Women Movement In India

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INTRODUCTION

The women movement in India has been one of those never ending discourse that has been taken not so seriously but still has a social, economic and political significance. In Indian context Women had always been in a disadvantageous position in our social and political system due to deeply entrenched patriarchy. But despite of all odds Women power had been a very potent force of social movements in India. Indian experience of women movement proves that Patriarchal hierarchy could not become impediment to women leadership. There is a long history of Women movement in India. The symbolic representation of 'women Power’ as Shakti go back thousands of years ago. Women in India looks at 'Sita’ and ‘Savitri’ as ideals of womanhood on one side and on other side drew their strength from imaginary of 'Durga’ and 'Kaali’. In its Indianized form the women movement is not merely a reactionary force fueled by resentment, a rather opposite reaction to oppression, but a development of the distinctiveness of women power. It must be noted in relation to the women movement in India for the larger part of the history while the issues that bring changes which altered public life were accepted but any notion of equality in caste and sex terms was not. Particularly, equality in the private sphere was not acceptable and masculine authority in private sphere was unquestionable. Any change which challenged the Indian male privilege or position in the private sphere was not acceptable.

Women Movement is basically creating an environment where women can feel their sense of belongingness, where they are free from social pressures, where they can feel that they are in their own paradise and also where they can make their own
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personal decisions and can shine as equals in the society. Empowerment of women is a long way process where one part of the society has thus continually struggle for her creating and preserving and thus prolonging her own identity in the society where she is born and re-born again. Any study of women movement will be incomplete without tracing the role, position and power enjoyed as well as suffered by women through ages.

Our Indian culture attaches much importance to women as she is symbolized as ‘MOTHER INDIA’ keeping in view the endurance and power which the women keep intact within them. India is a place where goddesses like Kali and Durga are worshiped, which represents ‘NARI-SHAKTI’ (The power of the women). Despite of the fact that India celebrates womanhood in the form of goddesses, since time immemorial the Indian women are being oppressed and dominated by the same male sex who worship these deities. Though present women are better positioned than her ancestors but women development has to go a long way so as to free women from the shackles of male sex/patriarchy and social constraints.

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The Women Movement in India has basically traversed through several phases and there is a different story in every era. The Ancient period saw a sense of solidarity of women standing equal to men on several occasions but still there was this patriarchal dominance designed in the social mainstream of India. It was widely believed that women had this status of equality in every field but one could not say that there was any movement as such in order to acquire a better social status. In the Medieval period we saw an increased grasp of the patriarchal outset and therefore we see a rise in the poetic-rebel cult and a kind of soft protest against the social system by the women but still there was never a movement as such in any context that came into light, But on the whole the medieval part saw a low time in the sense of women movement. Then came the promotion of the rights of women by the social and cultural reformers in India and then the colonial phase during which we saw several laws and reforms and women movements.

The post independent India saw the movement at large and the growth of women movement in India has shown that there has been a progressive approach in the
context of women movement in post-colonial India. From environment, tribal rights, equality, liberty, Protection from sexual offences, dowry, Right to live with dignity etc, there has been a rise in the number of movements in India and also the pattern in which they have operated. The process of Liberalization and Globalization has also helped women to construct better movements and also have given them a platform to be heard globally. The United Nations and its several agencies has helped to protect and advance the Rights of women in India and it has given a larger meaning to the women rights. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have emancipated women in a broader sense in the grass-roots and has marked the beginning of a new era of development for women.

In order to develop a deep understanding of the women movement in India we have to go through a detailed description of each and every phase and therefore understand the proper context of each and every era.

WOMEN IN ANCIENT PERIOD

Manu, the great law-giver, said long ago, 'where women are honoured there reside the gods'


Scholars and researchers believe that in ancient India women enjoys equal status with men in all spheres of life as in politics, education and decision making. In the Vedic period, women were adored by their male counterparts and other members of the family. She also enjoys high status in the family as she was considered goddess. Women in the ancient age were free to choose their husband and used to marry at mature age, as says the Rig Veda. The incidence of free choice can be seen in epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, where the respective maharani’s Draupadi and Sita chooses their husband through ‘Swayamvara’
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ceremony. In this, the well-to-do grooms assemble at the bride’s house and the bride selects her spouse. But we can still not claim that women were empowered in that society. It was the same society where on one hand freedom of choice was given but on the other hand, Draupadi who is ‘de-robed’ in the meeting of counsellors and Sita went through the ‘Agni-Pareeksha’.

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But with the passage of time women lost their prestige and independent position even more. By 500 BC, the status of women began to decline with Manusmriti, which summoned her position that she must be protected in all stages of her life from childhood to old age. With this protection the suppression of women took its root and her condition deteriorated. Along with that unity and equality began to fade away through time which was also reflected in literature of the preceding centuries. The Brahananical literature was very severe in treating women. Buddhist texts on the other hand were more considerate in treating them. Along with that Buddhism and Jainism allowed women to be religious and to submit them to the religious order; other than women in India faced confinement into the four walls. Thus, the position of women was though made inferior and suppression came into the picture but was not as worse as it came to be in later ages.

**Women Movement and Buddhism**

There was this special quest in the Buddhist society to generate egalitarianism. There was this emphasis as to how women could come as equal in the society. Given the Buddhist perspective there was always a space for women in moral, social, spiritual and leadership aspects. Buddha taught about the law of karma, according to which one is responsible for one’s own actions and consequences. This generated a belief that its not the fate but karma. Therefore It somewhere helped to ease the situation of the women and afterwards it also helped the women to stand and support the birth of a girl child. Buddhism helped to enhance the property rights of the women and they held possessions. The Buddhist teaching helped in a lot of way to emancipate the women in the society.
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Rita.M.Gross agrees that "a misogynist strain is found in early Indian Buddhism. But the presence of some clearly misogynist doctrines does not mean that the whole of ancient Indian Buddhism was misogynist." Her work on women and Buddhism is significant and underscores almost every important aspect of women in that age.

But Buddhism was not a separate movement for women. It though evolved as a movement in the society but did not solely emphasize on the cause of women. There were limitations on some counts as Buddhism did not take the women movement separately to another plane.

Value addition Did you know

Glorious age of the Guptas

It saw women actively participating in state politics. The founder of the Gupta Dynasty, Chandragupta-I, ruled along with his Lichchavi queen Kumaradevi. Further, in the 2nd century BC queen Nayanika ruled in the Satvahana Empire in the Deccan as a regent to her minor son.
In 4th century AD Prabhavatigupta directed the Vakataka administration in Madhya Pradesh for 10 years after the death of her husband. In Rajput history there are numerous references to widowed queens carrying on as rulers of the empire. Vijayabhattarika, the senior queen of Chandraditya of the Chalukyan dynasty, ruled over a portion of present day Bombay Deccan in the middle of the 7th Century. Some queens also gave land grants independently. For example, Silamahadevi, the queen of Rashtrakuta king Dhruva, issued a land grant on her own.

In JAINISM there was no basic difference or distinction as far as the souls of a man and a woman was concerned, on the spiritual plane. It promoted the equal status and equal treatment of woman. Jainism regarded inferior treatment towards woman as illogical, irreligious and ignorant construct of the society. The violence against woman in any form was not acceptable and was considered Sin in Jainism. Therefore with Jainism we saw the rise of equality of man and woman.
WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The medieval period imposed further deterioration in condition of women by introducing various laws, such as purdah system, practice of Sati, polygamy which further added to their suffering and also further added to their treatment as second and inferior sex. At some point of time, women were even forced to be ashamed of their own sexuality. All these demarcations were imposed by patriarchy. Now, before moving further, let us know understand the term ‘patriarchy’. Patriarchy, simply mean the ‘male domination’, the rule of father-figure over all the women in the family. The set standards of patriarchal men destroyed and their clear demarcations between the male and female, their continuous suppression of females destroyed the frame of her mind, her own body and will is crushed by the family and society. A society in which women becomes the perfect pattern surrounding the male need.

Other than the patriarchal pressure, social pressure also stifles women. The introduction of ‘purdah system’, the system which ask women to cover their body so as to protect themselves from the lecherous male gaze, added much more misery in lives of Islamic women. In metaphorical terms, purdah is a veil which is used as a weapon in structured Islamic culture to subjugate women through violence and oppression and also a symbol that puts an end to freedom and education of women as the covering up of body symbolizes an end to freedom of mind and thought. As a Scottish Muslim Calvinist and a poet, Imtiaz Dharker, says against purdah system:

it is a purdah which makes women believe that she is a sexual organ and should not tempt men in any way. She further continues that how these very patriarchal ideas became part of their identity and they began to internalize them in their lives. so on one hand it is patriarchy which crushes women, shatters her hope and desires, on the other hand, it is religion which stifles women and force them to follow some strict rules.

Value addition – surf and know

Purdah system in India


Apart from purdah system, society have taken off women’s individuality and have pushed her in ‘Sati’, which as Wikipedia states, refers to a funeral ritual within some Asian communities in which a recently widowed woman commits suicide by fire,
typically on the husband’s funeral pyre. Apart from these, the evils of prostitution, female infanticide, early marriage, ban on widow remarriage and polygamy prevailed during the year. The widows, even after such a great loss of losing their husbands, were made to suffer even more. They were excluded from the social and religious functions of the family and were confined in the four walls.

Despite of such oppression, some women celebrated themselves, they showed the other part of the women which stands out of the shackles of society and made their own place in the history. They excelled in the fields of politics, education and religion. Razia Sultan became the only monarch for fifteen successive years, before she lost her life in a battle. Shivaji’s mother Jijabai was deputed as queen regent because of her ability as a warrior and an administrator. Apart from all these, literature of the time also discussed about women’s position. As the Bhakti Movement tried to restore women’s status and also questioned oppression of women. Mirabai, the famous female saint-poet was one of the most important bhakti movement figures. Some other important female saint poets from this period include Akka Mahadevi, Rami Janabai and Lal Ded. Bhakti movement advocated social justice and equality between men and women. Guru Nanak dev Ji on the other hand preached the message of equality between men and women. He encouraged the idea of women religious assemblies to be led by women in the form of bhajans and kirtans where they could hymn the name of god. In fact worshiping or preaching god was an act of freedom for them. It was a kind of alternative through which they could come out from the shackles of patriarchy.

So , religion also played a dual role in medieval period. On one hand it changed the outlook of Islamic women through purdah and on the other hand there were women in bhakti movement, where for them religion turned out to be a liberating force.

WOMEN DURING THE BRITISH RULE

During the British rule, people were indifferent to women as they were again confined to the four walls of patriarchy which depresses them within. Continuing the old age tradition of suppression and ignorance, women were not given their basic right to education, civil rights and political rights until the Christian missionaries took desired steps for the female education in India. Along with women empowerment through education, they also brought forward the social evils existed in Indian society. The long suffered and marginalized section of society was now given voice, not by her own people but missionaries.
Later, many Indian socialist like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayanand Saraswati advocated for change for the upliftment of women. They abolished practice of sati, the purdah system, dowry system, polygamy, child marriage and widow remarriage. On the other side of the globe, Anne Besant in Madras, 1917, started women's organization named ‘women's Indian Association’. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, also helped to reform the condition of women and played an important role in Bengal Renaissance. Many other legislatures were also enacted so as to improve the condition of women. Some of them are: Hindu widow’s remarriage act 1856, child marriage restraint act, 1929, Hindu women’s right to property act 1937 were brought forward for the upliftment of women from their unheard miseries.

**WOMEN: DURING THE STRUGGLE**

Any freedom struggle cannot be a successful outcome without involving women in it. Either it was Trojan war or India’s independence. Women have been the guiding spirits, sometimes in person and sometimes a shadow. During the freedom struggle, lower caste women were illiterate and superstitious.
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It was Mahatma Gandhi who stood up for women upliftment. He realized that to meet the economic crisis, women must be involved in freedom struggle so as to gain economic development. So he brought women out of four walls of their houses and explained them the importance of ‘Khaadi’ and ‘Charkha’. He motivated them to come out and take spinning in their hands, which can free the country from the web of Britishers and also we as well as women as an individual can gain self-independence. Gandhi on the other hand had firm faith in their abilities and worked for their emancipation.

Indian social system in Pre Independence era had a very little scope for Women activism. Most of the time the life of a women was restricted within the four walls of Family House. Women has little or no contact with the public sphere. Moreover Lack of Education and Rigid social customs strengthening Patriarchy made their life difficult. However, some ‘exceptional’ women have left profound imprint on the pages of recorded History. These women challenged the norm of that time to display the potency of their extraordinary leadership and scholastic capability. The list of great women whose names have gone down in history for their dedication and undying devotion to the service of India is a long one.

Rani Lakshmibai was one of the leading warriors of India First war of freedom who laid an outstanding impact on the succeeding women freedom fighters. Her remarkable courage imbued many men and women in India to rise against the colonial power.

Begum Hazrat Mahal was a great Indian freedom-fighter who played a major role during India’s First War of independence (1857-58). Begum was a symbol of bravery, patriotism, perseverance, and resistance to British rule. She led a band of her supporters against the British, and was even able to seize the control of Lucknow.

Rassundari Devi was also one of these exceptional women who recorded name in history. In 1876 Rassundari’s autobiography Amar Jiban was published.

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Her book is a passionate description of the deplorable condition of women due to prevalent social customs and practices of that time. Amar Jiban was a secret call for women to stand against these social atrocities.

**Swarnakumari Devi**, daughter of Debendranath Tagore and granddaughter of Dwarkanath Tagore was actively involved in politics. In 1889 and 1890 she served Indian National Congress. That was the first time women participated publicly in the sessions of the Indian National Congress. Swarnakumari started Sakhi Samiti (Society of Friends) in 1896. The objective of the society was to assist helpless orphans and widows.

**PANDITA RAMABAI - AN INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMER,**

Pandita Ramabai was other Indian social reformer, a champion for the emancipation of women, and a pioneer in education. Her book The High Caste Hindu Woman was a pioneering work which vehemently criticised the prevalent social system for deplorable condition of women due to prevalent social customs and practices. Pandita was one of the 10 women delegates to the Indian National Congress in 1889 and she was involved in the setting up of several women's organisations, schools for girls, and homes for widows, along with a host of her other contributions to society.

**Annie Besant**, a British woman supporter of the Indian nationalist movement was another flag bearer of Women movement in India. Annie Besant was the second President of The Theosophical Society from 1907 to 1933. Besant was an outstanding orator of her time, a champion of human freedom, educationist, philanthropist, and author with more than three hundred books and pamphlets to her credit. She fought for the causes and rights, such as, women's rights, secularism, birth control, and workers' rights. She also became involved in Indian
freedom movement. In 1916, she founded Home Rule League which advocated self-rule by Indians. She became the President of Indian National Congress in 1917. She was the first woman to hold that post.

**Sarla Devi Chaudhrani** Daughter of Swamakumari Devi was the founder of the first women's organisation in India, the Bharat Stree Mahamandal in Allahabad in 1910. One of the primary goals of the Bharat stree Mahamandal was to promote female education, which at that time was not well developed.

Muslim Women mobilized as well. In 1916, the Begum of Bhopal founded the All India Muslim Women’s Conference with education of women as a prime agenda, the conference also fought against women oppression and custom like polygamy. We can site many such instances where individual women have been leaders in a struggle for women’s rights and National movement.

Miraculous women like Pandita Ramabai, Anandibai Joshi, Tarabai Shinde, Haimavati Sen and Saraladevi, challenged patriarchal hierarchy, at least in their own lives, and some went on to participate in the emerging freedom movement.

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<th>Women in India’s National Movement</th>
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<td>The History of Indian National Movement would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of these women. The sacrifice made by these women of India will occupy the foremost place. They fought with true spirit and steadfast courage and faced various torment, exploitation and encrustations to earn us freedom. Women actively participated in the Swadeshi Movement in the early 1900s and continued to play a crucial role in the struggle for independence from British colonial power. During the years of Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership in particular, women’s participation in the political struggle multiplied. Mahatma Gandhi was very much successful in encouraging women to step out of four walls of home to contribute in India’s struggle for Independence.</td>
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<td>When most of the men nationalist were in prison the women came forward and took charge of the struggle. The following quote from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s Discovery of India best illustrates the role of women in the struggle for Independence:</td>
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<td>“Most of us menfolk were in prison. And then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there, of course, but now there was an avalanche of them, which took not only the British government but their own menfolk by surprise.”</td>
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**Value addition- surf and know**

**Women in Indian National Movement**
To read more about this issue, one may read from:

Woman's participation in India's freedom struggle began as early as in 1817. Bhima Bai Holkar fought bravely against the British colonel Malcolm and defeated him. At the Battle of Mahidpur, she led a brigade of 2,500 cavalry into the battle against the British at Mahidpur. It is believed that her bravely act of taking on the East India Company as a soldier imbued Rani Lakshmibai in 1858 during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Many other women including Rani Channama of Kittur, Rani Begam Hazrat Mahal of Avadh fought against British East India Company in the 19th century.

Women played a very active role in the War of Independence of 1857 was commendable and was admired by leaders of the Revolt. Rani of Ramgarh, Rani Jindan Kaur, Rani Tace Bai, Baiza Bai, Chauhan Rani, Tapasvini Maharani daringly led their troops into the battleground. These women who joined the Indian national movement belonged to educated and liberal families, as well as those from the rural areas and from all walk of life, all religions, caste and communities.

Women had actively participated in every phase of Indian National movement. Women had a creditable presence during Moderate phase, Swadeshi and Boycott Movement, Extremist phase and all movements led by Mahatma Gandhi. Women freedom fighters like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Madam Cama, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Kalpana Dutt had done a commendable work during freedom struggle. They held protest meetings, organized picketing of shops selling foreign alcohol and articles during swadeshi movement, sold Khadi and even resorted to violent methods to win India’s freedom. They bravely faced the torture of the police and went behind the bars.

**WOMEN: SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

Modern India refers to period after independence where education plays an important role in every sphere of life, women were educated but with modernity came more violence. To her utter shock, she was not free from the shackles of patriarchy and society. Modern India though modern in action was not at all modern in mind. But with women education also came their ‘voice’. Education played an important role in shaping their lives and they started raising their voice so as to free her from the years of patriarchal torture. Since time immemorial women have been singing the songs of their pain and agonies but no one paid heed. They now decided not to starve in silence and break these years of oppression. They started making
groups so as to fight against males and this is where ‘Feminism’ stems in. With education women started questioning their basic rights, they ultimately raised voice and spoke when pushed to ultimate margin.

Women during the early 19th century, suffered under the patriarchal system and those who tried to break this patriarchal cover with the hope and dream of free new world, face uncertainty and are crushed by their heads. It was during the late 19th century that the umbrella term ‘Feminism’ came as a movement of revolution and as a savior in lives of women.

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<td><strong>Defining Feminism</strong></td>
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<td>‘It is a collection of movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, cultural, personal and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment.’</td>
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Feminism raised voice against women oppression, domestic violence, reproductive freedom (bodily autonomy), control over sexuality, mobility, and their basic rights which include right to vote, to work, to equal pay, to property and to hold public office. As Gloria Steinem describes the image of the documentary ‘SEX AND THE WORLD PEACE’: The human race is a bird with two wings. As long as there is violence against females, one wing will be broken. Only when that wing is healed and strong can humans fly.

There has been numerous significant women movements in India since independence and they have contributed gradually in developing the conscience of women in all spheres and have brought about a voice. According to Vina Mazumdar, after Indian independence, ‘for all practical purposes, the women’s question disappeared from the public arena for ... over twenty years’. With the Constitution guaranteeing ‘equality’ to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or gender (Articles 14 and 16), the need for the same demand from the women’s movement seemed redundant.

**CHIPKO MOVEMENT AND WOMEN:**

This was not just an event but a landmark in the history of India where we have seen women in a rare romantic and a compelling scene. The women standing with their arms around the trees and roaring to protect them from being cut. It is the poor women of northern hilly areas of India who stood with solidarity and made their voices heard world wide. This was an important movement to secure human rights in purview of local community, environment and forest protection was in parallel to
enlarging women rights.

There was a difference in the approach of men and women and the perception was also different. The women consciousness during the movement has in large to do with the subsistence economy organized in the area. It is also related to "back-to-nature" strategy as the man treated the movement. Their preference for a traditional type of economic development that takes place around them.

There were reasons why did women came in the forefront to fight. They lost the control of cultivation, livestock, children and other resources as a result of recurring floods and landslides. The women were largely affected as they were in charge of all these. The message of the Chipko workers made a direct appeal to them. They were able to perceive the link between their victimization and the denuding of mountain slopes by commercial interests. Thus, sheer survival made women support the movement.

The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) movement:

source:http://t4rd.skillsdevelopment.org/research_project/project_case_studies/self-employed_womens_associat.aspx

In Ahmadabad led by Ela Bhatt, which was a sort of pioneering augment of women’s trade union movement that began in 1972. This was one such landmark in the history of the contemporary Indian women’s movement. This was one great and strong beginning of modernity in women movement in India. The involvement of women in various trades in the informal sector were brought together by their shared experiences such as low earnings, harassment at home, harassment by contractors and the police, poor work conditions, non-recognition of their labour to list just a few. Apart from collective bargaining, the movement strove to improve working conditions through training.

The Nav Nirman movement of 1974:
A student movement which began in Gujarat and was chiefly designed against the attributes of corruption. It was oriented around the demand of rights and Lokniti (people’s rule of law). Caste and religious rituals were also criticized. A lot of social, economic and political efforts were made.

**The Progressive Organization of Women (POW):**

It was organised and then developed in Hyderabad in the year 1974. It was a movement towards organizing women against gender oppressive structures in society, namely, the sexual division of labour and the culture that rationalized this discrimination. The organization promoted the ideology of ‘equality’ and opposed the economic dependence of women on men.

**Towards Equality Report (1974):**

This was a major landmark for the women’s movement. Thus there was this beginnings of the women’s movement in India has often been traced back to this report. The demographic data revealed the most deplorable condition of women throughout the country. It was more like an analysis of the prevalent socio-cultural conditions, the legal provisions and safeguards, economic role played by women in all sectors, women’s access to education, political participation, the policies and programs for welfare and development, the impact of mass media, etc. The report also made several recommendations which included stressing the important role of the State and the community in the achievement of ‘gender equality’. It highlighted the need for a concerted effort to eradicate oppressive practices such as dowry, polygamy, bigamy, child marriage, ostentatious expenditure on weddings, and it emphasized the need for a campaign on legal awareness.

### Value addition—Know it better

**Shah Bano and Muslim Women**

**SHAH BANO** is one name which one must go across when we deal with the question of women empowerment in India. It was a controversial maintenance lawsuit in India. Shah Bano, a mother of five, Muslim by religion, was divorced by her husband and was denied alimony. It was brought to the notice of the courts. The supreme court in its judgment favoured Bano but the alimony was denied to her as there was legislation **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act**, passed by the parliament in response to the huge outcry by the Muslim community alleging the interference in the Muslim shariyat law. Women organizations are till date critical of the act and there has been huge wave of protest in the civil society.

**Women and the Narmada Bachao andolan:**

Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Delhi
**Value addition – Did you know**

**SARDAR SAROVAR DAM**

The height of dam, benefit sharing and the mode of settlement of project–affected people caused serious difficulties. Project–affected people agitated under the banner of the dedicated NGO.-The Narmada Bachao Andolan.

NBA is one of its kind of a social movement led by different sections of the society. It has got active contributions of adivasis, activists, tribals, farmers and environmentalists but it is the active and huge participation and engagements of women that has led to the huge success of the movement. Patkar as one of those faces amongst the section has led the movement from the front and have led the hunger strike campaigns and peaceful protests to protect the cause and taken the movement to a different plane. It was one movement where the women leadership played a vital role in leading it to success.

- **First Phase of Indian Feminism: 1850-1915**
- **Second Phase of Indian Feminism: 1915-1947**
- **Third Phase of Indian Feminism: 1947-Till date**
◆ AIWC—All INDIA Women’s Conference was formed in 1926
◆ SEWA Bank was established in 1974 with 4000 members each contributed Rs.10 as share capital.
◆ The first National Conference of AIDWA was held at Chennai in 1981, with delegates from 12 states representing 590,000 members.
◆ On Dec 23, 2012, The justice Verma committee was constituted by the government in order to amend the criminal law and facilitate quick trials of crimes against women.

The Women Empowerment - 73rd And 74th Constitutional Amendment:

Bringing the women movement to the grassroots has been one of the continuous engagements of the activists and the civil society. It is largely possible due to the affirmation of this late constitutional amendments. Women have got this positive empowerment through the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments.

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<td>The 73rd Amendment inserted a new Part IX in the Constitution which contains article 243 and articles 243A to 243-O. Section 4 of the Amendment inserted a new Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution which deals with matters on which the Panchayats may be devolved with powers and responsibility by the State Legislatures by law. It also made provision for the reservation of not less than one-third of the seats for women.</td>
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The 73rd amendment has ensured election of over 10,48,148 elected women representatives out of total 28,51,739 representatives in country’s three-tier rural panchayats. It is more like a “silent revolution”. Similarly, the 74th amendment to the constitution, has till 2002, ensured the election of 22,665 women out of total 67,990 representatives in urban local bodies. This has only been possible as some states have taken this drastic decision to reserve 50% of the seats in local bodies for women and thus have helped empower women in a larger framework.

The Nirbhaya Movement:

It was both brutal and peaceful protest which erupted and people took their course on the streets to demand justice and to demand security of women not only in Delhi but all over the country. The brutal gang rape of a girl in the capital and that too in a moving bus was not only shocking but shameful. This aroused amongst the...
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people the anger which was waiting to come out. This took the shape of a mass movement all around the nation and there was demand for stringent laws to punish the perpetrators. The authorities were foxed by the Nirbhaya Movement. The large numbers made them wonder that how could such huge number of people join the movement and come on streets giving up their comfort and work. This was for the first time probably there was no bar and ideology. People joined in numbers to raise their voice and concern for women and their security.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Value addition- work for mind</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think and Develop your Response:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Critically analyse and compare the social response to Shah Bano case and the Nirbhaya Movement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you think legislative reforms are necessary for Women Empowerment.</td>
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source: http://www.nirbhayadiwas.org/

CONCLUSION

Women movement has played the role of a catalyst in awakening the state and society from slumber. Any nation cannot move forward living half of its population behind. We can infer from thoroughly analyzing the Indian experience that a radical feminist movement is unwarranted to challenge and change the existing unjust order. Patriarchal construct of the society cannot become a shackle to women movement. All the women movement in Indian history is an example stating that the will power of women can vanquish the evil power. ‘Naari Shakti’ have the vigour to challenge Society and state. Women’s participation can make a huge difference in the intensity of a movement. Women power fuelled every successful movement in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India. Many Social Evils which was infecting our social system vanished after the tireless campaign of our valiant women. The Dream of India to win its freedom could not turn reality without the struggle of all those women who faced all the torture by alien government to see India free. All the Social
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movement in modern India for 'JAL, JANGAL, JAMIN' will lose its strength without Women power. There is no problem in the world which can dare a women’s will. Women movement has changed the world and will be doing so till the world become perfect.

**Female sexuality**, which was treated as a male property, where a women was obliged to provide sexual service to their husbands so as to satisfy their need was questioned by women. Women were treated as a mere 'target' by men where they could exercise control and show manliness. But after years of sufferings, empowered women began to repudiate and started taking pride in their bodies as it is her body and above all it is her body in this whole world which she completely owns. So now instead of giving herself unwillingly in a sexual act, she resists. Through her body she became her own pride.

Another way where men exercise control over female sexuality is by compelling their wives, daughters in prostitution. Rape and threat of rape is another way in which women sexuality is controlled though the notion of 'shame' and 'honor'. Rape in a phallocentric society, is identified with the authority of 'manhood'. On the other hand, the 'rapability' of the women body is because it is believed that women's honor lies in her unaltered body. Rape is often viewed as a sign of female degradation, female submission and stripping of honor and humanity.

In the 1960's and 1970's women began to have sexual freedom atleast in their patriarchal home where they gained strength to deny any sexual intercourse done against her will. Power is being redefined; women started taking their own decisions and often said that they gained power only to control their own lives and not to dominate others. Many women are now becoming the men they wanted to marry; they are denying force marriages and are empowering them in own way or the other. Gone are the days when they(marginalized section) wanted their songs of agony to be heard by someone, now they are fighting alone and are taking pride in their sexuality by realizing that 'they created mankind'.

Apart from this, rape which is seen as a symbol of shame and blaming the victim, now most of the people stand with her so as to give her immense strength. As an empowered woman, she now completely becomes her own women in every sense of the world because no male society owns her or defends her. Only on such cases of strong, powerful, empowered women, the fear of brutality is not experienced by the victims but it only denigrates the tyrant. Instead of talking about how many women have been raped; we’ve begun to talk about how many men rape.

**Women’s Reproductive power**, is also controlled by men for she cannot decide whether she want a child or not, whether she want to use contraceptive or a decision to terminate pregnancy. They are forced to give birth to children and are considered as 'child-bearing machine'. It is not only patriarchy but also state which controls
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women’s reproduction by introducing birth control programs in which they cannot have children according to their own wish. So on one hand patriarchy celebrates womanhood but on the other hand it puts condition on their motherhood. Gradually women began to question that why their own reproductive lives are not under their own control? And with the span of time, women exercised the control in her hand. Now men who want children must find a woman who is willing to bear them. The emancipated women now put an end to old age control and manage their lives according to their own wish. Now they do not give birth to number of children so as to maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. This duality or double role problems, that of working outside and inside of the home forced her to fight for her right. In the wave of feminism of the 19th century and early 20th century, advocations regarding birth control or fertility control even for married women were the basic motto for many feminists, which also caused flutter in the lives of male sex as they were losing control.

Property and economic problem, marks the clear distinction between male and female. There are set standard of limitations for females in every society where they have no or little control over their maternal property and even if they are working outside, they are given low wages job. Women now demand equal pay as they work much harder than men in every field. This is a biased situation based on clear demarcations between ‘male’ and ‘female’ and ‘masculinity’ and ‘feminity’. They are considered a secondary citizen where they are forced to live in the shadows of men and have to be dependent on men economically. But now women can claim right to property and can also work in equal status with men. According to UN statistics,

“Women do more than 60% of the hours of work done in the world, but they get 10% of the world’s income and own 1% of the world’s property.”

GLOSSARY:-

1. Discourse-: speak or write authoritatively about a topic.
2. Patriarchy-: is a social system in which males hold primary power; predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property; in the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children.
3. Masculine- :Masculinity (also called manliness or manhood) is a set of attributes, behaviors and roles generally associated with boys and men
4. Empowerment-: To give power or authority to; authorize, especially by legal or official means; I empowered my agent to make the deal for me.: 
5. Liberal-: willing to respect or accept behavior or opinions different from
one's own; open to new ideas.

6. **Feminism**- is a range of movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

7. **Movement**- a group of people working together to advance their shared political, social, or artistic ideas.

8. **Domination**- the exercise of power or influence over someone or something, or the state of being so controlled.

9. **Civil Society**- society considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity.

10. **Ideology**- a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.

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**Question exercise**

1. How Did Mahatma Gandhi create a nexus between women and National Movement?
2. Critically examine the position of women in Indian context and Explain with relevant example?
3. How do you analyse the role of social reformers in context of women movement in India?
4. Is radical feminism relevant in Indian context?
5. How do you see women in the context of globalization and liberalization?
6. Discuss the role of Women in Indian Politics?
7. Women Movement is dynamic and self evolving: Explain?

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**Multiple choice questions**

1. Which of the Following Queen ruled along with Chandragupta I during the ancient period-:
   a)Rudradevi b)Kaminidevi c)Kumaradevi d)Malavadevi
   
   ans- : **b. Kumaradevi**

2. Razia Sultan became the only Monarch for consecutive ___ years?
   a)15 b)17 c)18 d)21

   ans- : **a. 15 years**
3. In 1917 the women's Indian Association was formed in Madras by -:
   a) Raja Ram Mohan Roy  b) Annie Besant  c) Bal Gangadhar Tilak  d) Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

   ans:- b. Annie Besant

4. Hindu widow's remarriage act was passed in the year -:
   a) 1856  b) 1855  c) 1859  d) 1852

   ans:- a. 1856

5. The Book - The High Caste Hindu Woman is written by -:
   a) Swamakumari Devi  b) Ahilya Devi  c) Sarojini Naidu  d) Pandita Ramabai

   ans:- d. Pandita Ramabai

6. In Which year Towards Equality Report came -:
   a) 1967  b) 1975  c) 1974  d) 1978

   ans:- c. 1974

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Economic philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Shanti Swarup Gupta.
Gloria Steinem; the essential reader: As If Women Matter.
Rita M. Gross
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WEB LINKS FOR FURTHER STUDIES:

1. http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2722/13/13_chapter%204.pdf
2. http://sch.sagepub.com/content/42/3/325.abstract