Satidaha is credited. Lord William Bentinck's 1829 prohibition on the practise of Sati was the result of his efforts and endeavour. In addition to having a tremendous impact on women's lives, the legalisation of this traditional practise altered people's attitudes towards it to some measure. He wanted to institute a widow remarriage system and end child marriage in society. They obviously had their own interests in mind, as seen by the upper caste Hindu families' lack of support for the missionaries' work. It was credited to Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule for founding the country's first girls' school. In 1848, he built a school for females from lower castes after educating his wife. This was the second girl's school that the Indians had founded in India. The first free school for females was established in 1847 in Barasat, a suburb of Calcutta, by Peary Charan Sarkar, a former student of Hindu College in Calcutta and a member of "Young Bengal." The school was later known as Kalikrishna females' High School. In order to protect newborn girl children from female infanticide. Mahatma Phule founded the first shelter for widows from higher castes. Another important figure in the 19th-century social reformation movement was Eshwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He researched a lot of ancient Hindu religious literature and discovered that the gender disparity or inferior position of women that was prevalent in society had nothing to do with spiritual texts in the truest sense; rather, it was the result of nefarious politics carried out at the time to maintain women's subordination to men. He had contributed greatly to widow remarriage. His tireless efforts led to the legalisation of widow remarriage in 1856. He played a commendable role in the expansion of women's education. First female school in which the respected Hindu families started to send their daughters was the „Calcutta Female School‟, established by J.E.D. Bethune in 1849 (later the school was named Bethune School). His attempt was strongly supported by Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Vidyasagar, Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay and others. Madan Mohan Tarkalankar sent his own daughters in that school. Vidyasagar, who was the honorary secretary of that school, established 50 female schools in Bengal in 1857 onwards. He got great support from the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal F.J.Halliday. However, in the initial stage there was no financial backing from the Government. The venture was solely dependent on the personal funding (Narishikshabhandar) of Vidyasagar and his supporters. It should be remembered that in the rural area there were no scope of girls‟ formal and non-formal education due to the lack of girls‟ school and educated parents and liberal persons in the family. Not only that, wherever there were girls‟ school the male teachers were not accepted by the orthodox Hindus. Another major hindrance was child marriage. At that phase, the role of Brahmo Samaj was remarkable. Keshab Chandra Sen, one of the renowned leader of BrahmoSamaj, wanted to train female teachers with the help of Miss Merry Carpenter (who came to India with the mission of spreading female education). He established „Female Normal School‟ (1871) for women teachers‟ training, „Metropolitan Female school‟ (1879) etc. Though several girls‟ schools were started at that period, yet the mind-set of the Hindu society was not favorable to enlighten the female folk. In the late nineteenth century only the women of the Brahmo, Christian and educated Hindu families got the opportunities of formal or non-formal education. However, the large section of the female was in the dark. Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of Araya Samaj had translated Veda from Sanskrit to Hindi, so that common man including women can understand the Vedic religious scripture and apprehend that the ancient scripture gives utmost importance on women. He emphasized for the equal rights of women and men in every facets of life. He tried to change the mind-set of people with his Vedic teachings. Situation gradually changed in the first half of the twentieth century. The social reformers of nineteenth century although had laid down the stage for the emancipation of women from socio-cultural evil practices but it became more vibrant and spread to the mass by the initiative of Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi. He was the one who liberated Indian women largely from the clutches of Purdah and other social evils. In Gandhi’s mission of free India women have participated in the struggle for independence. According to him, women should be released from the slavery of kitchen and only then, their true potential could be realized. According to him although women have a vital responsibility in household affairs but it should not be the only one duty and responsibility for them. In fact, women should come forward to share the responsibilities of nation building. It was due to his effort’s female participation in the struggle for independence became visible. They came out of their homes to organize meetings and processions, to spread the message of Swadeshi, to sell khadi, to give away their jeweler and ornaments, to picket near the shops of foreign cloth. He spread the message of equality of gender to the masses and criticized the desire of Indian people to have male child instead of a female (Patel, Sujata, 1988). Gandhi was strictly against the child marriage and favored widow remarriage. He said that the girls are also capable of everything that boys can do. It was mainly due to his efforts 'right to vote' came naturally to Indian women after independence whereas in other developed nations like England and America women got this right after lot of protest.

**Women During The Post Independence Period**

After independence the government of India has tried to enact laws, rules, positive discriminatory policies and measures for safeguard of women’s interest and for their up liftmen due to its very spit of democracy, sovereignty and socialistic nature of governance. In the constitutional framework the divisive social forces are tried to be reduced and attempt has been made for equality in respect of caste, gender and religion etc. Also sufficient legislative measures are enacted and developmental policies are initiated to increase women participation in economic affairs by coming out of the traditional and rigid socio-cultural constraints and customs and attitudes; initiatives have been take for increasing awareness of sex equality, but the index of success of mission seems to have found among elite circles. The occupational, property and other legislations have clearly upgraded the quality of many individual women‟s lives. However, these changes are not indicative of any significant improvement in the status of women as a whole, especially amongst the low caste, illiterate and poor female population who are in a majority. It means Gender as a socio-cultural constructed phenomenon when inter mix with other social challenges like Caste (Scheduled caste), religion (Minority), locality (rural), it further aggravates the status. Census 2011 shows our national sex ratio as 943:1,000 (943 females for every 1,000 males). The Declining trend in sex ratio, from 972 in the year 1901 to933 in 2001 and 943 in the year 2011, indicates the actual deteriorating condition of women in the society. Biological evidence proves that resistant to diseases power women is more than men. Life expectancy is a proof of that. In our country, life expectancy of women is 65.27 years whereas for men it is only 62.36 years. Though women have a higher death rate until the age of 34, the probabilities of survival after this age are higher. Therefore, the ratio of female above 60 years is greater than male. How ever the child sex ratio (in the age group of zero to six) in India has dropped to 914 females against 1,000 males -- the lowest since Independence, in the provisional 2011 Census report released by the Government of India. Despite of laws to prevent abortion of female foeticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child, the ratio has declined from 927 female children against 1,000 male children in 2001 to 914, which was perceived as a "matter of grave concern" by Census Commissioner of India C. Chandramauli. It portrays social discrimination shown towards women even at the stage of birth. Main reasons of this high gap in the ratio are sex wise abortions and female infanticide. Although Abortion is legal in our country but sex based abortion is a crime here (Regulation & Prevention of Misuse Act 1994, which prohibits any prenatal diagnostic techniques and sex selective abortions). However, gender wise abortions are on the rise in India. Although abortion of female foetus in society has a high relation with poverty due to son preference attitude for economic return point of view but in some societies opposite pictures are visualized. In economically developed states such as Haryana and Punjab, the tendency is found to be more. Though there is an increasing trend in 2011 census still Punjab and Haryana remained at the bottom of the list of sex ratio. Haryana has 830 female children and Punjab 846 against per 1,000 male children. The accepted reason for practice of female infanticide in India is the existence of dowry system, where parents of girls have to pay a great deal of money to the parents of groom during marriage. By avoiding a girl, a family can avoid paying a large dowry on the marriage of their daughter. In India dowry remains as the major point of discrimination and justice shown to women. It has always been an important part of Hindu marriages. Not only among Hindus, are its evil tentacles now spreading to other religions also. Although dowry was legally prohibited in 1961 (Dowry Prohibition Act), it continues to be highly institutionalized. As per the prohibition of dowry Act, the precipitant and provider of dowry will be sentenced to imprisonment for 5 years and a fine of Rs 15,000 or the value of dowry if that is more. Still the practice of dowry abuse is rising in India. It is ridiculous to see that even among highly educated sections the practice of dowry is seen which is perceived as a symbol of status from both end. The statistics are more in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh but miserably, the largest IT sector of the country, Bangalore has also recorded an alarming rise (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015). It is found from the survey data that half of the world’s malnourished children live in India primarily due to the non-availability of nutritious food to their mother during pregnancy period. In all the stages of human development i.e. Prenatal, postnatal, infancy, childhood, adolescence the girls or women suffer from malnutrition purely due to the discriminatory and the narrow social attitude mentalities. This type of discriminatory attitude is more prominent among lower middle class or below the poverty line families. In the poor families where the income is not sufficient to fulfill the basic needs of life, the male members get the priority in case of food and nutrition without any consideration to the health of the females. Poverty is a major cause of poor health and various social issues in India so also the issue of illiteracy and lack of education to girls is closely related to poverty. As per census data, 2011, literacy rate in India is 74.04%. Where the male literacy rate is 82.14% and that for females is 65.46%. As per the literacy rate it shows a significant decrease of the gap in comparison to the year 2001. In the year the literacy gap was 21.59 percentage in 2001 which is reduced to 16.68 percentage points in 2011. Also trend of literacy growth is higher among female (11.8%) where as it is (6.9%) among male in the 2001--2011 decadal period that indicates narrowing of the literacy gender gap. Nevertheless, there is huge discrepancy in between male literacy and female literacy. More boys are enrolled in primary schools than girls are. In addition, more girls drop out of school before any kind of graduation or certificate than boys do. Of course, the reason for this result of studies is the perception of the society about the role of women in the family, especially in poor areas, that women do not need education, as they have no financial responsibilities to maintain families. It is true that the people living a life below the poverty line do not have enough funds to educate all their children. Hence, they prefer giving education to boys and keep girls away from schools and colleges. Even if girls get a basic education, they are often called back to stay at home when they start their teenage in order to help their mother in choirs of household. Another problem is a lack of job offers to educated women in rural areas. Usually, parents consider it very unproductive to get the girl children higher educated as it ends up working on a field and traditional engagement in domestic works like cooking, watering crop or taking care of cattle etc. Primarily in rural and economically back ward areas, parents hardly found any scope of engagement for their daughters. People have no better outlook on the future if they go to school. Consequently, the gender disparity in literacy rate is higher in rural areas. Despite several Acts and schemes undertaken by the Government, women are immobilized and are mistreated inside and outside the home. Intense study reveals that the level of awareness of Government schemes is very low. Therefore, more effective publicity as well as system for monitoring women welfare and empowering programmers has to be developed. Along with the Government lots of non- governmental organizations are also involved in the process of capacity building of the underprivileged women to improve their situations economically, educationally, socially and physically.

**Social Evis In India**

The constitution of India imparts equal rights for men and women. But there are certain social evils prevailing in the society which tend to hamper the success of the country. India is a land of cultures and traditions. Many traditions which were set for purpose have taken a worse form today in the name of social evils. Social evils mean a condition which demands to be reformed or totally banned. For the development of the country, it is very important to remove all the social evils else our country will not progress. There have been numerous reformers and socialites who have fought against them such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar etc. All have fought for the rights of people and have successfully helped in removing many social evils from the society such as sati system etc.

Let’s look at some of the major Social Evils prevailing in the society.

1. Gender Inequality

2. Child Marriage

3. Dowry system

4. Bribe and corruption

5. Adulteration

6. Child Labor

7. Caste system

**Gender Inequality**

The major evil which India is still fighting is of gender inequality. In many areas especially villages, people still prefer boy than a girl. This has resulted in female infanticide. People kill the baby girl in the womb itself. This is leading to reduction in the population of the girls. Every child is gift of God and we should accept it. Many families tend to have many babies in hope of getting a baby boy. This also leads to poverty and overpopulation of the country.

**Child Marriage**

The legal age for marrying a girl is 18 years and a boy is 21 years. But in some villages,they marry the children at an early age. This leads to complicated problem in the marriedlives. It also affects their health badly. Children are forced to have family responsibilities at anearly age of life. They should be allowed to enjoy their childhood rather than indulging in household activities.

**Dowry System**

Dowry is when parents give their daughters some gifts on her marriage. But now days, dowry has taken its worse form. Rather than gift, the groom side demands heavy dowry. If bride side is unable to fulfill the dowry, either the marriage is broken or she is physically tortured. Some cases of brides burning themselves or committing suicide have come to notice. Government is taking strict action against the dowry demanders. People living in cities are well aware of the consequences and hence they don’t demand it anymore.

**Bribe And Corruption**

Corruption is when an officer or any person takes gifts/ cash for doing a person’s work. This system is badly affecting the nation’s growth. There are very few honest officers left in the country. But the government of India takes a strict action, in case anyone is found guilty. The person is suspended or is dismissed permanently. The citizens of the country should not either take bribe or accept any. In case anyone offers you a bribe or accepts a bribe should be immediately reported to the police. So that a valid action can be taken against that person.

**Adulteration**

This is another social evil which should be eradicated as soon as possible. People are mixing adulterants or similar items in the food items so that they can make more money at the same price. Ghee, sugar and oil are the most adulterated ones. Milk is adulterated with water, turmeric with yellow powder etc. Even the medicines sold are sometimes adulterated. So we should buy branded ones.

**Child Labour**

Child labor is a condition when children below the age of 14 years work in homes, industries or other institutions for making money. Over population and lack of education is the main cause behind this. Child labor can lead to some very devastating consequences such as robbery, criminal offense and other small thefts etc. Government of India has made a rule that no one will employ a child less than 14 years in homes or industries or coal mines. We should not play with the emotions of the children and ruin their childhood. Rather they should be given education properly.

**Caste System**

This is the biggest social evil which has its roots way deep. The complete society is divided into many groups either by caste or by color. People from lower caste still face many problems in villages and are considered untouchables. We as responsible citizens of India should aim at removing and not following these practices. We all should join hands to make our country free from social evils.

**Feminism In India And National & State Commission For Women**

Feminism in India is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic. Women in India. It is the pursuit of women's rights within the society of India. Like their feminist counterparts all over the world, feminists in India seek gender equality: the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal access to health and education, and equal political rights. Indian feminists also have fought against culture-specific issues within India's patriarchal society, such as inheritance laws. The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-19th century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of Sati; the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India movement and independent women's organizations began to emerge; and finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women at home after marriage, in the work force and right to political parity. Despite the progress made by Indian feminist movements, women living in modern India still face many issues of discrimination. India's patriarchal culture has made the process of gaining land-ownership rights and access to education challenging. In the past two decades, there has also emerged a trend of sex-selective abortion. To Indian feminists, these are seen as injustices worth struggling against. As in the West, there has been some criticism of feminist movements in India. They have especially been criticized for focusing too much on women already privileged, and neglecting the needs and representation of poorer or lower caste women. This has led to the creation of caste-specific feminist organizations and movements.

**Women's Organizations**

Women’s India Association (WIA) in 1917 was “the first purely feminist organization to arise in India (Kaur, 1932, cited in Kaur, Manmohan, 1968, 106). Annie Besant was chosen as the first WIA president. The honorary secretaries were Margaret Cousins, a teacher and Irish suffragist; Dorothy Jinarajadasa, the Irish wife of a Sri Lankan Theosophist; Ammu Swaminathan and Malathi Patwardhan. Borrowing the idea of a cross cultural association from the Tamil Mathar Sangam (Tamil Women's Organization) formed in 1906 by Indian and European women, Margaret Cousins sounded out her proposal to a gathering of Theosophists at Adya after her arrival in 1915. The founders included S. Ambujammal, Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddi, Mangalammal Sadasivier, Saralabai Naik, Hera bai Tata, Dr. Poonen Lukhose, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, BegamHasratMohani, and Dhanavanti Rama Rao. Describing themselves as the ‘daughters of India’, its mothers and wives, their objectives were to guide the nation; serve the poor, promote women's education and compulsory universal primary education, abolish child marriage, raise the age of sexual consent to sixteen for women, win female suffrage and attain the female right to elected office. The Association soon grew to have around thirty- three branches within a year and after five years added another ten branches with twenty centers and two thousand three hundred members. It claimed to represent women from all races, cultures and religions. Religion, education, politics and philanthropy were the four areas identified for intervention. Nonsectarian religious activity was promoted while in education, adult literacy; sewing and first aid were taught. Politically, the first women's delegation to demand the vote that met Secretary of State Montague, in 1917, included a large number of WIA members and in the following years it was this organization which took the lead in mobilizing support for female franchise. In the area of philanthropy, shelters for widows were set up and relief for the poor and disaster victims were provided. The WIA published a monthly journal Sri Dharma in English. Though published in English, it contained articles in Hindi and Tamil.

**Protection Of Women's Rights Acts In India**

The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history. Their position in society deteriorated early in India's ancient period, especially in the Indo-Aryan speaking regions, and their subordination continued to be reified well into India's early modern period. Practices such as female infanticide, dowry, child marriage and the taboo on widow remarriage, have had a long duration in India, and have proved difficult to root out, especially in caste Hindu society in northern India. During the British East India Company rule (1757–1857), and the British Raj (1858–1947), measures aiming at amelioration were enacted, including Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829, Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870, and Age of Consent Act, 1891. Women's rights under the Constitution of India mainly include equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination; additionally, India has various statutes governing the rights of women. As of 2018, some women have served in various senior official positions in the Indian government, including that of the President of India, the Prime Minister of India, and the Speaker of the Lok sabha. However, many women in India continue to face significant difficulties. The rates of malnutrition are exceptionally high among adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women in India, with repercussions for children's health. Violence against women, especially sexual violence, has been on the rise in India.

**Central Government Schemes For Women In India**

Under Article 15(3), the Constitution of India allows for positive discrimination in favor of women. The article, under right to equality, states that: "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children." In addition, the Directive Principles of State Policy 39(A) states that: "The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood." The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Credit Fund for Women) was set up in 1993 to make credit available for lower income women in India. More recent programs initiated by the Government of India include the Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS), the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, Conditional Maternity Benefit plan (CMB), as well as the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – Sabla.

**Mother And Child Tracking System (MCTS)**

The Mother and Child Tracking System was launched in 2009, helps to monitor the health care system to ensure that all mothers and their children have access to a range of services, including pregnancy care, medical care during delivery, and immunizations. The system consists of a database of all pregnancies registered at health care facilities and birth since 1 December 2009.

**Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana**

Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), Conditional Maternity Benefit (CMB) is a scheme sponsored by the national government for pregnant and lactating women age 19 and over for their first two live births. The programmed, which began in October 2010, provides money to help ensure the good health and nutrition of the recipients. As of March 2013 the program is being offered in 53 districts around the country.

**Rajiv Gandhi Scheme For Empowerment Of Adolescent Girls – SABLA**

The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – SABLA is an initiative launched in 2012 that targets adolescent girls. The scheme offers a package of benefits to girls between the age group of 10 to 19. It is being offered initially as a pilot programmed in 200 districts. It offers a variety of services to help young women become self-reliant, including nutritional supplementation and education, health education and services, and life skills and vocational training.

**Rashtriya Mahila Kosh**

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (The National Credit Fund for Women) was created by the Government of India in 1993. Its purpose is to deliver women from lower income group with access to loans to begin small businesses.

**Priyadarshini**

Priyadarshini, initiated in April 2011, is a programmed that offers women in seven districts access to self-help groups.

**National Action Plan For Children**

National Action Plan for Children was initiated in 2017, This Scheme Was Launched by Ministry of Women and child Development.

**Digital Laado (DIGITAL LAADO) - Giving Digital Wings To Daughters**

An Initiative started with the association of FICCI & Google Digital Unlocked to empower and strengthen daughters on digital platforms. According to Government of India 65% daughters drops out from there higher studies due to household work. This program is a nationwide initiative in which every daughter will be taught and trained to develop their talent and skills to work from home itself and get connected with the global platform. Daughters can register themselves to avail these benefits from anywhere in the world - online & offline.

**Women And Self Help Groups**

Self Help Group (SHG) is a group of 12 to 20 women of the same socio-economic background who come forward voluntarily to work together for their own upliftment. The unique feature of the SHG is its ability to inculcate among its members sound habits of thrift, savings and banking Regular savings, periodic meetings, compulsory attendance, and systematic training are the salient features of the SHG concept. Each group selects one animator and two representatives from among themselves. The animator is responsible for providing leadership to the group and to maintain the various registers. The representatives assist the animator and maintain the bank accounts of the group.

1. Self Help Groups consist of 12-20 BPL women members in the age group 18-60 years residing in the same area.

2. NGOs and PLFs affiliated with TNCDW undertake the formation of SHGs.

3. They are trained to become cohesive as a group through regular meetings and encouraged to cultivate savings habit.

4. Capacity Building Programme such as SHG and A & R training are imparted to the Group members and within a period of six months.

5. After a period of 6 months, SHGs are rated for Credit Linkage by a Committee consisting of Bankers, APOs, NGOs, Block level officer and PLF Representative.

6. For the eligible Credit rated SHGS, credit facilities are largely made available through Banks, both for revolving fund and economic activity.

7. Other sources of funding for Credit linkage are SGSY, TAHDCO, NABARD & SJSRY

8. Under various Skill Training Programmes, eligible SHG members are encouraged to start economic activities or undertake self-employment.

9. Efforts are made by TNCDW for marketing the products produced by SHGs wherever possible locally and for sale in exhibitions.

In order to enable all poor women living below poverty line to join and benefit from the Self Help Group movement, the group formation is undertaken with special focus on NREGS women workers, urban slum dwellers and in Village Panchayats where SHG coverage is still inadequate.