

GS-1 Women Organizations/Role Notes

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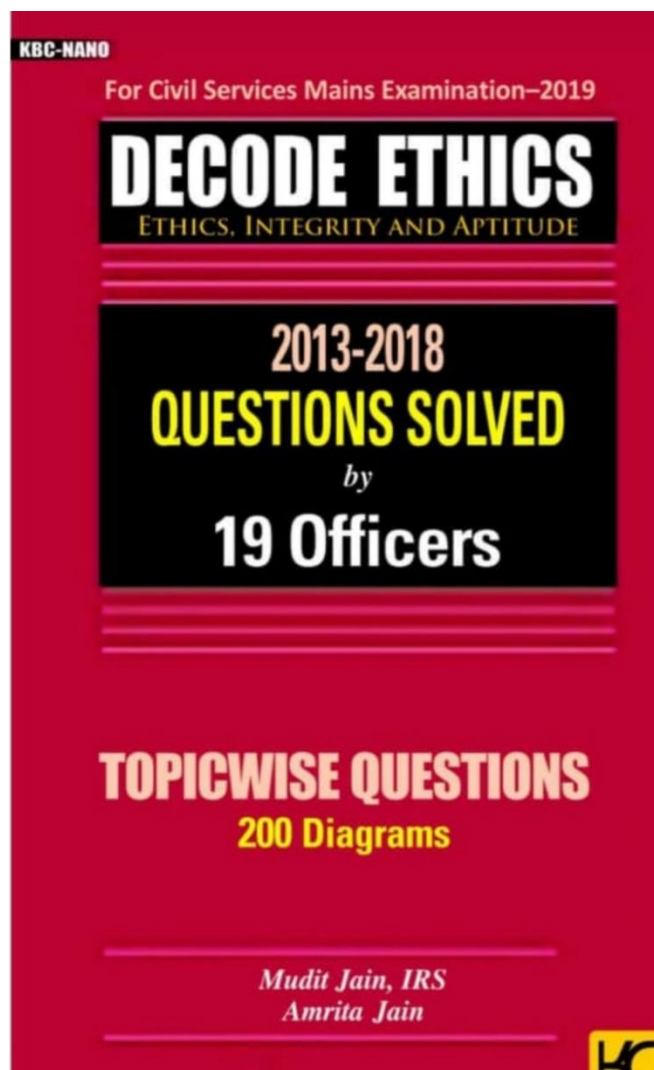
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**Ethics Paper 2019 – References From “Decode Ethics”
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|----------|---|
| Q 1. (a) | <p>What are the basic principles of public life? Illustrate any three with suitable examples.</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: Public life page 76, principles page 81.</p> |
| Q 1. (b) | <p>What do you understand by the term ‘public servant’? Reflect on the expected role of public servant.</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: Public servant page 294, roles page 82, values from code page 195</p> |
| Q 2. (a) | <p>Effective utilization of public funds is crucial to meet development goals. Critically examine the reasons for under- utilization and mis-utilization of public funds and their implications.</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: 331-333, sample question 2 page 334</p> |
| Q 2. (b) | <p>“Non-performance of duty by a public servant is a form of corruption”. Do you agree with this view? Justify your answer</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: PoCA (forbearance) page 335, sample question 2 page 344</p> |
| Q 3. (a) | <p>What is meant by the term ‘constitutional morality’? How does one uphold constitutional morality?</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: 195</p> |
| Q 3. (b) | <p>What is meant by ‘crisis of conscience’? How does it manifest in the public domain?</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: 266-268</p> |
| Q 4. (a) | <p>Explain the basic principles of citizens’ charter movement and bring out its importance.</p> <p>Decode Ethics Book Page No: 315-318</p> |

Q 4. (b) **There is a view that the official secrets act is an obstacle to the implementation of Rights to Information act. Do you agree with the view? Discuss**

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Confidentiality page 182, administrative secrecy page 257, RTI rejections page 300

Q 5. (a) **What do you understand by probity in governance? Based on your understanding of the term, suggest measures for ensuring probity in government.**

Decode Ethics Book Page No: 291, 292, sample question 2 page 294

Q 5. (b) **“Emotional Intelligence is the ability to make your emotions work for you instead of against you.” Do. you agree with this view? Discuss.**

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Values-emotion page 96, definition page 200, quotes page 219, 220

Q 6. (a) **“An unexamined life is not worth living.” – Socrates**

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Socrates ideal life page 222, Kierkegaard life page 239

Q 6 (b) **“A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.” – M.K.Gandhi**

Decode Ethics Book Page No: 109-111, 125-126, sample question 10 page 242

Q 6. (c) **“Where there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. When there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world.” – A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Kalam’s quote in reverse page 123

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Indian Women's Movement

Aparna Basu*

The roots of the Indian women's movement go back to the nineteenth century male social reformers who took up issues concerning women and started women's organizations. Women started forming their own organization from the end of the nineteenth century first at the local and then at the national level. In the years before independence, the two main issues they took up were political rights and reform of personal laws. Women's participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of the women's movement.

In post independence India, large number of women's autonomous groups have sprung up challenging patriarchy and taking up a variety of issues such as violence against women, greater share for women in political decision making, etc. both at the activist and academic level. India has a rich and vibrant women's movement but it has still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and gender justice.

Socio-Religious Reform Movements

The roots of the Indian women's movement go back to the early nineteenth century when social reformers, beginning with Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833), began to focus on issues concerning women. Roy condemned sati, kulin polygamy and spoke in favour of women's property rights. He held the condition of Indian women as one of the factors responsible for the degraded state of Indian society. If Ram Mohun is remembered for his anti-sati movement, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar is more often remembered for his widow remarriage campaign. Following them, improving the condition of women became the first tenet of the Indian social reform movement. Women's inferior status, enforced seclusion, early marriage, condition of widows and lack of education were facts documented by reformers throughout the country.

Women's Organizations started by men

Men who belonged to the socio religious reform associations began the first organization for women. In Bengal, Keshub Chandra Sen, a prominent Brahmo Samaj leader, started a woman's journal, held prayer meetings for women and

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developed educational programmes for women. Members of the Brahmo Samaj formed associations for women of their own families and faith.

The Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and Gujarat did similar work. Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar, Madhav Govind Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar in Pune and Mahipatram Rupram Nilkanth and his associates in Ahmedabad started organizations for prohibition of child marriage, for widow remarriage and for women's education. The male-inspired and male-guided organizations for women did valuable work in educating women and giving them their first experience with public work. While the men wanted their women to be educated and take part in public activities, they regarded the home as the primary focus for women.

Women's organizations started by women

By the end of the nineteenth century, a few women emerged from within the reformed families who formed organizations of their own. One of the first to do so was Swarnakumari Devi, daughter of Devendranath Tagore, a Brahmo leader, and sister of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who formed the Ladies Society in Calcutta in 1882 for educating and imparting skills to widows and other poor women to make them economically self-reliant. She edited a women journal, *Bharati*, thus earning herself the distinction of being the first Indian woman editor. In the same year, Ramabai Saraswati formed the Arya Mahila Samaj in Pune and a few years later started the Sharda Sadan in Bombay.

The National Conference was formed at the third session of the Indian National Congress in 1887 to provide a forum for the discussion of social issues. The Bharat Mahila Parishad was the women's wing of this and was inaugurated in 1905. It focused on child marriage, condition of widows, dowry and other "evil" customs. The Parsis, the Muslims and the Sikhs all formed their own women's organizations. Women in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other smaller cities formed associations whose members were drawn from among a small group of urban educated families. They were useful in bringing women out of their homes, giving them an opportunity to meet other women, doing philanthropic work, encouraging them to take an interest in public affairs and thus broadening their horizon. It also gave them the experience of managing an organization.

National Women's Organizations

The early women's organizations had been confined to a locality or city. In 1910, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, daughter of Swarnakumari Devi formed the Bharat Stree Mandal (Great Circle of India Women) with the object of bringing together "women of all castes, creeds, classes and parties... on the basis of their common interest in the moral and material progress of the women of India." (Bagal, 1964, 24). It planned to open branches all over India to promote women's education. Branches were started in different cities such as Lahore, Amritsar, Allahabad, Hyderabad, Delhi, Karachi and other cities. Purdah was regarded by Sarala Devi as the main obstacle for women's education and teachers were sent round to women's homes to educate them. She wanted

women to escape male domination and so only women were allowed to join her organization. The Bharat Stree Mahila Mandal however proved to be a short lived venture.

Votes for Women

In the inter war years, between 1917 and 1945, there were two main issues that the women's movement took up- political rights for women and reform of personal laws.

When Lord Edwin Montague, Secretary of State for India, came to India to join the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford to survey the political scene with a view to introduce constitutional reforms, Indian women saw an opportunity to demand political rights. This led to the foundation of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in 1917 by Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa, all three Irish women Theosophists, who had been suffragettes in their own country. They were joined by Malati Patwardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Mrs. Dadabhoy and Mrs. Ambujammal. WIA was in a sense the first all India women's association with the clear objective of securing voting rights for women.

A Memorandum signed by 23 women from different parts of the country, demanding votes for women on the same terms as men which would enable them to have a say in political matters was submitted to Montague and Chelmsford. It also stated other demands such as for education, training in skills, local self- government, social welfare, etc. (Cousins,1950)The Indian National Congress at its session in Calcutta in 1917, over which Annie Besant presided, supported the demand of votes for women and so did the Muslim League.

A women's delegation led by Sarojini Naidu met the Secretary of State and the Viceroy to plead their case personally. The women leaders argued that the absence of women in the legislative assemblies was deplorable and that their presence would be extremely helpful as they could ensure that "children grow up to be splendid, healthy, educated efficient and noble sons and daughters of India..." (Basu,2008,132)

Women's organizations held meetings all over India to express support for women's franchise. Behind the scene, Margaret Cousins and a few other women worked hard to make their case. At this time petition politics was the main way of making an impression on the government.

The Southborough Franchise Committee toured India in 1918 to gather information. It accepted women's petitions but was initially reluctant to grant the franchise to women as it felt that Indian women were not yet ready for it. WIA and other women's groups were furious and continued their agitation. Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant went to England to present evidence before the joint Parliamentary Committee while local branches of WIA held meetings, passed

resolutions and forwarded them to London. A delegation was sent to England to plead their case.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of Parliament finally agreed to remove the sex disqualification but left it to the provincial legislatures to decide how and when to do so. Travancore-Cochin, a princely state, was the first to give voting rights to women in 1920, followed by Madras and Bombay in 1921. Other states followed. Franchise was of course extremely limited. Women could vote only if they possessed qualifications of wifehood, property and education.

In the elections held in 1926, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya stood for the Madras Legislative Council elections from Mangalore but was defeated by a narrow margin. (Nanda, 2002, 25) The Madras Government nominated Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, a noted social worker and medical doctor, to the Legislative Council where she took up the women's cause.

Ten years after the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, the Simon Commission was appointed in 1927 as the first step towards the formulation of a new India Act. This led to the second round in the battle for female enfranchisement. When the Commission visited India, the Indian National Congress boycotted it on the ground that there were no Indian members on the Commission. The WIA joined the boycott, while the All India Women's Conference was divided and some of its members met the Commission. AIWC prepared a Memorandum to be submitted to the Franchise Committee of the Second Round Table Conference demanding universal adult franchise, mixed general electorate and no reservation of seats for women. The Franchise Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Lothian rejected universal adult franchise but recommended that 2 to 5 per cent of seats in the provincial legislatures be reserved for women (Reddy, 1956). AIWC rejected the demand for reserved seats. The Government of India Act of 1935 increased the number of enfranchised women and removed some of the previous qualifications. All women over 21 could vote provided they fulfilled the qualification of property and education. Women had to wait till after independence to get universal adult franchise.

Reform of Personal Laws

The All India Women's Conference was established in 1927 at the initiative of Margaret Cousins to take up the problem of women's education (Basu and Ray, 2003). Women from different parts of India belonging to different religions, castes and communities attended the first session in Pune that was a great success. AIWC's initial concern was with education but it realized that girls did not go to school because of purdah, child marriage, and other social customs. It therefore took up these issues. It waged a vigorous campaign for raising the age of marriage which led to the passing of the Sarda Act in 1929. AIWC took up the cause of reform of personal law. As there was some opposition to a common civil law, it demanded reform of Hindu laws to prohibit bigamy, provide the right to divorce and for women to inherit property. The women's movement carried on a

sustained campaign for these reforms that were finally obtained with the passing of the Hindu Code Bills in the 1950s.

Women in the National Movement

While on the one hand women's organizations were fighting for women's political and economic rights and trying to improve their position by education and social reform, women's struggle entered a new phase with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene. (Kaur, 1968; Basu, 1976). Women had been associated with the freedom struggle before that too. They had attended sessions of the Indian National Congress and taken part in the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal, 1905-11 and in the Home Rule Movement. But the involvement of really large number of women in the national movement began when Gandhi launched the first Non Co-operation Movement and gave a special role to women. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli. Women participated in the Salt *satyagraha*, in the Civil Disobedience Movement, in the Quit India Movement and in all the Gandhian satyagrahas. They held meetings, organized processions, picketed shops selling foreign cloth and liquor and went to jail.

While thousands of women joined the freedom movement in response to Gandhi's call, there were others who could not accept his creed of non-violence and joined revolutionary or terrorist groups. Their hatred of the British was intense and their plan was to make attempts on European lives as widely as possible. They believed in individual acts of heroism not in building a mass movement.

Women participated in the freedom movement because they were inspired by patriotism and wanted to see the end of foreign rule. It is debatable as to how far this participation liberated them. Women's participation in the freedom movement did not lead to a separate autonomous women's movement since it was part of the anti-colonial movement. While women who picketed shops, marched in processions or went to jail or threw bombs did not question male leadership or patriarchal values, it did generate in them a sense of self-confidence and a realization of their own strength. Many returned to their homes but others continued their activities in the public arena. It transformed the lives of many young widows such as Durgabai Deshmukh or Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.

Women won respect for their courage and the large numbers in which they participated in the freedom struggle and at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1930, the resolution on Fundamental Rights gave equal rights to women.

Women in the labour movement

In 1917 Anasuya Sarabhai had led the Ahmedabad textile workers' strike and in 1920 under her leadership the Majoor Mahajan, the Ahmedabad textile mill workers union was established. By the late 1920s, the presence of women in the

workers' movement was noticeable. There were several prominent women unionists and women workers were consciously organized and a special role was given to them in the workers' movement. Bombay was the center of this development and Maniben Kara emerged as the socialist leader of railway workers and Ushabai Dange and Parvati Bhore as Communist leaders of textile workers. In the 1928-29 Bombay textile mill workers' strike, women played a leading role, as they did in the Calcutta strike during the same years.

First Phase of Women's Movement: An Assessment

Nineteenth century social reformers were primarily concerned with issues that affected urban, upper caste, middle class women such as purdah, sati, education, age of marriage and widow remarriage. They argued that uplift of women was necessary because women are the mothers of future generations. While women were urged to come out and work for the nation, there was no questioning of the traditional role of mother and wife. In fact it was stressed that if they were educated they would become better wives and mothers.

The women's organizations demanded political rights and reforms in personal laws. The nationalist movement brought into its fold elite women but also poor, illiterate rural and urban women. What then was the nature of the women's movement during the period before independence? Social reform, demand for political, economic and legal rights as well as participation in the freedom struggle were the main elements in the women's movement. Women's participation in the public arena and in politics legitimized their claim to a place in the governance of India. The national women's organizations like WIA and AIWC tried to remain apolitical but many of their leaders and members joined political parties whose main demand was *swaraj*.

As early as 1918, moving the resolution at the Indian National Congress, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani told the delegates that women had as much rights as men for this was the age of human rights, justice, freedom and self determination. She asked, "How do we attain rights?" and answered, "By the strength of our agitation we must force men to concede our demands and at the same time carry on propaganda among ourselves." (Quoted in Forbes, 1998, 94). The women's organizations did precisely this by holding meetings carrying on propaganda and petitioning the government to give women votes and bring about changes in laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, property rights, etc. All women's organizations worked very hard to gather information for the Rao Committee on the Hindu Code Bill. They issued questionnaires and held meetings to discuss the implications of these reforms. Efforts were also directed towards women's education and improving the condition of poorer women. These organizations cut across boundaries of religion, caste, language and region.

In 1938 the Indian National Congress set up a National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. One of the 29 sub-committees established was on "Women's Role in a Planned Economy" in which many

prominent women's organizations and women Congress leaders were members. (Basu, 1996). The terms of reference of the committee were very comprehensive and dealt with every aspect of women's life and work. The committee put in an enormous amount of work, sending detailed questionnaires and compiling a huge amount of data. In its report, it came up with some extremely radical recommendations.

The women in the movement were educated and mentored by men but they were not mere puppets of the anglophile elite or even of nationalists. Nor were they a monolithic group. Some had been educated in English medium convent schools others in *pathshalas*. Some were from princely families, others from ordinary middle class homes. Some of them were strong personalities with views of their own.

The women's movement in pre-independent India has been often called the first wave feminism. In this phase, women blamed tradition and religion for their suffering and sought redress in education and legal change. They were feminists in the sense that they recognized women as oppressed because of their sex. They looked upon women as biologically, psychologically and spiritually different from men and based their claim for representation in public life on the complementarity of this difference. They argued that women could bring a special knowledge of the household and family matters to forums where public policy was debated and formulated. This ideology fitted well with Gandhi's views on women and the nationalist desire to bring women into the freedom movement.

The Women's Movement: 1970s to the Present

In post-independent India, the women's movement was divided, as the common enemy, foreign rule, was no longer there. Many of the Muslim members went over to Pakistan. Some of the women leaders now formally joined the Indian National Congress and held positions of power as Ministers, Governors and Ambassadors. Free India's Constitution gave universal adult franchise and by the mid fifties India had fairly liberal laws concerning women. Most of the demands of the women's movement had been met and there seemed few issues left to organize around. Women's organizations now saw the problem as one of implementation and consequently there was a lull in the women's movement.

Women dissatisfied with the *status quo* joined struggles for the rural poor and industrial working class such as the Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the Telangana movement in Andhra Pradesh or the Naxalite movement. Shahada, which acquired its name from the area in which it occurred, in Dhulia district in Maharashtra, was a tribal landless labourers' movement against landlords. Women played a prominent role and led demonstrations, invented and shouted militant slogans and mobilized the masses. As women's militancy developed, gender based issues were raised. There was an anti alcohol agitation as men used to get drunk and beat their wives. Women went round villages breaking pots in liquor dens. (Kumar, 1993).

Meanwhile in Ahmedabad, what was probably the first attempt at a women's trade union was made with the formation of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) at the initiative of Ela Bhat in 1972. Its aim was to improve the condition of poor women who worked in the unorganized sector by providing training, technical aids and collective bargaining. Based on Gandhian ideals, SEWA has been a remarkable success.

The anti price rise agitation launched in Bombay in 1973 by Mrinal Gore of the Socialist Party and Ahalya Rangnekar of the CPI-M, together with others, mobilized women of the city against inflation. The movement grew rapidly becoming a mass movement for consumer protection. So many housewives got involved in the movement that a new form of protest was invented by women coming out in the streets and beating *thalis* (metal plates) with rolling pins.

The Nav Nirman movement, originally a students movement in Gujarat against soaring prices, black marketing and corruption launched in 1974 was soon joined by thousands of middle class women. Their method of protest ranged from mass hunger strike, mock funerals and prabhat pheris.

The Chipko movement got its name from the Hindi word '*chipko*' which means to cling. This clinging to trees was a particular action people used to save trees, which were crucial to their lives, from being felled. The movement began in 1973 in the small hilly town of Gopeshwar in Chamoli district when representatives from a sports factory came to cut trees. Women joined the movement in 1974 and with their united strength prevented the contractor from cutting trees. It was the women of Chipko who brought to public attention the importance of trees and the need to protect the environment.

Towards Equality Report

The publication of *Towards Equality, the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women* in 1974 and the United Nation's declaration of 1975 as the International Year of Women beginning with the First World Conference on Women in Mexico, generated a new interest in and debate on women's issues. The data collected by CSW Report after exhaustive countrywide investigation revealed that the *de jure* equality granted by the Indian Constitution had not been translated into reality and large masses of women had remained unaffected by the rights granted to them more than 25 years earlier. It provided the intellectual foundation of a new women's movement that found expression both in activism and the academia.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the growth of numerous women's groups that took up issues such as dowry deaths, bride burning, rape, *sati* and focused on violence against women. They stressed the sexual oppression of women in a way previous reform or feminist groups had never done. They questioned the patriarchal assumptions underlying women's role in the family and society based

on the biological sex differences implying a “natural” separation of human activities by gender differentials, the public political sphere being the male domain and the private familial sphere as that of the female which eventually translates into a domination of male over female. (see Lerner, 1981, 169). It was held that based on such a dichotomous perception of male and female roles, women find themselves in a secondary role which may sometimes lead to humiliation, torture and violence even within the family. Such a questioning of the patriarchal character of the family and society was not evident in the earlier phase of the women’s movement. Thus they held that the first step towards women’s liberation was to become aware of such patriarchal assumptions based on biological sex differences and roles.

Some of the earliest autonomous women’s groups were the Progressive Organization of Women (POW, Hyderabad), the Forum Against Rape (now redefined as Forum Against Oppression of Women), Stree Sangharsh and Samata (Delhi). Among the first campaigns that women’s groups took up was the struggle against rape in 1980. This was triggered by the judgment of the Supreme Court to acquit two policemen who were accused of raping a minor tribal girl, Mathura, despite the fact that the High Court had indicted them. Four eminent lawyers addressed an open letter to the Chief Justice of India protesting the patent injustice of this decision and this led to country- wide demonstrations.

Several other rape cases became part of this campaign that culminated after several years of protest in Government agreeing to change the existing rape law. The amended law was enacted in 1983 after long discussions with women’s groups. Since then, women’s groups have lobbied again to have the law further changed to make it more stringent and have also fought for an implementation machinery to be set up without which the law is less effective than it was intended to be.

The POW in Hyderabad organized new and fresh protests against dowry. In the late 1970s, Delhi became the focus of the movement against dowry and the violence inflicted on women in the marital home. Groups which took up the campaign included ‘*Stree Sangharsh*’ and ‘*Mahila Dakshita Samiti*’. Later, a joint front called the ‘*Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manda*’ (organization for creating consciousness against dowry) was formed under whose umbrella a large number of organizations worked.

The anti dowry campaign attempted to bring social pressure to bear on offenders so that they would be isolated in the community in which they lived. Experience in the campaign revealed the need for counseling, legal aid and advice to women. It was in response to this that legal aid and counseling centers were set up in different parts of the country. Women’s organizations also succeeded in getting the dowry law changed.

Sati was declared a punishable offence in 1829. Yet in 1987, Roop Kanwar, a young widow, was forcibly put on the funeral pyre of her husband and burnt to death in a village in Rajasthan. Women's groups rose in protest and declared this to be a cold-blooded murder. They demanded a new Sati Prevention Bill.

There were several campaigns in the eighties relating to women's rights. Among them was a campaign, in 1985, in support of the Supreme Court judgment in the divorce case where Shah Bano, a Muslim woman, had petitioned the Court for maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Act and the Court granted her demand. The orthodox Muslims, however, protested against interference with their personal law. In 1986, the government introduced the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights in Divorce) Bill denying Muslim women redress under Section 125. Women's associations protested against this outside Parliament.

Over the years it has become clear that changing laws alone means little unless there is a will to implement them and unless there is education and literacy which makes women aware of their rights and allows them to exercise them effectively. It was this realization that has led the women's movement to take up in a more concerted manner programmes of legal literacy and education, gender sensitization of textbooks and media.

Women's studies as an identifiable area of teaching and research emerged in the 1960s in the United States, although the intellectual antecedents go back further, most noticeably in the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Wolf. The contemporary women's movement provided the impetus for the establishment and growth of women's studies across disciplines. Women's studies spread to India slowly at first and then more rapidly following the UN Mid Decade Conference in Copenhagen in 1980. The Indian Association of Women's Studies established in 1981 is an institution of women academics and activists involved in research and teaching. In the last three decades a large number of books and journals by and on women have appeared. There are publishing houses that bring out books exclusively on feminist subjects. Efforts are being made to prepare reading and teaching material with a feminist perspective. A number of universities and colleges have women's study centers.

All the major political parties, the Congress, BJP, CPI, CPI (M) have their women's wings. The new women's groups declare themselves to be feminist. They are dispersed with no central organization but they have built informal networks among themselves. Their political commitment is more leftist than liberal. The Indian women's movement is often accused of being urban based and middle class in character. While the urban feminists are more visible and articulate, rural women have also mobilized themselves.

While street level protests and demonstrations gives the women's movement visibility, this is clearly not enough. What is needed is attention to basic survival

needs such as food, safe drinking water, sanitation and housing. Women need education, health care, skill development and employment; safety in the home and at work. The last few years have seen the broadening and expansion of the movement to take in a whole range of issues.

Women's organizations not only lead campaigns and march on the streets, they, including the older ones such as AIWC, YWCA and others, run shelters for battered wives and women who are victims of violence and provide counseling and legal aid. They conduct training workshops on various issues. They also help in forming self help groups to make women economically self - reliant. The success of the women's movement has not been in the number of women appointed to office or in the number of laws passed but in the fact that it has brought about a new consciousness on the entire question of women in Indian society.

There would have been no women's movement in India if Indian men in the nineteenth century had not been concerned with modernizing women's roles. They focused on certain issues such as sati, child marriage, condition of widows, education, etc., because they saw the world through the prism of their own class and caste. Their efforts led to bringing women of their own families into the new world created by colonial rule. Women came out and created a space for themselves. They started organizations of their own, first at the local, then at the national level. They were motivated by liberal feminist ideas and the belief that education, granting of political rights, and legislative reforms would improve women's position. They fought for the country's freedom and believed that independence from foreign rule would remove obstacles in women marching forward. In the second phase, the women's movement was more radical and challenged patriarchy.

Yet in terms of numbers, few women, even now, are involved in the women's movement and one should not exaggerate its impact. The large majority of India women still live below the poverty line leading miserable wretched lives. While there have been scattered and sporadic examples of women's outraged protests against rape, dowry deaths or sati, women have not been able to mobilize themselves enough to exert political pressure and focus attention on those problems which are today affecting their role and status. Despite this long history of women's struggle, Indian women are one of the most backward today in terms of literacy, longevity, maternal mortality, female work participation and sex ratio. Changing societal attitudes and women's own self perceptions which are deeply rooted in our psyche and social structure is not easy. For every step forward that the movement takes, there may be a possible backlash, a possible regression. History shows that though the struggle for women's rights is long and hard, it is a struggle that must be waged and won. The women's movement thus has a long way to go in its struggle for bringing about new values, a new morality and a new egalitarian relationship.

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