WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KERALA:
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that, this thesis on **WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KERALA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**, submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the faculty of Social Sciences, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by **Manjula Devi S.**, School of Gandhian Thought and development Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

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DECLARATION

I, MANJULA DEVI S. hereby declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted in this University or any other University for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar titles of recognition.

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GLOSSARY

Adhivedanam : Marrying an additional wife.

Antharjanam : Namboothiri Woman.

Charka : Spinning Wheel.

Chunri Festival : The festival to proclaim the girl who commited *Sati* as *Sati Mata*.

Devadasi : A female member of a community of temple dancers.

Dharna : A form of mass strike by squatting.

Ghosha : Umbrella-like covering used by Namboothiri women in front of others.

Grama Sevakan : A male worker at village level appointed by government.

Illum : Family of Namboothiri in Kerala.

Jathi vyavasthithi : Caste system.

Kalari : Place where formal education was given to children in the olden days.

Kalian : Type of coin in olden days.

1 Kalian=10 Chakrams: 28 Chakrams = One rupee.

Karanavan : The seniormost male member of Nair family in Kerala who govern the family.

Kulinism : Practice by which it was socially possible for even a hundred women to be given in marriage to a Brahmin by reason of his high status.

Karshaka thozhilali : Agricultural labourer.

Kuppayam : Jacket wore by women to cover the upper part of the body.

Lahala : Riot.

Lesbianism	: The term used for female homo-sexuality.
Mahila Samajam	: Women's organisation.
Mahila vidyalaya	: Educational institution for girls.
Marumakkathayam	: The law of inheritance in the female line.
Marumarakkal	: Wearing cloth above the loins.
Makkathayam	: The law of inheritance in the male line.
Mopans (Moopan)	: A chief or head man of a gang of labourers.
Mukkuvan	: Person of fishermen community.
Onam	: National festival of Kerala.
Poojari	: The priest who perfoms pujas or sacrificial rites in temple.
Pulikudi	: A customary ceremony of drinking the juice of sour fruits by women in their first pregnancy.
Purohita	: A cle rgy women.
Pynkili novel	: Colloquial term used to denote sub-standard novels appear regularly in Malayalam magazines.
Raja	: King of a state or country.
Samaram	: Strike.
Sambandham	: The term used by Nairs of Kerala to denote marriage.
Satyagraha	: A kind of resistance movement against the unjust laws.
Sastras	: Pertaining to science or the science.
Sati	: Self immolation of a widow on her husband's pyre.
Smartha	: A person appointed by the Raja to perform the *Smarthavicharam*.
Smartha Vicharam	: The punishment for women who were accused of adultery.

Sudra	: Servant caste.
Tali	: A chain or string tied by the bridegroom round the neck of the bride at the time of marriage as a token of wed-lock.
Thavazhi	: Inheritance along the mother's line.
Thakli	: A top like apparatus for spinning yarn.
Tharavadu	: Family organisation of Nairs in Kerala.
Thirandukuli	: A ceremony among certain castes when a girl attains puberty.
Varadakshina	: Present given to the bridegroom by father of the bride at the time of wedding.
Veli	: A Brahmin marriage; married woman of a Namboothiri community.
Yogam	: Council.
Yuvajana sangham	: Youth league.

INTRODUCTION

The status of women constitutes a problem in almost all societies and is a matter of world wide concern. The growing sensitiveness has been manifested by the emerging trends in favour of women in the international scene. This has culminated in the convening of the World Women's Conference at Mexico in 1975 and the declaration of the period from 1975 to 1985 as the international decade for women. A second conference held under the aegis of the United Nations at Copenhagen in 1980 adopted a "Programme for Action" for the second half of the decade for women. The third conference held in Nairobi in 1985 was distinguished by the adoption of the 'Forward Looking Strategies'. Efforts are being made at the United Nations for securing 50 percent of the top U.N jobs for women by 2000 A.D. The U.N Women's Conference held at Beijing, China, in September 1995, has demonstrated once again the concern and resolve to widen the platform for action and to obtain greater equality of opportunity for women.

Women in India have suffered due to the peculiar socio-cultural structure of the society which is based on religious and social factors such as caste, class and sex. Despite the laws and other governmental and non-governmental measures for women's upliftment, majority of them had been continued to live in a

state of bondage. The advent of social reform movements in the nineteenth century signalled the onset of efforts for the emancipation of women.The political awakening in the course of India's struggle for freedom gave an impetus to the process of liberation of women in the country. Women's movement in India lost its sense of direction and vitality with the attainment of Indian Independence. But the 1960's witnessed a new spurt of enthusiasm. Women's movements have gathered considerable strength since then and have come to gain wide recognition and acceptance. The National Commission for Women formed with the continuous influence of the women's movement is taking up serious measures to check the increasing violence against women in the country. Moreover, after studying the overall condition of women, it has recommended and moved a proposal to the concerned ministry to reserve 30 percent of the government jobs to women. In line with the National Commission, the Kerala State Government has already introduced the Women's Commission Bill in the Legislative Assembly to establish the same in Kerala.

Besides, various conferences of women are being held to discuss women's problems, their movements, future strategies and to press the government to formulate policies in favour of women. The National Conference on women's movement was held twice in Bombay in 1980 and 1985 and once in Patna in 1988. The fourth National Conference was held in Kerala in 1990 on the initiative of women's groups in Kerala. All these provide some hope for women in the state. Compared to the early women's movement, the

present day women's movement has had its own ideologies, new strategies of action, different perspectives regarding women's issues and is trying for networking throughout the country.

The State of Kerala situated in the southern most part of India, deserves particular note in a study on the condition of women. The State with its legacy of matrilineal joint family system, had been noted for the dominant position enjoyed by women in considerable section of society for a long period. What however marks out the region is the progress achieved in female education. The starting of schools by Christian missionaries in the early part of the nineteenth century and the benevolent attitude of the native rulers had opened avenues for education for girls since very early days. Christian missionary activities also helped to awaken certain sections of women against some of the unjust social practices to which they were subjected. The caste-based reform movements which spread all over Kerala in the last part of the nineteenth century further facilitated organised campaigns for the uplift of women. One of the first campaigns was a movement organised by the low caste Channar women early in the nineteenth century in opposition to the ban on covering the upper part of their body. The Channar Revolt (widely known as Marumarakkal Samaram) which lasted for about three decades was one of the successful movements organised by women in Kerala. A similar movement was organised by Namboothiri women against Ghosha, the enforced use of an umbrella to conceal themselves.

The advent of the Indian National movement in Kerala transformed the caste based movements into a wide political movement which sought freedom for the country. The Civil Disobedience Movement of the 1930's was conspicuous by the enthusiastic participation of women, as the subsequent satyagraha campaigns, khadi movement and quit India agitation.

Compared with the other parts of India, the condition of women in Kerala is much better, especially in literacy and health. The various demographical indicators like sex-ratio, life standard index, and birth and death rates all show that women of Kerala are better placed. Yet, in Kerala too, the status of women in society has been far from satisfactory. The matrilineal system which had assigned to women in Kerala a superior position, is fast disintegrating in Kerala, due to political and economic changes and patrilineal influence. Women are hardly visible in positions of authority and responsibility. Their representation is poor in the Legislative Assembly. Majority of the women in Kerala are engaged in the most arduous of jobs, requiring long hours of drudgery, and are paid discriminatory wages as elsewhere in the country. Women's typical roles are those of wife and mother, and even when she performs productive roles, it is perceived as only marginal, supplementing the family income. Violence and sexual exploitation are on the increase as elsewhere. Dowry deaths which were unheard of in the past, are very much a social reality in present day Kerala.

This state of affairs has brought into focus, issues relating to women and their movements in Kerala. The period from 1975, marked by the celebration of International Women's Year and International Women's Decade (1975-1985), saw a major shift in the nature of women's movement in the state too. The 'Shah Bano' case and the Muslim Women's Protection of Rights (on Divorce) Act had its ripples in Kerala. The legal battle for securing equal share of parental property, the movement within fishing community challenging patriarchal values, the anti-liquor agitations led by victims of alcoholic husbands, the activities of the women's wing of political parties and social and religious bodies and the emergence and proliferation of autonomous women's groups under women's own leadership, all epitomize the growing strength of the women's movement in Kerala.

A notable development in the state of Kerala is the passing of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, reserving 33.33 percent of seats to women. The presidentship in each of these local self-governing bodies has also been reserved for them. In the recent elections to Panchayats and Municipalities, about four thousand five hundred and fifty three women were elected to village panchayats, five hundred and sixty eight to block panchayats and one hundred and four women to district panchayats. They have assumed charge as presidents in three hundred and thirty one village Panchayats, fifty one block panchayats and five district panchayats. In eighty one municipalities and in one of the three corporations women have become presidents. This new development

marks a major break through with brighter prospects for the empowerment of women in the State. It has helped to moderate the disapproval of people towards the participation of women in politics. Sharing of power should make them confident and self assertive, empower them economically and strengthen the women's movements in Kerala.

The major objectives of this study are (i) to trace the history of women's movement in Kerala, starting from caste-based social reform movements in the nineteenth century; (ii) to analyse the recent trends in women's movement with special reference to political organisations and autonomous women's groups; and (iii) to study the challenges faced by the women's movement in Kerala and to assess their prospects and strategies.

This study is based mainly on the data collected through official publications and books, besides discussions and interviews with women group leaders and other persons prominent in academic circles, and analysis of media reports. Government documents such as study papers, committee reports, gazetters, census reports, five year plans, reports and publications of various departments, legislations, and Kerala administration reports were consulted.

The institutions visited for the purpose include Research Centre for Women's Studies, Sreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersy Women's University, Bombay, Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal, Women's Studies Centre, Alagappa University,

Karaikudi and various research centres and offices of women's organisations.

The problems of women and their movements in the West have been the theme of several published works. Notable contributions to the subject, particularly the origins of the women's movements in Britain and America have been made by scholars like Mariamies and Jayavardhana[1], Barbara Ryan[2], Christine Bolt[3] and Barbara Sinclair Deckard.[4] Barbara Ryan analyses both early women's movement and the contemporary movement in United States. Christine Bolt has attempted a detailed history of the British and American women's movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the present study concentrates more on the women's movement in India, particularly in Kerala, an elaborate and intensive survey of literature on the movements in the West has not been attempted.

Social science literature have not paid much attention to women's issues in India until recently. A movement in the academia could be seen only after the declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year. Some researchers and writers have discussed the problems of women at various levels in India. Women's participation in and their contribution to the national movement also received some attention from academicians. But compared to many other areas of women's studies, not many studies are available on the theme 'Women's movements'. Paucity of literature on the status of women and their movements in Kerala

did pose a great challenge to the present study. However an earnest attempt was made to compensate the same through extensive use of journals and newspapers and interactions with women's organisations and activists. Though the study is concentrated mainly on the Kerala context, the origins of the movements in Britain and America and the nature of women's movements in India have been studied in order to present the theme in a larger perspective.

Among the various Government documents relating to women, Towards Equality[5], and National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 A.D[6] are significant as they are systematic and analytical in their portrayal of women's problems and issues. Studies on women in India are relatively new and less in number.

However, a comprehensive study is attempted by Jana Matson Everett. Her book, entitled Women and Social Change in India[7] discusses in detail the background, emergence and ideology of the women's movement in India, and narrates its similarities and differences with the women's movements in Britain and United States. Women's Movement in India[8] by Pratima Asthana presents a systematic study giving a detailed account of women's movement in India before the attainment of independence.

Notable contributions in the subject, supported by case studies, has been made by Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi.[9] Aruna Asaf Ali's book, Resurgence of Indian Women,[10]marked by information gained through her active and intimate association

with the national movement and one who worked with many women's organisations. She concentrated on Gandhiji and Nehru and their policies and opinions while dealing with the women's movement and freedom movement. Reference also should be made of the research study by S.Sreedevi whose book, Gandhi and the Emancipation of Women in India[11], focuses on the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the emancipation of women in India.

Women's Emancipation Movement in India by Kanak Mukherjee, Revolution and the Status of the Women in India by Dr. Sushila Mehta, A Decade of Women's Movement in India - an edited work of Dr. Neera Desai, Indian Womenhood Then and Now, edited by Jessie B. Tellis Nayak, Women in Indian Society, edited by Rehana Gadially and Communists in Indian Women's Movement 1940-50 by Renu Chakravarthy are some other books in this area of study.[12] General studies about women in India are attempted by other scholars including Devaki Jain, Vijay Agnew, A.S.Altekar, Tara Ali Baig, Kiran Devendra, Marcus B.Fuller, Karabi Sen, Kalpana Shah, P.N.Tikoo, Illina Sen and others.[13]

Conference papers, booklets, working papers and study reports form a major part of literature on women's movements in recent times. Papers presented by researchers and scholars at various national conferences on women's studies, UGC seminar on Social movements for the Under-privileged held in Bombay in 1983, Conference on Women's Status and Development at Warangal in 1982, and the National Seminar on A Decade of Women's Movement in India

held at Bombay in 1985 have helped to add to literature on women's movements.

The concept of feminism, women's movement and the different approaches to feminism are dealt within the series of publications of the Research Centre for Women's Studies, Bombay. An edited work of Maithreyi Krishnaraj on Feminism[14] contains a collection of articles of eminent scholars like Julie Stephens, Gail Omvedt, Radha Kumar and Susie Tharu. Other publications of Women's Research Centre, Bombay, include Emergence and Development of Women's Organisations in India, [15] Feminism and the Women's Movement in India[16] and Emergence and Proliferation of the Autonomous Women's Organisations in India.[17]

Not many studies have come out discussing women's problems or women's movements in Kerala. The books on Kerala history generally do not provide much information about women's movements in the region. Women's role in the national movement in the state has been discussed in the History of Freedom Movement in Kerala by P.K.K. Menon[18], while K. Karunakaran Nair's book, Who is Who of Freedom Fighters in Kerala[19], give short biographical sketches of some prominent women in Kerala. Further light in this area is thrown by P. Bhaskaran Unni, E.M.S. Namboothirippad, P.K. Balakrishnan, William Logan, V. Nagam Aiya, V.T. Bhattathirippad, V. R. Menon, M. S. A. Rao, K.P. Padmanabha Menon and others.[20] The autobiographies and biographies of prominent leaders including V.T. Bhattathirippad, E.M.S. Namboothirippad, C.Kesavan

and Mannathu Padmanabhan[21] also provide some information relating to the conditions of women and about the origins of women's movement in Kerala. Other notable studies include an analysis of women's organisations in Kerala concentrating on women's co-operatives and women's societies, by P.M. Mathew and M. S. Nair,[22] a case study by M. Indu Menon[23] which examines the role of education in raising the status of Muslim Women in Kerala, an interesting narration about the historic struggle by the agricultural labourers for more wages and rights and the role of women agricultural labourers in the movement, by N.K. Kamalasanan.[24]

As the very title shows, A History of Women's Education in Kerala by R.N.Yesudas[25] give an account of female education in Kerala in the pre-independence period. The author has succeeded a certain extent in presenting the efforts of Christian Missionaries as well as that of the government in the field of women's education. The study come to the conclusion that 'The Introduction of English Education and Western Liberal Thought' among women by the Christian missionaries and the consequent efforts of the local rulers and social reformers in the field of female education went a long way in shaping the present women of Kerala. Politics, Women and Well-being by Robin Jeffry[26] explains how the shaping of a new public world affected the material well-being of Kerala people. He was of the opinion that the vital roles played for this was the opening out of politics, the growth of readiness among ordinary people to try to influence decisions

and the ambiguous changes in the position of women. The changes in the condition of women which form a small section of the book is described through portraits of four women namely Janamma(1860-1940), Mary Ponnen Lukose (1886-1976), Akkamma Cherian (1909-82) and K.R. Gouri (born in 1919).

As evident from the above review of literature, studies on women of Kerala are comparatively few and hence the researcher had to depend considerably on interviews and discussions with academicians and activists and on articles and reports in various newspapers and journals. The journals utilised for the study include Seminar, Commonwealth Law Bulletin, Economic and Political Weekly, Mainstream, Kurukshetra, Yojana, Alternatives, Kerala Calling, Manushi,The Week, India Today, Illustrated Weekly, Equality and Kerala Padanangal.

The dissertation includes five chapters, besides an introduction and the conclusion. The first chapter presents the conceptual framework for the study and traces the origins of women's movement, particularly in Britain and America.

Chapter II, entitled *The Women's Movements in India*, examines the emergence of the movement during the nineteenth century, the formation of women's organisations and the fillip the movement received during the Indian national movement under Mahatma Gandhi. The progress registered by the women's movement in the post-independence period, its identification with militant mass movements in the 1960's and 1970's involving industrial

workers, tribals and agricultural labourers, the anti-rape movement, the women's movements during the International Women's Year (1975) and the Women's Decade (1975-85) and the working of independent women's organisations under women's own leadership are also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter III presents the emergence of women's movement in Kerala in a historical perspective. It traces its origins during the early part of the nineteenth century consequent to Christian missionary activities and the reform movements in the caste-ridden society of Kerala, and examines the efforts of caste based organisations like Yogakshema Sabha and the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam to improve the conditions of women. It also assesses the impact of the Indian national movement in Kerala and the nature of women's participation in the working class movements involving agricultural labourers, and industrial workers.

The nature of the women's movement in Kerala during the post-independence period is the theme of discussion in chapter IV. The individual as well as organisational efforts of women against discriminatory laws and patriarchal values and the functioning of social organisations and political parties have been examined in this chapter. An attempt is also made to analyse the recent trends in the women's movement in Kerala where a number of independent women's groups have emerged with the clear objective of fighting anything which discriminates against or oppresses women.

Chapter V examines the various factors which hinder the progress of women's movements in Kerala, and to discuss its prospects and strategies.

One mentionable change adopted with regard to the references cited is the omission of the traditional Latin abbreviation of 'op.cit.' to indicate that a work has already been cited. The procedure that has been followed in this work to refer to a work which has already been cited in the same chapter is as follows:

8. Prathima Asthana, Women's Movement in India, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1974, p.99.

36. Asthana, n.8, p.115.

The abbreviation 'n.8' in reference no. 36 means that the book has been cited earlier as reference no. 8.

Women's studies, the intellectual arm of women's movement, is widely recognised as a subject of study in the academic circles. It serves as a tool for examining the status of women , the nature of oppression to which they are subjected and the need and strategy to redeem their position. Research relating to women as a major part of women's studies should help as a catalyst to women's movements. Besides, this can fill the gaps of knowledge, lead to purposeful action and betterment of society. Moreover, it helps in making women visible in history. History is generally silent about women's issues and struggles. Economists do not give due consideration to women's work in the home and thereby bypass the nexus between the relation in the family and

capitalist development. This study represents an attempt to recapture the main trends in the history of women's movement in India in general and Kerala in particular with a view to securing for women their rightful place in history. It also endeavours to provide a stimulus to women's movements by bringing to focus their positive role in the upward social mobility of women. The efforts made in the study to identify the factors which pose challenges to women's movements, it is hoped, would encourage new initiatives to re-orient them and to ensure better prospects for them.

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CHAPTER I

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN THE WEST

A movement is a course or series of actions and endeavours on the part of a body of persons, moving or tending more or less continuously towards some special end.[1] However there is not a commonly accepted definition for it. Consensus is yet to be reached on the exact meaning of social movements.

According to the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, social movements are uninstitutionalised groups in some insurgent relationship to existing society, involving unmediated bonds between leaders and followers.[2] 'A social movement, in the opinion of Rudolf Herberle, aims to bring fundamental changes in the social order, especially in the basic institutions of property and labour relations'.[3] For M.N. Zald and R. Ash, 'a social movement is a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures.'[4] T.K. Oommen defines social movements as conscious or purposive collective mobilisations, informed of an ideology, to promote change in any direction, (past / future) using any means - violent or non-violent -and functioning within at least an elementary organisational frame-work.[5] According to Hans Toch, a social movement represents an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel

they have in common. In Wendell C. King's opinion, 'a social movement is a group venture extending beyond a local community or a single event and involving a systematic effort to inaugurate changes in thought, behaviour, and social relationships. William B. Cameron holds that a social movement occurs when a fairly large number of people band together in order to alter or supplant some portion of the existing culture or social order'.[6] All these definitions have some characteristics in common. A social movement is a collective activity which aims at social change in any direction.

The characteristics of social movements include sustained collective mobilization for or against change, presence of an ideology and a stand more or less conflictual in nature.[7] The relation between social movements and action groups or the role of action groups in a movement is of great importance. Action groups or pressure groups may be catalysts of a social movement. Sometimes they will be the initiators also. However, social movements and action groups are not one and the same though closely related. D.N. Dhanagare observes: Action groups can be initiators of social movements, but not necessarily their customary agents, instruments or carriers. Social movements once institutionalised, may operate through already formed groups, parties, trade unions, organisations and similar paraphernalia. He adds: "An action group which initiates the mobilization process and acts as a catalyst of a social movement may also became its principal sheet-anchor when that movement moves in the

direction of institutionalisation representing a broader zone and political action. But some action groups may dissociate or withdraw from the movement."[8] Organisation or group is a unit in a social movement. "Social movements are more amorphous social collectivities as compared with political parties and pressure groups."[9] Social movements can be classified on the basis of their participants, their scale, dominant issues of interest, nature of the desired social change and the means of action. There are various movements. They include religious, caste, tribal, dalit, student, peasant, worker and feminist movements. These movements "have their inception in a condition of unrest, and derive their motive power from wishes and hopes for a new scheme or system of living."[10]

Feminist movement or women's movement is one of the categories of social movements which started with the aim of changing the deteriorated position of women to which they were condemned to for centuries. It was started in different countries at different periods. About women's movement, Encyclopedia of Feminism says "It is more widely used, and more all-embracing than either feminism or women's liberation movement and can include any and all activities and organisations which have the aim of improving women's status and situation."[11] Neera Desai defines women's movement as the organised effort to achieve a common goal of equality and liberation of women and it pre-supposes sensitiveness to crucial issues affecting the life of women.[12]

Gail Omvedt says: "not all movements which include women are for women's liberation, and women's liberation movements may also include men."[13]

A broad category of women's movement includes movements in which women participate in large numbers with men as in the case of national movements and peasant movements, movements led by women for general issues such as for slum improvement, or against price-rise, and movements for achieving women's rights and for their upliftment. Before studying women's movements it is necessary to have an idea about certain terms such as patriarchy, feminism and various theories or approaches to feminism. These terms are often used and closely related to women's movement.

Of late, we find the term Patriarchy used by most of the feminists. Generally used to denote male domination both in family and in society, the word means 'the rule of the father.' Gail Omvedt explains: "Patriarchy comes from a Latin word meaning the power of the male head of the family, and refers to the power of the man (or patriarch) both over women and over children and other dependents in the family. It links the power of man in the family with the power of man in society as a whole."[14] According to Kamala Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan, "When one uses the word patriarchy, it refers to the system that oppresses and subordinate women in both the private and public sphere." They further say: "it refers to a social system where the father controls all members of the family, all property and

other economic resources and makes all major decisions. Linked to this social system is the belief or the ideology that man is superior to woman, that women are and should be controlled by men, and are part of a man's property. This thinking forms the basis of many of our religious laws and practices, and explains all those social practices which confine women to the home, and control their lives. Our double standards of morality and our laws which give more rights to men than to women are also based on patriarchy."[15]

Feminism is a controversial word today. Many who were directly or indirectly involved in the fight for women's equality and against women's oppression generally hesitate to say that they are feminists. The word feminism is not acceptable to many women and men in India. Most of them think that feminism is a western word or concept which is against men and that feminists are man-haters. But feminism does not mean that. As Kamala Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan explains : "the term feminism may be foreign, the concept stands for a transformational process, a process which started in South Asia in the nineteenth century as an organised and articulated stand against women's subordination."[16] Feminism stands for the advocacy of women's rights . And a feminist is one who supports feminism or women's rights. The best way of looking at feminism is to see it as an ideology of women as an oppressed section, in struggle against their oppression just as socialism is the ideology of the workers organised in class struggle.[17]

The meaning of feminism may vary from time to time. Feminism of the eighteenth century may not be the same as that of the twentieth century. It also differs from country to country and person to person. A more accepted broad definition of feminism is 'an awareness of the oppression and exploitation of women in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation'. According to this definition any one who recognises the existence of sexism (discrimination on the basis of gender), male domination and patriarchy and who engages in some action against them is a feminist.[18] Feminists may fight against all forms of oppression against women. To accept the legitimacy of the term 'feminism' means that women are specially oppressed as women, that their exploitation cannot be reduced to that of being members of the working class.[19]

There are various theories or approaches in feminism. Major approaches are liberal feminism, radical feminism and socialist feminism. Liberal feminism is also called "moderate feminism" or "women's rights feminism". Liberal feminism aims at bringing equality within the framework of the existing system; radical feminism aims at revolutionary change in all social institutions and sees sexual oppression as primary; socialist feminism seeks to unite the fight for socialism with women's liberation. Today nearly all feminists in India are socialist feminists.[20] However, the liberal tradition could be seen in the movement during the pre-independence period in India.

Women constitute nearly half of the world's population. Yet they have been subjugated for centuries, though the nature and form of that subjugation have varied from country to country and period to period. This is reflected in the aims, objectivity and methods used by women's movements in different parts of the world. In many countries women had to fight a long and fierce battle to attain voting rights and freedom.

Women's movement had its origin in the West during the nineteenth century. It is often described as having two stages. i) The first wave of feminism and ii) the second wave of feminism. The first wave emerged in an organised way during nineteenth century and was known as the women's rights movement. It almost faded out with the attainment of better status and voting rights for women. The second wave of the movement emerged in the 1960's and was widely known as modern feminist movement or women's liberation movement.

The debate on Feminism arose in developed countries like Britain and France during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first recorded expression of the idea that women were the political equals of men occurred during the French revolution (1789). But it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that emancipation and suffrage groups began to be formed.[21] The English revolution of 1648, the American revolution of 1776 and the French revolution of 1789 (which was influenced directly and indirectly by the English and American

revolutions and had a great impact on the whole of Europe and the United States) almost ended feudalism and encouraged capitalism. The industrial revolution, the increase of centralised power, the intellectual flowering of humanism associated with Renaissance and the ideological challenge to the church, monarchy and aristocracy to a great extent changed Europe.

Eminent philosophers and political thinkers of the period were Jean Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Volttaire, Condurcet and Diderot. Though these philosophers and thinkers of French revolution upheld the ideas of fraternity, liberty and equality, only a minority spoke about women's liberty.[22] Jean Jacques Rousseau expressed radical revolutionary ideas on the social and political order and emphasised the value of freedom and equality. "But for all his enlightenment on political and social issues, Rousseau's ideal republic excludes women; the family is a 'natural institution', the man is head of the family with power of control over the wife, who is denied equal rights; freedom, equality are for the patriarchal heads of families, and women are not part of the social contract or the 'general will' Rousseau proposed a fundamentally different education for boys and girls. According to Rousseau only man was rational and capable of thinking rationally and abstractly, therefore women, lacking these qualities, could not be given freedom and equality. On the contrary, they had to be subjected and controlled as their passions were a source of danger."[23] Many of the thinkers shared the ideas of Rousseau in the case of women's rights. However a

minority supported women's rights. Among that group Condurcet's name was prominent.

The new ideas and the new awakening of the period influenced women also. The rich women who got some education raised their voice in favour of women's education. Isolated voices began to be heard from women about their position and education. Some women writers questioned the discriminatory social practices and proclaimed the necessity of educating women and of giving access to women in all types of employment.

The most outstanding feminist writer of the time was Mary Wollstonecraft[24] who wrote the famous document A Vindication of the Rights of Women, published in England in 1792. she says "challenged the idea that women exist only to please men and proposed that women receive the same treatment as men in education, work and politics and be judged by the same moral standards."[25] Barbara Sinclair says: "it was the first full-scale book favouring women's liberation, and nineteenth century leaders of the women's movement in Europe and the United States read it and were much affected by it."[26] Mary Wollstonecraft asserted that woman was a fully rational human being and denied the existence of separate male and female virtues. She vehementally criticised Rousseau for his views on women and advocated similar education for boys and girls. Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights on Women was published in French in 1792. Many women's clubs were formed in France which urged women to involve

in politics and demanded equal education for women. Among the names of the revolutionary women Olympe de Gouges's name is prominent during that period for her work in 1791 entitled the Declaration of the Right's of Women. This declaration demanded equal rights for women in the field of access to government employment, freedom of thought, as well as better education, equal property rights and reform of the marriage laws. Though the period of industrial revolution provided a big boost to debates on feminism, as Mariamies and Jayawardhana remarks, the early decades of the nineteenth century were a period of reaction. In 1793, the women's political clubs were abolished. The Civil Code which would have given greater rights to married women was rejected. In 1795, women were forbidden to attend political meetings. In 1804, the Napoleonic Civil Code decreed the total submission of women to marital authority, and the right of divorce, which had been granted in 1792, was abolished in France in 1814. The brief whiff of freedom during the revolution was replaced by repressive laws and constraints.[27]

The struggles for democratic rights set in motion in the eighteenth century continued into the nineteenth century when more systematic liberal doctrines based on bourgeois parliamentary democracy were put forward, in a period which saw the great expansion of industrial capital in Europe. As in the early phase, the most rapid strides in Industrial Revolution took place in Britain, which up to the latter decades of the nineteenth century was the most advanced capitalist country. The

strong bourgeoisie which arose in Britain had to struggle against feudal forces in both the economic and political spheres. Politically the continued existence in the unreformed parliament of powerful feudal interest left to a massive campaign for the reform of the parliament culminating in the Reform Bill of 1832, under which the bourgeoisie were able to obtain political representation.[28]

As elsewhere, until the nineteenth century, women in Britain had never been politically discriminated against in a conscious way. The law had never expressly forbidden women to sit in parliament, for instance; it remained true that none had ever done so. It was the first time in the English legislation that the word "male" appeared in the First Reform Bill of 1832, extending franchise to large sections of the new industrial middle class. Voting was thus specifically and officially restricted to qualified "male persons".[29]

Industrial revolution also paved the way for the emergence of feminist thinking. In the pre-capitalistic period production was centered on household or small community. And women actively participated in the workforce along with men. Emergence of capitalism and the industrial revolution changed the centre of production from home to factory. As a result the wife as husband's productive partner and fellow worker disappeared forever. The family as the co-operative unit of production faded out. The one exception was agriculture, which retained the family

as a unit of production, but the gradual shrinking in the number of farms and increasing urbanisation so reduced the farming population in the industrialised countries. Housewives were gradually deprived of most of the work that had been traditionally done at home: most of that work was now moved to industrial plants. The effect of capitalist development and the industrial revolution brought poor women out of their homes and fields, to factories, mines and sweated industries as cheap labour. Middle class and upper class women were kept within the four walls of home. They were totally excluded from work outside home and were wasted, and they suffered intensely from it. As Jean Crimshaw remarks in her book Feminist Philosophers; this situation "led to an increasingly sharp split between home and work and a resultant tension in the lives of many middle class women."[30] Education, an essential lever of power was almost completely denied to these middle class women who had few chances of gainful employment.

This situation led to the entry of more and more women in the field of social work and contributed to the early campaigns of women against the existing discriminatory laws concerning property, birth control, divorce, prostitution and for securing educational and employment opportunities.

Women established educational institutions[31] for women, and led the battle for reforms within the existing legal and institutional framework by sending petitions to the Parliament,

publishing books, circulating pamphlets and organising protest groups. Some campaigns were suppressed by the government though certain demands were accepted.

Women led campaigns for married women's property right. Women's committees which become active on the issue, petitioned to parliament to change the law. Their campaign met with success when in 1882 a law was passed allowing married women the control of the property acquired at the time of their marriage.

The other problem on which women reformers involved was that of prostitution. Double standard of morality in that age was clearly brought out in the Contagious Diseases Act of 1864 under which if a women was believed to be a prostitute, she could be compulsorily examined medically, hospitalised and imprisoned if she refused treatment. Led by Josephine Butler, the Ladies National Association was formed to organise opposition to the Acts. They exposed the class aspects of the Acts whereby the upper-class men could have access to 'publicly cleansed' women of the working class and the sexist nature of the legislation under which women who were the victims were transformed into the culprits. They published a Women's Protest which was reproduced widely in the press. The women courageously took the campaign into the political arena, supporting candidates favouring abolition of the Acts. The Acts were eventually repealed in 1886.[32]

The nineteenth century in Britain was an age of reform; it was a period when liberals supported by radicals were able to implement limited legislative reforms. Women in Britain were beginning to react against several disabilities and discriminatory laws which oppressed them. English law denied women political or economic or the right to suffrage. Married women could not sue, be sued, or be called as witnesses. They enjoyed no property rights, all her earnings belong to her husband. Even they were denied rights over children. Divorce was practically impossible for them.

However the most prominent and the militant struggle led by women in the nineteenth century was the Women's Suffrage Movement. The suffrage movement in Britain paralleled the movement in the United States. In the fifteenth century women petitioned for the right to vote. Books like Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) argued for woman suffrage. The demand was also raised by the Chartist[33] movement in the 1840's. Soon afterward reports of suffrage movement in the United States reached England.[34] The woman suffrage movement in England is a natural outgrowth from the Great Reform Act of 1832. "This was the first time that the word 'male' had been used in the electoral law of England; hitherto the words used had always been of a generic character- "persons", "freeholders" etc."[35] The bill specifically enfranchised male persons thus excluding the other half of the population.

When most of the nineteenth century political thinkers were against women's equality, John Stuart Mill - the leading ideologue of British liberalism -strongly supported women's rights. John Stuart Mill's[36] name stands prominent when talking about the women's rights movement in Britain. Mill, on his wife Harriet Taylor's persuasion, supported and took up the issue of women's franchise. He even included women's franchise in his manifesto during his political campaign for election to the House of Commons.

Two years after (1968) when the first women's franchise committee was formed in Manchester, John Stuart Mill presented to Parliament a petition signed by nearly one thousand five hundred people including Florence Nightingale, Frances Power Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Harriet Marlineau and Mary Somerville calling for equal suffrage for women. But an amendment to this effect to the Reform Bill of 1867 was lost, seventy three in favour, one hundred and ninety six against. Following the defeat of the amendment, numerous local woman suffrage societies were organised in England and Scotland, followed by the formation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies under the leadership of Millicent G. Fawcett. From 1867 onwards, the movement in Britain and Ireland never ceased.[37]

Meanwhile some gains were made by women. Women taxpayers were given the municipal franchise (in 1869). The question of women's franchise was debated frequently in the Parliament. But

all the move towards that end failed due to lack of support from both conservative and labour parties. This behaviour of the political parties made some women organise and lead a separate movement. "By this time disillusionment with both the labour and liberal parties had spread amongst feminists, and the initiative passed to the militant suffragettes led by Emeline Pankhurst.[38]

Pankhurst made the then campaign for suffrage into a militant one and used all means to achieve the goal. The leadership of the movement thus shifted from a moderate to an extremist hand, using violent means to gain their ends for the first time in the history of European women's movement.

Pankhurst established a new organisation for the cause, namely, Women's Social and Political Union. It was formed in 1903.[39] Though led by middle class women, the campaign had support among sections of working class women, Irish activist women and women radicals.[40]

Under the efficient leadership of Pankhurst, women rose in rebellion against the government, they held women's parliament, organised mammoth meetings and adopted violent means to get wide publicity to their cause. On several occasions they were arrested and imprisoned. "They organised window smashing raids on shops and the fashionable men's clubs in the West End of London; street lamps were broken; train seats, orchid houses, flowerbeds and golf greens were damaged; telephone wires were cut; fuse boxes blown up; sports pavilions and grand stands at races were burnt

down; works of art were damaged; several empty houses and stately homes and church property were destroyed; and bombs were placed in key places such as near the Bank of England. In addition the women used violence at political party meetings, interrupted the House of Commons debates and attempted to disrupt the Derby Races (where a woman suffragette threw herself in front of the king's carriage and was killed). Their cause was further highlighted by their martyrdom for the repressive state action against them included much brutality, beatings, arrests, imprisonment and forced feeding in jail and the death in action of several suffragettes.[41]

But the outbreak of the world war in 1914 changed the course of the movement as its foremost leaders Emeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christobel joined war efforts thus giving up the agitation. However Pankhurst's one daughter Sylvia continued the campaign. But its activism and militancy vanished to a great extent.

Women leaders participated enthusiastically in war efforts. They extended their service in the quite running of the government machinery. Many women "became nurses at the front, drove army trucks and ran the army communication system.[42] After the world war women were given limited freedom. As Barbara Sinclair writes: "in 1918, partly as a reward for helping win the war and partly under the continued pressure of socialist militants, the government at last gave universal suffrage to men and women.[43]

But unlike men, women only above thirty years of age were allowed to vote. They had to wait until 1928 to get equal suffrage. After the attainment of suffrage the movement declined and no such militant movement is seen before 1960's in British history.

Compared to Britain and United States, the issue of women's voting rights was raised in France only later. Leyon Rishiyar was one of the pioneer of the women's movement in France who published the book Women's Rights in 1869. The movement initially concentrated on legal reforms such as campaigns for right to education and property. In 1878 Maria Deraismes organised the first International Congress for Women's rights. Around 1880's a movement started for women's suffrage in France. Hubertine Aucert started a suffragette paper, 'La citoyenne' in 1881. However the movement was very slow. It was only in 1909 an organisation to fight for voting rights was formed. It conducted conferences and processions to press the demand. In 1919, though the law regarding this was accepted, it was later rejected by the Senate in 1922. In France voting rights were given to women only in 1945.

As in Britain, in many other countries, including United States, a movement by women for reform and suffrage developed during the same time. There are very many versions and opinions among feminists and historians about the origin of feminist movement in United States. The beginning of the movement is

generally traced to the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848. "But an enlightenment was seen from the American War of Independence (1776). In the United States of America the feminist movement was also an outcome of demands for democratic rights. It first emerged around 1800, a period of intellectual ferment in Europe as well as in the United States of America. The leaders of the American War of Independence (1776) and the makers of the American Constitution had been strongly influenced by the philosophers of the 'age of reason' in Europe, and at this time some American women took up the issue of women's rights."[44]

During much of the 1800's both by law and by custom, women were considered 'non-persons. The law as the powerful restraining force on women's emancipation. Religious principles also maintained wives' rightful subordination to their husbands. Education for slaves were non existing and for non-slave women suppressed. Before an organised women's movement began, middle class women were agitating for the right to higher education.

In 1821 Emma Willard opened Troy Female Seminary with local tax money to educate women. At first her request for funding to open such an institution was refused by New York legislators. In 1833 Oberlin college opened its doors to all races. Women were also admitted so that they might be trained for their future role as proper minister's wives. But some of the first Oberlin graduates instead of being cultured appendages of their husbands, began breaking down gender barrier. Early graduates included Lucy Stone, soon to become a leader in the women's suffrage movement.

Meanwhile the temperance movement attracted women very much. Elezabath Cady Stanton connected temperance and women's rights and advocated divorce when alcoholism was present. Within a short period women began to feel that temperance was a matter of women's rights.

Another area in which women actively participated was in the movement against slavery. The women leaders actively involved in efforts to eliminate slavery were Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Antonette Brown and Grimke sisters.

In 1830 anti-slavery societies were formed and Lucretia Mott who was present at the organising meeting of the American Anti-slavery Society later become one of the organisers of the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Conference.

Women in America took part in struggles against slavery had to face vehement opposition from their male counterparts. Angelina and Sarah Grimke the two female abolition workers often received a negative reception from the public not on the content of their abolition talk but because they were women speaking in public. Thus while working in the anti-slavery agitation women become self consciously aware of their subordinate position. As a result they began including in the issue of women's rights also in their lecturers.

Later the exclusion of feminist leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and other women delegates from an anti-slavery convention held in 1840 forced them to think and discuss the idea of organising a women's rights convention. That incident practically paved the way for a separate movement. Thus in 1840 an Equal Rights Association for the emancipation of slaves and women was founded.

The first Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. A Women's rights document based on American Declaration of Independence was the speciality of that convention. Signed by sixty eight women and thirty two men, the Seneca Falls declaration stated: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal .... The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward women, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her ...." The convention demanded for women the right of equal education and the right to preach, to teach, and to earn a livelihood. It also passed a resolution stating "that it is the sacred duty of the women of this country to secure themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise." Thus was laid the foundation for the women's suffrage movement in the United States.[45]

After that convention various conventions were organised in different states. In 1850 the First National Convention was held in Worcester with delegates from nine states. Another convention was held in Syracuse New York, in 1852.

However from the 1850's until the Civil War, the women's movement was mainly concerned with grass roots organising. Activism was constituted of meetings, conventions and petitions to state and national legislative bodies only. After Civil War Negro Males were enfranchised. But women were not given any such consideration. For more than five years, activists for abolition and women's rights had been intensely involved with the 15th Amendment granting black males the vote. It showed women that they had no power to influence the content of laws. Thus the passage of the 14th and 15th Amendment became a political setback for white women as they were now, for the first time, explicitly excluded from politics. Naturally, achieving equal status through the vote become the primary goal of women's movement from 1860's onwards.

In 1863, after a number of southern victories, Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady stanton called a convention of women to form a Loyalty League. President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, but it freed slaves only in the rebel States. The 13th Amendment outlawing slavery passed without mentioning suffrage for blacks or white women. Immediately afterwards a 14th Amendment was proposed with the intent of granting citizenship rights to freed slaves and, by inference, suffrage; the 14th Amendment was significant because it contained the word male, the first time this designation had been used in the Constitution. This Amendment with words 'male citizen' left

intact was passed. In 1869 a 15th Amendment was introduced to grand black males, the right to vote. Once again, women's efforts to have the female sex introduced in this Amendment were rebuffed by abolitionists who feared this inclusion would jeopardies passage. Undesirably, the forces for abolition and women's rights, instead of working together, were now pitted against each other.[46]

Anthony and Stanton organised the National Women Suffrage Association (National) to work for the women in the 15th Amendment. The National Association was the first independent organisation formed for women that was defined and controlled solely by women.

Six months after the founding of the National, the American Suffrage Association was formed to work for passage of the 15th Amendment as it was worked with the intention of working for a 16th Amendment for women's suffrage after passage of the 15th. Before the war, the women's rights movement had made progress on a number of issues raised at the 1848 conference. For instance, the activists had made significant gains in two of their most sought after goals: inheriting rights and entrance into educational institutions. However, passage of the 14th and 15th Amendment constituted a political setback for white women as they were now, for the first time, explicitly excluded from politics. And by the end of 1860 the primary goal of the women's movement was to obtain equal status through the vote, and thus , the women's rights movement became the women's suffrage movement.

During this time two groups with different views and opinions were formed inside the women's movement. Some felt the need to obtain suffrage through the amendment of State Constitutions while others had the firm opinion that the immediate requirement was the enactment of amendment to the United State's Constitution. Two groups namely the National Woman Suffrage Association (under the leadership of Susan.B.Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton) and American Woman Suffrage Association (Top leaders were Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe) were established in the same year 1869.[47] They followed their own methods to obtain the desired results, but did not succeed. In 1890 the two organisations merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association and continued their fight in both ways.

Meanwhile three American women Harriot Stanton Blach, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns,taking their cue from the got experience in the militant suffrage movement led by Emmeline Pankhurst in Britain introduced militant tactics in the women's movement in America. And in 1914 Alice formed the Congressional Union. The Congressional Union members engaged in actions to call attention to the issue of suffrage, thereby keeping it in the mind of the President, Congress and public. She 'staged scenes' introducing tactics and splash not found in the movement since its inception. Always calling newspapers ahead of time, she organised demonstrations on a grand scale with stirring songs and pageantry. The Union adopted colours - purple, white and gold,

held parade with women dressed in white carrying tri-coloured banners, and established a weekly publication, "The Suffragist".

In 1916, in the states where women could vote the Congressional Union formed a women's party to divert women's votes from the democratic party. Though the former President Wilson got re-elected, the women's party was able to claim a women's protest vote.

In 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. Ignoring the war, the Congressional Union officially become National Women's Party (NWP). The National Women's Party initiated picketing at the White House and held "Watchfires of Freedom" in which they burned newspaper clippings of President Wilson's words. The first picket lines appeared in January, and for the next year and a half, on most days that congress was in session, women carrying purple, white and gold banners were to be found infront of either the White House gates or the Capitol. Delegations representing different status or organisations took turns on the picket line, thereby ensuring a constant reminder to the President and legislators of women's demand for suffrage.[48]

After six months of picketing a series of arrests began, which extended over a year. Attacks by heckling crowds became a frequent occurrence and their banners were rippled away. But at every time new processions of women with banners appeared, arrests continued. Arrest and more stringent penalties could not deter the enthusiasm of women. More and more women came to the

front for picketing. Increasing penalties were invoked, resulting in prison terms of thirty to sixty days and the occoquan workhouse. Eventually some suffragists including Alice Paul were sentenced to seven months in prison. Calling themselves political prisoners, seventeen imprisoned suffragists went on a hunger strike. The response from authorities was to forcefeed them. The process of arrests, refusal to pay fines, jailing, hunger strike, forced feeding, and eventual release continued throughout the remainder of the suffrage campaign. With the constant coverage provided by the press, women's suffrage become a household word.

Finally in 1920 American women were enfranchised by the 19th amendment to the constitution. By 1945 in most European countries and America, women had won a high degree of political and legal equality with men. During the Second World War many women took up jobs outside home and held even high positions.

But the legal rights won by women increased their status only to a limited extent. The discrimination in all fields of activity continued. As Jo Campling says: ".. Women remained a minority at all levels of political life, they were grossly under represented in high professional positions, they were discriminated against in all areas of employment, they were paid less than men, welfare provisions assumed and encouraged dependence on a husband, and many women certainly did not share the benefits of the newly affluent society."[49]

Both in Britain and America, the first wave of feminist movement disintegrated with the attainment of voting rights. The organisations existed but activism disappeared. And till 1960's no such movement emerged.

Three years later Alice Paul wrote Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and had introduced it in the congress of the United States. The Women's Party activists belived that this may raise women to an equal status with men and do away with the legal barriers to women's advancement in the public realm. The women's groups from that time onwards debated on it and many opposed the passing of such an amendment. While the Women's Party worked for equality between the sexes, most of the other women's groups considered women as mothers who needed special treatment and protection and were for legislative provisions for maternity infant health care and proctive labour legislations. Later the movement almost succumbed to the divisions within.

The period from 1920's to 60's was a period of anti-feminism. During second World War, though women were encouraged to accept jobs outside home by the government, many of them were thrown out of their jobs in the post war period. The credit of campaigning single-mindedly as a feminist group for women's equality and for Equal Rights Amendment goes to the National Women's Party which faced great opposition and criticism from other women groups.

The second wave of feminist movement developed in the early 1960's in United States. Publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique in 1963[50] gave much inspiration to the feminist activity in America. Millions of copies of it were sold in America and Britain. As many women entered paid employment they became more and more aware of their position, and demands for change were voiced.

The forerunner to the 1960's social movement was black activism in the South. The precipitating event to organising mass protest occurred in 1955 when Rosa Parks, a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to give up her seat and move to "the back of the bus". This action went beyond the concept of integrated educational facility and inspired Southern civil rights activists to protest segregation of public facility in general. Martin Luther King worked on the resulting mass transit boycott and the organising of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). College-age students in SCLC formed the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1961 and began promoting summer 'Freedom Rides' in the deep South. Another campus movement of importance founded in the early 1960's, calling itself the New Left, was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)[51]

The younger generation who were involved in the movements of the Political New Left, civil rights and particularly in students

dominated antiwar movements found themselves treated as second class participants. Many such college educated women founded organisations and worked for a change, such type of experiences including discrimination, inequality and neglect in almost all fields made employed women also work in this line.

Various organisations were formed to work for the cause of women. The 'National Organisation for Women' (NOW) was formed in 1966 which in its 1971 conference supported the right of each person to define and express his own sexuality and passed a resolution declaring the oppression of the 'lesbians' a legitimate concern of feminism. WEAL, the Women's Equity Action League, focussing on legal and economic issues was established by some of the former 'NOW' members in 1968. Later a radical feminist group, 'The Feminists' was organised by Ti Grace Atkinson. All the time while working within the social movements, women suffered discrimination. Their secondary status and suppression of their rights within these social movement circles which espoused high ideals of social justice made women to protest publicly. In 1964 women in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee wrote a position paper protesting their status within that organisation. They were ridiculed by male activists.

Moreover in a National Conference for New Politics (NCNP) held in Chicago in August 1967, a group of radical women led by Jo Freeman and Shulamith Firestone attempted to move a resolution

that women who represented 51 percent of the population must receive 51 percent of the convention votes. They were refused access to the micro phones and were told that they had more important issues to talk about than women's liberation.[52] This and other similar incidents occurred during the period urged them to organize seperately. They held a meeting in Chicago asking women of the Left to organize their own autonomous movement for women's liberation. Books such as The Second Sex by Simone de Beauoir (1948) and The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan (1963) inspired women of Britain and America. Later Jo Freeman acted as the editor of the first news letter - 'Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement' for radical activities. In 1968, with Pam Allen, she formed the New York Radical Women (NYRW). This group organised the first media protest - the 1968 Miss America pageant which launched the movement into the public eye. By this time, consciousness- raising groups were widespread. Women's centres become common. Women examined their lives, and issues bubbled over. Research from a feminist point of view slowly gained legitimacy and eventually led to a new and positive perspective on traditional women's values.

Despite the growth of the women's movement, ideological divisions emerged inside the groups which tried to analyse women's issues and wanted to change women's status differently. Marxist feminists have blamed women's problems on capitalism and a class structured society and advocated an end to capitalism. Separatists, often lesbians, have claimed that women's situation

will change only if women withdraw from male-formed structures. Radical feminists have seen women's situation as the result of biology and seek to change women's status through biotechnology and fundamentally restructured families and communities. Many socialist feminists have agreed with important elements of both the radical and Marxist critiques. However, they have advocated fundamental societal changes that will accommodate women's biological and social roles.[53]

The major issues on which women agitated were i) equal pay for equal work and ii) protection of gains and equal participation in decision making. But ideological differences inside the movement created problems many times. Generally issues related to fair employment practices, education and political participation united women, but family and sexually related concerns especially abortion and *lesbianism* polarised women.[54]

Though in 1970's and early 1980's women's movement concentrated on the passage of Equal Rights Amendment, it failed to win ratification by 1982. As a result the activists began to revaluate their strategies.

The long struggle led by women enabled them to achieve many gains. By 1980's women had gained access to almost every public office. In 1981 Sandra Day O'Connor became the first women to sit on United States Supreme Court. Pressure from the women's groups resulted in various Amendments. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibited discrimination based on sex in

educational activities and programmes in order to enable teachers and administrators to became conscious and to change discriminatory practices. Efforts were also made by women to change the language and the media to avoid its gender bias. They demanded equal pay for work of equal value and challenged many assumptions about the relationship between men and women and about the family roles.

The 1960's witnessed the re-emergence of a women's movement in Britain also. It was mainly led by left wing of women. The first women's groups banded together as a loose collective called the London Women's Liberation Workshop and published a news letter called SHREW. The first National Women's Liberation Conference was held in 1970 at Ruskin college, Oxford.[55]

The news about the movement in America and Britain spread fast and inspired women of other countries in their struggle for achieving rights.

The movement for liberation carried out by women in different countries for getting equal status with men, though not successful had no doubt improved their condition to a large extent. The liberal ideas and the news about the women's struggle for getting equal rights in Britain and America reached India which influenced educated Indians during the nineteenth century.

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    Mariamies, n.23, p.88.

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33. Chartism was a British working-class movement for social reform that normally came into existence after the publication of The People's Charter in May 1838.

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The best known of early feminist writers in Europe was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97).In 1791, she wrote the Vindication of the Rights of Women, in which she challenged all the prevailing nations about women's rationality.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Many historians hold the view that women in India in the early Vedic period[1] enjoyed a fairly high status in comparison with the later periods. Altekar observes: "Girls were educated like boys and had to pass through a period of brahmacharya. Many of them used to become distinguished poetesses and the poems of some of them have been honoured by their inclusion in the canonical literature. The marriages of girls used to takeplace at a fairly advanced age, the normal time being sixteen or seventeen. Educated brides of this age had normally an effective voice in the selection of their partners in life. In social and religious gatherings they occupied a prominent position. Women had an absolute equality with men in the eye of religion; they could perform sacrifices independently and were not regarded as an impediment in religious pursuits."[2]

Even though the Rigvedic society was patriarchal in nature, women enjoyed a relatively high status.[3] In Vedic period *sati* custom was not in vogue and widow remarriage was allowed.[4] Tara Ali Baig notes that Rigvedic society was based on moncgamy.[5] The main disability from which women suffered in this age, as well as in the next one, was proprietary in nature. They could not

hold or inherit property. Altekar contends that landed property could be owned only by one who had the power to defend it against actual or potential rivals and enemies.[6] However, from the above details it can be safely assumed that women in the Vedic period enjoyed a high status.

It is believed that the position enjoyed by women in the early Vedic period changed gradually in the later periods. In the age of Later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads[7] a decline in education and greater seclusion of women could be observed. Following the gradual decline in female education all their privileges also received a set back. Accordingly their religious rights were also curtailed. But the change was gradual. "Naturally there was no tonsure (shaving of the head) of widows, purdah was altogether unknown, but women had ceased to attend public meetings."[8] The two main reasons put forward by Altekar for the decline of the status of women are:

(i) introduction of the non-aryan wife (who was uneducated and had no knowledge of their religious practices) into the aryan household, and

(ii) the growing complexity of the Vedic sacrifices which required long training for the students. So it became difficult for a female student to spend long years to get education and training in religious matters.[9]

During the age of the Sutras, the Epics and the Early Samhitas[10] women's position deteriorated considerably.

Marriageable age was lowered, widow remarriages were discouraged and the practice of *sati* started appearing in society during this period.

Women continued to fall lower in the social ladder till the code of Manu summed up her position: The father protects a woman in her childhood, husband during her youth, her son, in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.[11] It was Manu's code which became a part and parcel of Hindu Law. Though Buddhism provided women certain privileges and greater freedom, they were not regarded as equals with men. It is significant that "even in the liberated rules of Buddhism, a nun howsoever advanced in her faith, was always subordinated to the youngest novice among the brethren".[12]

The period from the invasion of India by Mohammed of Ghor to the establishment of British authority in the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed in general the further deterioration of the position of women in India. The medieval period which synchronised with Muslim rule had brought further deterioration in their position. There were many factors directly and indirectly responsible for the continuous deterioration in the status of women in the medieval times. The then prevailing conditions in the society demanded the protection of women from the eyes of Muslim rulers and led to the system of "purdah"[13] which blocked the way of their further progress. Early marriage became a rule to safeguard the honour and chastity of girls. In

addition to these cruel customs, the disabilities to which Indian women were subjected to were *sati*, *polygamy*, *kulinism*[15] and enforced widowhood. This was the social situation when the country passed under the political domination of the British.

The introduction of English education, the activities of Christian missionaries and the impact of ideas of liberalism, democracy and equality from the West contributed to a new awakening in India in the nineteenth century. The first English educated Indian elite welcomed the introduction of English education throughout the country. They began to view many of their social practices and beliefs critically. In their urge for change, they also aspired "to bridge the increased gap between husband and wife (women were not usually given education) and to enable wives to prepare their sons for a western educated milieu".[16] These western educated Indians were the pioneers of social reforms in India. They focused their reform activities on women and their education. Moreover, English education helped men and women of India to know and study about various movements in other countries of the world.

Christian missionaries started working in India from the early part of the nineteenth century itself. They did commendable social service by opening orphanages, widow homes and schools. They vehemently criticised Hindu values, beliefs and customs. Though their major aim was conversion of people to their faith, it aroused a new spirit and rethinking of values among Indians

and introduced improvements in Hindu society. The elevation of the status of women became one of the main planks in the consequent social reform movements.

The British authorities had initially followed a policy of strict neutrality towards indigenous socio-religious problems. But the reformist zeal of enlightened educated Indians forced a change in their stand. Pioneers among the champions of social reformers were Raja Rammohan Roy, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Behramji Malabari, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swamy Dayananda Saraswati.

Rammohan Roy was the first Indian social reformer who took up the cause of women. Born in 1772 in a Kulin Brahmin family,[17] he became a great scholar in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. Pained by the prevailing socio-religious maladies of the time in India, Rammohan Roy was determined to work for reforms. He viewed English education as one of the means for reforming Indian society and through his persistent effort got it introduced in India. His historic agitation, against strong opposition from orthodox Hindu leaders, to end the cruel practice of sati, resulted in the declaration of sati as illegal in 1829.[18]

To further his reform activities, Rammohan Roy founded the Brahma Samaj or Divine Society which upheld the unity of God, decried idol worship, advocated communal harmony[19] and championed the cause of women. The freedom and equality of women and remarriage of widows figured prominently among the goal of the Samaj.

Rammohan Roy also opposed polygamy and considered it as a blot on the fair name of Hinduism.[20] One of his pamphlets 'Modern Encroachment on the Ancient Rights of Female' stressed the need for removing the property disabilities of women.[21]

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's name is associated with two important reforms, namely the education of girls and widow remarriage. Born in 1820 in a Brahmin family, he became the Principal of the Sanskrit College, in Calcutta.[22] Vidyasagar took an important part in the vigorous campaign in favour of widow remarriage in Bengal. His endeavors were responsible for Act 1 of 1856 legalising the remarriage of Hindu widows.[23] In the five years following the enactment of the Widow Remarriage Act, twenty five widow marriages were performed through the efforts of Vidyasagar who was also liberal with monetary help.[24] He used his time and energy to educate girls. He was largely responsible for helping the government to found the first girls' school in Calcutta in 1849. He established as many as forty girls' schools in Bengal between 1855 and 1858.[25]

Swamy Dayanand Saraswati who founded Arya Samaj in 1875,[26] was another staunch advocate of women's freedom and education. He was also highly critical of the system of dowry and early marriage of girls. He recommended the study of Vedas and other holy scriptures for women and exhorted them to follow the example of Gargi[27] and Maitreyi.[28] In order to execute his programme, the leaders of Arya Samaj opened a large number of girls' schools throughout northern India.[29]

Kesab Chandra Sen was another great social reformer of the time in India. He was born in 1838. Sen joined the Brahma Samaj in 1857 and was a whole time missionary of the Samaj. In 1859, he staged a drama on widow remarriage which openly attacked the practice of Kulinism. Sen brought to the Brahma Samaj a dynamic force which it never possessed before. But the advanced ideas of social reforms, such as inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage and the removal of purdah for women did not find favour with the older section of the Samaj led by Devendranath Tagore. This led to an open conflict and Sen and his followers formed a new organisation called 'The Brahma Samaj of India' in 1866.[30] In 1870 he founded the Indian Reform Association, with the welfare and emancipation of women as its major objectives. The education of women got special attention of Kesab Chandra Sen. He started an organisation for educating female members at home. Bamabodhini- a magazine for women was started. He inaugurated a prayer meeting called Brahmika Samaj, an organisation exclusively meant for women. His campaign against early marriages facilitated the Civil Marriage Act of 1872.[31]

Mahadev Govinda Ranade was the leader of social reform and cultural renaissance in Western India. He was born in the Nasik district of Maharashtra in 1842.[32] In 1870 he joined the Prarthana Samaj, the counterpart of the Brahma Samaj in Western India. He was an active member of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and was connected with over twenty Association at Poona. He worked

against the social abuses and advocated women's education. He also formed the National Social Conference (NSC) in 1887 to provide an all India forum for discussion of social reforms.[33] Ranade began his work by giving education to his wife. He taught her and encouraged her to immerse herself in social reform movements. Soon Remabai Ranade became a pioneering woman social reformer.

Behramji Malabari was a journalist who did commendable work against social evils. He was very much inspired by Christianity. Malabari devoted his life in fighting against child marriage and enforced widowhood. He founded a journal, Indian Spectator, to spread his reformist ideas. He published two notes- 'Infant Marriage' in India and 'Enforced Widowhood' in 1884.[34] Thus through publications and by his speeches he roused public opinion against those social evils and worked for legislative remedy. His efforts met with success when in the year 1891 the Age of Consent Bill[35] was passed.

Another Great reformer was - Dhondo Kesav Karve who worked enthusiastically for the emancipation of women in India. On the death of his first wife, Karve married a widow in 1893. In the same year he founded an association in Maharashrta to which admission was restricted only to persons who had re-married or had the courage to dine openly with re-married couples. Karve signalized the launching of this association by starting a boarding house in his own home and under the supervision of

himself and his wife, for the children of re-married couples.[36] Karve's greatest achievement was in the field of women's education. In 1907 he founded the Mahila Vidyalaya with the assistance of Deccan Education Society.[37] Though the efforts met with considerable opposition, Karve's Women's University was formed on 20 June 1916 at Poona.[38] In 1908 he established the Nishkam Karmamath for training a body of selfless workers. Later he was awarded Bharath Ratna for his services.[39]

The efforts for the betterment of the status of women in India, pioneered by a group of eminent men, were soon taken up by women themselves. Their efforts to improve the condition of women in India laid the foundation of the women's movement in India. The pioneers among women social reformers were Pandita Ramabai, Ramabai Ranade, Anandibai Joshi, Francina Sorabji, Cornalia, Dr.Annie Jagannadhan, Swarna Kumari Debi and Rukmabai.

Panditha Ramabai was born in Mysore in 1858, as the daughter of Ananth Sastri, a very learned man, who encountered persecutions for his conviction that women had the same right to higher knowledge as men themselves possessed. Ramabai imbibed this spirit from her father.[40] In her early years she suffered many hardships because of poverty, diseases, death of her parents and hostility from the public. By overcoming all hardships she became an eminent scholar and emerged as an individual with a great mission in life. Even conservative men appreciated her scholarship. In 1878, the title of 'Saraswati' was conferred on

her. Later she was honoured with the title of Pandita.[41] Her denunciations of men for keeping women down, her marriage out of her caste and the criticism of popular Hinduism roused the ire of the orthodox against her; but they admired her scholarship and eloquence.[42] She took up women's upliftment as her mission. And concentrated her activities on improving the condition of widows and on the education of women. For that she sought help and inspiration from abroad. Ramabai was attracted to western ideas and embraced Christianity in 1883 when she visited England.[43] She studied the education system in America and concentrated on women's education in India.

Ramabai started the Arya Mahila Samaj at Poona.[44] By writing books and delivering lectures about the sad condition of child widows in India, she sought financial support from America. And she succeeded in opening her first home for widows called Sarada Sadan in Bombay in 1889.[45] Her great enterprise of educating widows begun at Sarada Sadan in Bombay grew rapidly, particularly during the time of the Great Famine in 1896.[46] Her dedication to the cause of widows was great. This is evident from her mission to save widows from Vrindavan, She had heard that priests were using widows for immoral traffic and the number of temple prostitutes was increasing. For fifteen days she lived in Vrindavan in the guise of a beggar and convinced seven widows to go with her to Poona. But they were locked up by the priests, and she could rescue only one against threat to her own life. She started relief work during the famine of 1897, and rescued about

sixty women from the camp.[47] She founded many institutions for the welfare of lower castes and women. Besides schools for children, she opened a training school for teachers and an industrial school with garden, field, oil press, diary, laundry, departments for baking, sewing, weaving and embroidery.[48] She encountered many hardships during her efforts to improve the lot of Indian women. Yet she continued her efforts with great enthusiasm and became an encouraging force for other social reformers. Pandita Ramabai was regarded as the first great woman pioneer who laid solid foundations for Indian women's freedom and education.[49]

Ramabai Ranade, wife of the great social reformer Justice Ranade, was another outstanding woman who devoted her life for women's emancipation. Her major work was in the field of women's education. In the campaign of women's suffrage also her contribution was immense.[50] She joined the Arya Mahila Samaj in 1881 and worked hard to organize the womenfolk. In Bombay she founded the Hindu Ladies Social and Literary Club, which conducted regular classes on subjects like religion, medicine and industry. The classes tried to spread literacy too.[51] When the social conference met in Bombay in 1904, she presided over the session specially convened for women.[52] In 1910 she published her 'Reminiscences' which was later translated into many languages. In 1913, when a severe famine affected Gujarat and Palanpur, she led a group of workers from Seva Sadan who distributed food grains, clothes and medicines to the affected

people. She presided over the meetings of Bharath Mahila Parishad on four occasions and her speeches laid great stress on the education of women.[53] She protested in 1914 against the British policy towards Indians in South Africa, led an agitation in Poona in 1920 for free and compulsory education for girls, and from 1919 onwards took an active part in the suffrage movement.[54]

Swarna Kumari Debi - the sister of Rabindranatha Tagore was a famous social reformer of Bengal. In 1886, she started a Ladies Association in order to promote friendly intercourse among Indian women and to provide a home for education of poor girls and to prepare them for employment. She become the president of the Theosophical Society of Bengal for 1885-86.[55]

Frncina Sorabji was a distinguished woman who contributed to the social reform movement of the time. She was an ardent advocate of women's education. Francina established many educational institutions for girls at Poone.

Other great women who worked for the emancipation of women included Dr.Anandibai Joshi (1865-87)- a contemporary and friend of Pandita Ramabai, Cornelia, Dr.Annie Jagannadhan and Rukmabai who rebelled against tradition in order to join a medical college. These names are however only indicative. Among the great social reformers of the time are Swami Vivekananda, Sree Ramakrishna Paramahamsar, Sasipada Banerjee, Rabindranatha Tagore and Gopalakrishna Gokhale. Mahatma Gandhi's name is the foremost while discussing the names of social reformers. His idea

of women's emancipation and his approach to their problems were novel and he was the person who talked about complete equality between men and women during that period. Gandhiji organised women on a mass scale and brought them to the forefront of the national movement.

Besides the individual reformers, several social reform organisations took up the cause of women's upliftment by organising women and propagating ideas against the evil practices concerning women and advocating education for women. Such pioneering organisations were started by early reformers like Rammohan Roy, Ranade, Swamy Dayanand Saraswati and others. Notable among these organisations were the Brahma Samaj (founded in 1828), the Prarthana Samaj (1867), the Arya Samaj (1875), Deva Samaj, the Sikh Association, Servants of India Society (1905), Social Service League, Seva Sadan, Sarada Sadan, Bombay Provincial Social Conference, Bombay Presidency Social Reforms Association,[56] Theosophical Society (1886), Ramakrishna Mission (1898) and the Decan Education Society (1880).[57]

Most of these organisations aimed at social and religious reforms. And so women's upliftment became one of the major objectives of many of these organisations. They led campaigns for women's emancipation and established schools for their education. Later many associations and institutions were started solely for women. Many of these organisations were either started by men or directed by men.

Many of the reform associations started during 1870's had their women's wing too. In 1866 Brahma Samaj split into the Brahma Samaj of India led by Kesab Chandra Sen and the Adi Brahma Samaj led by Debendranath Tagore. Under the leadership of Kesab, the Samaj opened a girls' school, started a women's magazine, the Bamabodhini(1863), and founded a women's branch, the Bramika Samaj in 1865. The women attended Brahmo religious ceremonies, though they sat behind a curtain. Social opposition to this early women's association was illustrated by the excommunication of women by their non-Brahmo relatives.[58] Brahma Samaj was divided into liberal and conservative factions in 1870's and 80's- namely Navabidhan Brahma Samaj and Sadharan Brahma Samaj. Arya Nari Samaj and Banga Mahila Samaj were the corresponding women's branches of the above mentioned associations.[59]

Soon women took up the leadership and started various women's organisations and thus gave a powerful lead to the social reform movement, especially the women's movement. The organisations thus started focused their activities on improving the condition of widows and giving them education.

Sarada Sadan was founded by Pandita Ramabai in 1889 in Bombay. A similar institution was founded in Poona in 1892. Sri Mahipatram Rupram Anadhasram was started by her at Ahmedabad in 1892. This was to help widows and to give shelter to illegitimate children.[60] Swarna Kumari Debi in 1886 formed a Ladies

Association to provide home for the education of poor girls and to prepare them for employment.[61] In 1909 Seva Sadan was established by Ramabai Ranade. It provided a home for women, imparted education and prepared them for social work. In 1904, leaders of National Social Conference organised a women's section which held annual conferences during the National Social Conference sessions. This with the name Bharat Mahila Parishat, organised educational and inspirational programmes in which women of distinction like Ramabai Ranade, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Ganguli and several Maharanis made speeches.[62]

In Madras Presidency, an Indian Christian social reformer, Dr.Sattinadhan, encouraged his wife Kamala to start Indian Ladies Magazine in 1901. She edited the magazine for many years. Subbalakshmi Ammal founded a Brahmin Widows' home in 1913 and the Mahila Seva Samaj of Mysore in the same year. In 1909, Rameswari Nehru organised a Mahila Samiti in Allahabad. The early associations and their agitations against social evils in the community encountered bitter opposition also. Muslims, especially Muslim women were very backward in education. So Muslim Women's association were conspicuous by their absence, in the early period. All India Muslim Women's Conference was started only in 1916 by the Begum of Bhopal. In 1917, Abrubegum proposed a resolution against polygamy which provoked opposition from Muslims. Opposition also was encountered by Sheikh and Begum Abdulla when they started a girls' school in Aligarh in 1906 and by Atiya Begum and Sakhawat Hussain when they tried to be

admitted to the All India Muslim Educational Conference in 1926.[63] Meanwhile YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) was active among Christians.

Hundreds of such women's associations were formed in the early part of the twentieth century of which only some are mentioned here. Between 1910 and 1930 several National level women's organisations were formed and they widened and strengthened the women's movements in India.

Major women's associations formed during the period are Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM) founded in 1910 by Saraladevi Choudhurani, Women's Indian Association (WIA) founded in 1917 by Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarajadasa and Margaret Cousins, Bombay Presidency Women's Council (BPWC), founded in 1918 by Lady Tata and others who had been active in war work; National Council of Women in India (NCWI), founded in 1925 by Lady Aberdeen of the International Council of Women, Lady Tata and others from BPWC; and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) or Akhil Hind Mahila Parishad (AHMP) founded in 1927 through the efforts of Margaret Cousins and others.[64] Among the nationwide women's organisations started during the first and second decade of twentieth century, All India Women's Conference become the most influential organisation of the time in terms of its performance to the cause of women.

All India Women's Conference began functioning from 1926 with the sole objective of imparting education to women, but

later enlarged its scope to include social reform. It was primarily concerned with influencing government policy on women in matters of education, social service, law, suffrage, health and employment. From the 1930's a notable shift in its perspectives can be seen. It got involved in making resolutions on a wide range of development issues and talked in terms of equality between the sexes as a necessary condition of social development. The net-work of branches all over India widened its realm of action. It played an important role in pressurising the government to make social legislations. It took a lead in the suffrage movement also.

By 1930's Women's Indian Association became a part of AIWC. Thus it became one of the most influential organisations which focused its efforts on women's education and women's suffrage. This organisation acted as a training ground for many women leaders who later took part actively in the National Movement and held responsible positions in the government after independence.

The political awakening in India and the participation of women in the national movement gave a new turn to the women's movement of India. It provided a new stage for women to work side by side with men in the public arena. Such a mass participation under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi gave women a sense of equality with men. This imparted greater strength to the women's movement.

After the beginning of the world war I, some elite women had attended political meetings. The outstanding of these women were Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu and Bi Amma, the mother of Mohammed Ali.[65] Few women were associated with the National Congress initially. They attended the sessions of the Indian National Congress as wives and visitors. The first Indian woman who entered into active politics and lived to see India attain freedom was Sarojini Naidu.[66] There was no woman delegate among those who entered their names in the register at the inaugural meeting of the Indian National Congress. A woman delegate participated for the first time in the fifth annual session, in 1889. She was Kadambini Ganguly, who was the first women to graduate in medical science.[67]

When Annie Besant formed the Home Rule League in 1916, there began an accentuation of the ideal of unity in India, and women of different provinces met together to exchange views on vital national issues.[68] The League also had established a women's branch to meet and discuss political issues without the inhibiting presence of men. The movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 included women also.

Women participated in the first major political satyagraha in 1919, but only in limited numbers. Small and isolated groups of women held political meetings in Bombay and Punjab. Annie Besant[69] and Sarojini Naidu[70] addressed meetings in Bombay to educate women on the nature of satyagraha, and Kasturba Gandhi

and Kamaladevi Chathopadhyay[71] sold proscribed literature in the streets. At the AICC session of 1922, of the three hundred and fifty delegates, sixteen were women.[72] The first woman to be elected as president was Annie Besant in 1917. Eight years later in 1925, Sarojini Naidu became its second woman president.[73]

The Khilafath and Non co-operation campaigns (1918-1922) marked the beginning of Gandhiji's leadership of the Indian nationalist movement.[74] He combined the problems of women with the struggle for freedom and attacked social evils by appealing to the nationalist feelings of the people. Gandhiji was the first great pioneer who brought women out of the four walls of home and then to the forefront of the freedom struggle. At a time when no reformers spoke of women's equality with men, Gandhiji throughout his life, maintained and worked for the equality of women with men. He belived in women's ability, strength of will and character to stand her own and to work with men.[75] According to him, the soul in both man and woman is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings.[76]

Gandhiji was totally against the evil customs like dowry, child marriage and enforced widowhood, and asked the public not to rely completely on the religious texts alone but to follow one's own reason on every issues which an individual or society confronted. He said: "all that is printed in the name of scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired God".[77] For him, woman is the companion of man gifted with equal

mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest detail of activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he.[78]

Gandhiji's ideas and views had great impact on the minds of Indian people. Women's problems were discussed by him in his newspapers. When he called upon women to join Indian National Congress and to work for the independence of the country, the response was tremendous . They joined the Congress, worked wholeheartedly and proved themselves as more compatible for non-violent struggle than men. In all the satyagraha movements launched by Gandhiji women participated in great numbers. Police violence or, rigorous imprisonments did not deter them.

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 elicited wide enthusiasm among women. They took part actively in it and carried illicit salt in their sarees. Under the leadership of Kasthurba Gandhi, women volunteers picketed before the liquor shops.[79] Sarojini Naidu assumed the leadership of the satyagraha at Darsana, the scene for the mass breaking of salt laws. Numerous women marched in processions, picketed shops selling foreign cloth and liquor. They spun and propagated Khadi, went to jails during the non-cooperation movement and participated actively in the revolutionary movement.[80]

Gandhiji's constructive programme provided women with education and training in the fundamentals of organised activity and propaganda. And thus women could accept supportive as well as

leadership roles in the constructive programme without any fear of stepping outside the limits of conventional behaviour.[81] Women were encouraged to participate in the programme of khadi, village industry, prohibition and eradication of untouchability.

At the annual AICC meetings of the Indian National Congress, women were present as members and were appointed as delegates. Gandhiji had established a convention of electing at least one woman member to the elite working committee of the Congress. Sarojini Naidu for many years filled this position.[82] Gandhiji's leadership in the National movement provided many women an opportunity to rise in politics and to become leaders. Their mass participation in the National movement helped a general awakening, which contributed to the formation of many women's organisation and to the women's movement as a whole.

The few names of women who worked wholeheartedly side by side with men in the national movement and thus gave strength to the women's movement were Suchetha Kripalani (wife of J B Kripalani), Anasuya Sarabhai (the sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, a wealthy textile industrialist and a devoted follower of Gandhiji), Manibehn Patel (daughter of Pyarelal Nayyar), Basanti Devi (wife of C R Das), Begum Hasrat Mohani (a delegate to the AICC meetings, member of All India Muslim Conference), Kamala Nehru, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Mridula Sarabhai (daughter of Ambalal Sarabhai), Satyavati (grand daughter of Swami Sradhananda) and Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy[83].

Women of India not only played their role in the non-violence struggle but also engaged in the secret missions aimed at the early attainment of freedom. During the 'Quit India Movement' Gandhiji's 'Do or Die' pledge encouraged women like Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kripalani, and Usha Mehta, who assumed the leadership of the movement in various places while staying underground.

Bina Das, Preethi Lata Waddedar, both from Bengal and Kalpana Dutt as members of secret and terrorist societies had undertaken dangerous assignments and pursued politics of violence in the National movement.[84] Thus though the participation of women in the movement and their role in the leadership of the movement was in no way near to that of men, their presence can be seen and felt in almost all fields of activities in the national movement.

The movement for obtaining the right to vote for women in India deserves special mention. Before 1920 the women of India were not given the right to vote. During the freedom struggle women leaders organised and launched a movement to win women's suffrage. It started when in 1917 under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu, a group of twelve members including Annie Besant, Cousins[85] and Dorothy Jinarajadasa appeared before Lord Montague and demanded women's franchise.[86] Initially British authorities ignored women's demand. But later the government left the matter to the decisions of Indian legislatures.

When in 1920 British government published The Rules for Elections to Provincial Legislative Councils , Women's Indian Association arranged a campaign. The number of women involved in this varied across the provinces. The Bombay campaign appeared to be the most vigorous, as nineteen women's associations and over 800 women including some European women, participated in it.[87] Finally, in 1923 and 1924, some Indian State Legislatures enfranchised women.[88] Other states also enfranchised women in the following years. After securing franchise women leaders started a second campaign for the removal of the ban on women entering legislatures. Without much effort women won that campaign also. Suffrage Movement was a great success for the women's movement in India. And it gave them an impetus to struggle for better results in other areas.

The women's movement during the post-independence period can be divided into three phases:-

i) the period from 1947 to the late 60's, which is charactrised by complacency and acquiescence after the attainment of formal equality and liberation under the constitution;

ii) the period from the late 60's till 1975, which is marked by growing economic crisis leading to rural revolts in which women actively participated; and

iii) the post 1975 period which is witnessed by tremendous changes within the women's movement: the observance of International Women's Year and the International Women's Decade 1975-1985; abundance of systematic study and

research on women's issues, the submission of the report on the status of women (Towards Equality), anti-rape campaign, the influence of western feminist groups and the emergence and proliferation of a new type of women's organisations.

In India, women's movement engaged as part of the national movement. The first wave of the women's movement in the country lost its vigor and enthusiasm after the attainment of equality before law. The absence of an inspiring goal like the quest for freedom naturally weakened the women's movement. Equality before law guaranteed by the Constitution of India aroused in women a feeling that their problems were solved. Most of the women's organisations of the time ceased to be active. Some organisations settled down to do welfare work among women with the grant provided by the government.

Vibhuti Patel remarks: "Once independence was achieved, Indian women left public life. Larger issues of society no more concerned them. Women's organisations got themselves immersed in routine activity of cookery, sewing and embroidery classes, fashion parades, henna competition etc.[89]

A period of stagnation prevailed on the scene for a long period in India. This in no way means that the problems of women disappeared or that they were getting equal treatment in every walk of their lives. A new awakening of women could be seen only in 1970's after the formation of autonomous women's groups. There were some women's organisations working in India since the early

decades of the nineteenth century, like All India Women's Conference which followed a liberal feminist ideology. The spread of autonomous women's groups in the country gave an impetus to the feminist movement in India. They took up issues concerning women and fought vehemently against oppression, exploitation, injustice and discrimination against women in society. This positively contributed to the origin of a second feminist movement in India.

During the late 1960's India witnessed militant mass movements involving industrial workers, tribals, agricultural labourers and middle class masses. In all these general struggles, women also actively participated.[90] The economic and political events in the late 1960's and the resultant discontent among the people were the major factor behind these mass movements.

Nanditha Gandhi writes: "The Indian economy, after an initial spurt settled at stagnation level. The increase in unproductive expenditure during the China and Pakistan wars in 1962 and 1971, famine and drought, coupled with fluctuations in foreign aid forced the Indira Gandhi government to double the amount of deficit financing, prices of all commodities shot up, and black marketing took over. Essential commodities like food grains, sugar and oil saw a twenty five percent to thirty percent increase every year. Official measures to check inflation like wage freezes and credit controls only frustrated an already

disillusioned and economically battered people. The urban working class, agricultural labourers and sections of the middle class joined different political streams to voice their discontentment.[91] Various movements emerged in different states and spread to other parts of the country. The opposition parties organised campaigns against corruption, unemployment and price rise. The movements of the period included the Anti- price rise movement of 1972, the Naxalbari movement which started in 1967, the Chipko movement of 1970's and various other movements led by industrial workers, students and agricultural labourers.

Majority of these struggles covered Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu in the south; Maharastra, Goa, Gujarat in the west; Bihar, Rajasthan, Utter Pradesh, Delhi in the north; and West Bengal and Assam in the eastern parts of India.

The anti-price rise movement in Maharastra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh saw the most massive women's mobilisation of the time. The economic crisis of that period affected family as a whole. The increasing debts and the consequent misery in the family brought women to the forefront of the campaign.[92] Various women's organisations including women's wings of political parties led the movement and mobilised women belonging to all sections.

During this time, politically leftist parties showed much interest in mobilizing women. In 1954, National Federation of Indian Women was formed.[93] This was organised by some women party

members who had worked in the AIWC before independence. In 1971 the CPI (M) recognised the need for a women's organisation and set up Sramic Mahila Sanghathanna (Working Women's Organisation) to mobilize women. The socialist party also organised a women's wing.

All these women's organisations joined with other women's organisations like Samajvadi Mahila Sabha, Bharatiya Mahila Sabha and Bharatiya Mahila Federation (state branch of the CPI affiliated to NFIW) led the anti-price rise movement by organising an Anti price rise Joint Women's Front.[94] The protest movements organised between 1973-75 included women from Congress and non-party middle class housewives. Their activities included mass concientisation, gheraos of ministers and industrialists, demonstrations and public meetings and marches with rotis attached to their rolling pins. The anti-price rise movement was suspended after the declaration of the State of Emergency. The Naxalbari movement which began in 1967 also had active participation of women. It first originated in West Bengal and later spread to Maharastra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. This struggle helped to strengthen the organisation of agricultural labourers on wages and land issues.

The forest protection movement of 1970s in the North Indian hill areas is regarded as a women's movement. This spread through out India and is known as 'Chipko Movement'. This movement in the Utter khand region of Himalayas was largely a tribal-women-

centered struggle where women had clung to the trees in order to protect them from the saws of the contractor's men. As the forests were increasingly felled for commercial industry, the women sought to protect their livelihood through the Gandhian method of satyagraha and non-violent resistance.

In 1974 the village women of Reni forest of Chamoli district in Utter Pradesh decided to act against a commercial enterprise intent on felling some two thousand five hundred trees. To protest against this, women joined hands and encircled the trees. To cut the trees, they would first have to cut-off their heads. Thus the Reni forest was saved.[95]

Movements of agricultural workers for minimum wages, land rights and against feudal servitude during 1970's in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu also witnessed very keen participation of women agricultural labourers. Because of increasing agrarian unrest, the government had to come up with various schemes for the employment of rural poor. Rural women constitute more than half of the "beneficiaries" of the rural employment scheme. They have also participated in the struggle against corruption and sexual harassment by the contractors and government officials involved in such schemes.[96]

The intensive movements of different sections of people which spread all over India got a set back due to the imposition of Emergency in 1975. However this added to the climate of dissent. The objectives of the movements of the 60's were mostly

general issues. Women's specific issues did not appear prominently in these movements. However participation of women in these movements helped them to rethink their problems. They became aware of the fact that unlike men they are doubly oppressed in the society. This developed in them a wish for change. Many new women's organisations were formed during this period. Participation in general movements made women politically conscious and it helped to produce leaders among women. Thus the newly formed democratic consciousness among women contributed much to a climate favourable to feminism.

During this period the feminist movement in the West was so intense that the news about their activities and their literature reached India and influenced educated Indian women. "The issues of women's liberation movement in the West were demands for equal pay for equal jobs, absence of discrimination at work place, defiance of sexism in media, right to contraceptives and abortion, child care facilities for working mothers".[97] Women of India by this time also started organising around specific issues which are in some way similar to those of the West. They started questioning patriarchal values and protested against the discrimination and oppression of women as a class.

"The Women's Liberation Movement in the West created a great stir during 1965 to 1975 as a result of which the United Nations declared 1975 as the International Women's year."[98] The declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year had

tremendous impact on the feminist movement in India. The submission of the government report on women, Towards Equality analysing women's position in India was another favourable development. The report submitted in 1975 says: "The review of the disabilities and constraints on women, which stem from socio-cultural institutions, indicates that the majority of women are still very far from enjoying the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them by the constitution. ..the increasing incidence of practices like dowry indicate a further lowering of the status of women. They also indicate a process of regression from some of the norms developed during the freedom movement".[99]

The release of this report led to serious discussions among educated women about women's deteriorated position. The presentation of the above government report coincided with the celebration of 1975 as International Women's Year. Later the period from 1975 to 1985 was declared as International Women's Decade. And India was one among those countries which signed the U.N Charter on Women. As a result research on women got greater attention in academic circles. Literature on women multiplied. Conferences and seminars were organized in different parts of the country on women's issues by political parties, academic circles, and women's organisations.

The most remarkable feature of the period was the emergence of autonomous women's groups in major cities of India. These organisations were qualitatively different from the earlier

women's organisations. Members of most of these groups were from middle class. Autonomous women's group provided a platform for women to discuss and take up women's specific issues such as rape, dowry, sexism in media, wife beating and prostitution. They highlighted specific problems of women in general such as problem of women workers in factory, victimisation of women during caste and communal riots, women's plight during droughts or ecological disasters.[100] These types of women's group were first of its kind in India,[101] and they gave full attention to women thereby activating the women's movement in India.

At first Autonomous women's grcups were started in major cities like Bombay, Delhi, Pune, Hyderabad and Patna. Stree Sakti Sangathana -Hyderabad, Vimochana -Bangalore, Stree Jagruti -Mangalore, Mahila Mukti Manch -Patna, Nari Samatha Manch -Pune, Saheli -Delhi, Women's Centre - Bombay, Sakhi Kendra -Kanpur, and Pennurimai Iyyakam -Madras are some of the women's organisations which emerged[102] during the International Women's Decade which fought militantly against women's oppression. Many other groups were formed in various other parts of the country. Describing its autonomy, Vibuti Patel writes: "Autonomous Women's Organisations are by women, of women and for women in the true sense of the term because they do not compromise on women's issues".[103] But that does not mean that Autonomous women's organisations are against men. They sought the support of men also in their activities.

Along with these women's organisations, by this time, political parties particularly the women's wing of left parties began to take up women's issues. Also various interest groups with feminist perspective started functioning in different fields like media, law, academia and in popularising science, health etc. Besides, traditional type of women's organisations were also working among women but not challenging the existing patriarchal values and not giving attention to specific issues. Many such organisations performed certain welfare activities for women like income generating activities etc. Thus women's movements in India have such diverse aims and activities, perspectives and programmes that it is hardly possible to reduce them to certain distinct categories.

Autonomous women's groups became a strong current in the women's movement in India in the 1980's. They led many campaigns on issues related to dowry, police rape, witch hunting, alcoholism and on temple prostitutions. They engaged actively in unionising women workers, domestic servants and slum-dwellers.

One of the major campaigns led by Autonomous women's organisations was against dowry murders and police rape. In 1979 the campaign against dowry murders started. Dowry deaths were on the increase especially in Delhi and other major cities in north India during that period. Murder of young brides for their failure to bring in more and more dowry as demanded by their husbands or in-laws were often regarded as suicides by the

authorities. And many times the accused went scot-free owing to lack of evidence or to the influence of the in-laws.

"When newly formed women's groups in Bombay and Delhi reported cases of 'unnatural' deaths of newly married women to the police, the police treated these with indifference. Most of the cases of bride burning, dowry deaths and wife murders are passed off as 'accidental deaths' in police reports".[104]

In the anti-dowry campaign which had begun in Delhi several women's groups held street protests to draw attention to the burning of young women by their husbands and in-laws. The movement was particularly strong in Delhi and women's groups received wide support for their protests. As a result, the dowry deaths hitherto treated as suicides or accidental deaths were called murders. Radha Kumar remarks: "it was the first time that the private sphere of the family was invaded, and held to be a major site for the oppression of women, and the public- private dicotomy was broken by groups of women demonstrating outside the houses and offices of those who were responsible for dowry deaths within their families and demanding the intervention of both the state and civil society."[105]

During 1977-79 women's groups and democratic rights organisations took up cases of gang rape of women by police men in Punjab and Hyderabad and mass rapes in Marathwada, Aligarh, Agra and Luknow. This violence against women and brutal torture generated a public protest. It was against this background that

the infamous Madura rape case which aroused such hue and cry from the women's organisations triggered a nation-wide anti-rape movement. Madura, a fourteen year old girl was raped in police custody in Chandrapur, Maharastra. In the case, the Sessions Court, Nagpur declared the policemen innocent but the High Court convicted them. But when it come to Supreme Court, the High Court judgment was reversed and curiously alleged Madura to be of loose morals[106] (that Madura had given consent to sexual intercourse with the policemen). This anti-women judgment of the Highest Court of India aroused nation-wide anti-rape protests. The women's groups took up the issue seriously and fought militantly against the verdict.

Four professors of Delhi University wrote an open letter to the judge of the Supreme Court condemning the judgment.[107] And from every part of the country, women's organisations demanded reopening of the Madura case and also demanded amendments in the rape law. Many new groups were formed in different parts of the country for this purpose. One such organisation was the Bombay based Forum against rape founded in 1980. The campaign has received a great deal of media publicity also. Many political parties especially left parties joined the campaign. Finally the campaign met with success when the government accepted the demand to reopen the case.

The success in anti-rape movement boosted the confidence of women's groups. They extended their activities to academic field

also. Women's centres were started in Bombay and certain other cities. They paid more attention to studies on women's issues, to analyse the historical reasons, and also to conscientise and mobilise women towards action. Many such women centres provide emotional, legal or medical support to victims of atrocities. Women's studies were accepted as serious subjects in Indian universities during this time. Many new feminist journals were started. The journal Manushi became very prominent among them because of its effective commitment to women's issues. Women's movement also spawned feminist cultural groups purporting to spread their messages through plays, songs, films and other media.

Women for once, began to register their protest against anything and everything which they considered discriminatory or oppressive. They protested against obscenity and violence in films and campaigned for a change in the way women were depicted in films, television, radio, press and in advertisements (which portraits women as sex objects). "The Ahmedabad Women's Action Group organised demonstration against obscene plays and also poured coaltar over obscene advertisements, posters and hoardings. Mahila Mukti Manch (Patna), Mahila Morcha (Kanpur), Committee on Media Image of Women (Delhi) and Pennurimai Iyyakkum (Madras) also took up similar protests.[108]

Along with the agitation against violence and oppression,campaign for legal reforms continued. Many women from

different religious backgrounds challenged constitutional validity of personal laws which had religious sanctions. They filed petitions in courts for getting divorce, maintenance, property rights, and custody of children. In challenging the existing laws or customs they had to face ostracism from community and also from their own family. On 23 April 1985, the Supreme Court of India in a landmark judgment awarded life long maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman, 'Shah Bano'. But this evoked much hue and cry from Muslim fundamentalists and the political party -Muslim League. Rallies, demonstrations, mass petitions, signature campaigns and media wars both for and against the Muslim personal laws were held.

There was hectic political activity. The government decided to intervene. But the government framed a bill to take away the husband's liability of paying maintenance to divorced Muslim women. Women's groups joining hands with political parties and some progressive groups campaigned vigorously against the passing of such a bill. However the then government bowed before the fundamentalists and statusquo-its by passing *Muslim Women Protection of Rights (on Divorce) Act 1986*. The act deprived the divorced Muslim women of maintenance right sanctioned as per section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. This was a serious set back to the women's movement in India. Perhaps no single piece of legislation in recent times has attracted as much criticism as the Muslim Protection of Rights (on Divorce) Act 1986 following the Supreme Court verdict in the Shah Bano case.

Protest movements criticising the government's failure to prevent *sati*[109] and for making effective measures to check that social evil was the salient feature of the women's movement in the year 1987. The government with all its powers not only failed to prevent the girl from committing or abetting to commit sati but also it failed to prevent the communal fanatics from celebrating the so called *Chunri festival* to proclaim that girl as *Satimata*. Later due to high demand from the public including women's organisations and political parties the Government of Rajasthan passed an anti-sati law. A month later the central government also passed a bill which sought to provide more effective prevention of *sati*.[110]

Similarly in 1988, against the sex determination tests on foetus and the abortions to eliminate the unwanted girl, women's organisations agitated. The long battle were fought by organising special forums[111] and by conscientising the mass through seminars and meetings. And yet the efforts have not succeeded fully.

These are only some of the major issues on which Indian women led long battles. Many women's groups organised agitation against strict rules in women's hostels, they also attempted to free women from brothels and to rehabilitate them; took up the problems of Devadasis, exploited maid servants and tribal women and worked to improve their lot.

In general, women's movements underwent a metamorphosis. Their aims multiplied; their modus of action changed. Maithreyi Krishnaraj says:- "By the early eighties, therefore, the women's movement had grown in such a way that autonomous feminist groups were only one of its several currents."[112] Most of the women's groups developed links with far left, working class, tribal and anti-caste organisations. And women increasingly began to take part in other social movements like environmental protection and civil rights.

Unlike in the early years of their functioning the women's groups and generally the women's movement earned much confidence in their activities and received much support from the public. Though western feminist ideologies were discussed in detail in India, the feminists groups here did never go in for the extremes like *bra burning* or male-hating.

Women's movement in the pre-independence India was for getting legal reforms for the right to education, employment, vote, and divorce. But present day women's movement in India has advanced far. They have realised the importance of seeing every issue through woman's perspective. It has begun to fight against everything which in one way or other tries to oppress or discriminate against women. As Kamala Bhasin says: "now feminism is trying to develop a perspective on all issues, economic, political and cultural".[113]

The women's movement in India along with the national movement helped women to secure equal rights with men. The constitution of India provided equal rights for women and also made 'special provisions' for them. A series of legislations were made to raise women's status in society. Some of the acts passed were The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The Hindu Succession Act,1956, The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act,1956 and The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act,1956.

Under the Hindu Marriage Act polygamy has been abolished and the right of divorce has been given to both males and females. Under the Hindu Succession Act the widows have been conferred full rights over their property. Besides, mother and daughter are also given equal rights on property as the sons are. Under the Minority and Guardianship Act, the custody of a minor child under the age of five shall ordinarily be with the mother instead of the father. Under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, a woman can adopt a son in her own name. Both male and female child can be adopted and in case the wife is alive, the husband will have to take the consent of his wife in adoption.[114] Thus in many respects the rights of women have been brought at par with men.

Many women entered various professions in government institutions. Education of women got great momentum. The political awareness and women's experience in the national movement raised them to positions of high distinction as cabinet ministers, governors of states and ambassadors.

In the first general election many women contested and some of them were elected to the Loksabha. Twenty three women were elected to the Loksabha in 1952, while nineteen were nominated. The brilliant dancer Rukmini Arunndale was nominated to the Rajya Sabha.[115]

Sarojini Naidu, Suchetha Kripalani, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Lakshmi. N. Menon and Padmaja Naidu were among the Indian women who occupied high political positions and served the country efficiently. Sarojini Naidu became the first woman governor of Utter Pradesh. Later, her daughter Padmaja Naidu was appointed governor of West Bengal. Suchetha Kripalani was the first woman Chief Minister of a state. The stature of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi needs no elaboration here. Many women became members of important delegations to world forums. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was elected president of the United Nations General Assembly. Many notable women were elected to various state legislatures; they did well not only as members but also as ministers.

In the field of social work and welfare activities women's contribution has been immense. When the Central Social Welfare Board was constituted, Durgabai Deshmugh, an ardent social worker and an efficient administrator became its first chair person.

The Five Year Plans consistently placed special emphasis on providing minimum health facilities integrated with family welfare and nutrition for women and children, education, their large participation in the labour force and welfare services for women in distress. Various welfare and development schemes

have been introduced to improve especially the living conditions of women and to increase their access to and control over material and social resources. Special steps have been taken to remove legal, social and other constraints to enable them to make use of the rights and new opportunities becoming available to them. Meanwhile various commissions and committees were set up by the central government and state governments to analyse the prevailing condition of women in India and to suggest measures for their improvement.

In 1971 The committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) was appointed by the Government of India,

(i) 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,

(ii) to examine the impact of the complex processes of social change on various sections of Indian women, and

(iii) to suggest measures which would enable women to play their full and proper role in nation building. The committee set up six Task Forces and two Study Groups to examine the changes in the field of social life, law, economic participation, educational development, political status and women's welfare and development.[116]

The report of the committee on the status of women in India was presented in 1975. The report exposed once again the continuing low status women had in India.

To operationalise the recommendations of the CSWI, a 'Blue print of Action points and National Plan of Action for Women' 1976 was formulated by the then department of social welfare. In

1978 the Report of the Working Group on Employment for Women, and that on Development of Village level Organisations of rural women were published. The impact of these reports necessitated the inclusion of a separate chapter on Women and Development in the Sixth Five Year Plan. It also resulted in women being perceived as contributors to the nation's economy. The Report of the Working Group on Personnel Policies for bringing greater involvement of women in science and technology-1981 reviewed the extent of participation of women in scientific establishments and suggested measures for promoting greater involvement of women in science and technology.[117] In the seventh Five Year Plan, the chapter on socio-economic programmes for women (1985-90) moved further away from a 'welfare approach' to a more positive 'developmental approach' to women's concerns. More recently, the Indian parliament adopted a National Policy on Education (1986) which included a chapter on Education for Women's Equality. The Government of India launched the Twenty Point Programme in 1975 pinpointing areas of special thrust which would show immediate results.[118]

The Report of the National Expert Committee on Women's Prisoners (1987) identifies the gaps and draw backs in existing facilities and services for women offenders and recommends a more humane policy for them. The National Commission on Self Employed Women in the informal sector was appointed in January 1987 to look into the ways and means to alleviate the sufferings of the unprotected labouring women.[119]

The National Perspective Plan for Women 1988- 2000 A.D is an effort at evaluating the impact of developmental plans and programmes on Indian Women. It is linked to the national targets

determined for the end of the century in respect of certain basic indicators especially of health, education and employment. The plan sees women not as the weaker segment of the society or as passive beneficiaries of the development process but as a source of unique strength for reaching national goals.

The plan aims at:-

(i) economic development and integration of women into the main stream of the economy;

(ii) equity and social justice for all women.

These are critical goals for the all round development of women not merely as producers and providers, but also as individuals with a right to human dignity in a society where culture, class, and caste tend to discriminate against the 'weaker'gender.

Despite all the efforts made by the government of India, welfare organisations and individual members, things have not changed much for women since 1975. Society remains staunchly male dominated. It is true that the status of women is changing but only at a slow pace. Position of women in Indian society is far from satisfactory. Wide gap exists between men and women in many spheres of life. In society the women's place has been primarily confined to home, her role limited to procreation, upbringing of children and catering for the needs of men. Many social and religious customs, taboos, and rituals hinder women's freedom, education and work participation in productive labour.

While many problems have been solved and the International Women's Year has ushered in an era of hope, some problems have staged a come back. Dowry deaths are on the ascendancy. Female

infanticide which got reduced considerably, is back with a scientific boom. Female foetuses get aborted, after their sex is determined by tests during pregnancy. Infanticide in its true form prevails in certain places of Tamilnadu. Reports show that in Usilampatti (Tamilnadu) almost all female children born are being killed by the parents.[120] Women's literacy rate is very low when compared to that of men. Rural society is not at all free from bias against girls' education. In poor families girls have to take the household burdens at an early age itself. The problem of wife beating is perhaps the most common amongst Indian women's problems though people are openly fighting against rape and dowry, wife beating is discussed inside home only. It is seldom reported. Almost every single day, newspapers report incidents of dowry harassments, dowry murders and suicides of newly married girls. Rape cases are increasingly reported in the media. The reports are like tips of the ice-bergs.

There are people who even today would consider the practice of *sati* as part of India's glorious heritage. It was belived that the inhuman custom *sati* had died in the nineteenth century. But it had not. On 4 September 1987, eighteen year old girl, Roop Kanwar was burnt to death on her husband's funeral pyre in village Deorala, Sikar district, Rajastan.[121] Not only did the administration with all its power fail to prevent the girl from committing sati but also it failed to prevent the communal fanatics from celebrating the so called *Chunri Festival* to proclaim the girl as *Satimata*.

Devadasi system still exists in many parts of India particularly in the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharastra. It was reported that in Karnataka every year, girls

below twelve years of age were dedicated to goddess *Yellamma*[122] as *devadasis*.[123] It is said that this system is nothing but prostitution under the banner of religion.

The amniocentesis tests-the chromosome test done on the amniotic fluid in the womb of a pregnant woman to learn the sex of the unborn foetus is usually followed by abortion if it happens to be a female one; This practice is gaining wider currency as more and more people come to know about it. In recent times dowry is becoming a serious problem in Indian society. Dowry which was earlier regarded as a symbol of love given by the girls' parents according to their ability, has now became institutionalized as a right to be demanded by the boy's parents.

All these reveal the fact that though constitutional rights including equality and equal opportunities in many spheres were guaranteed to women, many of their problems have remained unsolved.

This in no way means that women's movement was not able to make any headway in fighting injustices towards women. The movement succeeded to a great extent in checking the increasing problems. The campaigns against dowry , sex determination tests etc.create an impact on the public. Consciousness raising among women about their problems, their rights and about the laws made for them is a major contribution of the movement. Legal aid cells, counselling centres and centres for women in distress functioning in the country is providing assistance atleast to a minority. Crimes against women often went unreported during the early years. But as a result of the movement more and more

women show courage to speak out their sufferings. Moreover, crimes against women are widely reported in the media. Though the movement is trying to make links with other social movements and other classes of people even now the women's movement includes mostly women of the middle classes. However with the inclusion of more and more women and also men to the movement and by making better liaison with international bodies the women's movement may able to change the awful situation of women with the passage of time.

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CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KERALA:

PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The word Kerala refers to the south western region in India. Till the states' reorganisation in 1956, Kerala continued to be divided into Travancore and Cochin- the two princely states and Malabar which was under the Madras presidency.

The state of Kerala is famous for its progress in the fields of education, political awareness and general health care. It is also well-known for the matrilineal joint family system where women got dominance and which existed for a long period of time. It also has the unique distinction of achieving hundred percent literacy, the only state in India to do so. According to the 1991 census, the female literacy rate stood at 83.93 percent, a creditable achievement.

A relatively tiny state of the Indian union it is, both in terms of population size and geographical area; its women folk enjoy, relatively, a very high status in the society. Certain demographic indicators like normal sex-ratio, life expectancy at birth, level of literacy, high social priority given for education for both sexes etc.[1], point to this fact. But this is not the whole story. Despite high literacy rate and education

women of Kerala too are not free from many of the problems which they share with their counter parts in other parts of India.

Kerala represents a mosaic of socially different groups of people. In the pre-independence era Kerala was strictly divided into numerous castes and subcastes. The three major religions Hinduism, Christianity and Islam prevailed there. Untouchability was much in vogue. Every caste had its own identity, individuality and prejudices. The social attitude of each community towards their women folk also differed. Even though women in this part of India enjoyed considerable respect and freedom in the earlier centuries, women suffered the lack of both.

The two types of family organisations,- 'matrilineal'[2] and 'patrilineal[3]- existed in Kerala from time immemorial. The difference rested on the system of inheritance.[4] One of the distinctive features of Kerala was the matrilineal system of the Nair community which has prevailed for centuries. This has created the general impression that women of Kerala enjoyed absolute freedom and equality. The matrilineal system has certainly afforded high status to women. But the system has never been a feature of all the communities of Kerala. The Brahmin community for instance followed patrilineal system. Like-wise most of the Muslim and Christian communities also followed the patrilineal system.

It is difficult to list accurately the several castes and communities following either matrilineal (marumakkathayam) or patrilineal (makkathayam) system of inheritance as there were considerable regional variations.

The Malabar Manual gave the lists of communities grouped under matrilineal and patrilineal system of inheritance. According to it, castes following patrilineal system are 1) Namboothiri 2) Pattar 3) Embran 4) Mussat 5) Eleeth 6) Thangal 7) Nambidi 8) Kammath 9) Vaisian 10) Nambiyachan 11) Chakyar 12) Adikal 13) Pidaram 14) Vilakkitharavan 15) Eerankolli 16) Mattachettiyar 17) Kammalar 18) Thandan 19) Ezhavar 20) Cherumar and Chaliyar Jeedar, Kaikolar, Kaniyan, and Thiyyar of Thiruvithamcore.

Those following matrilineal system are 1) Kshatriyar 2) Thirumulpadu 3) Nair 4) Oorali 5) Andore 6) Pallichan 7) Kusavan 8) Vyabari 9) Kolayan 10) Chembotti 11) Pisharodi 12) Varian 13) Nambi 14) Thiyyambadi 15) Maran 16) Kuttunambi 17) Athikurissi 18) Unithiri 19) Eradi 20) Vallodi 21) Nedungadi 22) Veluthedan and 23) Chaliyan and Thiyyan of the North.[5] This shows that only a section of the people observed the matrilineal system. The two major castes around whom the controlling powers vested were Namboothiris and Nairs.

Namboothiris in Kerala strictly followed patrilineal system of inheritance. One of the special features of their family which

they called *Illum*, was that only the eldest son was allowed to marry within the caste. Other brothers were not permitted to marry. They can only have *Sambandham* with Nair women. And their wives and children were excluded from the circle of kinship.

In Namboothiri family discrimination between boys and girls was prominent. Girls were denied education while boys were given education. Strict segregation was observed in the case of girls in families. Condition of Namboothiri women during 18th and 19th century Kerala society was deplorable indeed. As the people who always stay inside the illams, they were called *antharjanams*. *Antharjanams* were not given freedom. Purdah, polygamy, *smarthavicharam*, enforced widowhood and dowry system-all contributed to their suffering. Illiteracy added to their woes. "They observed Purdah and strict segregation was maintained. Polygamy was allowed to the extent of having three wives. The younger brothers were not supposed to talk or even see their eldest brother's wife or wives".[6] Girls were discriminated against from the time of birth itself. The birth of a girl child in a Namboothiri family was an unwelcome event while that of a boy was celebrated with fan fare.

The payment of dowry was another important feature in the marriage of the Namboothiris. Very huge amounts were demanded as dowry and this has caused the ruin of many Namboothiri families. The Travancore Raja's Proclamation of 1823 says that 'those Namboothiris who demanded more than seven hundred *kalian* money

for one girl will be punished by the 'Court of Law'.[7] This clearly shows that a heavy *Varadakshina* in marriage prevailed during that time. Naturally many women of poor Namboothiri families, had to remain unmarried till death.

The practice that only the eldest son could marry had brought about already a situation where there were excess of Namboothiri women. It is quite natural to conclude that the founders of this custom completely ignored the fact that there are as many Namboothiri women as there are Namboothiri men. While men were free to marry or to have *Sambandham* with many women as they liked, widows were strictly prohibited from remarrying. Even a child widow must remain unmarried till her death. This was the law of the time.

"The consequence was that while the Namboothiri bachelors solace themselves with their sudra lovers, Namboothiri spinsters secluded and vigilantly guarded in the privacy of their house, must live and die unmarried."[8]

Though Polygyny existed, that custom was not a boon but a curse on the poor women and that worsened their married life. P. Bhaskaran Unni says that all *antharjanams* during that period were included in any of the three categories namely, i) unmarried ii) *sapatni* or iii) widow.[9] High dowry and non-availability of elder sons of Namboothiri families made many women remain unmarried. The majority who got married had to share their husbands with other wives. As young women marrying old

Namboothiris was common, a majority of them easily slipped into the category of widows. P.K. Balakrishnan describe the condition of Namboothiri women in the nineteenth century Kerala.'From the reports of Cochin (1881) it can be calculated that the average number of persons in a Namboothiri *illam* was ten. In 1891 the population of Namboothiris in Travancore was twelve thousand three hundred and ninety five including six thousand seven hundred and eighty seven men and five thousand six hundred and eight women. This means that there were five thousand six hundred and eight *antharjanams* in about one thousand two hundred and thirty nine *illams*. But the number of available Namboothiri men to marry them were only around thirteen hundred. Even if each of them married three women, two thousand women remained as spinsters till their death.[10]

V.T. Bhattathirippad in his autobiography Kanneerum Kinavum (Tears and Dreams) has presented a clear picture of the life of an average Namboothiri woman. Even in his last days, an eldest Namboothiri of a poor illam marrying a young woman was not uncommon.[11] Due to this type of *veli* (marriage) of old Namboothiris and the system of polygyny, even those women who got married did not enjoy a long marital life. The polygyny of the Namboothiris and practice of young women marrying old Namboothiris might lead to extra marital sexual relationship.

The women accused of adultery were treated very badly under the heinous custom of *Smarthavicharam*. The women accused of

adultery were subjected to mental torture under this system. *Smarthavicharam* provided for an enquiry followed by a trial of the accused woman which lasted months. The Jury called *smarthas* were appointed by the Raja (King) of the state. During the trial she was mentally forced to confess her guilt. After the confession, she might be excommunicated. Her male partners of guilt were also ostracised.

When the accused did not confess, various modes of torture were resorted to extract a confession; The torture methods included rolling up the accused in a piece of matting and letting the bundle fall from the roof to the court-yard below or leaving rat snakes and other vermin into her room; in certain cases cobras were turned ib and if, after having been with the cobra for a certain length of time, and she was unhurt, it was accepted as conclusive evidence of her innocence.[12]

Compared to the condition of Namboothiri women, Nair women enjoyed better status in Kerala. Their family organisation was matrilineal and that contributed positively to their high position. A Nair family was known as *Tharavadu*. The *Tharavadu* of the Nairs was a large lineage, the members of which reckoned descent from a common ancestress and consisted of all the descendants through the female line. When it grew unwieldy it might be divided with consent of all the members for the sake of convenience into *tavazhis* (mother's lines), family units clustering round a mother.[13]

Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi remarks that the Nairs represent a form of family organisation in opposition to the patriarchal structure of the North Indian Brahmin family, where property is owned in common by the men and inherited through the male line, and the men have control over the women's sexuality. In the Nair family, property is owned in common by the men and the women, and women and men are in control of their own sexuality within certain broad limits.[14] They add that as the people with whom the Nairs engage in sexual relationships are not the people on whom they depend upon for economic survival, there will not be economic exploitation within the sexual relationship. So there is no question of economic dependency. And a Nair woman never regarded her husband as master or lord.

Nairs were among the few castes who gave education to girls. Boys and girls of the community were given education in the nearby schools known by the term *Kalaris*. Education was in Sanskrit and Malayalam. However girls after *talikettu kalyanam* ceremony did not attend the classes. Though descent was traced from the mother, the family was governed by the senior most male member called *karanavan*. However the eldest of female member also enjoyed an honourable position in the family. All female members of the family received special attention. After marriage the girls remained in the *tharavadu* only and the husbands visited them.

In the case of females of Nair community two types of marriages existed. Padmanabha Menon observes: "marriage among the followers of *marumakkathayam* law of succession may mean either what is called *talikettu kalyanam*, which is a mere formal ceremonial or *sambandham*, which latter alone creates the relation of husband and wife between the parties. While the former is an essential ceremony with females, the males have no corresponding ceremonial".[15] *Talikettu kalyanam* was not the real marriage. It is only a ceremony to be performed on a girl before she attains puberty. It includes tying of a *tali* around girl's neck by a Brahmin or a relative of the girl. Eleven was the ideal age. In every *tharavadu*, the ceremony was performed once in ten years, or twelve years, in a mass scale for a batch of girls. The ceremony was elaborate and involved much expenditure. The *tali* tier was not intended to be the girls' future husband.[16]

Marriage among Nairs was known by the term *sambandham*. The ceremony includes 'giving cloth' to the bride by the groom. Sometimes the giving of cloth was done by close relatives of the bridegroom. Mannathu Padmanabhan in Jeevitha Smaranakal (Memories) says that no freedom was given to bride and groom in choosing their partners.[17] But the wife could divorce the husband at any time and the husband could discontinue visiting his wife. Women were allowed remarriage also.[18]

Besides Namboothiris and Nairs there were many other castes, in Kerala including Kammalars (artisans), Kanisans

(astrologers), Ezhavas (toddy tappers), Valans, Arayans or Mukkuvans (fisher men), Cherumars, Pulayas and Parayas, Nayadis (hunters) and various hill tribes. They were designated polluting castes or untouchables.

The polluting castes were graded according to the degree of pollution. Hence they were to keep away, by a certain distance prescribed by custom violation of which could bring corporal punishment to offender. For example, a Mukkuvan must keep twenty four feet from a Namboothiri, an Ezhava thirty two, a Cherumar sixty four, and a Nayadi seventy two. Such severe limitations were placed on the movements of these castes.[19] Polluting caste women were not allowed to wear cloth above the waist.

Of the polluting castes, Ezhavas constituted the bulk of the Hindu population. Among Ezhava women polyandry existed. The system of a common wife for many brothers of a family also prevailed. C Kesavan in Jeevitha Samaram (The struggle of life) says that his mother married her husband's brother after the death of the husband.[20] Until 1785 it was forbidden for women of the Ezhavas and of those of the lower castes to wear any clothing above the loins. Their women did not have property rights. Polyandry existed among Kammalars also.[21]

Christians and Muslims form two other major communities in Kerala. The former were concentrated in the northern parts. Muslim women were not allowed to enter mosques. Their right to property was only half of that of men. Men observed polygamy and

all these had religious sanction. Men had the right to divorce their wives on flimsy reasons or none at all. Christian women enjoyed greater freedom comparison with Muslims. Christian girls were given education. Syrian Christians followed patrilineal system. Early marriage of their girls was not uncommon.[22]

Christian missionaries arrived in Kerala in the early part of the nineteenth century. Though their prime aim was the propagation of their religion they did charity work and started schools for giving education to women. Christian missionaries succeeded in converting low caste people to their religion. Also they could instill in them an awareness about their rights. As a result the converted Channar women agitated for their rights, the agitation developed into a movement which is generally known as *Channar Lahala*. During that period Channar women were not allowed to wear cloths above the loins. The converted Channar women's first struggle was for getting that right recognised. In 1829, the riot started through out South Travancore when the converted Channar women started wearing dresses above the loins. This provoked the caste Hindus. High caste people burned the churches and schools of new Christians. And the government had to seek the help of the army to quell the commotion. Finally Colonel Monroe granted Channar women the right to use *kuppayam* (jacket) but not the separate upper cloth.

This subsided the riot for a short period. But soon demands came from both Hindu and the Christian Channar women for rights

to wear separate upper cloth. They submitted various memoranda to Thiruvithamcore Government. But they did not get a favourable reply or orders. They appealed to the Madras Presidency Government, and received an unfavorable response. However by this time Channar women started wearing the upper cloth without waiting for the permission of the government. They received ample support from Christian missionaries in challenging caste Hindus.[23]

Again riots broke out in 1859. Channar homes, churches and schools were destroyed. At last in July 1859, the government granted Channar women the right to wear upper cloth with the strict direction that it must not be in the style of high caste women. Hindu Channar women were also given the right to wear jackets.[24] In Central Travancore also riot occurred occasionally. In Kayamkulam when an Ezhava women walked along the public road by wearing the upper cloth, caste Hindus and some Muslims insulted and harassed her.[25] This incident also led to riots. Similar incidents which followed riots were not uncommon in Travancore. The courage showed by the women of Channar and Ezhava communities to fight against discrimination and for their rights was immense. *Channar Lahala* was a remarkable example of women's awakening in Kerala.

Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century Kerala witnessed a profound awakening which expressed itself in a number of socio-religious movements. The custom ridden society underwent

revolutionary changes. A spirit of reform and rejuvenation swept over the whole of Kerala and every community felt its impact in varying degrees. The percepts of Brahma Samajam and Arya Samajam and the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda in addition to the influence of English education and of western science, were chiefly responsible for the generation of the new spirit.[26]

All castes and communities had many problems and hurdles on their way to progress. To reform their castes, they organised movements but under strict caste identity. In their struggle for social equality, with high castes riotings occurred. Riots were largely for and against giving admission to low caste pupils to schools, temples and for the right to walk along public roads. Under the impact of all these new developments, the caste-ridden society began to change.

Starting of printing presses and publishing of newspapers and journals contributed to the new awakening in the society. Various heinous customs and practices including superstitions existing in the society were widely discussed by these newspapers and journals. Gradually novels and short stories were published by Keralites who got the benefit of education.

In Indulekha written by O. Chandu Menon in 1889, rudiments of feminism could be seen.[27] Chandu Menon through his novel ridiculed the prevailing practices in the society and presented to Keralites the image of an educated girl with intelligence and

courage to decide her future and to choose her life partner according to her wishes which was really unthinkable in those days. In 1887 a women's magazine Keraliya Suguna Bodhini was started. It was the first women's magazine in Malayalam.

Sreemathi the first Women's weekly in Malayalam was published by Anna Chandy,[28] from Trivandrum. After a break of two years, in 1940 it restarted publishing from Changanacherry. Along with stories and articles about home management, general health, household industries, it widely discussed women's freedom, their rights and question of widow remarriage.

The reform activities initially came from men as they were the people who enjoyed all freedom. Influenced by western education and modern ideas they felt the need to reform their community especially the women folk. In the first stage women's participation in the movement was minimal as they were kept under strict rules and regulations. Only Nair women had the freedom of expression and the freedom to come out of their homes.

The major force behind women's education in Kerala was Christian missionaries. Wives of the protestant missionaries took a lead in this work. They started modern education for girls in Kerala. At first there was a lot of prejudice against women education. This became a great obstacle to their education. Christian missionaries started the first girls' school in 1819[29] in Nagercoil. Also in north Travancore the first school for girls was started at Kottayam by Ametia Baker in 1820.[30] After that

many schools were started by missionaries in different parts of Kerala. But due to social opposition, the attendance was minimal. The school authorities had to give free food, clothes and boarding to attract girls to schools. They imparted vocational education also. Meanwhile near Nagercoil a school for caste Hindu girls was also started. This helped the caste Hindus who from the early years were reluctant to mix up with other communities.

Church Mission Society (C M S) was mainly responsible for the education of girls in central Kerala. In 1820 Norton started a girls school in Alleppey.[31] Baker Memorial School was established at Kottayam in 1869. The missionaries imparted free education in Malabar and Cochin also. These missionaries lit the fire of education and paved the base of modern education in Kerala. The progress in education especially of women contributed much to the social reform movement of the time. This influenced the government also to think about starting girls' schools and in 1864 Travancore Government started the first government school. Though less in number the educated women became aware of their condition in society and urged for a change. Educated women were soon absorbed as teachers in schools as there were few women to teach in girls' schools. Education modernised and reshaped the life of women.

The reform movements in each community and caste led to the formation of organisations such as Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham, (S N D P), Yogakshema Sabha, and Nair Service

Society which in turn acted as a medium to struggle for their rights and to work for economic prosperity and social reforms.

As early as 1887, pained by the social disabilities to which the low castes had been subjected at that time, Sree Narayana Guru began work to reform the Ezhava community.[32] He started his campaign by consecrating a Siva idol at Aruvippuram. Temple consecration by low caste people for low caste people was a revolution, the high castes could not tolerate. This was a great challenge to high caste people. The Guru urged his community men to do away with the expensive and superstitious customs like *thalikettu kalyanam, thirandukuli, pulikudi*. He advocated women's education and asked his people to work for the same.

In 1903 Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S N D P) was formed[33] to propagate the ideas of Narayana Guru and act as a powerful instrument of social reform. S N D P Yogam concentrated mainly on issues like education for men and women, freedom of movement on public roads and representation for Ezhavas in public services. Such type of organisations were formed in other communities also.

Namboothiris who occupied the highest position in the social ladder had been suffering from many disabilities. However till the last part of the nineteenth century they remained indifferent to modern education and the changes occurring all over the state. The Namboothiri women spent their time in the gloomy interior of their residence, behind purdah. In the Administration Report

of Travancore for 1910, it is recorded that in that year only nine hundred and seventy six children of the Namboothiri community had joined school. The first instance, perhaps of the education of a Namboothiri girl on modern lines was when Karimanthur Parameswaran Nampoothirippad in north Malabar sent his daughter in 1911 to an elementary school. The Namboothiris were over-ridden by custom and it was extremely difficult for them to break the shackles of tradition.[34]

In 1908, the Yogakshema Sabha was formed with the objective of reforming the Brahmin community. Kuroor Unni Namboothirippad and Chittoor Narayanan Namboothirippad were the early organisers of the group.[35] A weekly called Yogakshemam was also started. 'Yogakshema Sabha' gave emphasis on English education. They tried to make the community aware of the need of English education. The other objective was to improve the plight of Namboothiri women. However no substantial progress was made by the Sabha in the case of women.

Meanwhile a 'Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham' or 'Youth League' came to be formed as a radical organisation under the leadership of V.T. Bhattathirippad and K N Kuttan Namboothiri. They published a monthly, Unni Namboothiri, to disseminate progressive ideas of reform among the members of the community.[36] Tremendous changes occurred among the community after the formation of the Youth League. The great revolutionary who took up the cause of Namboothiri women and devoted much of his time for that was, V.

T. Bhattathirippad. He was the person who laid the foundation of the reform activity among women. Rajaneerangam - the collection of short stories published by V.T. Bhattathirippad presented before the community the silent sufferings of Namboothiri women.

V.T. Bhattathirippad wrote a play Atukkalayilninnu Arangathekku (From the Kitchen to the Arena) which portrayed the inhuman customs existing in Namboothiri illams and the pathetic condition of Namboothiri women. The staging of the drama was opposed greatly by the conservatives. But against all obstacles, the drama was staged during the twenty second yearly conference of Yogakshema Sabha at Edakkunni.[37] Later, in many places which include many *illams*, the drama was staged and women also got an opportunity to see and enjoy the play which made a conscientising effect on the community.

Another literary work which promoted reforms was the novel Apphante Makal (Father's Daughter) written by M. Bhavatratan Namboothirippad. The works Iruthumathi (The Fertile Female) by M.P. Bhattathirippad, and Marakkudaykkullile Mahanarakam (The Inferno behind Parasol) by M.R. Bhattathirippad were also aimed at the reformation of Namboothiri women.[38] The drama Marakkudaykkullile Mahanarakam was staged in the year 1930. These works advocated English education for Namboothiri girls and boys and laughted at the system of polygyny, the marriage of young girls to old Namboothiri men, the practise of younger sons marrying girls of lower communities (being forbidden to marry

girls of Namboothiri community), and the system of ex-communication.

The first ever widow re-marriage was conducted in 1939 under V.T. Bhattathirippad's initiative, with his blessings and also due to his efforts.[39] The woman who came out with courage was "Nangema", V.T. Bhattathirippad's wife's sister. The bridegroom was M.R. Bhattathirippad. Though it roused much protest from the caste people, it triggered off a revolution which was to happen in Namboothiri community.

Meanwhile the members of the Yuvajana Sangham removed the sacred thread from their bodies, condemned Polygyny in which the leaders indulged and advocated the remarriage of widows.[40] Under the auspices of 'Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham', a marriage sub committee was formed to compel the unmarried Namboothiri youngsters to marry from the same caste.[41] Picketings were organised by its members to prevent marriages of young girls with aged Namboothiri men and the second marriages of Namboothiri men. The resistance did not yield results immediately, but it created a feeling among Namboothiris against this type of marriages. Moreover, the fear of picketings compelled many Namboothiri families to do away with these marriages. E.M.S. Namboothirippad- the veteran Communist leader- participated actively in some of the picketings aimed at preventing marriages between young girls and old men. He describes these picketings in his Atmakatha[42] (Autobiography) Many Namboothiri married from the

same caste. It is apt to recall here that in Namboothiri community, only the eldest brother was allowed to marry from the same caste. Others were not allowed to marry from the caste. Challenging the old custom, V.T. Bhattathirippad and Pandum Vasudevan Namboothiri married from the same caste. The girl whom V.T. Bhattathirippad married was to have been given in marriage by her parents to an aged Namboothiri.

Gradually women also came forward to be active participants in the reform movement. The reformist Namboothiri women began wearing blouses instead of the *ghosha*.[43] The first woman who rejected ghosha and came out was Mrs.Manezhi. She attended a meeting of Yogakshemasabha at Edakunni in December 1922 without wearing *ghosha*. Though only one woman attended the twenty second meeting of the Sabha, seventy five women having rejected the *ghosha* took part in the meeting of the Sabha when it celebrated its Silver Jubilee.[44] After Mrs. Manezhi, of the many women who rejected *ghosha* are Parvathi Nenminimangalam and Arya Pallam. Parvathi presided over the meeting of 'Yuvajana Sangham' held at Thaliparambu. She later represented Namboothiri women at the time of discussion on Namboothiri Bill of Cochin.[45] Lalithambika Antharjanam and Pathanadi were also among the active women leaders of the time.

V.T. Bhattathirippad took the initiative for Intercaste marriages also. His sister Ittippapti was married to a Nair youth named Raghavan.[46] Here again V.T. Bhattathirippad had to suffer

insults from his own people. But nothing would deter that great revolutionary.

At the thirty fourth annual conference of the 'Yogakshema Mahasabha' held at Ongallur in December 1945, E.M.S. Namboothirippad who presided stated that the Namboothiris should be free to marry girls from any other community and that similar privilege should be extended to the Namboothiri women as well. At that conference resolutions were passed on the disabilities of the Namboothiri women concerning marriage, the abolition of dowry system and *adhivedanam*, the formation of Women's Associations, and desirable amendments of law concerning the Namboothiri community in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.[47]

Nair Service Society was formed by Mannathu Padmanabhan - a great social reformer of the time - for the upliftment of Nair community. Nairs were given education irrespective of their sex and their women enjoyed considerable freedom. So reformation among Nairs became easier than in other castes. Nair Service Society concentrated its activities on stopping the ceremonies like *talikettu kalyanam*, on reforming the system of marriage and starting educational institutions for the education of Nair boys and girls. Later Nairs agitated for the abolition of *marumakkathayam* and individual partition of properties. Mannathu Padmanabhan devoted his entire life time for the society and for the welfare of the community.

Though women of Nair community enjoyed comparatively greater freedom, they did not attend public meetings and discussions. A change came about through the efforts of Mannathu Padmanabhan and Nair Service Society through the historic annual conferences conducted throughout the state every year. The first annual conference of Nair Service Society was organised at Karuvatta in 1929.[48] The most noticeable event of this conference was an exclusive session for women. The session was presided by Thottakkattu Madhavi Amma[49] a well-known social reformer of the time. A very large number of women attended the session. The interesting aspect of it was that the majority of speakers were women. This conference is considered as a milestone in the history of women's emancipation in the Nair community. From that session onwards women's session become an inseparable part of Nair conventions. The conventions discussed various issues concerning women and it instilled in them a sense of equality and freedom.

In all communities reform movements started which in turn resulted in making laws and regulations. On 20 February 1931 was passed the Travancore Malayala Brahmin Regulation to define and amend the law of succession and family management of the Namboothiri community. Provision was made for the better administration of *tharavad* affairs, the improvement of the rights of junior members and the prescription of rules of intestate succession in respect of self-acquired property. The impediments

to healthy family life put in the way of junior members as well as the uncertainties in the law of succession were removed.[50] In 1913 the First Nair Regulation Act was passed. In 1925 a Nair Bill providing for individual partition, monogamy and the right of wife to the self-acquired property of her husband also became law.[51]

The Government of Cochin decided to pass regulations on the model of Regulation in Travancore, the Nair Regulation which was put into effect from 5 June 1920.[52] Thus laws were passed for different communities according to the demand from the people.

The reform activities among various castes and communities led to a new awakening in Kerala and it raised the status of women to a great extent. This caste based movements soon got transformed to a wider political movement which sought freedom for the country.

While revolutionary ideas spread and changes were taking place in different communities in Kerala, Nationalist Movement also began to take roots in the state. The National movement had close links with the reform movement and the resultant renewal among various communities here. Though the political ideas reached the interior of the state very slowly, the educated Keralites imbibed the spirit of the freedom movement at once.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas influenced men as well as women of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. His crusade against

untouchability and his idea of high thinking went straight to the hearts of the people of Kerala where the struggle against untouchability and caste system had already begun. As the educated belonged to middle class elite they were the majority who participated in the freedom movement. Malabar witnessed vigorous satyagraha movement from the early years as it was the only region which was under direct British rule. It was during the political developments in Malabar in the wake of the famous salt satyagraha one can observe the active participation of women in the freedom movement in Kerala. There is hardly any political writing about women in Kerala. Even the books which deal with the National movement in Kerala did not go into detail about the women's role and their participation in it. However The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala written by P.K.K Menon gives a bird's eye-view of the women's role in the freedom movement in the state. Women's role was only supportive during the early years of the struggle. They encouraged sathyagrahis and volunteers in ample measure. One instance for this is that at the time of civil disobedience movement, through an article in Mathrubhumi - a nationalist triweekly in Malayalam T.C. Kochukuttyamma of Cochin Educational Service exhorted her sisters in Kerala to help the freedom movement and take to the constructive programme outlined by Gandhiji. On 10 February 1929, C. Rajagopalachari attended the first 'All Kerala Hindi Prachar Sammelan' at Ernakulam. It was attended by prominent officials and non-officials including nearly two hundred women.

Lakshmikutty Nethyaramma the consort of the Ruler of Cochin, was the president of the reception committee.

In March 1930, at a meeting arranged under the auspices of the satyagraha committee at Purameri in North Malabar, Devaki Kettilamma made a donation to the satyagraha committee.[53] On April 1930, women led by Gracy Aron took part in a grand reception to K.Kelappan and his first batch of Sathyagrahis who reached Payyannur to inaugurate the 'Salt Satyagraha'.[54]

On 20 July 1930, when Hassan Koya Mulla was elected president of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, M. Kartyayaniamma[55] was co-opted as a member of the same body. The civil disobedience movement was gaining momentum day by day. Women had already entered the political field though they did not break the law till then.[56] Meanwhile the news of the arrest, at Bombay of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Madan Mohan Malavya and some other members of the congress working committee on 1st August caused much excitement in Malabar. The Congress Working Committee called on the people of India to observe 10 August as 'Political Sufferer's Day'. The leading members of the Mahila Sangh and the Swadeshi League at Calicut went round the town organising a hartal which was highly successful. The volunteers were headed by A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, E. Narayanikutty Amma and Mrs. U Gopala Menon.[57]

On 16 November 1930, women leaders in Calicut decided to take out a procession to protest against the cruel treatment

meted out by the police to the women satyagrahis at Bombay. On the previous day the District Magistrate served on them, orders under section Cr. P C 144 by which they were prohibited from taking out processions or meetings. But it did not deter them. They assembled at Verkot house at Tali, Calicut and started the procession. The women who led the procession were Kartyayani Amma, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, K.E. Sarada, T. Narayani Amma, P.G. Narayani Amma, E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. K. Madhavan Nair, Mrs. T.V. Sundara Iyer and Gracy Aron.[58] The procession was stopped by the police and M. Kartyayani Amma, E. Narayani Kutty Amma, Gracy Aron and Jayalakshmi were arrested. All except Kartyayani Amma were sentenced to undergo imprisonment till the rising of the court. Kartyayani Amma was sentenced to two months simple imprisonment. This was the first occasion on which women were arrested in Kerala in the course of the freedom movement. The arrest of the women aroused great protest among the public. In protest against the arrest, the students of most schools and colleges in Calicut observed hartal on 17 November 1930.

The system of appointing dictators for the satyagraha movement began in Kerala during 1930's. The dictator was to lead the entire satyagraha movement for a certain period. The dictator is supposed to be an efficient person who can take decisions independently, chalk out and implement programmes for the movement. Women of Kerala played a remarkable role as dictators of the movement. Many women were appointed as dictators during

the civil disobedience movement. Gracy Aron, Eswari Ammal, K. Kunjilakshmi Amma and Pavamani were some among those who acted as dictators and proved their leadership qualities and dedication to the movement.

Potheri Madhavan was nominated as the first dictator. Raghava Kurup, the second dictator on his arrest nominated Gracy Aron[59] as the next dictator. She gave prior intimation to the authorities about her programme of action. On 13 January 1931, she conducted a procession to the Calicut beach accompanied by P. Devaki Amma, L.S. Prabhu, Ganesh Pai, Vedavathy Ammal and two men-volunteers, K Kumaran Nair and T.K. Ayyappan Pillai. She hoisted the tri-colour flag as the crowd sang the flag song in chorus. There was also a bonfire of foreign cloth on their return from the beach. All the women and men-volunteers were arrested by the police. Calicut observed a partial hartal on that day. This was the second occasion when women were arrested in Malabar.[60] Gracy Aron and the two men-volunteers did not take part in the trial proceedings. But the other women made a statement demanding maximum punishment for themselves. All of them were sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment and asked to give security for good behaviour for six months after release from jail. They were taken to the Presidency Jail for women at Vellore. Mrs. Ganesh Pai had a child also with her.

Eswari Ammal, wife of T.R. Krishna Swamy Iyer, was the fifth dictator. But when Gandhiji appealed to the nation to

observe 15 February as Motilal day, giving out a programme to be followed by the country, Eswari Ammal, the fifth dictator had already been arrested on the Calicut beach for breaking the salt law on 2 February. The sixth dictator K. Kunjilakshmi Amma and other prominent leaders appealed to the people of Kerala to observe Motilal Day in accordance with Gandhiji's instructions. Thus it was observed in all solemnity, even in villages with complete hartal.

The National movement saw many women becoming leaders in their own rights. K. Kunjilakshmi Amma was one such. She was a teacher in Cochin Government service. N. Sanjivi Bai was another prominent woman who was a teacher under the Malabar district board. Both resigned their jobs to join the satyagraha movement. These two were the first women to undertake picketing in Malabar. On 12 February they picketed a piece-goods shop at Big Bazaar in Calicut. They were arrested on the third day and were remanded to jail for a fortnight. They were tried on 28 February and awarded six months rigorous imprisonment by the Magistrate of Calicut. On her arrest Kunjilakshmi Amma nominated Margaret pavamani as the next dictator. Meanwhile arrests and convicting of picketers were taking place in large numbers in Palghat, Calicut and several other centres of north Malabar.

Under the joint auspices of Bala Bharat Sangh and Balika Sangh, a large procession of boys and girls led by Jayalakshmi

and P G Swarna Kumari went along the important roads of Calicut on 25 February singing national songs In response to the call of Pavamani, shops, streets and residential houses in all important places in Malabar were decorated with tri-colour flags on 27 February.[61] Vigorous house to house propaganda was conducted in North Malabar by the members of the 'Yuvak Sangh' and 'Desa Sevika Sangh' headed by E.C. Kunjikkannan Nambiar, Kartyayani Amma and Matilda Kallan.[62]

The Gandhi-Irvin pact signed on 5th March 1931 was welcomed in Kerala. On 6 March Pavamani, the seventh dictator and other leaders (K. Kelappan, K. Madhavan Nair and Dr. Ganesh Pai) issued a communique calling on the people to observe the terms of the Pact strictly and not to break law.'

On 7 March, public meetings were held to celebrate the event all over Kerala. At Calicut, a huge procession was organized by the Bala Bharath Sangh, Balika Sangh, the Mahila Sangh and the Student's League. At the mammoth meeting held at the beach and presided over by Pavamani, T. Prakasom the great Andhra leader who had been released on the previous day from Cannanore jail, congratulated Kerala on the splendid part played by her in the historic movement.[63] Pavamani then nominated a new Kerala Provisional Congress Committee as an emergency measure. The new working committee which was constituted included Karthyayani Amma also.

Pavamani and P.M. Kamalavathi organised the picketing at Tellicherry while Mrs. M.Narayanan, Mrs. Madhava Pai, Mrs. Bhandarkar, M.K. Kausalya, M.K. Yasoda, M.K. Vani, M. Rudrani, S.Chandrika Bai, N. Madhavi and N. Revathy, besides a few girls organised picketings at Cannanore. They were helped by Sambavi Amma, Sumathi Bai and Chandramathi. At all these towns the nationalist activity, as reported by the police, was regular and peaceful. On the whole the women who entered the political field hailed from respectable middle-class families and were educated. Their participation in the movement enhanced its popularity and was bound to contribute to its ultimate success.

Meanwhile vigorous picketing campaigns were organised by women in Cochin and Travancore also. Women of Cochin including P. Amritamma, P. Visalakshi, T. Lakshmi Kutty, M . Kartyayani Amma, M. Lakshmikutty Amma, Poduval Ambadikochammini, K. Kamalam, T. Subhadra, Mrs. Achuta Menon, Mrs. Ikkanda Warrier and others launched the picketing campaign in Trichur on 25 April 1931 with the co-operation of A.V. Kuttimalu Amma and Pavamani from Calicut. They were led by E. Ikkanda Warrier, K.N. Namboothirippad, and K Madhava Menon.

As regards Travancore, K. Kumar organised an effective picketing of foreign cloth shops at Alleppey. Women and young boys and girls also were very active at Alleppey. Mrs. T.K. Madhavan, Dr. Rugmini Amma, K. Lakshmi Gopalakrishnan and

others led by M. Kartyayani Amma from Trichur did not spare themselves, during the campaign. In May 1931, together with the Fifth Kerala Provincial Political Conference, The Provincial Women's Conference also was held at Badakara in Malabar. Mrs. Padmavathy Asher in her presidential address called the women to keep the tri-colour flag flying aloft until the attainment of independence.[64] This conference turned to be a historic one for the women of Kerala. It demanded the recognition of the equal rights of women, in all administrative institutions. Besides, the conference resolved that all Hindus irrespective of caste difference should have free access to all public places. It was decided to organise the 'Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh' for carrying on nationalist work and serving the cause of women in the country and to set up night schools and handicraft training centres for providing education and employment for poor women.

'Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh' was formed in Calicut on 13 June 1931 at a meeting of women at Verkot House, with Margaret Pavamani as president, Kunjikkavu Amma as vice-president, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma as treasurer and P.M. Kamalavathi and K.Kunjilakshmi as secretaries. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee resolved to organise Kisans and labourers in factories and so a committee was appointed; (Pavamani, U.Gopala Menon, K.A. Damodar Menon and Mohammad Abdur Rahman were the members). Meanwhile the women leaders of Calicut had decided to organise an All Kerala Women's League with head quarters at Calicut for national reconstruction work.

During January 1932, when Gandhi- Irvin pact had come to an end, a second period of dictatorship began in Malabar. After the arrest of the dictator K C K Naha of Parappanangadi, Lalitha Prabhu[65] took up the leadership of the movement. She was arrested at Tellicherry for picketing shops. She was awarded six months imprisonment and fined Rs.1000/- by the Magistrate (D.W. Dodwell). Towards the fine, she surrendered all her jewels except the *tali*, as it was considered sacred. But the Magistrate ordered the police constable to remove the *tali* also.[66]

The high-handedness of the British Magistrate and the callous disregard of sacred custom provoked universal indignation in India and several women's organisations including one at Nagpur started an agitation for an enquiry into his conduct. V.P.N. Nambiar raised the issue in the Madras legislative council, which also came before the British House of Commons. Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddi, Jinarajadasa, Ammu Swaminadhan and Sen brought the matter to the notice of M. Krishnan Nair, then law member. Finally the government of Madras condemned, in a press note issued on 23 February the action of the magistrate and got the *tali* restored to Prabhu. Dodwell himself later expressed regret for his action. But Swami Anand Tirth, a relative of Prabhu was refused permission by Dodwell to interview her. Also when she was taken to the Velloor jail, she had to travel in third class and was escorted by two constables but no women-warden. All this created protest from the public.[67]

Meanwhile picketings and arrests of women continued unabated. The forth day of every month was celebrated as Gandhi day at Calicut under the leadership of Kunjikava Amma, Pavamani, Padmavathy Amma and others. On 10 February Matilda B. Kallan with a few other volunteers, was arrested for leading a procession at Quailandy. The women of Palghat including P. Devaki Amma, P. Janaki Amma and P. Padmini Kutty were sentenced to imprisonment for varying terms during that period. The women at Tellicherry, Sambhavi Amma and K. Madhavi Amma met with the same fate for having picketed foreign-cloth shops. At Calicut A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, the ninth dictator together with her co-workers were arrested on 22 February; charges were framed only against the women who were later sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years.

The women leaders were conscious of their rights and they would fight for them. This is how A.V. Kuttimalu Amma stood her ground against heartless dictatorship. She had a two month old child on her hand when she was arrested. But as the trial was over, Kuttimalu Amma[68] was not permitted by the Magistrate to take her baby to jail. She protested and stuck to her decision and finally the court accepted her arguments and allowed her to take the baby with her. In Kasargod Taluk, a conference was held in front of the customs office, on 9 July. It was presided over by T.Kamala Bai. As usual, the agitators went on a procession which was asked to disperse. On their refusal to do

so, police caned them. The President of the Kuttiyadi village conference, Narayani Amma and three other volunteers were sentenced, to rigorous imprisonment for six months. A.V. Lakshmi Amma president of the Azhikodu village conference which was held on 4 September was given one year's rigorous imprisonment.[69]

During the Swadeshi movement of 1931-32 there was vigorous picketing of foreign cloth shops in all parts of Kerala. Educated women, assisted by men volunteers including lawyers and students came out of their homes and picketed shops in all important towns. The table below gives an idea of the course of the civil disobedience movement in Malabar from January to August 1932.

Number of persons convicted up to 31-7-1932

Men	408
Women	22

Except in the town of Calicut and a few other places in Malabar, the Civil Disobedience Movement had been overshadowed during 1932 by the 'Guruvayur Temple Entry Satyagraha' and anti-untouchability campaign. Women including Dr. Rugmini Amma and M. Kartyayani Amma were actively associated with this struggle.[70] A special committee was formed under the leadership of P.M. Kamalavathi to organise the Temple Entry Satyagraha. Women in large numbers attended the conferences and participated in satyagraha.

In September 1934 C Kunjikkavu Amma[71] was elected by majority vote the president of Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. During the civil disobedience movement in August -September 1938, Accamma Cherian[72] become the twelfth president of the State congress. As the president she led the All Travancore State Congress Volunteers Jatha to the Padmanabhapuram palace of the reigning Maharaja, on 23 October (being Maharaja's birthday), demanding immediate granting of Responsible Government and an unconditional release of political prisoners.

The other prominent women who took leadership in the agitation for responsible government in Travancore were T.N. Kalyanikutty Amma, Matilda Kallan, C.R. Devaki Amma, Anna Kuruvila, Rosamma Punnoose and Saramma Mathew. T.N. Kalyanikutty Amma effectively used her magazine Vanitharatnam to fight for the responsible government. But the government proscribed the magazine as anti-government. She later started another publication Vanithamitram which was intended to encourage a struggle for Responsible Government[73]. S S Miranda was another important leader of the agitation for Responsible Government. She joined the Travancore State Congress as a volunteer and took part in its struggles. During civil disobedience in 1938, she was arrested at Attingal and was brutally tortured for having participated in a procession from Chirayinkil to Attingal[74]. Rosamma Punnoose also participated in the movement and organised the Desa Sevikas, the women's wing of the Congress Volunteers Corps.

Women's contribution to the propagation of khadi and spinning is remarkable. They fully imbibed the true spirit of Gandhiji's message on khadi and organised committees and conducted classes in spinning all over the state. They were effective examples as they wore khadi to propagate the importance of khadi among the people. On 17 May 1930 when the Kerala Provincial Congress Commitee met at Payyannor, a committee was constituted to organise khadi work in Kerala in order to satisfy the increasing demand for it. Meanwhile a committee of women was formed at Calicut for effective khadi work. The committee consisted of T. Narayani Amma, Mrs. U. Gopala menon, K.E. Sarada and Margaret Pavamani.[75] Its members and other leading women soon organised a number of classes in spinning, carried on home propaganda and distributed charka and cotton among the people in Malabar.

A 'Rastreeya Stree Sabha' was formed in Cannanore on 28 April 1931 with Madhava pai as president and O.K. Madhavi Amma and Mrs. M.Narayanan as secretaries. The committee included 35 women. The objective of the body was to organise classes in spinning, popularise Hindi and conduct propaganda for prohibition and 'swadeshi movement'. Those who could, were also asked to picket foreign cloth shops .[76] In Calicut a large number of educated persons including young women formed the Khadi Pracharana Sangh during 1931. They distributed *Charkas, Taklis* and cotton free of cost among the people in different centres. P.I. Kaimal served as the secretary of the Sangh and Kuttimalu

Amma as the treasurer. Kartyayani Amma who had given up her job for national service was the most active worker of the Sangh.

Women organised classes in Khadi Spinning wherever possible. E. Narayanikutty Amma took a lead in the formation of Swadeshi Committee in the meeting held on 5 June 1931. When the first Swadeshi Art and Industrial Exhibition was held at the premises of Annie Hall in Calicut, the Women's Indian Association and the Mahila Sangh cooperated with the exhibition committee[77]. In 1937 Khadi producing centre was started at Pulikkal in Ernad Taluk. It was admittedly a great boon to a large number of Muslim women and girls. Under this centre four subsidiary branches also functioned in places where the members of the Moplah Community constituted the majority. Nearly thousand women got the necessary training in spinning[78]. In the states of Cochin and Travancore many women came forward to enforce prohibition and popularise Khadi.

When Mahatma Gandhi launched Quit India Movement in 1942, it had a tremendous impact on Kerala. Women of Kerala offered enthusiastic and dedicated participation. Many assumed leadership role also. Notable women leaders were Kamala Nambeesan, E. Ammukutty Amma, M. Kartyayani Amma, P. V. Madhavikutty Amma and G Suseela. E. Ammukutty Amma picketed the Zamorin's College, Calicut during the Quit India Movement. She was awarded one month's rigorous imprisonment in the special sub jail, Calicut as 'c' class prisoner[79]. Lakshmikutty Amma was sentenced to one month's imprisonment for having made a

'prejudicial' speech in 1942.[80] Karthyayani Amma was one among the leaders who organised the mass movement in Cochin state during 1942. Likewise Kamala Nambisan played an important role in organising youth and students during Quit India Movement.

When Indian National Army (INA) was organised by veteran freedom fighter Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose, women of Kerala served as dedicated soldiers in its women's wing. Lakshmi Saghal from South Malabar served as a doctor and commanded the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. She was imprisoned in 1945, when Singapore was re-occupied by the British. Nalappattu Narayanikutty joined the Indian National Army as a fighter in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in September 1942.[81] She later become an officer in the Regiment. During 1942-45 Lakshmi Krishnan also served as a soldier in the women's wing.

The reform movement side by side with the nationalist movement and the success of various satyagraha namely Vaikom Satyagraha and Temple Entry Struggles aroused egalitarian values and democratic consciousness among Ezhavas and other low caste people in Kerala. This new consciousness led to the emergence of working class movement where the participation of women especially from the low caste people could be seen. Many women from the women's wing of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam became leaders or activists in the labourers' struggles later.

Trade unionism began to spread in Travancore from the year 1922. The Travancore Labour Association, formed during this time,

got encouragement from Congress Socialist Party. Women workers, many a time exploited by the landlords or their employers, joined hands with men to conduct agitations. The struggles to be singled out are those which were organised by Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union in October 1938; the protest movement organised by 'Quilon Factory Workers' Union (cashew workers) in 1939; the struggle against dismissal of workers by Goodcare company and the agricultural workers movement in Kuttanadu in 1940's.

The general strike organised by Travancore Coir Factory Worker's union in October 1918 was the first of its kind in Kerala. The workers protested against wage-cuts, fines and retrenchment and demanded payment in cash, a minimum wage of Rs. 30/- a month, unemployment allowance, maternity benefits, educational facilities for themselves and their children, medical aid and recognition of the union.[82]

They raised political demands such as adult franchise, responsible government and release of political prisoners. During picketing of factory gates, women also participated. They led the agitation when male workers were lathicharged. They played a great role in distributing information among workers through letters, circulars and statements of the strike-committee. The women's movement got an impetus as efforts were made by the union to mobilise them and many women activists like Kalikkutty Asatty who was a member of S N D P women's committee joined the movement.

In Quilon, during 1936, Factory Workers' Union was formed. The process of conscientisation of workers of various sectors of the economy including women workers gained momentum by 1939 as the Communist Party was formed.[83] The political education campaign led by the party helped to conscientise the workers in general and women workers in particular. Various campaigns led by women workers themselves were clear examples of this new awakening. The earliest of such struggles was the one for *Onam festival* advance, undertaken by women workers and led by Meenakshi, a thirteen year old ratt-spinner, of the British multinational, Darragh Smail, the first and the biggest coir company in Alleppey, in 1941; the second one, for maternity benefits, was held in the company premise under her own leadership. The employer was forced to accept both the demands[84].

During 1944-45, about 288 cases of maternity benefit was taken up by Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union and all were paid Rs. 0.49 per day for two months. It has to be noted that in Cochin, where the number of women workers were much higher than in Travancore, maternity benefit was paid by no employer though the Maternity Benefit Bill was passed in 1939 itself.[85]

The third noteworthy struggle, against dismissal of workers by Goodcare company, was also won by the workers. The practice of using abusive language against women workers by *mopans* of the company was considerably reduced after this struggle. In the former issue women shouted slogans, though they were intimidated

by the police, while in the latter case they applied a novel method of filling their betel boxes with pebbles and throwing them against the mopans whenever they abused any women worker.[86] Thus it become a common practice for women to lead struggles for specific issues and also for other general demands of the workers. The courage and enthusiasm shown by the women in these campaigns was immense.

Women's trade union and political activities got a new dimension as they formed a radical organisation of their own. The Ambalappuzha Taluka Mahila Sangham (A T M S) was formed in 1943 with R. Meenakshi as secretary and Kalikutty Asatti as president. This was the culmination of the organisational efforts taken by women workers in coir factories. Struggles conducted within the factories led to the formation of Women's Factory Committees by 1941.[87]

The struggles in the industrial field had its impact in the agricultural sector also. In agriculture many women were engaged in transplanting and harvesting work. 1939 onwards a trade union movement was developed among the agricultural workers of Kuttanadu.[88] In 1940 'Thiruvithamcore Karshaka Thozhilali Union' was formed. Women in large number participated in the agitations against denial of work and demand for higher wages.

There were instances in which landlords were surrounded by women workers in the threshing fields and not allowed to leave the spot until they consented to the workers' demands, usually

for higher wages. In one instance which took place in 1940s, a big landlord was tied with ropes and paddy was taken away by the workers forcibly.[89]

Women resorted to gheraos for wage-rise in different places like Kottayam, Kumarakom, Vaikom and Ettumanoor. Mostly low caste women participated in these struggles for which they had to suffer a lot. But everywhere their enthusiasm and dedication for the cause was tremendous. In Alleppey women agricultural workers led a demonstration with broomsticks in their hands.[90] Picketing by women in front of the farmers' houses for days was common during that period. In 1943 when 'Kerala Mahila Sangham' was formed, the women leaders who took the initiative were Thankamma Krishna Pillai, Kamalakshi, Saraswathi and Radhamma Thankachy. Women participated in communist-led Punnapra Vayalar struggle also during 1946.

"Besides participating in the armed struggle women also engaged in solidarity actions by the families of workers during this period of repression. Many women activists were arrested, tortured and raped by the army and the police, though many of them went underground."[91]

Thus, together with their men folk, women fought battles for land and wages and against feudal repression. Their role was indeed commendable in these movements. Their participation in these movements encouraged and strengthened the women's movement in Kerala.

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CHAPTER IV

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KERALA: POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Women of Kerala after independence were freed from many of their social handicaps of the earlier period. The Christian missionary activities started in the state at a very early period (1819) and the initiative on the part of the government encouraged women to acquire education. Disintegration of caste system and removal of untouchability contributed to this new awakening. The progress made by women in the field of education enabled them to find jobs outside home and come out of their seclusion. Legal equality was achieved easily as the Constitution of India granted equality of sexes. Women's participation in the National movement opened the doors of political and administrative fields to them. And they proved themselves efficient political leaders and administrators. The press in Kerala also played its role in women's emancipation. Constraints and impediments in the way of women's development were viewed with empathy by the media and given wide coverage. Post independence Kerala saw women's achievements in almost all fields of activities, and mostly in politics, education, employment and general health.

When the shackles of age-old beliefs and customs were removed, girls from all communities were benefitted by education. Missionary activities for improving girls education started from the early part of the 19th century itself. And in 1864[1] the first government girls' school was founded in Trivandrum. Co-education was tolerated and more institutions exclusively for girls were started throughout the state. The Kerala State administration Report for 1956-57 remarks: "there were one hundred and twenty four high schools and twenty eight special schools run exclusively for girls. Girls were also admitted in all secondary schools.[2] The numberof girls -students increased many times during the years that followed.

Various census reports show immediate increase in female education in the state. The literacy rate of women in Kerala increased from 3.15 percent in 1901 to 31.41 percent in 1951.[3] This was a remarkable change un matched by the other parts of India. Unfortunately due to the Oorthodoxy of Muslims, Malabar remained an educationally backward area.[4]

The 1981 census of India shows that Kerala kept uo the pace and lead in female literacy. In 1971 female literacy rate was 54.31 which increased to 65.73 in 1981. And by 1991, it touched a high percentage of 86.93.[5] Later Kerala was "declared"[6] a state which attained hundred percent literacy. Also percentage enrollment of girls in schools and colleges came very near to that of boys in Kerala. Free and compulsory education

naturally, raised the status of women in Kerala. The social disabilities like untouchability, early marriage, seclusion and other similar restrictions on their movement soon disappeared. As a result the educated women of Kerala entered various professions and began to complete with men.

Recent statistics show that in certain fields of employment women outnumbered men. The departments of Public Instruction, Social Welfare and Health Services are concrete examples. According to the 1981 census, percentage of women in the department of Social Welfare is 50.12. Corresponding percentages in Health Services and Public Instruction are 51.34 and 50.42[7] respectively. The statistics reveal that women worked in all departments and assumed top level positions.

With more and more women taking up employment, they become economically more independent. This new found freedom ultimately instilled in them a sense of self-reliance. This in turn helped them develop their personality. Their participation in National Movement had increased the political consciousness and majority of them effectively used their franchise in the general elections. Some of the women leaders became members of legislative assembly, parliament and some of them became ministers. But when the size of the electorates is considered the number of women contesting the elections is found to be meagre.

Many who participated in the National Movement continued in active politics and held responsible positions in Congress.

Before the formation of Kerala State (1950) Annie Mascrene became the first woman minister in the Travancore-Cochin State Assembly. During the first general elections to the Kerala Legislative Assembly in 1957,[8] out of the one hundred and twenty six seats, seven women won seats. Ten women had contested the elections. K.R. Gouri became the first woman minister in Kerala. She was entrusted with the portfolio of Revenue. In the next general elections also (1960) seven women were elected.

They are :-

Leela Damodaran Menon

C.T. Sarada Krishnan

Kusumom Joseph

K.R. Gouri

Nabisath Beevi

Aysha Bai and

K.R. Saraswathi Amma

But no one from them was accommodated in the ministry. In 1965 only three women were elected namely K.R. Gouri, Suseela Gopalan and K.R. Saraswathi Amma. Since no party got majority in the house the Assembly was dissolved.

In 1967 only one woman was elected. K.R. Gouri, the lone member became the minister in charge of the portfolio of food. During 1970 elections, one more member Pennamma Jacob was elected in addition to K.R. Gouri. In the Legislative Assembly constituted after the elections in 1971, Bhargavi Thankappan

was the only woman member elected. The 1980 elections showed a slight improvement in terms of the number of women. Five were elected. They are :-

P. Devooty

M. Kamalam

K.R. Gouri

K.R. Sarswathy Amma and

Bhargavi Thankappan.

K.R. Gouri became a minister in the Left Democratic Front Ministry led by E.K. Nayanar. Out of the four women candidates elected to the Assembly in 1982, M Kamalam became minister in the ministry of K. Karunakaran. She was the second person to become minister after K.R. Gouri in the state. Other members elected during 1982 are P. Devootty, K.R. Gouri and Bhargavi Thankappan. The 1987 elections returned eight women members in the Legislative Assembly. Again K.R. Gouri was appointed a minister for Industries and Social Welfare. Other women members are :

M.T. Padma

Leela Damodara Menon

Rosamma Punnose

Rosamma Chakko

J. Mercykutty Amma

Nabeesa Umma and

Bhargavi Thankappan

In the 1991 elections eight women were elected namely :-

K.R. Gouri

Rosakkuty

Sobana George

Rosamma Chakko

Alphonsa John

Meenakshi Thampan

M.T. Padma and

N.K. Radha

M.T. Padma became the Fisheries Minister. When the percentage of women candidates elected to the Legislative Assembly is considered the percentage of women elected to the Parliament is quite encouraging.[9] In 1951, Annie Mascrene from Trivandrum was elected to the first Lok Sabha. She was from the state of Travancore- Cochin.[10] Election to the Lok Sabha during 1992 shows the highest percentage of elected women. Among the twenty members, two are women. They are Prof. Savithry Laxman and Suseela Gopalan.

Progress in one field leads to progress in others. Thus, progress of women in political status and educational field, also spread to the field of health. An attempt is made here to asses the health conditions of women of Kerala. Factors like, attitude to marriage, age at marriage, fertility values, sex of the child, the pattern of family organisation and the role demanded of women by social conventions and the like affect the

health of women.[11] In addition, demographic trends and health care services are also to be reckoned with, for a fair evaluation.

Regarding sex ratio,[12] it is found that, unlike in the rest of India, the sex ratio in Kerala is more favourable to women. In 1971 there were one thousand twenty women per thousand men and it increased to one thousand thirty two per thousand in 1981. The 1991 census shows that the sex ratio is one thousand forty women for thousand men.[13] Though these figures can not be taken as a factor indicating women's high status, it can be taken as fair indication of the value society attaches to women.

The expectation of life at birth is higher for women in Kerala than that of the rest of India. According to the actuarial estimates in 1961-71 decade, the expectation of life at all-India level, was 47.1 years for males and 45.6 for females.[14] The disturbing trend is that the gap between male and female life expectancy has been increasing in the last five decades. However the trend is just the opposite ie, in favour of women in Kerala.[15] As Towards Equality remarks : "It may be noted that Kerala, which stands out for provision of maternity services also, has the highest expectancy of life for women, which is 60.7 for 1971-75, and the lowest mortality rate."[16] Higher literacy levels and therefore better use of medical facilities and an efficient public distribution system are the reasons attributed to the high female life expectancy.

Infant mortality rate in Kerala is only thirty three per thousand while that in India is hundred and five. In Kerala the number of women getting medical aid at the time of dying is less when compared to men. However more than 80 percent of the people are getting medical aid in Kerala. It may be due to the increase in the welfare measures and overall development, Kerala occupies the first place regarding low death rate.[17] According to the latest Statistics available (1991), the death rate in Kerala for female is 5.2 and that of male is 6.9. This is 9.7 and 10 for female and male respectively in India. Kerala also has a low maternal deaths ratio. During 1983, hundred and eleven maternal deaths occurred of which hundred and six occurred in rural areas.[18]

Early marriage prevalent in Kerala during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which affected adversely the mental and physical condition of the women folk almost disappeared[19] gradually. The age at marriage for girls increased from 17.1 in the year 1901 to 21.8 in 1981. The corresponding increase in the national level was 13.2 to 18.6.[20] Mean age of marriage of women is highest in Kerala and this contributes much to women's status. The birth rate is also comparatively less. The high age at marriage, high literacy and large-scale improvement in family planning measures in Kerala may be responsible for this. The family planning programme has had a high degree of success in Kerala; more and more families subscribe to the small family norm.

The birth rate in Kerala is markedly different in comparison with the rest of India.[21] The life standard index also shows that the position of Kerala is far better than other states. It is nearly hundred. Life standard index in Kerala for women is 89.8 and that of men is 93.7.[22] The gap is less between men and women in the state, than that in Punjab, Maharastra, and Haryana which rank next to Kerala.

Legal equality of sexs has been a major concern of women's movement all over the world. Women's domestic situation under the care of parents, guardians or husband and her external environs at the place of education, employment, entertainment involve the law in a positive manner.[23]

In the pre-independence India, arduous struggle was made for legislations against the prevailing cruel practices. Noted social reformers namely Rajaram Mohan Roy, Govinda Ranade, Beyramji Malabari and Vidyasagar are some among those who fought vigorously for legislations. Important legislations made for the cause of women in pre-independence India are the following.[24]

1. Regulation No. XXI of 1795 and Regulation No. III of 1804 declaring infanticide illegal.

2. Bengal Sati Regulation XVII of 1829 declaring *sati* or self-immolation of widows illegal.

3. The Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act, 1856 (15 of 1856) legalising the marriage of Hindu widows.

4. Indian Divorce Act, 1869 (4 of 1869) enabling a wife to petition for dissolution of marriage on certain specified grounds.

5. The Married Women's Property Act, 1874 (3 of 1874) declaring that the wages and earning of any married woman and any property acquired by her through the employment of her art or skill and all savings and investments thereof shall be her separate property, if expressed to be on her own behalf, and that a married woman may maintain a suit in respect of her own property.

6. Age of Consent Bill-1891. By this act the age of consent of marriage of girls was raised from ten to twelve.

7. The Legal Practitioners (Women) Amendment Act, 1923 (23 of 1923). No woman shall be disqualified from being admitted as a legal practitioner by reason of her sex.

8. Indian Succession Act, 1925 (39 of 1925). There is no distinction between those related through the father and those related through the mother. The husband surviving his wife has in her property the same rights as she would have in his property, if she survives him.

9. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, Sarada Act 1929 (19 of 1929) fixing the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls.

The Constitution of India came into force in 1950. The preamble of the constitution speaks about equality to all its citizens. Article 14 of the constitution says: "The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India".[25] Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth along with an additional line in favour of women and children. ie., 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children'. Various laws and amendments were made in due course of time for women.

The Factories Act, 1948, Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and Mines Act,1952 prohibit the employment of women between 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. in factories, mines and plantations, regulate the working hours and contain provision for their safety and welfare. The government is authorised to fix the minimum load that may be lifted by women and to open creches, etc.[26]

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

This provides for certain new rights to women. According to this Act, women were entitled to an equal share in the properties of their father. Section 14 of the Act gives women the right to

acquire absolute ownership of property. Under this section, woman has now been given absolute power to dispose of her property as she thinks fit. Though the amended Hindu Law has given the women many new rights, she cannot be a member of coparcenary and cannot ask for a partition.[27] Personal laws of other religions are not in favour of women's property rights. Muslims, Parsis and Christians had their own laws regarding the right of women.

'Muslims and Parsi women have some property rights but not equal rights with their brothers. Under their respective laws, the son gets twice the share of his sister. The Syrian Christian women were till recently governed by the Travancore and Cochin Succession Act under which they got almost no property. However recently the Supreme Court has ruled otherwise and Christian women are now governed by the Indian Succession Act 1956 which ensures them equal rights to property.[28]

The husband is under a legal liability to maintain his wife before judicial separation or after. The secular law of maintenance contained in Section 125 of the Cr P.C. 1973 provides for payment of a limited amount of maintenance even to a divorced wife. Specific provisions are contained for grant of maintenance under Sections 24 and 25 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and Section 18 of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance are also available under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936 and the Indian Divorce Act, 1869.[29]

Suppression of Immoral Traffic in women and Girls Act, 1956.

The Act inhibits trafficking in women and girls for purpose of prostitution, procuring, inducing or taking women/girls in premises where prostitution is carried on, and detaining a woman or a girl in premises where prostitution is carried on.[30]

The Act was amended in 1978 and more recently, in 1986 now titled The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act. It is applicable to both women and men. It provides for more stringent penalties particularly with reference to offences against children and minors. It provides that the special police officer making a search shall be accompanied by atleast two women police officers, and that a woman/girl would be interrogated only by a woman police officer and in their non - availability, only in the presence of a woman social worker.[31]

The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961

Applicable to every establishment, plantation, mine or factory, it provides for payment of maternity benefit at the rate of the average daily wage for the period of a woman's actual absence.[32]

The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 and the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 also have provision for creches to care for the children of women working as contract laborers.[33]

Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.

Abortion was made legal with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971. It legalises the induced abortion by qualified people on humanitarian and medical grounds.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

It provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers and for the prevention of discrimination on the grounds of sex against women in the matter of any employment.

Child Marriage Restrainment (Amendment) Act,1978.

The child marriage Restrainment Act of 1929 was amended in 1949 and the age limit of girl was raised from fourteen to fifteen. The lower age limit is further raised twenty one and eighteen for boys and girls respectively by the Child Marriage Restrainment (Amendment) Act of 1978.[34]

Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 1980.

The Rape Law, framed in 1860, has remained unchanged for well over a century. Under this law a rape victim had to prove that the sexual intercourse, did not have her consent.[35] The Government amended the law and introduced the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill in 1980 which ultimately became an Act in 1983. The changes made include protection of the victim from the glare

of publicity during investigation and trial, change in definition of rape to remove the element of consent, addition of the crime of 'custodial rape', enhancement of punishment for the crime and the shifting of the onus of proof on the accused. These steps recognise that the woman victim of rape deserves a different kind of treatment.[36] By section 376 of the Act the minimum punishment for rape is seven years and the maximum, life imprisonment.

Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act 1984

In the pre-independence India unsuccessful attempts had been made to end the custom of dowry. But no law was enacted to check this until 1961 when the Dowry Prohibition Act was passed. Pursuant to a wide spread demand from women's organisations, the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1984 was also passed. According to this, the punishment for giving or taking dowry is a minimum of six months imprisonment, subject to a maximum of two years and fine, which may be upto Rs.10,000/- or the value of the dowry which ever is more.[37]

Again, in 1986 this was further amended to make provisions for more stringent punishments. By this amendment, the period of limitation for filing complaints was removed. The Court now has powers to act on its own knowledge or on a complaint by a recognised welfare organization. The offence has been made cognizable for the purpose of investigation. Protection is extended to the complainant. A new section on 'dowry murder' has

been introduced in the Indian Penal Code. The Indian Evidence Act has been amended to shift the burden of proof, to the husband and his family in cases of dowry deaths where the bride dies within seven years of the marriage. Provision for appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers and Advisory Committees has also been made.[38] The recommendation of the Committee on Status of Women for banning the taking or giving of dowry in the Government Servants Conduct Rules, had been accepted in 1976 and clause 13 A was introduced in the Central Service Rules for the purpose.[39]

Family Courts Act 1984.

Parliament passed the Family Courts Act in 1984 in order to provide a forum in which family disputes would be resolved in an atmosphere of reconciliation and understanding, keep the advocates out and provide for counsellors to assist the judge.[40] This may help women to a great extent.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

Provisions are there in sections 292, 293 and 294 of the Indian Penal Code against obscenity. But as it was found ineffective, a law was made in 1986. The salient features of the Act are[41]:-

a) Indecent representation of women has been defined to mean the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have

the effect of being indecent or derogatory to, or denigrating, women or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals.

b) It is proposed to prohibit all advertisements, publications etc. which contain indecent representation of women in any form.

c) It is also proposed to prohibit selling, distribution, circulation of any books, pamphlets etc. containing indecent representation of women.

d) Offences under the Act are made punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term extending to two years and fine extending to two thousand rupees on first conviction. Second and subsequent convictions will attract a higher punishment.

Muslim Women Protection of Rights (on Divorce), 1986

This Act has taken away the husband's responsibility of giving maintenance to his divorced wife.

Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 provides the right to divorce to both men and women. The husband and wife have the same grounds for divorce, in addition to the option of divorce by mutual consent.

By the recent amendment the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Law has also been brought on the lines of Hindu law . But the law of divorce is different in personal laws of other religions.

The Muslim man can unilaterally proclaim divorce on the women; the Christian man can get divorce on the ground of adultery, but the Christian woman has to prove adultery with incest, or with bigamy, or with rape, sodomy or bestiality. There is no provision of divorce by mutual consent in either Muslim or Christian law.[42]

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

Though the regulation of 1829 declared *sati* illegal, the government was forced to pass another bill in 1987 to make the punishment more stringent. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 says : "Notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Penal Code, whoever attempts to commit *sati* and does any act towards such commission shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine or with both".[43] The Act also prescribes the maximum punishment for the abatement of the Commission of Sati, to equate it with murder rather than with abatement of suicide under section 306 of the Indian Penal Code, as had been done in earlier cases of Commission of Sati. The Act also makes glorification of the practice of *sati* an offence and goes a long way in refuting the myth that *sati* is a manifestation of the glory of Hindu women.[44]

A National Women's Commission was constituted with a view to looking into cases regarding offences against women and to serve as a mechanism to facilitate redressal of grievances of women. It is an offshoot of the National Commission For Women Act, 1990.

It is a permanent commission which comprises seven full-time office holders, including a chair person, five members and one member secretary. Each member holds office for a period not exceeding three years. The commission's mandate covers the whole gamut of issues concerning women, from constitutional safeguards for women's rights to atrocities against women. National Commission for Women participates in the planning of, and gives advice regarding, socio-economic development programme for women. Its other functions include :-

i) Commissioning special investigations of specific problems related to discrimination and atrocities against women;
ii) Conducting research in order to suggest ways of ensuring due representation, of women in all spheres;
iii) Evaluating the progress of the development of women under the union and in states; and
iv) Inspecting jails, remand homes and other institutions and places of custody where women are lodged voluntarily or involuntarily.

While investigating complaints, the commission has the powers of civil court in trying a suit; it can summon and enforce the attendance of any person and examine him or her under oath, as well as require the production of relevant documents etc.

Another provision of the National Commission for Women's Act is that the government of India shall consult the commission on major policy matters affecting women.

Now Mohini Giri is the Chair person of the commission. On this pattern, The Kerala Women's Commission Bill, 1990 was introduced in the eighth Kerala Legislative Assembly with a view to providing for the constition of a Women's Commission to improve the status of women in Kerala and to enquire into unfair practices affecting women and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The Five year plans of India envisaged some welfare measures for women. And the only development after independence upto 1960's regarding women's movement was their focus on welfare activities for women by the government and women's organisations. In 1953 the Central Social Welfare Board was formed to function as the centre for all welfare activities in India.

In the First five year plan (1951-56) some programmes for women and other weaker sections were introduced. A review of the programme in Kerala from the second plan period onwards is needed to know the progress of the programme regarding women.

During the Second plan period social extension projects were set up. The aim was to promote family welfare schemes in urban areas and also to undertake other social welfare schemes for

women, children and the physically handicapped. The central board sanctioned twenty eight projects of which eighteen were started in the second plan. Each project was to comprise one welfare centre - all centres arranging for feeding four hundred children out of UNICEF rice and milk. Also certain amount was provided for After Care Homes, Rescue Homes and Shelters.

By the Third plan period (1961-66) there were sixteen welfare extension projects of which two were wound up in 1963 (after completion of five years). They continued to be run by the Central Social Welfare Board with state government's help. Also it was decided to set up three destitute homes (abalamandirs) for women in the southern, central and northern part of the state, each accommodating hundred inmates. A sum of Rs. 7.16 lakhs was set apart for this and it was also proposed to start three after care working women hostels for working class women discharged from correctional and non-correctional institutes.

In the Fourth plan (1969-74) a new scheme, Family and Child Welfare Centre was proposed to be implemented by the staff of the erstwhile state social welfare board and conversion of existing welfare extension projects. These multi-purpose welfare centre known as *Kshema Kendras* were to have a *Creche* attached to each centre. A *Mukhya Sevika* would supervise seven centre and these centres would also be encouraged to undertake handicrafts production. During each year of the plan, hundred centres were to be set up. During the fourth plan the state sector allotted Rs. 3

lakhs for a working women's hostel and offered grant-in-aid of Rs. Five Lakhs to voluntary organisations. The abalamandirs to be established during the third plan were set up. Though *mahila samajams* existed in the state, but were dormant. So a decision was taken to give one hundred and fifty selected mahila samajams the minimum facilities required to take up continuous activity useful for rural women. In 1971-72, a scheme was implemented to impart nutrition education through *mahila samajams*.

From the Fifth plan onwards some programmes for creating employment opportunities for women were initiated jointly by the Social Welfare Department, Department of Industries and the Department of Rural Development. There was an intensification of welfare activities also primarily in the areas of health care and nutrition for women and children for which aid through a number of international agencies- UNICEF, WHO, CARE, FAO was available. The three departments mentioned here undertake now the major share of welfare/development activities specific to women. The programmes in the fifth plan period have continued with certain modifications in the sixth and seventh plans.

Social welfare board was formed in Kerala in 1975 with the specific aim of protection and upliftment of the weaker sections of society. To benefit women and children, various institutions were started by this department in different parts of the state. These included *Day Care Centre* for children, *Hostels* for working women, *Abalamandirs*, *Rescue Homes*, *Aftercare Hostels*, and *After*

Care Home for the adolescent females.[45] Besides this some innovative schemes such as financial aid schemes and employment generating schemes were implemented by this department for women.

From the Fifth plan onwards (1974-79) the social welfare department is handling a major share of women's welfare schemes. During this plan, one hundred and fifty Day Care Centre were proposed to be started at the rate of thirty centre each year with a facility to take care of thirty to forty children, five hostels for working women of low income groups and a few *kshema kendras*.

In the Sixth plan (1980-85) the department proposed to start thirty Day Care Centres in unorganised sectors such as coir, fishing, agriculture where there were no voluntary organisations to run them. At the start of the sixth plan there were ten Abalamandirs. One more was to be set up in Idukki and small scale production units were to be started in all these homes.

Abalamandirs are institutions specially intended for giving protection and also education to poor orphan women. Each Abalamandir can accommodate about twenty five women. All expenses regarding the inmates are met by the government. These women are given training in employment and on requests, they are given in marriage to suitable persons. The government provides Rs. One Thousand Five Hundred each for the marriages. Now Abalamandirs function in Trivandrum, Quilon, Alleppy, Kottayam, Cochin, Trichur, Palghat, Mancheri, Calicut and Cannanore.[46]

In the Seventh plan (1986-90) the Creche cum Day Care Centre were to be increased by another 100 particularly in places where fisher men, brick and tile workers, cashew, coir and handloom workers were concentrated. The programme would continue to be implemented by assisting voluntary organisations: a number of Day Care Centres were run directly by the department. A working women's welfare society was registered with the objective of constructing hostels, and in the seventh plan the provision was made for completing the four hostels started in the sixth plan. Now hostels for working women are functioning in Calicut and Malappuram.[47]

The Social Welfare Board now undertakes the scheme for financing the construction of working women's hostels under the Government of India scheme. According to this scheme financial aid is being given to voluntary welfare organisations to construct working women's hostels. Under this scheme the central government will meet 75 percent of the expenses.

The social welfare department envisaged the setting up of additional small industrial units for the destitutes in the abalamandirs, since the scheme started in the earlier plans were not adequate to meet the demands of growing numbers. Progress of some of the women and child welfare schemes is shown in table 13. During this period, the department introduced two major employment schemes. a) Scheme for promotion of employment opportunities for women and b) Scheme for payment of financial

assistance to women for self- employment. [48] The first scheme envisaged the payment of assistance to organisations of women registered under the Societies Registration Act or Companies Act or under any Law or Act for the time being in force, for promotion of employment in small scale, cottage industry or service centre. The unit should employ atleast three women. The maximum assistance to be given in the form of a non-recurring grant-in-aid was to be Rs. 10,000/- or twice the amount collected by the organisation, whichever is less for starting or expanding a project. Report of the Task force on Women Development says that the major activities started under this scheme are food processing and tailoring.[49] But according to table 14, it is understood that though the amount disbursed increased from the sixth plan period onwards as also the number of voluntary organisations procuring it, there occurred a visible decline in the latter half of the plan and a further decline in the first two years of the seventh plan.

The second scheme for payment of financial aid to women for self-employment was earlier envisaged for over-aged women in the lower income group, who would be unable to obtain employment through normal channels, but now covers widows, unmarried mothers, women whose husbands or the male bread earners are victims of prolonged illness, or are serving jail term. The amount given as advance for all grant is Rs. Five hundred to start some petty trade or business. From table 14, it seems that under this scheme too, the amount disbursed and the number of

beneficiaries have declined. The Report of the Task force on Women Development says "The experience with the scheme has not been satisfactory, though it seems to be attractive for vegetable vendors, fisher women and those engaged in petty trade. Some of the problems mentioned are transportation- carrying the load on the head for long distances, or misuse of the grant, small as it is, for some other contingency".[50] Both these schemes are now to be transferred to the Kerala Women's Development Corporation.

Besides the above schemes the other institutions started for women by the government under the social welfare department includes Rescue Homes, After Care Hostels and Aftercare Homes for the adolescent female. Rescue homes are meant for the protection and rehabilitation of those women engaged in immoral activities. In the state at present rescue homes are functioning in Alleppy, Ernakulam and Malappuram.

After Care Hostels admit women freed from jails after punishment. One such institution is functioning in Trivandrum. Here also employment training is given to the inmates. Accommodation is available here for only fifty women.

After Care Homes afford protection and rehabilitation of girls released from other orphanages, balamandirs and poor homes between the age group fourteen to twenty one. Two such centres are now in the state - one in Quilon and the other in Calicut. Each can accommodate hundred girls. Here girls are given education and vocational training to help them stand on their

feet. There is also provision for giving them in marriage to suitable persons.

In a society woman's status is very much connected with their economic status and their participation in productive work. Though women were always engaged in some sort of worked they were considered economically inactive as long as they work at home. In comparison with women of other states women of Kerala have greater literacy, and at the same time, the percentage of the educated unemployed, is also higher. To tackle this problem, the government of Kerala introduced many programmes for women particularly through the Department of Industries.

In the Women's International Year, 1975 the state government introduced a new industrial programme called 'Industrial Programme for Women'. Government gave special incentives to the women's industrial units to attract educated unemployed women into the field of industry.

Women's industrial units are defined as units owned/organised and run by women, engaged in small scale and cottage industries with not less than 80 percent of the total workers as women.[51] Between 1977-78 about seventy three women's industrial units were established as small scale units. But it was only with the provision of various special incentives including a separate Women's Industries Cell that the number of units and assistance given has risen significantly since 1979. According to the Department of Industries there were one hundred

and twenty units in 1978-79 which has now become one thousand three hundred and forty.[52]

These industrial units avail themselves of all facilities generally available to small scale units. And in addition, there is grant assistance for (a) machinery - 50 percent of the cost of capital equipment, subject to a maximum of Rs. 25,000/- (b) building grant (introduced in 1986) for construction of a workshed at 50 percent, subject to a maximum of Rs. 25,000/-. In case of rented building a rent subsidy subject to a maximum of Rs. five hundred for four years on a tapering scale is available: (c) establishment grant - that is salary for a manager and technical assistant, the maximum being Rs. Five hundred on a tapering scale for four years.

The other type of financial assistance given is share participation in industrial co-operative societies, to the extent of six times the collected share capital of the society subject to a maximum of Rs 1 lakh. Women's industrial units are exempted from payment of Sales Tax for six years (instead of five in general). The amount of grants sanctioned has increased from less than a lakh in 1978-79 to almost twenty two lakhs in 1987-88, however share participation in industrial co-operatives has declined quite sharply from eight lakhs to about three lakhs during this period as also the number of units availing themselves of this facility. Total government investment in Women's Industrial Units in 1987-88 was about twenty five lakhs.

The employment created by these units was around fourteen thousand.

The Seventh plan has allocated Rs. fifteen lakhs as share participation in Women's Industrial Co-operatives, however by 1987-88 hardly Rs. three lakhs were utilised.

Some programmes intended to help women are run through the Department of Rural Development also. It took initiative in promoting *mahila samajams*. Major programmes included, Composite Programme for Women and Children (CPWC), Applied Nutrition Programme (ANP), Integrated Rural Development Service (IRDS), and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA).

Applied Nutrition Programme was implemented in 1971-72 for imparting nutrition education. Composite Programme for Women and Children started in the fifth plan period is centred around balawadi and run through the local Mahila Samajams. By this scheme assistance was given in the construction of Balawadi buildings. Feeding centres were conducted. The report of the Task Force says that under this scheme by the middle of the sixth plan, around two thousand five hundred and eleven balawadis had started catering to the needs of 2.5 lakh children and seventy five thousand[53]women.

Integrated Children Development Services was started in 1975. Services rendered by this scheme are supplementary feeding, health education and immunisation. This Programme is run by the

Department of Social Welfare. Another major scheme of employment implimented by this department is the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) in which 30 percent of the beneficiaries are supposed to be women. This scheme targets low income groups. The strategy involved provides the households with income generating assets which would sustain incomes and, employment in the long run.

The activities for which assistance has been given especially to the women-headed families included goat-rearing, raising betel vine, boat and net making, broiler poultry, well and pump set, weaving, pottery, ready to wear garments, bakery, hiring of equipment, cycle shops, and radio repair etc.[54]

A new programme exclusively for women and children in rural areas started in 1984-85 is DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas). Its major objective was to give assistance to the poorest women in rural areas to enable them to take up income generating activities.

In 1954 Social Welfare Advisory Boards were constituted in various states. The major aim was to help voluntary organisations engaged in welfare activities among the weaker sections of the society. This Board gives aid through organisations only and not directly to individuals. Some of the main programmes/schemes run by this department are the following:

1. General grants-in-aid programme

By this scheme the government provides grants upto Rs. 10,000/- to voluntary organisations for setting up of or for the expansion and development of institutions like balawadis, protective homes for women, hostels and other such type of institutions.

2. Condensed course of Education

Under this scheme grants will be given for conducting courses for 1) women (between the age group sixteen to thirty) studied upto standard seven to make them fit to appear for the SSLC examination and 2) women who failed in the SSLC examination. The former is a two year course and the latter a one year course.

Grants are also given for conducting vocational courses. This includes courses in cutting and tailoring, garment making, secretarial courses, book keeping, type writing, library science, and radio engineering. The selection for these courses should be in such a way to ensure more consideration to orphans and widows.

3. Socio-economic Programmes.

This scheme provides for assistance to poor women so that they can increase their income through self employment programmes (setting up of industrial units etc.). Assistance is given to small groups of women for cattle rearing also.

4. Nutrition Programme.

Assistance under this scheme is for giving nutritious food to small children in balawadis (upto six years of age). The aim of this programme is to produce healthy children in the society.

5. Creches

This scheme envisages looking after children of poor women employees. But creches accepting a grant must provide all facilities to children (upto five years of age). Besides children of women labourers, children of women admitted in hospitals and those affected with epidemics should be admitted in these creches. A creche with atleast twenty five children will be given a grant of Rs. 1112.50 per month - towards the expenditure. For buying furniture an amount of 4000 will be given at the time of starting.

6. Concientisation camps for rural women.

Increasing the participation of women in the removal of poverty and in welfare activities is the major aim in introducing this programme. To conduct concientisation camps the Board provides a grant of Rs. 10,000/-. Out of this amount Rs.2,000/- is earmarked for giving a daily allowance of Rs. Ten each for those taking part in camps.

7. Family Counselling Centre.

This is to handle and solve problems suffered by women and children. A Voluntary Action Bureau is functioning along with the

Social Welfare Advisory Board itself in Trivandrum to concientise women of their rights and help them to recover from family related issues. To extend the activities of this bureau the Board provides grants to organisations for the setting up of similar institutions in the state. An amount of Rs. 5,000/- is granted for this purpose.

After independence, though the governmental and non-governmental efforts in the field of welfare measures for women gathered momentum the intensity of the women's movement in general slackened. In the meantime, the state achieved tremendous progress in women's education as in other fields of women related activities. But corresponding progress was not achieved by the state in terms of assuring equality and equal opportunities to women in all walks of life. The rights promised by the constitution and the other laws enacted for women mostly remained unimplemented. For more than a decade, women's specific issues did not appear prominent.

When the militant mass movements of agricultural labourers, industrial workers and tribals spread all over India during 1960's and 70's Kerala too witnessed a great awakening. In 1970's the state witnessed mass movements organised by agricultural labourers, peasants and industrial workers. Most of these struggles were led by the Communist Party of Kerala. Women in large numbers joined these struggles and especially in the agitation in 1972 against price-rise.

Meera Velayudhan writes, " A striking feature during 1971-73 was the militant participation of women in the Communist - led *Karshaka Thozhilali Union* (Agricultural Worker's Union) agitation for the right to land, homestead, and higher wages. Those struggles were spread over central Travancore, Alleppy and Kottayam. During one of the struggles, for fixing working hours a furious land lord stabbed seven women workers."[55] Such was the intensity of the struggle.

In the various working class struggles in the traditional industries of coir and cashew during the period 1971-72 also a very large number of women workers participated. Their agitation aimed to secure various demands like wage-rise, leave with wages and greater dearness allowance and nationalisation of coir export trade. In the agitation 1972, a fifty one year old women coir worker "Ammu" was killed in police firing.[56] The anti-price rise movement which spread affected the whole of India during 1972, induced many women of Kerala to join the struggle. They resorted to picketing government offices road blocking and the like to vent their feeling. A new awakening was thus formed in the state during 1970's.

The International Women's Year was celebrated with proper pomp; a committee at the state level was constituted with the Chief Minister as the Chairperson. The District level committees were constituted under the respective Collectors. The celebrations were held at various levels.

In the first meeting of the state committee 20 February 1975, three sub committees were formed

i) to undertake the study of benefits conferred on women under the Maternity Benefits Act, The Factories Act etc; and the extent to which the provision of these acts are given effect to; Rosamma Punnose was appointed convenor of the committee.

ii) to undertake the study of the conditions of women in the Rescue Homes, Abalamandirs, After Care Homes, Working Women's Hostels etc; Retnakala S. Menon was appointed as the convenor.

iii) to conduct sports, seminars, publicity and such other activities in connection with the International Women's Year. Convenor of the committee was Indira Ramakrishna Pillai.

Under the auspices of the district level committees seminars and symposium were organised at various levels to bring home to women, their rights and privileges and the necessity to bring about an attitudinal change towards their problems. It was decided to compile a Who is Who of Women in Kerala with outstanding achievements. The All India Radio gave wide coverage of the programmes connected with the International Women's Year. The Regional Division of the field publicity unit arranged exhibitions depicting the various facets of Indian women. The state government opened a college for women at Malappuram in

1975. The programmes and functions in connection with the International Women's Year succeeded in creating an awareness and self-confidence among women.

When 1975 was declared as International Women's Year, a meeting of women was held in Trivandrum and was attended by women activists and academicians. Later the period between 1975-85 was declared as International Women's Decade. The celebration of 1975-85 as International Women's Decade by the United Nations was well received in Kerala. Seminars, conferences and Rallies organised in different parts of the state helped to spread an awareness about women's status among women and the public in general. Newspapers, journals and the media in general gave more attention to women's issues. Also women's studies became a subject of study at the academic level and research on women also got a momentum. Academic disccussions, research and writings gave an impetus to the women's movement in the state.

Shah Bano Case and the discriminatory Muslim Women Protection of Rights (on Divorce) Act -1986 passed by the government of India raised heckles in Kerala.

The Muslim League of Kerala supported the new law while a section of Muslim women joined the struggle against the Supreme Court's verdict. However many women's organisations and women's wing of left parties raised their voice against the discriminatory law and organised protest meetings and rallies throughout Kerala.

The case of Mary Roy of Kottayam is one of the best examples of individual women who came forward and fought a long battle to secure her rights and thus the rights of women of her community.

Till 1985, Christian women of Kerala were under a discriminatory law regarding the property rights. According to the Travancore Christian Succession Act, a daughter's right to family property ended when she was given *Stridhan* (dowry) on marriage. And that too is an amount fixed at Rs. 5,000/- or one fourth of the value of the son's share which ever is less.[57] This law continued till recently without any protest what so ever. This Act deprived the natural right of the Christian women. The only woman who showed the courage to fight and get back her right through the highest Court of the land is Mary Roy. She approached the Court for equal right in share and the Court upheld that right by giving equal right to Christian women with her brothers in the share if the father dies without leaving a will, with retrospective effect from 1956.

Mary Roy was alone in her path. She had to fight a long battle and had to face protest from her own family, religious leaders and even from the Kerala State Government. In February 1986 the Supreme Court passed a landmark judgment over the Christian Succession Act and declared that all Syrian Christians would be governed by the Indian Succession Act. Immediately after this, the state government filed an appeal in the Court in order

to reconsider the verdict and to strike off that portion which gave retrospective effect to the decree. But the Court refused to accept the appeal.

The verdict created tremendous impact on the Christian Community. Many petitions were filed by Christian women to get equal property. But there is a trend in Christian families to overcome this law. With the fathers making their wills in favour of their sons much earlier than usual. It is said that religious leaders are also supporting this trend.

In the meantime some Christian women formed an organisation, 'Forum of Christian Women for Women's Rights', with the objective of fighting against discriminations and injustices towards women in the community.[58] They organised vigorous campaign against the government's intended move to invalidate the retrospective effect of Supreme Court verdict on 'Mary Roy case'. By way of seminars, processions and such type of campaign, they are trying to concientise women.

Besides, the forum is fighting against all types of discriminatory stand of churches against women. Christian women who had prior experience with democratic and socialist political movements, women members of economical movement and nuns who are working in people's movement for social justice, joined hands with this organisation acting as a united front, arranged protest meetings in front of the secretariate. They studied in detail all aspects of the Christian Succession Laws and submitted a

memorandum to the government. Some women's groups in Kerala joining with other progressive groups protest against recent trend of increasing dowry murders and rape cases in the state. But these reactions were only issue based.

A movement among fisher women community was developed through years of the organisational efforts of the voluntary groups, mainly concentrated in Trivandrum. It later become an organised movement as many women came to the front taking leadership and effectively fighting for their rights. A major shift in its perspective can be observed after 1980 when the women's group started questioning partriarchal value system, and trying to make a space for women in all organisations. The movement was initially based on Trivandrum, but after 1985 ripples of it covered the entire fishermen community in the State.

The fishermen community in the state is very backward, socially and economically. In the case of women, they were subject to poverty and malnutrition. Various social taboos, illiteracy and other hardships like wife-beating make their lives miserable. Besides household duties they have to walk miles to sell fish. As the mothers go for work, girls are often denied education, to look after younger ones. Strict taboos of the community curtail the freedom of girls.

The Community work started in 'Marianadu' in the earlier period under the control of Church. Later it became an autonomous

organisation. The team of social workers who actively engaged in social welfare activities in Marianadu include two foregin nationals Racel, Senaphine and Nalini, Eugine culas, and John Kurian all from Kerala. There was Sheela from Veli in the period 1977-82. Later many from the community also joined the team.

At first these workers did not 'concentrat' on women's upliftment. Later due to the request from the women of the fishermen community they took up women's issue and helped them to form their own organisations. Once they became organised, they took up responsible undertakings and began to take up women's issues independently. Initially they took up small issues like the quality of teaching in their local government school and demanded the regular attendance of teachers. They tried to respond to individual problems of the members too. Then they went to more complex problems like exposing the corruption in the ration shops. Later they succeeded in getting one fair price shop exclusively for them. All these experiences enhanced their confidence and they demanded representation in the church committees. In those days church committees had only male members, but as the parish in Marianadu was only in the formation stage, this was accepted.[59]

Thus women of the fishing community succeeded in entering into decision making bodies, including church committees. During 1979-80 the team of workers withdrew from the village as the

villagers themselves were able to take up and tackle their problems. An official organisation 'Programme for Community Organisations' (PCO) was registered with its headquarters at Trivandrum city and continued as an effective organisation to organise, lead and to give training to village people.

Meanwhile the women's movement in Marianad spread to other villages also. Women's organisations were started in those places; commonly they began to discuss problems and issues. One of the major issues take up was 'the transport problem of women fish vendors'. For a long time women fish vendors had been smarting under lack of transport facilities to take fish to the market. They were not permitted to utilise public transport. This problem was taken seriously by the women in 1979. The organisations jointly campaigned for it. Women fish vendors with their baskets marched to the secretariat demanding their right to travel on the public buses or to get special facilities. As a result of the intense struggle organised and lead by women, they were given special transport buses.

When, in 1980 the 'Swathanthra Malsya Thozhilali Federation' was formed to agitate for the entire fishing community, women formed a core group in it to press for their own demands. The women's wing is known as 'Theeradesa Mahila Vedi' (Coastal Women's Front). It has branches in almost all districts.

However while engaging in general struggles during 1980's, a major shift occured in the women's movement, in terms of its

attitudes, perspectives and modus of action. From 1980 onwards feminist elements dominated the scene and patriarchy was challenged by the members. Till then, the movement never considered, the specific oppression women were suffering in the society, because of their gender. This change marks the beginning of the end of first phase.

The movement tried to analyse the position of women in society, their sufferings, oppression, the discriminations etc. and began conscientising women about the situation. They accepted their prime aim as fighting for more space to women, in all field and to end all discriminations. The women activists studied the organisational efforts of women's movement in various parts of the country and consulted members working in trade unions to evaluate their attitude to the partriarchal system. The methods adopted by the movement in the early years were personal sharing or discussing their issues with their close male friends. They invited feminists to their informal meetings to generate greater awareness of their work.

A group of women from Kerala visited central India to consult other women involved in similar movements. The visit gave them a feeling that they are part and parcel of the larger women's movement in the country and it gave them much confidence to face courageously their future better. The seminars, exhibitions, plays, the women's day celebrations, and the monthly meetings of the group- all strengthened the movement. As a

result, the less educated or even illiterate women of the community got a chance to participate in discussions and got experience in conducting meetings and organising seminars. A mass consciousness of women about their place in society and rights was the great impact of the movement. The movement helped women to learn that individual problems are not simply individual problems but, they some how have links with other people, and general social problems. The movement now takes up major issues, namely fish scarcity due to over fishing etc . They successfully link the exploitation of women with the over-exploitation of nature.

In 1985 the women's wing of the fish workers union protested against the violence and the mass rape of women by the police at *Thankamani* in central Kerala. A group of women rushed to the spot and extended their support to the victims. They organised a march to the secretariate. Again in 1987 the women's front jointed the demonstrations to protest against *sati*. In the same year, the women's day celebrations were organised jointly by the CPM Mahila Federation and the Coastal Women's Front. As Nalini Nayak remarks 'it was women who first mobilised women and went out for demonstrations to submit representations to the government before men did'. In the following years when the large fish workers struggle took place, women were not only in the forefront of the demonstration but also in the actual engineering of the agitation.

The names of the prominent women leaders of Fisher Women's Movement deserve mention here. The most prominent among them are Thankam and Baby from Marianad, Mercy from Vettuthura, Fresca from Thumba, Margaret from Pallithura, Maglin in Veli, Aleyamma and Grecy. There are two groups of religious sisters who settled in the fishing community in mid 70's and collaborated with movement. They are the sisters of the Divine Saviour from Pulluvila and the Medical Mission sisters in the north of the district, in Anjengo.

A large number of women participated in the state wide agitations against mechanised trawling during 1981 ,1984 ,1985 and in 1993. Indeed their militant participation in the struggle attracted wide publicity. Women took to indefinite fasting Sr.Alice in Malabar, Kuttamma in Alappuzha, Sr. Philamin Mary, Patritia, Theramma, Josaphine, Mercy Alexander, Margaret and Sr.Elsi in Trivandrum played an active role. Now in all the major struggles by fishing community, women are at the forefront and often lead the campaigns. The Costal Women's Front as an autonomous body is acting as a pressure group to obtain justice within the fish workers union. Inspite of all the challenges to its autonomy, the women's front has now became a great power. They raise protests loud and clear when they find discrimination against women. They also demand greater role in the leadership.

There is spirited participation by women in the prohibition movement in Kerala. The prime factor which turned the satyagraha

movement against a liquor shop in *Azhimavu*, northern Kerala into a great success, was the women of the village. The sathyagraha was led by the well known Gandhians Prof. M. P. Manmadhan and Prof. G. Kumara Pillai.

The entire village was in the fray to remove an unauthorized liquor shop situated in the heart of the village. The government did not yield easily; at least it was forced to satisfy the satyagrahis by removing the shop. Women participated actively in the movement and courted arrest. Even the harassment from the people of liquor shops and the police could not prevent them.

Women and who become victims of the alchoholic husbands and their children spearheaded the anti-liquor agitation at Pozhiyoor in Trivandrum district. This agitation was a great success. As a result *Pozhiyoor* has become liquor-free and the brewers were rehabilitated.

In Harippadu an eighty year old woman Achamma heads the women's movement against a liquor shop; arming themselves with red chilly solution and brooms they picketed the liquor shop. The agitation is a month old and is still continuing. The women in hooch-haunted Vypeen have been staging a month long stir in Pallathankulangara. Here the struggle is intensive and the women are determined to free Vypeen from liquor.[64]

In Chellanum as in various other places across the state, the women have been seen sitting patiently in 'dharna' shouting

themselves hoarse against a liquor vendor, braving the sun and rain. In the year 1995 they celebrated *Onam festival* on the street as they sat in 'dharna' before liquor shops. Such was their determination and dedication.

However the police and liquorshop owners are trying all means including torture and character assassination to suppress the fight of the women. Recently children including six girls who were participating in an agitation against liquor shop in Mananthavady were stripped and incarcerated , food and water denied by the police on 14 May 1994. denying them food and water.[65]

These agitations got wide media publicity and generated a renewed awareness through-out Kerala. But when compared to Andhra Pradesh where the women's determination nearly wiped out a Rs.600 crores liquor industry, in literate Kerala the women are comparatively too docile to effectively banish the intoxicated brew.

According to Prof. M.P. Manmadhan the foremost leader of the prohibition movement in Kerala, Kerala women were seemed aggressive in the prohibition movement. He cites the instance of the women in 'Edakkomkanaravayal Panchayathu'.[66]In that region, the bread winners are mostly women. But it is a common sight to see them being beaten up by their drunkard husbands. Inspired by the movement spreading throughout Kerala, women of this panchayath organised themselves under the leadership of

Kartyayani Amma against the liquor shops. They marched towards the shops and destroyed everything in it. Such was the enthusiasm and militancy showed by women there. The instances cited show a general trend: The women do take their destiny in their hands. More battle will follow.

Women's wings of various political parties in Kerala represent a major current in the women's movement. Political parties are mainly concentrating on mass mobilization of women especially the working class and low caste women of Kerala. Autonomous women's groups and women's wings of political parties fight each other on various issues and on ideology and naturally they are not willing to share a common platform.

Though working within certain constraints these women's wings of parties take up women's issues along with other general issues. They also influence government policies and programmes to a great extent. These groups play a crucial role in the decision making on issues concerning women.

Almost all political parties in Kerala have their own women's wing. They are working inside the party. However they are helping to develop in women's organising capacity and leadership quality. Most women MLA's and MP's were products of women's organisations working under political parties. Mahila Congress is the women's wing of Congress party (CON-I) and Democratic Women's Association is that of CPI(M). Kerala Mahila Sangham (KMS) and Kerala Aykya Mahila Sangham (KAMS) are the women's wings of CPI and RSP respectively.

Prior to attainment of Indian independence a women's wing was functioning within the Congress under the name, Congress Mahila Sangh. In 1970's when the Congress party split, Mahila Congress was formed as the wing of Congress (I), under the leadership of Leela Damodara Menon. Responding to the question why a separate wing of the Congress for women, Leela Damodara Menon says "Today more and more women are accepting jobs in the offices and in individual concerns, and are participating in activities which were hitherto confined to men. This is bound to increase as the transformation from a feudal order to a highly industrial society takes place. The fact that women play an increasing part in these activities raises two problems. Firstly, women have problems different from those of men. The struggle for social equality has to be carried on. The question of family welfare and child welfare concerns women more than men. Secondly, women have to help solve the common social problems facing the country as they affect them more. These two activities have to be carried on simultaneously. While working within an organisation pledged to preserve and develop the democratic way of life they have also to function separately within that organisation, to discuss and find out ways of tackling their own problems. in their own exclusive set up, they can focus better attention on their particular difficulties. This is indeed the justification for the women's wing in the Congress organisations".[67]

Democratic Mahila Association is the women's wing functioning in the state under the banner of CPI (M). In the early years the women's wing of the anti congress party was Kerala Mahila Sangh which fought militantly many historic struggles. Thus split in the CPI (M) 1964 caused the formation of a new women's wing in 1968 under the leadership of K R Gowry. It came to be known as 'All India Democratic Women's Association' (AIDWA) thus claiming a national charactoer. Kerala Democratic Women's Association is the womens' wing of CPI (M) functioning in the state. T. Devi, Sarojini Balanandan and Devaki Warrier are the leaders of this movement today. Vice-president of the Association Devaki Warrier is the daughter of Arya Pallom who is one of the pioneers of women's movement in Kerala. She says that their stand is against today's social organisation which hinder women's freedom. So they strongly believe that the destruction of this system and the formation of a new one only can bring forth a society which gives equal status for women.[68]

Democratic Women's Association is one of the active women's associations functioning in the state. The issues which the Association took up and fought for, in recent times include against Muslim Women's Rights Bill, Thankamani Issue[69] Movement against price rise, Arabi Marriages and increase in Dowry deaths.

In the Shah Bano Case[70] when the government started arrangements for passing 'Muslim Women's Rights Bill' which in turn cuts the rights of divorced women getting maintenance from

their husbands, the Association strongly protested over the issue.

It organised meetings, rallies and other mass activities to protest the move. On the day of the presentation of the Bill, Association with other organisations arranged a great march in Delhi. Members from Kerala also took part. To mobilize public opinion, women of Kerala collected signatures from all over the state and sent to the Prime Minister. And at last Suseela Gopalan, the secretary of AIDWA and the member from Kerala filed a petition in the court to nullify it as unconstitutional.[71] But inspite of their efforts the bill became law.

In the 'National Committee on the Status of Women' constituted in 1971, and also in both the houses of parliament All India Democratic Women's Association demanded a Uniform Civil Code. In 1984 the members of the Association conducted a signature campaign for this; they had to face stiff resistance from fundamentalists. From Kerala about three lakhs signatures were collected.[72]

The Association is seriously engaged in another fight against what euphemistically known as 'Arab Marriages'. This is now becoming an epidemic in the state of Kerala particularly among Muslims. Rich Arabs come to Kerala apparently for business, stay here for some time and they marry young girls mostly below the age of eighteen in exchange for a sum of money paid to their parents. It is said that , these Arabs at the time

of marriage itself make the girls sign on the divorce notice. And after their stay in Kerala they divorce these girls. These marriages are conducted with the connivance of the religious leaders, hotel authorities where the Arabs stay and also the police. Abject poverty and ignorance of the girls and, their parents, help of Brokers and Khasis and above all, with the muslim personal law in India provide these Arabs ample scope to marry and divorce young girls with impunity. Recently one such marriage was reported in the papers and caused much hue and cry. (Ameena's Case). But very often such incidents go unreported.

Members of Democratic Women's Association are working among these poor people to conscientise them and to make them aware of the tragedy. The Association is also trying to settle some of these issues by forcing (compelling) these Arabs to give maintenance to girls. The secretary of the Association says that when the Judiciary, Police, and in a way the other authorities are on the side of Arabs, the Association is not able to do much.[73]

According to its leaders the Association is functioning well. They strongly raised their protest against the increasing dowry deaths in the state. All India Democratic Women's Association discussed seriously the National Perspective Plan for Women[74] and put forward an alternate plan explaining the defects of the proposal and giving more prospects and strategies. In Kerala too the Association organised several meetings and for

a to discuss National Perspective Plan for Women. They all had sent their comments and recommendations to the government.

Kerala Mahila Sangham (KMS) is the women's wing of CPI (Communist Party of India). Its National level organisation is known as National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW). This organisation in many cases fought jointly with AIDWA. In issues of common interests such as inflation, unemployment, atrocities on women especially dowry related harassment, they fought together. And from 1979 onwards, the International Women's Day (March 8) is celebrated jointly by the left organisations of women.

Kerala Aikya Mahila Sangham (KAMS) is the women's organisation of Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). The right-wing women's organisations also have led some short-lived agitations. Their major issues of struggle have been dowry, unemployment, prohibition etc.

Kerala Vanitha Congress is the women's organisation of Kerala Congress. The KVC organised a short-lived agitation against the Vypeen Liquor Tragedy of 1982, while the Mahila Congress organised a similar one in connection with the Punalur Liquor tragedy of 1981. Resolutions against dowry and for prohibition find an important place in their meetings.[75]

The formation of some autonomous women's groups in some parts of the state is a welcome development. Though there were

several hundred women's organisations in Kerala from the 1970 's itself, Kerala saw the emergence of such groups recently -mostly around mid eighties. These groups came into existence with the single minded objective to fight against oppression, exploitation, injustice and discrimination against women.

To name some groups: *Prachodana* at Trivandrum, *Bodhana* at Calicut, *Manushi* at Pattambi, *Manavi* at Palghat *Chethana* at Trichur, *Prabudhatha* at Payyannur, *Grameen Vanitha Prasthanam* at Thiruvalla and *Sahaja* at Kottayam. It seems that Manushi, Bodhana and Manavi are outstanding in their activities and their immediate response to women's issues. Prachodana formed with its centre of activities at Trivandrum has already disappeared from the scene after two to three years of functioning. Some groups are active, while others exist on paper.

One of the pioneer organisations of women in Kerala is *Manushi*. Prof.Sara Joseph, Prof.Sumangalakutty, Prof.Indira and Prof.Parvathi were the founders of this group. They tried to propagate feminist ideology in the state and actively engaged in working against the increasing dowry deaths in Kerala. The group is very much engaged in conscientising the people. The innovative action programme of street plays act as a powerful instrument to touch the hearts and minds of even illiterates and the rural masses.

Manushi organised a camp in Pattambi in 1986 where all members of feminist groups and like minded women gathered. It

was the first of its kind on an all Kerala basis. More than hundred women participated in the camp. The camp succeeded to a great extent in raising a feminist consciousness among them. They discussed the problems which women of Kerala face and about the ways and means by which it can be fought. However as a result of the camp the idea of organising into groups emerged among women activists. It lead to the formation of many such feminist groups in the state.

As far as their activities are concerned,[76] Manushi is taking up both social and individual issues of women. When in 'Thankamani' (a place in Kerala) mass rape of women by the police was reported, they strongly protested against the incident. Also the members visited the place, extended their support to the harassed women and demanded action against the policemen. In 1987, Manushi reached out to 'Balamani' who was a rape victim in Trichur. They organised an agitational committee also for getting justice to Balamani, and bringing the rapists to book. The group has its own Journal published from 1986. It tries to spread their message and expose the discrimination against women.

The women's group *Manavi* was formed in March, 1987, as a result of an ideological split within the group Manushi. Many of the members of this group expressed a strong desire to join hands with mass movements like that of Mavoor Rayons agitation.[77]

The issue of joining with other political as well as other mass movements of the downtrodden lead to a controversy in the group. Some members disagreed to join other general struggles. They were of the firm belief that if they joined such mass struggles, they had to take some political stand which might directly harm the group itself and would make it difficult to concentrate on women's specific issues. Since the two sides could not give up their principled stand and make a compromise, they decided to go seperate ways. Prof.Sara Joseph, Sumangalakutty and Parvathi with their followers left the parent group and founded 'Manavi' in 1987 with the aim of working totally as an independent women's group. Others remained in Manushi, and joined the Mavoor Rayon's agitation. Manavi has its headquarters at Palghat. It joins other groups in fighting for some of the issues of women and in staging 'dharna' for awareness building; one such event of co-operation is given below.

Some poor illiterate women were cheated by a *Gramasevakan* and some other officers of DWCRA loan programme of Palghat district. These unfortunate women were to be the beneficiries of a loan scheme. Large loans were taken out in the name of these women. They did not know that they were being taken for a ride. The fraudulent officers got the money and started an industrial unit. It functioned for six months. The women worked there for wages which were not given to them. Then the unit was closed and the industrialist absconded. After some time the loaner Bank

began proceedings against these women, because the loans were outstanding against their names. Manavi interfered at this juncture. The fraud was reported in the media. Manavi helped the women to approach the court of law for justice.

The women's group *Bodhana* was started in 1986 at Calicut. Its objectives include fighting all forms of oppression. The foremost leader of 'Bodhana' is Ajitha who once actively participated in the Naxal Bari movement in the state. She explains the rationale behind their movement: the attrocities against women throughout the country, the secondary position of women in the society, her own bitter experiences as a woman, the Shah Bano case in which even the government showed its bias against women and the uneqal laws for men and women in different religions, the increasing violence against women all these need to be addressed. More than anything, the new wave of women's movement that had already spread through out the country prompted her to form this feminist group.[78]

Bodhana is a group which is actively functioning in the state. They are very much engaged in taking cases of domestic violence and dowry harassments. For those women in need the group extends legal assistance and counselling facilities.

In 1987, members of the group agitated for an enquiry into 'Kunjeebi case'. Kunjeebi died on the 10th Sept. 1987 when she was in police lockup in Calicut. Bodhana conducted an enquiry about it and published their report and circulated it among the

people of the city. They organised an agitation demanding an enquiry against the lockup death of the woman. They conducted a protest march also by organising the women of that locality.

The group members submitted a memorandum to the District Collector and to the Chief Minister of Kerala. After a prolonged agitation, the government ordered Collector level enquiry into the case. And the policemen found guilty were suspended.

Another issue in which the group actively involved itself was that of India's sports- star the golden girl P.T. Usha. When she lost a medal in the seuol Olympics, the media blamed her and many people attempted character assassination. This pained her very much. Bodhana came forward and extended their support to the harassed Usha. They organised meetings and rallies and distributed pamphlets among the people to support Usha.

In June 1987 a policeman raped a dumb girl at Edavanna, Bodhana reacted against the incident and filed a case. They also submitted a memorandum to the District Collector. The collector made an enquiry about the case and the policeman was suspended.

Bodhana joined the worker's struggle of Mavoor factory during 1988. They organised a women's committee to actively involve themselves in the agitation. During the struggle two members of the group - Ajitha and Suhara- went on hunger strike for fourty eight hours.

The women's group *Prabudhata* was started in 1987 at Payyannoor. Prof. Mary and Devi were leaders of the group. *Chethana* yet another group was started in 1989 at Trichur. Their major objective is conscientising the society. Active members of this group to be singled out for mention here are Usha Mohan Kumar and Sheena Jose. But now these groups are not functioning actively. Limited membership, personal problems of the members and also the absence of full time members for the groupaffect its functioning adversely. *Prachodana* which started at Trivandrum in 1980 has ceased functioning. *Grameen Vanitha Prasthanam* is actively functioning in Thiruvalla. But their concern is not women's specific issues only.

Bodhana, Manushi and Manavi have their own publications through which they spread their views and ideologies. All these women's groups lay much emphasis on awareness building. They organise camps and symposia for house wives and conduct group discussions for students in colleges. According to these groups, the major problems which women of Kerala face are dowry, rape, domestic violence (wife beating), unequal divorce rules and the discriminatory laws in religions.

Ideologically, the majority are socialist feminists. The groups Manushi and Bodhana have the firm belief that women's problems cannot be seen and tackled seperately from other social problems. They have a holistic approach to women's problems. These women's organisations in Kerala have links with other

women's organisations functioning in the country. Many of them are aware of the women's liberation movement in the West and were inspired by it. But they are not ready to imitate the strategy of the western women's movement. They want the movement to be Indian Women's Movement. In Kerala the women's movement is not an anti-men struggle . They are trying to get support from all sections of society and that includes men. On 29 and 30 December 1990, all women's group in Kerala jointly hosted the IVth National Women's Conference at Calicut. The conference was attended by about thousand participants from all parts of India. Both scholars and activists in the field assembled there. This conference become a golden opportunity for the women's organisations in Kerala to come together on the same platform to discuss their problems. It helped to spread the ideas and objectives of the women's movement in Kerala. Men were supportive and helped in organising the conference.

Women's groups help highlight and bring to light, many issues that otherwise go unnoticed. They vehemently criticise the recently held beauty competitions in Kerala. And also express their protest to the media for giving wide coverage to the Mis Universe and Miss World Competitions. Some of the women activists effectively use the media to discuss women's writing (*Pennezhuthu*), women's journals etc.

The women's movement under women's own leadership is a recent development in Kerala. These autonomous women's groups play a great role in strengthening the women's movement in Kerala which is still in its infancy.

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70. Shah Bano Case.

Mohamed Ahemed Khan vs. Shah Bano Begum (AIR 1985 S.C. 945)

The appllant an advocate by provision was married to the respondent in 1932. Three sons and two daughters were born of that marriage. In 1975, the appellant drove the respondent out of the matrimonial home. In April 1978, the respondent filed a petition against the the appellant under S. 125 under Cr. P.C. for mainteinance at the rate of Rs.500 per month. On 6 November 1978 the appellant divorced the respondent by an irrevocable Talaq. The defence to the petetion for maintenance was that she had ceased to be wife by reason of the divorce granted by him, that he was ther fore under no obligation to provide maintenance for her, that he had already paid maintenance to her at the rate of Rs.200 per month for about two years and that he had deposited a sum of Rs.3000 at the court, by way of dower during the period of 'Iddat'. In August 1979 the Megistrate granted Rs.25 per month as maintenance.

In a revisional application filed by the respondent, the Madhya Pradesh High Court enhanced the amount to Rs.179.20 per month.

The Superme Court held as follows.

> "..... It would be wrong to hold that the Muslim husband, according to his personal law is not under on obligation to provide maintenance beyond the period of ' Iddat',to his divorced wife who is unable to manitain herself ..... The true position is that, if the divorced wife is able to maintain herself, the husband's liablity to provide maintenance for her cease with the experation of the period of Iddat. If she is able to maintain herself,she is entitled to recourse to S.125 of the code ".

The Supreme Court took the view that the 'Mahar' not being payable on divorce, does not fall within the meaning of the "Sum which is payable on divorce" under S.127 (3)(b).

Thus the Supreme Court's decision has made bold step in advancing the law as needed for making a " just and fair " provision for divorce women. But their came protest against this verdict from a small section of Orthodox Muslims and the Congress Government without considering the views and arguments raised by learned scholers and social reformers bowed before the fundementalist nearly by presenting and passing the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986, by which the responsibility of paying maintenance is taken away from the husband and vested upon the relatives of the wives and if they are not, the Wakf Board.

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CHAPTER V

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KERALA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Starting from nineteenth century, the women's movement in India has waxed and waned as times changed and emphasis shifted. Changes have occurred in its objectives, strategies and perspectives. It has notched up many victories to its credit. Many specific problems were solved; equality under the constitution was accepted; various committees and commissions were formed, and they did commendable work; International Women's Year and International Women's Decade promised much and achieved much; but much remain undone. Legal reforms were made through general and special laws. And yet, after more than a century of its functioning, women still do face many handicaps. Women's movement also faces many challenges. Various factors directly or indirectly affect the progress of the women's movement in India. The vigorous movements in Kerala stagnated without functioning properly. Here is an attempt to analyse the factors that hinder the movement.

Today the women's movement has grown so much, that it tries to view every issue in a woman's perspective and to struggle to solve women's specific problems. However, inspite of the growth of the movement, the problems of an average woman, are very much alive. The movement has not yet succeeded in its attempt to solve

the problems of the masses where the primary question is not equality but survival. Their theories and ideologies are not easily digestible to the masses.

Though the efforts of the women's movement could influence government policies and strategies to a certain extent, and legal reforms could be made, they remain ineffective at the implementation level. Political participation and political power still elude the majority of women. Inadequate participation in politics and near total absence in the committees for policy making, put women in a disadvantageous position. The apolitical nature of the women's groups keep them away from power. Women in the political parties face various limitations as there is male domination in the parties. To sum up: there is unequal power sharing.

Women's movement has not been strong enough to break the unholy alliance between religion and the state existing for years. All the personal laws in religions are against the interests of women. The Muslim Women's Protection of Rights (on Divorce) Act which was passed by the government to overcome the Supreme Court verdict on 'Shah Bano' case was a serious set back to the movement.

To establishing linkage between the women's movement and broader socio-political movement is the major challenge faced by women's groups.[1] They have to address themselves to questions like casteism, class issue, communalism and find how they affect

women's lives. Such questions are most important for women activists and groups who have to make crucial decisions concerning these issues. Differences of views moreover cause serious tensions or conflicts among these groups. The women leaders in various walks of life share the view that, language, literature, religions, media and the most important of factor, the executive, the judiciary, and the legislatures disseminate male-oriented values and pose great challenges to the women's movement.

The sociologists are bound to observe that the women of Kerala have a high standard of living, socially and culturally. They indeed have a high level of education, and receive good health care; the male-female sex ratio is favourable, the life expectancy at birth is high, the age of marriage is also demographically acceptable; the life standard index also is high.

But to conclude that women of Kerala have equality with men, economically and socially is erroneous. Prof.Saradamony says: "these demographic indicators cannot be taken as a true indicator of women's position in Kerala".[2] Projection of the above mentioned demographic indicators in one way hide the true picture and create a feeling among the public outside and inside Kerala that women's condition is far better in Kerala.

High literacy among women in Kerala is doubtful of producing desired results in terms of their knowledge and awareness of

their rights. A literate person is one who can write his name and put his signature. So mere literacy may not bring forth knowledge. And in literacy too, women are behind men.

The statistics show that the percentage of girls in schools are almost same as that of boys. In colleges they outnumber boys.[3] But when it comes to technical and professional courses their rate decreases. This may be due to various reasons. In Kerala there is discrimination in educating girls and boys. Quite a large number of parents still do not consider higher education and employment as a necessity to girls. They consider marriage as important in a girls' life. Many girls and their parents still continue to hold this belief and consider their education as a time pass up to marriage. For marriage of their daughters, parents usually prefer boys with high educational qualification and a job. If the girls go in for higher education the chances of getting a boy with the same education or higher education becomes difficult. This element also works against girls' education at a higher level. High value placed on dowry is another factor. This along with the general belief that a girl child will not be helpful for their parents after marriage, prevents them from spending more money on girls' education.

Finding and securing a suitable placement is a difficult proposition for the youth of Kerala. Unemployment is one of the major problems and the state has the highest level of educationally trained man power resources. Moreover Kerala does

not have the necessary industrial infrastructure to absorb educated men and women. Highly educated women accept jobs which do not commensurate with their qualifications. The number of women in the executive cadre is less in comparison with men. Their employment helps them, but it requires them to take double burden. The belief that women should do all household duties prevails here and this restricts the number of women seeking and taking up employment. Most of the employed women do not get help from the male members of the family in their domestic duties. This double burden affects their health, success in profession and in the overall performance. This force them to be away from joining organisations or engaging in other outside activities. As a class women, do take a second place in employment, under constraints stated above.

Many a time, due to possibilities of continual transfers women generally avoid promotions. It is a custom in all government controlled services, to transfer an employee and promote him to the higher cadre. Promotion without a transfer is a rarity. This is usually seen in banking sector where men go for higher positions and women do not try for it due to family related issues such as education of children. In all these cases women are the losers. Moreover, women who earn their salary have to get the permission of the husband to spend the money for personal purposes. The patriarch controls purse, no matter who puts money in it. Leela Menon[4] -a woman journalist says:- "Education conferred jobs on women but not an economic identity.

They are made mute by cultural compulsions, confined to secondary roles sans any decision making powers, they confirm to female stereotypes, social status and security rather than power. Spinsterhood is an enduring nightmare for the women in Kerala. And scandals are her nemesis."[5]

The female work participation rate in Kerala is lower than that of Indian average.[6] Discrimination in wages exists in the agricultural sector which employs a large number of women. "Average daily wages for agricultural labour although higher than elsewhere in the country is much less than that of males."[7] With the introduction of new technologies and mechanisation, women's employment chances in this sector are being reduced.

It is quite true that Kerala has achieved high levels in the field of family planning. Programmes are promoted not with the real welfare of women at heart but as population control measures. Thus ironically while the right of abortion is a battle cry for women in the West, the legalising of abortion for women in India is not necessarily liberating women when it does not come from their choice but due to pressure from government and more often from families. But here again women have to take greater responsibility than men do. The burden of controlling the family size falls on women generally. It is her duty. Official reports show that the number of women who undergo tubectomy -the operation for women- is much higher than that of men who undergo vasectomy -the operation for men, which is relatively simpler

than the former.[8] Many women are not at all aware of the side effects of contraceptives they use, and yet they do, as men would not take that responsibility.

Most people of Kerala are religious-minded and religion influences private lives to a very great extent. Thus the mores of the main three religions- The Hindu, the Muslim and the Christian have great bearing on the private lives. The patriarchal value- systems of these faiths put women in a subservient ambiance. Of women, Manu, the law-giver says: 'women have no right to enjoy freedom as the father protects her in the childhood, husband in the youth and son in the old age'.

The two epics of Hinduism - Ramayana and Mahabharatha -have references to women's duties. They describe woman as secondary citizen or as one who should devote herself to her husband and suffer anything and everything for him and his family. In Mahabharatha, women's duties are described as almost same as those of *Sudras*[9] (The servant caste or people who do menial jobs). As religious texts, these books have immense influence on the life style and customs of the people. And this religious literature passes from one generation, to the other without modifications; the role-models remain unaltered.

Women are prohibited from becoming *Poojaris* (priests) in temples. Widows are not given a prominent place during holy occasions such as marriage ceremonies. But widowers are not treated likewise. This discrimination against women, is not a feature of rural life alone, but of urban life too. Religious texts of Christians and Muslims are no exceptions.

Christianity also gives women only a secondary position. In India, dowry is prominent among Christians and it looks as if churches here too support this system. Till recently Christian inheritance laws discriminated against women. According to Travancore Christian Succession Act, a daughter's right among Travancore Christian family property ended when she was given, *Stridhan* (dowry) on marriage. The amount being fixed at Rs 5000/- or one fourth of the value of son's share. The widow has only a life interest in her husbands property. This ends with her life. Though this was challenged by Mary Roy of Kottayam and she got a favourable verdict from the Court, she had to undergo threats from her relatives, religious leaders and even from other women. The Supreme Court verdict was held in ridicule by some educated women of Kerala also. The Kerala state filed an appeal in the court, put it rejected in due course. The interesting thing is that even after six or seven years of the verdict, the State Government is trying to introduce a bill to bypass the judgment and to remove the retrospective effect of the verdict.

In Christianity women have no right to become *Purohita* (Priest). Recently some sects started allowing the same to women amidst strong protests from the members. The Indian Divorce Act 1869 is extremely hard to Indian Christian women. As such there is no provision for mutual consent like that of Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. Although under the Indian Divorce Act both husband and wife can obtain a divorce, inflicting much strain on wife.

The grounds provided in the Act, for dissolution of marriage are very limited. The couple must rely on differing grounds for divorce. The wife can seek divorce on the grounds of i) incestuous adultery, ii) bigamy with adultery iii) rape, sodomy or bestiality iv) adultery and cruelty v) adultery and desertion vi) conversion from Christianity and marriage with other women. A wife has to prove more than one ground, if she has to succeed in her petition for divorce. If she proves only one charge, namely, adultery or cruelty or desertion, the Court is competent to grant her a judicial separation and not a divorce decree. In order to get the marriage dissolved, the wife has to prove cruelty and adultery. A husband's only ground for divorce is adultery.[10] So a Christian woman has to tolerate her husband even if he has many vices.

Participation of women in the administration and other activities of the churches on terms of equality with men, is not common. In Protestant churches women's participation in decision making bodies as well as in liturgical services is being allowed. Women's ordination into priesthood is sanctioned and encouraged by some Protestant churches, of late, whereas in the Orthodox and Catholic churches women are not considered for elections to any of the decision making bodies. They are not considered equal with men.

The following case of a professor, who was actively engaged in activities related to church, is an illustrative case. She is

a retired professor of sociology. Besides she is a recognised national and international church leader, a dynamic community organiser and an effective public speaker.

She had been the executive secretary of the Women's Commission of the Kerala Council of Churches, a regional council of the National Council of Churches. She had the privilege of registering the honour of the women of the Orthodox Church in India as well as Global Ecumenical Movement. Her struggle with the church started when she was nominated by the Nomination Committee of the World Council of Churches to its Central Committee at its seventh assembly meet in Canbera, Australia.

When her name appeared in the nomination list the leader of the church delegation wanted her to withdraw the nomination in favour of a male priest from India. Knowing that it was a seat, for the women of the Orthodox Churches in India, she refused to obey. She got elected to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. She attended the first meeting of the Central Committee and established thereby for the first time in the history of the Orthodox Church in India, women's position in the central decision making body of the World Council of Churches. On returning home, she was pressurised and compelled to resign the position in the central committee, by the synod of the Orthodox Church at the instigation of the leader of the delegation who ordered her to withdraw the nomination in favour of a male priest. She was even threatened with excommunication if she did not comply with their order.

At last to avoid excommunication and the consequences, she resigned but handed over the baton to another woman in her church. Had she obeyed the command of the leader of the church, at Canbera it would have been impossible for her to safe guard the rights of women, and to secure the seat for women members. Thus the challenges are many to the women's movement in Kerala even from educated women and from the religion.

Muslims form a religious community in which customs, beliefs and personal laws rule every aspect of one's life. Women are the worst sufferers of Muslim personal laws. Muslim women's right to property is half that of men. According to 'Saria'at Law', a man can marry a women or divorce a wife through simple proceedings. He can divorce his wife by simply saying the word *Talaq* three times, even in the absence of his wife. And the husband is not at all legally obliged to pay maintenance to his divorced wife and children. Recently Government of India also backed the Muslim fundamentalists and by making an act to circumvent the Supreme Court verdict making it mandatory to pay maintenance to a divorced wife through the famous 'Shah Bano case'. With assumed religious sanction, Polygyny still exists among Muslims. All these practices negatively affect an average Muslim woman. Muslim women are not allowed to enter mosques. (Exceptions are there in some mosques). It is surprising that Purdah system continues in certain parts of Kerala (Malabar). In Malabar region, child marriages and 'Arab marriages' do take place, mostly among poor people.

Arab marriages constitute an alliance of convenience. The girls are married off to Arabs (who visit Kerala for a short time); The parents of girl take cash from the bride groom. In many cases these girls are discarded and the husbands return to their homeland after a short period of honeymoon. The girls do not get maintenance from their erstwhile husbands. These marriages take place in Kerala, with the indirect connivance of the religious leaders .

It may be due to deep -rooted taboos and practices like child marriages that women's education has not gathered momentum in the Muslim community. Thus it is seen that the stranglehold of religion hinder women's progress. The women's movement in Kerala has not yet succeeded in liberating women from the shackles of age-old beliefs and customs. It was never able to lead a serious campaign against personal laws in religions.

Media - both electronic and print, hardly give a woman the treatment she deserves. The stories, novels, plays and features coming through the media negatively affect women and resurrects the old images of women. The programmes on television and radio invariably depict woman as inferior to man. The house wife/mother image of woman is getting prominence in both print and electronic media. They are largely portrayed as home-bound, ritualistic and superstitious, self negating and passive, decorative, powerless and acquesceing to battering and violence. Advertisements on television and radio are also exploitative of women's bodies. The

female body, often scantly clad, is used to advertise all kinds of products ranging from shaving cream and drinks to automobiles. This further degrades the image of women. Cinema - one of the most influential of medias, is not an exception. Sex and violence is on the increase in cinema.

A large number of Malayalam weeklies indirectly encourage violence against women; the increasing rate of suicides among women in Kerala,[11] is attributed to such violence and sex. The sensational weeklies in Malayalam, with an eye on the till, exploit the soft feelings of the neoliterates as well as literates by publishing tens and hundreds of *pynkili novels*, depicting women as sex objects and the worst sufferers of the society. The theme of almost all of them is the same, whatever men may do, the female folk of the family must suffer. In Kerala where most of the people are literate, these sob stories can have a powerful impact on them.They surely produce some brainwashing effect, feminist group leaders feel.

Women in decision making roles are very few. Politics does not attracting women in the post-independence period. Even women who took part actively in the political activities in Kerala before independence are seen to quit the field. Statistics show that women contesters and those elected are comparatively less with reference to the total number of seats. This happens in a state where women outnumber men. Many a time, Kerala cabinet lacked a woman minister.[12] Commenting on low participation of

women in the assembly and parliament, Leela Damoodara Menon[13] once remarked that, political parties assigned to women constituencies where an easy victory was impossible. Even when elected, women were not given their due in responsible positions.

Much blame must be assigned to the nature of politics now. It is increasingly an area of fierce competition and corruption. Women who are not inclined to corruption are hesitant to enter politics. Character assassination, threats, harassment etc. are not rare in recent politics. As M.T Padma - the Fisheries Minister of Kerala from 1995 onwards says : "No women in politics remains untained by scandals".[14] They do not want to loose their fair image by entering in to politics - riddled with immorality, corruption, intrigues, dishonesty and patronage. Many times women political workers were mentally tortured and threatened. According to Simi Rosebell John - the state youth congress secretary :- "women cannot rise in politics except through reservations".[15]

Thus in Kerala political power is far away from women. It is men who make laws, plan and implement policies and programmes intended to promote women's development. Hence the lacunas are many. A woman's perspective is lacking all the time. Commenting about the lack of political power for women in Kerala, Leela Menon - a famous journalist says "of the 2.9 crores population 53 percent are women, who have no share in political power. And, of the one hundred and forty one members in the assembly there are

just six women. Only 11 percent of the one thousand two hundred elected members of local bodies are women. And there is just one woman among the twenty five members of parliament from Kerala. Women have registered only a 0.39 percent increase in the work force. In the IPS cadre there are two women officers while in the one hundred and sixty strong IAS force only thirteen are women. The fact that women form 60 percent of the faceless teachers in the state is no slave to feminist egos. And women entrepreneurs are either making pickles or stitching garments. Their motto seems to be "No high tech for us please, we are women".[16]

Women's wings of political parties are undoubtedly a strong current in the women's movement which can influence the governmental bodies to improve the status of women. But the members and leaders of these women's wings frankly admit that they are unable to find more space for women in the party. The women's membership in the party is not much. The women's wing is controlled by the party and so cannot always take an independent stand on women's specific issues. The attitude of the parties to these wings had always been "You are free and autonomous but you refuse my permission to say so".

Political parties have no definite outlook on women's issues. Meetings on important matters are convened late at night. Women cannot attend these meetings and so crucial decisions are taken in their absence. This view is shared by the members and leaders of many other (professional) organisations also.

Another tendency which prevails in the state is the animosity of the politically sponsored women's organisations against the independent women's groups - Feminists allege that their aim is to propagate the ideology of their political party among the poor women rather than propagate the ideas of free thinking and equality and sense of rights and privileges among them. Their organisation has their own well organised political machinery behind them and hence in each conflict of ideas the political organisations are the winners. Feminists allege that the political parties fear - the spread of free thinking and large scale awakening among women as that may ruin them. The leaders of the independent women's organisations are very much fearful and critical about this suppressive and destructive attitude of women's organisations of the leftist parties in Kerala. A strong spokes person of a feminist group in Kerala, Ajitha[17] - once a strong leftist, vehemently condemn the 'Janadhipatya Mahila Association', sponsored by the Communist party of India (Marxist).

However Gabriela Dietrich of Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary - an outstanding person in the field of women's studies opine that women's wing of political parties have an important place in the emancipation of women in Kerala. Though they may be against autonomous feminist groups - as feminists allege, they are responsible for the mass organising of women in Kerala. She adds that Kerala's culture, its customs and beliefs which are passing from generation to generation may be the prime factor which prevents the emergence of a strong women's movement.

Various laws were made before and after independence for the sake of women. But at the implementation level most of them did not measure up to their expectations. A majority of women are unaware of the laws which are enacted solely for their well-being. Laws against dowry, rape and child marriage, sometimes become ineffective due to various reasons. Economic dependence on others hinder women from approaching courts; litigation consumes much money and time. Plaintiffs influencing the witnesses and even the judges are not rare. Threats against women force them to withdraw cases. It is very common that political parties that have to raise funds, use their influence to save the criminals involved in violence against women. Moreover, existing laws are altered by the organs of the state. Existing rights also get snatched away by the government. This is borne out in the famous 'Shah Bano Case' where the central government legislated against the interest of women and in 'Mary Roy Case' where the state government is trying to.

Many laws framed to help women seem to be ineffective for they are ill-made. In many cases there was a wide disparity between the initial demands raised by the women's movement and the recommendations of the law commissions and final enactment. The activists and experts who initiate the movement cannot participate in the process of drafting the bills. Almost every single campaign against violence on women in the eighties resulted in new legislations aimed at protecting women. However, these have had little impact on the society.

The campaign for reforms in Rape Laws (1983) is a clear example of ineffectiveness. As a result of the anti-rape campaign a Law Commission was constituted to study the demands. The Law Commission's recommendations included both the demands raised by the campaign, i.e., regarding onus of proof and women's past sexual history. The commission also recommended certain pre-trial procedures - women should not be arrested at night, a policeman should not touch a woman when he is arresting her, and statements of woman should be recorded in the presence of a relative, friend or a representative of women's organisation. It also recommended that a police official's refusal to register a complaint of rape should be treated as an offence.

However, the bill which was presented to the parliament in August 1980 did not include any of these positive recommendations regulating the police power. The demand that a women's past sexual history and general conduct should not be used as evidence in a rape trial, was excluded from the bill.

Another disturbing trend in the state is the increasing violence against women. Dowry, social discrimination and sexual harassment are rampant and on the increase. Wife beatings are not rare though media coverage is scanty. 'Dowry deaths were unheard of in the past, they are however very much a social reality at present. There have been many instances of dowry related suicides in the last few years. Literate women have chosen to end their lives rather than be burdens on their parents who were unable to pay the unconscionable dowry demands.[18]

One incident to be singled out for mention here is the tragic suicide of an engineer working in the engineering research

unit, Trichur. The demand for dowry by her husband who was a co-worker in the institution and his torture ultimately led to the suicide of that woman with two small children.[19] Another incident related to dowry occurred in Palghat district (1989). Four sisters committed suicide not to become a burden on their parents. They were aged between eighteen and twenty five and were much worried about their plight. They learned how the marriage of their eldest sister, nearly had ruined the family financially. Hence their tragic end.[20]

Recently news papers reported the dowry harassment of a woman named 'Beena' at Kottayam by her in-laws and husband.[21] She was admitted in hospital with serious injuries and the newspapers reported the incident. Many women's organisations of Kottayam protested against the incident and extended support to her. Many such incidents often go unreported or unnoticed. All These reveals the prevalence of dowry related harassment and dowry deaths in Kerala.

In Kerala no dowry death was reported in 1983 and 1984 but there were five cases in 1985 and now it is on the increase.[22] Rape cases are also increasing in Kerala. Even though men are responsible for rape and molestation, society generally stands against women and that adversely affects her future. In 1990 the number of rape cases reported was one hundred and ninety seven. It increased to two hundred and eleven in 1991. Statistics show that Kerala is not far behind other states of India in the case of rape.[23]

The framing of uniform civil code to overcome all personal laws in religions is one of the long existing demands of women's

movement. Recently in an epoch-making judgment, the Supreme Court on 10 May 1995 asked the Prime Minister to take a "Fresh look" at Article 44 of the constitution mandating the state to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens through out the territory of India. This was in a case where a Hindu husband had misused the absence of a Uniform Civil Code to convert to Islam and marry a second wife without dissolving the first marriage.[24] However, the Prime Minister of India and Chief Minister of the state Kerala emphatically declared that there is no move from the part of government to constitute the Uniform Civil Code as it never wanted to hurt the feelings of the religious people by changing personal laws. From this it is crystal clear that the government is least moved by women's concerns or women's movement, even if there is direction from the apex court of the country.

The National Commission for Women is also facing criticisms.[25] The NCW from its inception is doing commendable work including inquiries on around one thousand cases concerning women, conducted major studies on family court system, women in the unorganised sector and so on, and appealed to the President not to give assent to the Kerala bill denying Christian women the right to succession. However many women's organisations criticize the functioning of the commission as it is biased in favour of the party in power. Disappointment is widespread among women in general about the appointments made in the commission that the government filled the commission with its supporters. Thus noted academicians and activists of the women's movement have not got a place in the commission.

Feminism is often a misunderstood term in Kerala. People consider it as western and try to neglect and oppose anything

connected with feminism. Feminists are often ridiculed even by eminent men and women and also the media in general. During mid eighties when feminist groups were formed, the opposition came from all corners - said a feminist group leader in Kerala. Feminism is considered as anti-Indian and against the country's culture. This adversely affects women's groups. Even the educated, freedom loving women hesitate to say that they are feminists. They may speak, write and work for women but add at the same time that they are not feminists. This hesitancy also negatively affect the growth of feminist groups in the state.

"Women in Kerala lack courage", says Sugatha Kumari.[26] She adds: "women in Kerala wear an inner purdah". Most women leaders share this idea and add that women of Kerala lack initiative. They are always afraid of society. This is a general tendency of the middle-class. Lower class people are very different and have some courage to come forward.

According to Sr.Alice,[27] "unmarried girls of Kerala usually would not come forward to join a rally or a protest meeting. They never wanted to be assertive or dominating as they fear that it may affect the prospects of their marriage. They consider marriage as the most important event in their life and are ready to sacrifice their jobs, education and even their individuality to that end. All these beliefs shared by majority of women is the stumbling block in the growth of women's movement".

Unity and contradiction -positive and negative- the recent developments in Kerala women's movement scene may be summed up in these terms. As the society grows and literacy become universal the women's question get momentum. Many talk and write about equality and the new autonomous feminist groups do much for the upliftment of women. Still there are problems, which impede the functioning of the women's organisation. The disappearance of 'prachodana' - a feminist group which actively functioned in Trivandrum indicates that challenges to women's groups are high in the state. It is said that the strong opposition from political parties and the mental torture of members in the group are among the factors for its disappearance. This is not a single case. Almost all organisation are facing strong challenges.

A close look at the situation in Kerala reveals that many feminist groups which started during 1980's are now inactive due to lack of strong leadership and membership. And, even after the years of emergence of various groups they have not at all succeeded in organising a united front to effectively fight and react to the issues concerning women. Attempts are made to bring the different groups together, but all their discussions end up in arguments on ideological or theoretical grounds. Unity has been elusive.

Various criticisms are levelled against women's movement that they are fragmented, lacks a clear orientation, direction or an efficient organisation. They are in their initial stage and

are far from organising intense struggles. However the great victories, the movement has made, are clear examples to its progress to success. It is quite clear that day by day, the number of individuals supporting women's emancipation is increasing. General public and media are becoming more and more conscious. Women's studies are also growing in volume and quality. The diffusion of education, the passing of social legislation, and the defence of oppressed women are the products of these women's movements. The movement has contributed to the transformation of the mind set of the people to a great extent. It influences the government policies on women also.

The movement today is undergoing various changes and comprises different trends in its fold. Most of the groups developed links with far left working class, tribal and anti-caste organisations. Women increasingly begin to take part in other social movements like ecological and civil rights movement. Unlike the early years of its functioning, the women's groups, generally the women's movement earned much confidence through their activities and received much support from the public. Though western feminists' ideologies were discussed in detail, the groups here never went to extremities like violent protests as in the West.

The movement in the pre-independence period was for getting legal reforms including right to education, right to employment, right to franchise, right to divorce etc. Whereas the present day

women's movement has gone much ahead in realizing the importance of viewing every issue in women's perspective. It began to fight against everything which tries to oppress or discriminate women. The movement by this time has got strength through protest, and pressurising, as well as research and basic net working among women's groups. The activism has spread even to the rural areas. Women's high participation and even leading roles they assume in various struggles such as fish workers movement and prohibition movement, bear this out.

One of the major charges raised by the women's movement against the left political parties is that they do not at all take women's issues seriously and are working against the interest of women's movement; now a change of heart has taken place in the left parties. With the initiative and leadership of AKG Centre, Trivandrum, a Women's Conference - "Women in Kerala, Yesterday, Today" - inviting academicians and women activists of all women groups, was organised recently at Trivandrum. (February 11 to 13, 1995). Around one hundred and eighty papers relating to women and their movements were presented in the conference. The seminar revealed the changed attitude of left political party towards women's movement in which E.M.S Namboothirippad talked about the immediate necessity of the emergence of a strong women's movement in Kerala. Besides he admitted the low position and participation, women have in the party and other mass based organisations and wanted a conscious effort to replace this situation. The incessant struggle by the

women members of the party against male domination may be one of the major reasons for this attitudinal change.

The most remarkable development of recent times in the state is the governments decision to reserve 33.3 percent seats in Panchayat Raj institutions which aims at the political and economical empowerment of women. In line with the constitution (73rd Amendment) Act 1992, the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994 has passed as a measure to secure a greater participation of people in the planned development and in local Governmental affairs, by constituting Village, Block and District level Panchayats.[28] The Act which reserved one third of the total number of seats for women, has also reserved for them in the same ratio for executive posts. According to the Act (Chapter XIV, Sec. 153(3)(b)(ii) of extraordinary gazette of Kerala Government) one third of the total number of offices of village panchayats, block panchayats and district Panchayats, will be reserved for women.

Accordingly in Kerala about four thousand five hundred and fifty three women will get power including three thousand eight hundred and eighty one members in Village panchayats, five hundred and sixty eight members in Block panchayats and one hundred and four members in District Panchayats. Women will be the presidents of three hundred and thirty one Village panchayats, fifty one Block panchayats and five District Panchayats. Also women get the presidentship of about eighteen Municipalities and one Corporation. This reform can be

considered a great success as far as women's movement is concerned.

The establishment of National Commission for Women in 1992 offers a bright prospect for women all over the country. Under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, the commission is empowered to take "suo motto" notice of matters relating to deprivation of women's rights and non-implementation of laws enacted to provide protection to women and to take up issues arising out of these with the appropriate authorities.

With the determination to check the increasing violence against women, the commission has formulated a number of recommendations.[29] Some of the relevant provisions are:

i) setting up / strengthening, of monitoring bodies in every district and every state. The committee usually consists of police officers and magistrates in some states, in-charge of the area, legal aid workers, representatives of women's organisations, counselling experts etc.

ii) recognizing the strength and capabilities of voluntary organisations for generating public response to violence and social mobilisation, the commission has recommended that the existing schemes of assistance to non governmental organisations be modified to include a specific component for combating atrocities against women,

iii) the commission has recommended to set up women's cells or women police stations on an urgent basis all over the country as a special mechanism to deal with violence against women.

It is of the view that a gender sensitisation programme should be incorporated in all the training programmes for the entire administrative machinery including police, the prosecutors, magistrates, the forensic and medico-legal personnel and judiciary.

The Women's Commission has also come to the conclusion that the only effective remedy for dowry deaths is financial i.e., confiscation of the property of the husband or in-laws of the deceased and it has been recommended that a legal provision should be made to do this in all cases of dowry deaths.

The proposal of the National Commission for Women for 30 percent reservation for women in all government job is conspicuous. Recently the Department for Women and Children in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has supported this proposal. The recommendation has been cleared by the ministry of Human Resource Development and is doing the rounds of the ministries of laws and welfare and the department of personnel.[30] In her meeting with HRD minister Madhavarao Sindia, Mohini Giri - Chairperson of the National Commission for Women has pointed out that the money spent by the commission would be wasted if this recommendation is not accepted.

In Kerala, the political empowerment of women was first attempted when 30 percent of seats of District council were reserved for women in 1990. Now the new legislation will surely be a great advancement towards granting political power to women.

Studies show that women in top jobs are very few. Even at the lower level, they hold just 4 to 15 percent of various categories of government jobs. The recommendation for reservation for women is significant, as it does just before the Beijing Conference of women and the release of the 1995 Human Development Report of the UNDP in which Mahbub-ul-Haq, author of the report has mooted the 50/50 job proposal for women and men. Beginning with 30 percent jobs in the organised sector for women, Haq says government should work towards 50percent jobs for women[31]

The UN secretary-general Boutros Ghali, is also pushing for 50 percent of the top UN jobs (assistant secretary-general and above) for women. The dead line to achieve the target is 2000 AD.

Meanwhile the Karnataka Government on 23 September 1995 decided to reserve 25 percent of posts in government service for women in future recruitment.[32] Briefing on the cabinet decisions, Law Minister M.C. Nanaiah said henceforth the government would ensure that 30 percent of beneficiaries for various welfare programmes drawn by the government shall be women.

The fourth National Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace to be held at Beijing, China from 4 - 5 September 1995. It became a stage for the world wide women's movement to discuss women's issues to share their experiences and to formulate strategies for the future. Convened

by the UN General Assembly, the confence adopted a 'Platform for Action',[33] concentrating on "critical areas of concern", issues identified as obstacles to the advancement of women in the world.

The first United Nations Conference on women, held in Mexico city in 1975, led to the declaration by the UN General Assembly of the United Nations Decade for Women 1975-1985. The second conference, held in Copenhagen in 1980, adopted a Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade for Women. The third conference in Nairobi in 1985 adopted the Forward-Looking strategies.

The Forward-Looking strategies provide a frame work for action at international, national and regional levels to promote greater equality and opportunity for women. They are based on the three objectives of the UN Decade for Women 'Equality, Development and Peace'. The 'Platform for Action' which will recommend further concrete steps to be taken by policy makers and by women and men world wide is intended to speed up the process of making the strategies a reality.

Despite the widespread movement towards democratisation in the past decade, women have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or achieving the target of 30 percent in decision making levels set by the United Nations. With a reservation of 33.33 percent of seats in local bodies for women, India has more than fulfilled the target and in the last local bodies election more than 40 percent elected

representatives in some states like Karnataka and Maharashtra were women.

Gender equality, politics and decision making are identified as one of the twelve major thrust areas which the Beijing Conference would focus its attention. It was at India's initiative that the issue of girl child was included as one of the thrust areas that the conference would focus. The other areas included women and poverty, literacy and education, women's health, women in the global economy, violence against women, women and the environment and women at war and peace.

Five hundred Indian delegates headed by Human Resources Development Minister Madhavarao Scindia participated the conference. About twentyfive thousand delegates including activists and leaders representing various types of women's groups from one hundred and eighty UN member states participated the conference, which may act as a springboard for renewed work.

A parallel NGO Forum on Women 1995 held from 30 August to 8 September 1995. The two themes the Forum had focussed are i) to influence 'Platform for Action' that UN member states will adopt, ii) to highlight the women's vision for the world in the twenty first century. The theme of the Forum is to "look at the world through women's eyes".

Though these conferences can work no miracle, they will help women to reach an understanding about women's common problems and

to chalkout ways to solve these at global level. They also help women to know about the women's movement in different countries and to instill in them a feeling that they are not alone in the path of struggle for liberation, which may inturn raise their confidence to work with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

The present study already revealed that women of Kerala is better placed in terms of health, education etc. Though they share many problems with the women of the rest of the country, their progress in the field of education is noteworthy. The old concept about women, as duty bound to remain at home and men as the bread-winners (earning members), is already broken. Now it is a fact that in many of the households in Kerala, bread-winners are women. This to a certain extent empowers them economically. Though employed women faces many problems, their status and dignity in society as well as at home is increasing.

The National Women's Commission's proposal to reserve 30 percent jobs to women, if implemented, may create a silent revolution in the state. The economic and political empowerment are the two key components which can liberate women from the clutches of subordination. The recent move to reserve 33.33 percent seats in the local bodies is sure to yield good results as it will empower women politically and economically. If the Panchayat Raj is allowed to function properly, the democratic process and institutions will be strengthened, people (both men and women) will receive a political education as well as a better

sense of themselves as citizens; the internal democracy of the voluntary sector may improve and women may participate in the decision making bodies as well as in the general functioning of the local government as full-fledged citizens. With this the concept that the public-realm is solely for men, began to rupture.

Increasing violence against women is seriously taken into consideration by the state under the direction from the National Commission for Women. More women police stations are started and measures have been taken to start more family courts to help women. According to Administration Report of Police Department, Kerala, 1990, there were twenty women's police stations already functioning in the state. In order to ensure more security and protection to women and to take up their complaints twenty more women's police stations are to be established in various places of state.[34]

Attention was given to employed women to lessen their difficulties regarding children by opening more Creches and Day-care Centres. Assistance is given to 'Mahila Samajams' to function properly and to take up economically beneficent schemes. Recognition of women in government policies can be observed in the case of IRDP where the direction is that 30 percent of its beneficiaries should be women. With the efforts of courageous women, the government and judiciary under pressure to reform discriminatory legislations as in the case of Travancore Christian Succession Act and the Christian Divorce Act.

Entry of more women writers to the field of literature is a new trend in the state. They get wider acceptance and are gradually breaking the monopoly of men in the field of literature. The women's writing (feminist writing) has become an emerging area in literature which owes much to the women's movement in the state. The acceptance of women's studies, as an academic discipline at the University level and the starting of women's centres or cells in many colleges and Universities in Kerala, offers a bright prospect to the women's movement.

The women's movement in Kerala so far was able to create a psychological impact on women and also to create a change in the attitude of the public towards women's issues and status. It has led to a rethinking about the present social order and values. This trend inturn influences the government and its programmes. Changes are taking place; the women's movement has the responsibility to accelerate the change.

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CONCLUSION

Women's movement in Kerala, as in other parts of India, are confronted with two major challenges- social attitudes and gender anomalies in the various family laws.

Concerning social attitudes which contribute to the distress of women in India, Pratima Asthsana writes: 'The feminist ideals of the West are foreign to the spirit of Indian women's movement, whose leaders always kept in mind the ancient ideals and values of Indian culture, the high spirituality and the spirit of service and devotion that women symbolise'. This is practically true as many of the women's leaders while arguing for women's rights and working for women's upliftment respect and perpetuate the old values and concept about women and while demanding education and more opportunities for women, hold the view that a women's primary and most important duty is that of a wife and mother and consider women as inferior to men.

But the emergence and proliferation of the new women's groups in India which question all gender discrimination both in family and society is a welcome trend. These women's organisations took up many issues concerning women including dowry deaths, rape cases, sexism in media, wife beating and prostitution where justice is often denied to women. Besides, they are fighting legal battles for women's cases.

The serious gender anomalies in the various family laws in India were highlighted time and again by various organisations and official reports. The Shah Bano case followed by the Muslim Women Protection of Rights (on Divorce) Bill of 1986 turned the lights forcefully on this issue. This, however, got dissipated as communal passions were raised in Indian politics following the demolition of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. In the debate over a Uniform Civil Code itself opinions were divided and uncertain. In opposition to the idea arrayed the leaders and ideologies of the minority communities who viewed such efforts as attempts to impose the wishes of the majority, thereby depriving them of their rights and identities. It is in the name of religion, politics or communalism, women's rights are neglected all the time.

However, over the last few months there has been a great deal of concentrated activity, particularly among women's groups, to deal with this problem with a view to evolving a concensus for reform. The issues taken up by the women's movements in other parts of India have some impact on Kerala where the advancement of women is remarkable in the fields of education, employment and such other fields. However in accordance with the great achievements made by women in the modern times, not much change has taken place in their attitudes. Dowry- now have spread like a wild fire even to those communities where the custom was not in vogue in the early period. (Eg. Nair Community). The general attitude of the society towards women's roles, their duties and values remains more or less same. Women with high education are not always getting an equal treatment with men either in home or in society. Their house-wife- mother image is often valued more than anything and

the roles assigned to them in home is not changed much. The power holders and decision-makers in most families are men. In passing these old concepts to generations also, women play a major role. This is not denying the fact that changes have come. But slowly and not in accordance with the great progress achieved by women of Kerala in many areas. Recently a great awareness spread throughout Kerala by the efforts of the women's movement. Reports from an educationally backward area highlight these changes. The report runs as follows: ' Malabar which perhaps houses the most conservative sects among the Muslims in India, is witnessing rather an unusual sight of Muslim women coming out of the harems in legions to rub shoulders with their male counterparts in every sphere of social life.' Many sects in Muslim community now appoint women as teachers in Madrasas (Institutions where religious education is given), which was unthinkable in earlier periods. Another encouraging situation for the women's movement in the state is that more and more women are coming forward to approach courts for justice. Legal aid centres have started functioning in some parts of Kerala with the initiative from women advocates and women's group leaders in order to provide free legal help and even financial assistance to women in distress who seek justice. Recently one of such centres was started in Manjeri, Malappuram with the initiative of a women's group. 'This centre has a panel comprising of fourteen advocates which offers expert legal advice to aggrieved women and agrees to appear on their behalf in various courts in the district.

Feminist writing is a recent trend which positively contributes in portraying women's problems and act as powerful

instruments to remodel old concepts regarding women. This may strengthen the growth of the women's movement in the state.

The women's movement of the present period is very much different in their aims and objectives and in the mode of functioning. Earlier the movement never questioned patriarchy or women's typical roles in society. They were satisfied with the legal reforms and the right to education and employment. But today the women's movement aims at a discrimination-free society. They challenge all development strategies, the old concepts and want a restructuring of gender relationships in creating a more humane society for all. Women's issues are not women's issues only, but of society as a whole.

Women's movement in Kerala is only in its initial stage of functioning. However they are now able to attract public attention and more support. The response about the injustices levelled against women was immediate. As discussed in the IVth chapter, the recent developments - including the involvement of more and more women in anti-liquor agitations, fish workers struggle etc. is a positive development which could strengthen the women's movement.

But as discussed earlier, the criticisms levelled against the movement and the challenges they are facing are innumerable. Today among the women's groups which are scattered throughout Kerala some are really inactive due to the absence of full-time members and efficient leadership. The groups usually seem to take up only individual issues of women of their localities. Thus a collective and organised struggle against common issues concerning women is lacking in Kerala. This is due to the

absence of a united front incorporating all women's groups--though ideologically different--having the major aim of working for women's upliftment. Moreover, a change should come in the mentality of the majority who view women's movement and feminism as family destroying and man-hating. Feminists need to take the great responsibility of changing the attitude of both men & women. In Kerala, still only a minority is involved in the movement. Their number is less in women's wing of political parties too.

Compared to all other states in India, Kerala has certain unique features and have the great advantage of its women, registering much progress in many fields. Universal education is an important factor. Women activists should be able to change these favourable factors concerning women in such a way to strengthen the women's movement.

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APPENDIX I

THE KERALA WOMEN'S COMMISSION BILL, 1990

A

BILL

to provide for the constitution of a Women's Commission to improve the status of women in Kerala and to enquire into unfair practices affecting women and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Preamble __ WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for the constitution of a Commission to improve the status of women in Kerala and to enquire into unfair practices affecting women and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto;

BE it enacted in the Forty-first Year of the Republic of India as follows:

1. Short title-extent and commencement - (1) This Act may be called the Kerala Women's Commission Act,1990. (2). It extends to the whole of the State of Kerala. (3). It shall come into force on such date as the Government may,by notification in the Gazette, appoint.

2. Definitions:- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

   (a). "Commission" means the Commission constituted under section 5;

(b). "Director" means the Director appointed under section 11;

(c). "member" means a member of the Commission and includes the Chairman;

(d). "person" shall include a firm, company, Corporation, association of persons, or the Government and its agencies receiving aid from the Government;

(e). "prescribed" means prescribed by the rules made under this Act;

(f). "public servant" means any employee of the Government or a local body or any Corporation owned or controlled by the Government or of any Government agency;

(g). "registered" means registered with the Commission under the Act;

(h). "unfair practice" means any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex for the purpose of or which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition,enjoyment or exercise by women of fundamental constitutional rights, or of human rights, or of fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

3. Act not to apply in certain cases - This Act shall not apply to -

(i) the Central Government; or

(ii) any public sector undertaking of the Central Government, or any other institution owned ,controlled or financed by the Central Government.

4. Application of other laws not barred - Save as otherwise provided, the provisions of this Act shall be in addition to

and not in derogation of, any other law for the time being in force,except to the extent the provisions of the other law are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.

5. Constitution of the Commission -

(a) For the purpose of this Act, the state Government shall, by notification in the official Gazette, constitute a Commission to be known as the Kerala Women's Commission which shall consist of a Chairman and not more than five other members to be appointed by the Government.

(b) The Chairman of the Commission shall be a person,-

(i) who holds or has held office as Minister in the State; or

(ii) who is qualified to hold or has held office as a Judge of aHigh Court; or

(iii)who is an officer not below the rank of a District Judge or a Secretary to the Government of Kerala; or

(iv) who is an eminent woman committed to the cause of women with sufficient knowledge and experience in dealing with women's problems.

The Chairman of the Commission shall preferably be a woman.

(c) he members of the commission shall be persons of ability, intelligence and standing who have adequate knowledge or experience or have shown ability in dealing with problems relating to safeguarding and promoting the interests of women and protecting their rights.

6. Term of office and condition of service of members-

(1) Every member shall hold office for a period of three years.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), a member may-

(i) by writing under his hand and addressed to the Government resign his office at any time;

(ii) be removed from his office in accordance with the provisions of section 10.

(3) A vacancy arising by reason of resignation or removal of any member of the of the Commission under sub-section (2) or otherwise shall be filled up in accordance with the provision contained in section 5:

Provided that a person appointed under sub-section (3) shall hold office for the remaining period of the term of the person in whose place he is appointed.

(4) The members shall receive such remuneration and other allowances and shall be governed by such conditions of service as may be prescribed:

Provided that such conditions of service shall not be varied to the disadvantage of a member after his appointment.

7. Quorum- The quorum for a meeting of the Commission shall be three.

8. Disposal of business- All questions at a meeting of the Commission shall be decided by the majority opinion of the members present and in case the opinions of the members divide equally, the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

9. Acts of the Commission not to be invalidated by infirmity or any vacancy etc- No act or proceeding of the Commission shall be invalidated by reason only of any defect or irregularity in its constitution or on the ground of existence of any vacancy in the office of any member.

10. Removal of members from office in certain circumstances- Any member of the Commission may be removed from the office by an order of the Government on the ground of misbehavior, if in an enquiry conducted by such authority as may be prescribed, the Government is satisfied that it is necessary to remove him from office on that ground.

11. Appointment of Director and other staff of the Commission- The Government may, in consultation with the Commission, appoint a Director for making investigations for the purpose of the Act and to carry out such directives given to him by the Commission besides the functions conferred on him by this Act. The Government may also provide the Commission with such other staff as may be necessary and prescribe their conditions of service.

12. Provision for salaries, allowances etc.- The salaries and allowances payable to the members and the administrative expanses, including the salaries, and allowances and pensions payable to, or in respect of, the Director and the other staff of the Commission, shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund of the State.

13. Registration of Women's Organisations.-

(1) Any Women's Organisation governed by written rules, regulations or bye-laws and working for the uplift, development, welfare or promotion of the interests of women for a continuous period of not less than five years may apply to the Director for registration of such organisation with the Commission.

(2)The Director may, if satisfied after such enquiry as he may deem fit that the organisation is qualified to be registered, by order, register the organisation.

(3)The Commission shall maintain a register of Women's Organisation in the State registered with the Commission.

(4) The Director may,at any time, either on his on motion or otherwise cancel the registration of a Women's Organisation, after giving an opportunity to be heard and on being satisfied that it is no longer qualified to continue as a registered organisation.

14. Powers of the Commission.- (1) The Commission shall, for the purpose of any inquiry under this Act, have the same powers as are vested in a civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Prcedure, 1908 (Central Act 5 of 1908), in respect of the following matters, namely:-

(a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any witness and examining him;

(b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;

(c) receiving evidence on affidavits;

(d) requisitioning any public records or copy thereof from any public office; (e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses.

(2) Any proceeding before the Commission shall be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code (Central Act 45 of 1860) and the Commission shall be deemed to be a court for the purpose of section 195 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973(Central Act 2 of 1974).

15. Functions of the Commission.- (1) The Commission shall perform all or any of the following functions, namely:-

(i) inquire into any unfair practice, take decision thereon and to recommend to the Government the action to be taken in that matter;

(ii) cause investigations to be made by the Director on issues of importance concerning women and issues

concerning unfair practice and to report thereon to the State Government on the corrective measures to be taken;

(iii) submit to the State Government annual reports on,-

(a) the lacunae, inadequacies, or shortcomings in the laws in force which affect the constitutional right to equality and fair treatment of women and also on the remedial legislative measures to be taken to meet the situation;

(b) the monitoring of the working of laws in force concerning women with a view to identifying the areas where the enforcement of laws is not adequately effective or has not been streamlined and recommending executive or legislative measures to be taken;

(c) monitoring the recruitment made to State public services and public sector Corporations and promotions within the said services and scrutinising the rules and regulations governing such recruitments and promotions with a view to reporting to the Government action, if any, required to guarantee equal opportunity to women in the matter of such recruitments and promotions.

(iv) (a) inspect or cause to be inspected, by the director or any officer of the Commission authorised by the Director in that behalf, police stations, lock-ups, sub-jails, rescue homes, or other places of custody where women are kept as prisoners or otherwise, or

shelters for women or other places run by the Government or any of its agencies for the purpose of offering rescue or shelter to women and cause further inquiries to be made about the treatment that women are subjected to at such places and report to the Government for taking remedial actions;

(b) in cases where the Commission is of the view that any public servant has been grossly negligent or grossly indifferent in regard to the discharge of his duties in relation to the protection of the interests of women, recommend to the concerned disciplinary authority to initiate disciplinary action;

(v) recommend to government, the social welfare measures to be adopted and implimented by the Government with a view to ameliorating the conditions of women;

(vi) formulate a comprehensive and affirmative scheme for securing equal opportunities to women and devise a programme for implementing such scheme which shall be forwarded to the Government for approval and on obtaining approval thereof with or without modifications, implement the same;

(vii) empower the Director to recommend to the appropriate authority to take prosecution proceedings in respect of offences commited against women under any statute providing for penalty for violation of the provisions of such statute;

(viii) maintain comprehensive Data Bank relating to the social, economic and political conditions of women including comparitive study, updating the same from time to time making available such data for use in actions for vindication of the rights of women;

(ix) recommend to Government to initiate legislation for removal of discrimination in the case of iheritance, gaurdianship, adoption and divorce or for matters relating to the safegaurding of the dignity of women and the honour of motherhood.

(2) The government shall cause the recommendation of the commission under sub-section (1) to be placed before the legislative Assembly during its next session and cause action to be taken thereon by the authority concerned within two months from the placing of such recommendations.

16. Inquiry into 'unfair practices'.- (1) The Commission shall inquire into any unfair practice,-

(a) on receving a written complaint from any women alleging that she has been subjected to any unfair practices or on a similar complaint from any regestered womens' organisations;

(b) on its own knowledge or information ;

(c) on any request from the Government.

(2) Where the complaint has been made under clause (a) of subsection (1), the Commission may, before the issue of

any process to the person complaint against, cause preliminary investigation to be made by the Director in such manner as it may deem fit, for the purpose of satisfying itself that the complaint requires tobe enquired into.

(3) Where the person against whom the complaint has been made, appears and shows cause or fails to appear on the day appionted for that purpose the Commission may proceed to inquire into the matter in the complaint and take a decision theron and if the Commission finds that there is unfair practice it shall recommend to the Government the action to be taen thereon.

(4) the Government shall , within two months fron the date of receipt of the recommendation of the Commission under Sub- section (3) take a decision thereon and intimate the same to the Commission.

APPENDIX II

TABLES

Table I

Literacy Rates in Kerala - 1901-1991

Census Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	11.14	19.15	3.15
1911	13.31	22.25	4.43
1921	19.02	27.88	10.26
1931	21.34	30.89	11.99
1941	Not available	-	-
1951	40.47	49.79	31.41
1961	46.80	55.00	38.90
1971	60.40	66.60	54.30
1981	70.40	75.30	65.70
1991	89.80	93.60	86.20

Source:- (1) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statistics, Trivandrum, 1984, p. 27.

(2) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statistics, Trivandrum, 1989, p. 17.

(3) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statistics, Trivandrum, 1994, p. 19.

Table II

Women Employees in Public and Private Sector in Kerala 1988-92

No. in Lakhs

Year	Public Sector			Private Sector		
	M	F	% of Women	M	F	% of Women
1988	421	165	28.10	283	228	44.58
1989	430	179	29.44	281	213	43.03
1990	437	189	30.16	283	208	42.35
1991	446	186	29.41	293	224	43.35
1992	450	201	30.90	302	225	42.70

Source:- (1). Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statistics, Trivandrum, 1994, Pp.57-62.

Table III

Women in Selected Occupation in Kerala -1981

Occupation	Male	Female	Total	Females as Percent of Total
Public Instruction	31503	32037	63540	50.42
Agriculture	4328	910	5233	17.39
Animal Husbandry	2498	377	2875	13.11
Civil Supplies	1292	323	1615	20.00
Collegiate Educat:	2127	701	2828	24.79
Co-operatives	1392	193	1585	12.53
Economics & Stati:	1141	277	1418	19.53
Excise	2318	46	2364	1.95
Forests	2378	153	2531	6.05
Health Servise	8339	8800	17139	51.34
Police	18247	514	18761	2.74
Public Health & Engineering	2162	387	2549	15.18
P S C	366	160	526	30.42
Social Welfare	208	209	417	50.12

Source:- (1). Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statistics, Trivandrum, 1984, Pp.93-95.

Table IV

Sex Ratio (Number of Females Per Thousand Males)

Year	Kerala	India
1961	1022	941
1971	1016	932
1981	1032	934
1991	1040	929

Source. (1) Government of Kerala - Women in Kerala, Dept. of Economics and Statistics, Trivandrum, 1989, p.1

(2) Manorama Year Book - 1993, Malayala Manorama Company, Kottayam, 1993.

(3) Dr. S Radha, Women, Men and Development in Kerala, Institute of Management in Government, Trivandrum, 1994, Pp.7-8.

Table V

Expectation of Life at Birth (India)

Decade	Male	Female
1921-31	26.9	26.6
1931-41	32.1	31.4
1941-51	32.4	31.7
1951-61	41.9	40.6
1961-71	47.1	45.6
1971-81	50.9	50.0

Source:- (1) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala 1989, Department of Economics and Statistics, Trivandrum, 1989, p.13

(2) Government of India, Towards Equality, Department of Social Welfare, Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, New Delhi, 1975, p.16.

Table VI

Expectation of Life at Birth Kerala (Rural)

Period	Male	Female
1951-60	46.10	50.00
1971-73	60.60	62.10
1975-77	62.50	65.20
1976-78	63.60	66.20
1977-79	63.80	66.90
1978-80	64.20	67.90
1979-81	64.70	69.00
1980-82	66.30	70.70
1981-83	66.00	71.80
1982-84	65.50	73.40
1983-85	65.70	72.50
1984-86	66.90	72.80
1985-87	67.10	73.10
1986-88	67.80	73.50
1987-89	67.60	73.90
1988-90	67.30	74.70
1989-91	68.40	74.80

Source: (1) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statics, Trivandrum, 1984, p.27.
(2) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statics, Trivandrum, 1989, p.17.
(3) Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Department of Economics & Statics, Trivandrum, 1994, p.19.

Table VII

Mean Age at Marriage of Males & Females 1901 to 1981

Year	India		Kerala	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1901	20.2	13.2	23.3	17.1
1911	20.5	13.6	23.8	17.3
1921	18.4	12.6	23.3	17.8
1931	20.2	15.0	25.6	19.6
1941	19.8	15.4	25.6	19.3
1951	21.4	16.1	26.3	19.8
1961	21.3	16.7	23.8	20.0
1971	22.7	17.2	26.3	20.8
1981	23.4	18.6	27.2	21.8

Source:- (1) S. Radha, Women, Men and Development Development in Kerala, Institute of Management in Government, Trivandrum, 1994, p.56

Table VIII

Birth Rate - Kerala & India

Year	Kerala	India
1980	26.8	33.7
1981	25.6	33.9
1982	26.2	33.8
1983	24.9	33.7
1984	22.9	33.9
1985	23.3	32.9
1986	22.5	32.6

Source: Government of Kerala, Girl Child in Kerala, Department of Economics, Trivandrum, 1990, p.6.

Table IX

Life Standard Index of Male & Female

State	Male	Female
Kerala	93.7	89.8
Punjab	67.7	56.6
Maharashtra	64.0	55.9
Haryana	63.9	46.7
Tamil Nadu	40.4	45.1

Source : Mathrubhumi, Cochin, 1988.

Table X

Representation of Women in Kerala State Assembly

Year	Women elected	Total Seats	Percentage of women representation
1957	7	126	5.5
1960	7	126	5.5
1965	3	133	2.3
1967	1	133	0.75
1970	2	133	1.50
1977	1	140	0.71
1980	5	140	3.57
1982	4	140	2.8
1987	8	140	5.7
1991	8	141	4.2

Source: (1) Assembly Elections since 1951, Department of Public Relations, Trivandrum, 1989.

(2) Indian Express Daily, 6 March 1994.

(3) Various Reports of General Elections to Assembly

Table XI

Women of Kerala in Lok Sabha

Year	Total seats	No. of women elected	Percentage of women elected
1957	18	Nil	0
1962	18	Nil	0
1967	19	1	5.26
1971	19	1	5.26
1977	20	0	0
1980	20	1	5
1985	20	0	0
1989	20	1	5
1992	20	2	10

Source:- Vina Majumdar (ed.), Symbols of Power, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1979, p.235

Table XII

Progress of some of the Women & Child Welfare Scheme

		1979 - 1980		1981 -1982		1983- 1984		1985 - 1986	
		A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
1	Abalamandirs	10	204	10	234	10	--	10	190
2	After Care Homes for Women	1	12	1	15	2	58	2	60
3	Day Care Centers	10	1000	30	1500	30	900	--	--
4	Creches Under Social Welfare Dept. run by Vol. Organisations	188	7520	275	11000	250	1000	125	6000
5	I C D S	13	93000	23	193000	61	163000	--	610933

A = Number of Institutions

B = Number of Beneficiaries

Source: Government of India
Eigth Five Year Plan 1990 - 1995, Report of the Task Force on Women Development, State Planning Board, Trivandrum, 1989, p.28

Table XIII

Year	Scheme for promotion of Employment oppertunities for women.		Scheme for Payment of Financial Assistance to women for self Employment.	
	Amount Disbursed (Rs.)	No: of Organisation (No:)	Amount Disbursed (Rs.)	No: of Beneficieries (No:)
1977-78	300000	15	-	-
1977-79	500000	25	-	-
1979-80	NA	NA	500000	2500
1980-81	327894	47	500000	2500
1981-82	215000	56	125000	533
1982-83	215000	63	166005	527
1983-84	207000	30	333000	666
1984-85	213500	24	250000	625
1985-86	210000	28	289500	579
1986-87	167800	22	-	-

Source : Government of India
Eigth Five Year Plan 1990 - 1995, Report of the Task Force on Women Development, State Planning Board, Trivandrum, 1989, p.29.

Table XIV

Kerala State Women's Industries Programme. Progress of units established

		1977-78	1978-79	1980-81	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
1	Trivandrum	9	16	140	103	113	116	138
2	Quilon	10	14	41	83	96	110	120
3	Alleppey	5	6	33	77	89	100	115
4	Kottayam	3	3	30	80	88	103	139
5	Idukki	-	5	10	40	42	45	53
6	Pathanamthita	-	-	-	15	22	35	42
7	Ernakulam	4	14	60	110	130	152	167
8	Trichur	19	28	42	137	159	171	193
9	Palghat	8	10	19	43	49	51	60
10	Malappuram	5	10	12	50	50	65	76
11	Calicut	5	7	27	78	82	92	111
12	Cannannoor	5	7	37	78	53	81	100
13	Wyanadu	-	-	-	5	7	10	13
14	Kasargod	-	-	-	5	8	12	13
	Total	73	120	351	901	1013	1143	1340

Source: Government of India
Eigth Five Year Plan 1990 - 1995, Report of the Task Force on Women Development, State Planning Board, Trivandrum, 1989, p.30

Table XV

IRDP Assistance to women in Kerala

Year	Total Families Assisted Nos.	Women Families Assisted Nos.	Subsidy Granted to Women Rs. in lakhs	Total Subsidies Granted Rs. in lakhs
1985-86	71376	19778	167.66	775.28
1986-87	143399	44846	555.81	2010.98
1987-88	110684	38029	499.78	1575.02
1988-89	87006	35602	580.65	1539.53
1989-90	74150	28184	544.85	1560.22
1991-91	60877	---	---	1702.09

Source: Government of India, Eigth Five Year Plan 1990 - 1995, Report of the Task Force on Women Development, State Planning Board, Trivandrum, 1989, p.34

Table XVI

Comparative Study of Work Participation Rate in Kerala & India

Year	Kerala		India	
	M	F	M	F
1961	47.20	19.71	57.16	27.93
1971	45.00	13.49	52.61	12.13
1981	45.25	17.02	53.19	20.85
1991	47.81	16.90	51.56	22.73

Source:-Government of Kerala, Women in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1984, p.88.

Table XVII

Crime against Women during 1991,1992 and 1993.

Crime \ Year	1991	1992	1993
Rape	203	212	168
Kidnapping & Abducation	75	72	145
Dowry Deaths	13	18	10
Molestation	580	553	468
Torture (Cruelty by Husband)	242	290	381
Eve Teasing	5	I	19

Source:- (1) Government of India, Crime in India, 1993, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministery of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1994, Pp.258-263.

(2) Government of India, Accidental Deaths & Sucides in India, National Crime Records Bureau, New Delhi, 1993, 62-68.

(3) Government of Kerala, Administration report of the Police Department for the Year 1990, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1994, p.157.