“.....there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”

Kofi Annan
Chapter II
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

“In the long, long history of humanity and its development, in the propagation of the human race and in the social economy of the world, woman has been as important a factor as man, yet she was always looked down upon as an inferior creature until an orphan in the desert of Arabia issued the divine injunction –

“Respect the wombs (women)”

“The very word – ‘woman’ (old English wifmann) etymologically meaning a wife (or the wife division of the human race, the female of the species Homeo) sums up,” says the “Encyclopedia Britanica,” “a long history of dependence and subordination.”

Empowerment is defined as ‘action of empowering, the state of being empowered’ by The Oxford English Dictionary. The term empowerment itself encloses the word ‘power’. The word - empower means ‘to give power to’ or ‘to enable’.

‘The idea of ‘power’ is at the root of the term ‘empowerment’. Power can be understood as operating in a number of different ways:

power over: This power involves an either/or relationship of domination/ subordination. Ultimately it is based on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it requires constant vigilance to maintain, and it invites active and passive resistance;

power to: This power relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling;
power with: This power involves people organising with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals;

power within: This power refers to self confidence, self awareness and assertiveness. It relates to how can individuals can recognise through analysing their experience how power operates in their lives, and gain the confidence to act to influence and change this. (William et al, 1994)³

Power can be described as ‘having control over’. There are four resources on which power can be exercised – physical resources (water, forest and land), human resources (people, skill and labour), intellectual resource (money), and self resource (confidence and esteem). Women are powerless as they hardly have any control on above resources and therefore they have no decision-making power with themselves.⁴ Empowerment is a process which changes the nature and direction of systematic force by gaining control over self, ideologies, resources thereby changing the power.

‘It is ‘power from within’ that enables a woman to come out and join with other women; ‘power with’, she builds with other women; new ‘power to do’, she acquires and celebrates with them, and she begins to share in ‘power over’, in decisions from the village to the nation. (Janet Townsend, 1999, 79)⁵

Empowerment is having control over one’s life as an individual. It is all about the power to make decisions which can further shape lives. One can be independent only if one is given a chance to make one or the other important decision. Different
options have to be there so that an individual can weigh all the pros and cons and then decide.

An individual who understands the meaning of empowerment and undergoes the process can only further change other people’s perception. Therefore, an actual change does not merely occur within an individual alone but to the society as a whole. It is a journey in itself and not merely a destination. Understanding individual’s rights directly boosts the sense of strength and self-confidence.

The term empowerment began to be widely used in the mid-17th century. Empowerment is what people achieve after undertaking certain activities/assignments to lead on to their own policies which involve active decision-making process. It crafts a distinctive atmosphere of moral superiority. In simple terms empowerment is amplifying access to decision making. The foremost step in women empowerment is the aptitude to describe their needs, realities and problems. Women empowerment is a development of creative human energy.  

‘Empowerment can be defined as a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices- i.e. those who have lost power to make choices- acquire such an ability particularly in the areas of strategic life choices- e.g. livelihood, whether and whom to marry, whether to have children.  

‘Empowerment is a process that challenges our assumptions about the way things are and can be. It challenges our basic assumptions about power, achieving and succeeding.  

‘Empowerment is not a homogeneous concept. Its notion varies
from individualistic to structural and from structural to postmodernist perspectives’.\(^9\)

‘Empowerment concerns both one’s perceived and actual ability to determine the course of one’s life and community. Empowerment strategies emphasise the importance of teaching individuals about the dynamics of power and power relationships within their social, political and economic systems. Power is defined as the degree to which we are able to affect our environment, that is to get things done or to make things happen or to keep things from getting done or happening (Lee, 1986)’.\(^10\)

‘Women’s empowerment is thus the process, and the outcome of the process, by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and the gender-based discrimination against women in all the institutions and structures of the society’.\(^11\)

‘The 1994 International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo has also emphasised women empowerment as a basic tool for a country’s overall development and improving the quality of people’s life. The ICPD has declared that ‘advancing gender and the empowerment of women and the elimination of all kinds of violence against women and ensuring women’s ability to control their own fertility are cornerstones of population and development related programs (UNFPA, 1998)’.\(^12\)

The core concept of empowerment is transforming the consciousness, thereby helping in imbibing the women’s control over their own lives resulting in creating the idea of ‘power’. Empowerment of women is not only a one way process, wherein
only a socialist or activist can empower others but it is a two way process, where one gets empowered him/herself and also helps in empowering others. It is a continuous and ongoing dynamic process on the path of empowerment for all the human beings.\textsuperscript{13}

‘Empowerment is a process which changes existing power relations by addressing itself to the three dimensions- material, human and intellectual resources. It is a process which must challenge and change ideology, the set of ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices in which gender bias or social bias like caste, class, regionalism and communalism are embedded.’\textsuperscript{14}

Empowerment encompasses a woman’s holistic development that is socially, mentally, culturally, economically, politically and spiritually. This means that women have to realise their own power and capabilities in order to overcome social and cultural barrier. Hence, in order to break these barriers, the perception of women has to be changed and she needs to be mentally robust.

Empowerment is an intrinsic as well as extrinsic process. With intrinsic capability women will have the power to think, act freely, and have the right to control one’s life. This increased self-confidence, self-reliance and conscience transformation will further help in overcoming external barriers of physical, financial resources, beliefs, attitudes (extrinsic) to change the old ideologies.\textsuperscript{15}

The empowerment of women will lead to an assured progressive growth of a society and the future generation. This can only be achieved by giving an opportunity to women to have her say in all aspects whether it is civil or political life. Women
empowerment is to develop the capacity of the fairer sex to influence the course of social change and thereby ensure a better social and economic order.

‘Women’s empowerment should thus lead to a world where women - and the ‘new men’ - ensure that resources are utilised not just equitably, but sanely and safely; where war and violence will be eliminated, and our earth restored to a clean, green place for the coming generations.’¹⁶

Gender equality and women empowerment’s are also the primary concern for all enterprise improvements of Department For International Development of the UK (DFID). The function of DFID’s is to guarantee that women’s empowerment and gender equality are actively practiced in the mainstream of all developmental activities. ‘Women’s empowerment is therefore more than simply marginal increases in incomes as it requires a transformation of power relations. This means that enterprise development must take into account not only income levels, but also power relations within households, markets, communities and national and international economies.’¹⁷

‘The report of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women called its Platform for Action ‘an agenda for women’s empowerment’ meaning that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. It aims at removing all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.’¹⁸
‘According to Stephen Covey, “In addition to self-awareness, imagination and conscience, it is the fourth human endowment-independent will-that really makes effective self-management possible. It is the ability to make decisions and choices and to act in accordance with them. It is the ability to act rather than to be acted upon, to proactively carry out the program we have developed through the other three endowments. Empowerment comes from learning how to use this great endowment in the decisions we make every day.”’19

Investing in women’s potentials is one of the definite ways of contributing to a nation’s growing potential and for the future generation. It is a bottom-up progression (to be started from the grassroots level) and cannot be imparted from the top to down.

The UNICEF empowerment framework is based on the premise that women’s empowerment involves five levels (Welfare, Access, Conscientisation, Participation and Control. The welfare level requires that all gender gaps between men and women in their material well-being are eliminated. Improving women's welfare alone will leave them as passive beneficiaries or recipients of development assistance: it means, for example, that women are provided pipe-borne water without having the power to influence the location of stand taps. The access level is very important for gender equality as it is at this level that women have the right to obtain services, products or commodities (Oxfam 1994). Eliminating obstacles to women’s access to resources (e.g. credit, land) is an important step towards empowerment. Women's successful drive towards equality and empowerment very much depends on the level of awareness on
the extent of women’s discrimination among themselves that is created. This is because awareness provides them with the basic actions to overcome and dismantle the obstacles which are holding them back.

Control
Participation
Conscientisation
Access
Welfare

The progressive five stages of women’s empowerment through the UNICEF framework.

At the level of participation, women should be able to take part or have a share in both resource and power allocation. This will lead to the level of control where they are able to direct or influence events so that their interests are protected and they are, therefore, empowered at all levels. In fact, empowerment is only real when women have attained control over themselves, resources, factors of production and decision-making, be it at home or in public arena.\textsuperscript{20}

Women’s empowerment is a versatile concept. But in India it seems to be more complex because of the presence of patriarchal society, where men are positioned at a beneficial place than women. Even the male superiority is echoed during child rearing, as birth of a male child is celebrated. Right from the tender age, a girl is taught to give priority to men in the family, either by serving food to them first or blindly following all the decisions by men.
2.1 NEED OF EMPOWERING WOMEN

During evolution, when human beings dwelled in caves, men went out for hunting and women guarded the nest to take care of the basic needs of the family from preparing food to nurturing and nursing the offsprings. Thus, down the centuries women have been stereotyped in this very role and have paid a heavy price for it.

Right from her childhood, women are taught to be submissive and to confine their ambitions to an extent that her very existence hinges on the clemency of men. As Manu said that a woman in childhood is responsibility of the father, in adulthood has to be dependent on her husband and in old age she should depend on her sons. Thus woman’s world is confined to these men, with no scope of her own development and subsequently looses the power to make choices of her own.

‘There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors – economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life.’ In a modern society, there is an urgent need to empower the women folk in order to let her overcome the inferior status and lifelong discrimination met out to her over the ages.

‘Empowerment is the initial phase of women’s liberation, freedom, and equity as well as long range goal of women’s political participation. It is the first step in a long journey toward the formulation and realisation of human rights and responsibilities that transcend gender role stereotypes and the objectification of women and men’
Women should be given all the opportunities to use their potential and unshackle themselves from social, economical, emotional and psychological bondages.

2.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Woman was related with life symbols as ‘goddess of motherhood’ in ancient civilisations of the world. This was the beginning (genesis) of the concept of mother earth in the ‘Atharvaveda’.\(^{23}\) The condition and the position of women in society is the best way to understand the progress and shortcomings of a civilisation. Woman’s status has been a subject of concern over the years, which in one or the other aspects has always inter-wined with the history of a country.

‘The status of Indian women has undergone a drastic change from era to era. It has been degenerated from that of a deity to ‘devdasi’, from the pious to the impious and from virtue to vice.’ \(^{24}\)

The status pattern, concerning the role of a woman has undergone a visible change with variations in social and ideological structure from time to time. This paradoxical situation must be understood and seen in its historical perspective in order to study it in detail. Therefore, the status of women and their role in the society can be divided into three main historical periods - the ancient, the medieval and the modern.
2.2.1 ANCIENT PERIOD

The configuration upon which contemporary Indian society rests has its roots in ancient India. The women in India have seen their social positions rise and fall with the policies of the prevailing rulers. The ancient period can further be divided into different ages - Vedic Age, Smriti Age, Epic Age, Buddhist Age and Puran Age.

**Vedic Age:** This age can be placed between 2500 B.C. and 1500 B.C. Vedic was a period in Indian history when sacred text - Vedas were composed. During this age, women in India held equal status with that of men and this age can literally be called as the ‘golden age’. Women enjoyed high position in household matters and had full freedom of activity in all spheres of life.25

‘The status of women during Vedic period could be judged by the way in which the birth of girl child received. Rigveda never considered birth of a girl inauspicious.’26

The tradition of ‘nagarvadhu’ (bride of the city) was followed in some kingdoms, the most famous example is of Amrapali. Important ceremonies like ‘namkaran’, ‘jatkaram’ were held both for girls and boys. Women had easy and complete access to education. ‘Upnayan’ was held for them.27 In this age, women were free to read, recite and impart Vedic teachings. They even performed ‘Yagnas’ and other religious ceremonies. It is believed that Rigveda was compiled by 32 women, who invariably expanded the Vedic literature.28 Women performed ‘Sitabhag’, ‘Rudrobali’ and ‘Radra Yagvas and sung ‘Samveda Ricahs’. Scriptures often mention the names of Gargi and Maitreyi who immensely contributed towards the cause of compilation of Vedic
In this period women had freedom to remain unmarried and were called as ‘Brahmavadinis’, portraying a symbol of independence. There were no child marriages and women were free to choose their life mates irrespective of caste. The marriageable age was between 15-16 years. Divorce and even remarriage were permitted by the law. At times, women used to visit fairs and festivals and also participated in wars. They had expertise in martial arts; they had good knowledge of veterinary sciences and also successfully participated in philosophical discussions.

Women’s cooperation was sought in every walk of life. A man could not undertake any social or religious duty without his wife. The concept of ardhangini reveals equal status of woman in the institution of marriage. Women were provided adequate opportunities for their overall development and above all they actively contributed in social and political spheres.

**Smriti Age:** The status of women gradually started declining around 500 B.C. Women’s freedom and basic rights received a setback as the Smriti’s and other religious texts gave ‘diktats’. The importance of a son gradually increased in the society, as he was considered to carry on the family hierarchy.

Women’s position suffered a setback with Manu and his Manu Smriti. Patriarchy slowly started establishing itself through draconic set of rules. According to Manu, a woman should never be independent. In her childhood, she should be under her father’s control, in youth under her husband and in old age her son should control her. In this age, wife was supposed to revere
her husband as a God and follow him blindly.\textsuperscript{34}

Marriage of women became compulsory, single women were looked down upon and girls were denied proper education. Child marriage became prevalent and girls were married as young as 12-13 years to do away with the responsibility by her father. A woman’s world remained confined to domestic chores and looking after the family. She was considered wicked, as a fickle mind and thus slowly degraded to an inferior status.\textsuperscript{35}

**Epic Age:** It includes the era of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the *Ramayana*, Sita is considered as one of the ideal characters. The social image of women was such that they were expected to perform sacrifices, prayers and recite sacred mantras. There was visible improvement in the prevailing state of the women folk and they were involved in major events of the family.\textsuperscript{36}

As a couple the names of Goddesses had precedence over Gods, like Sita-Ram, Radha-Krishna. In *Mahabharata*, woman’s role as a mother was at the highest position. However, woman was also considered as the root of all evils. The procedure and content of education was altogether different for men and women. During this era, on one hand woman was regarded as pure and full of spiritual power while on the other she was considered as weak and dependent on the man.\textsuperscript{37}

**Buddhist Age:** Buddhism gave honour to women, they were allowed to enter monasteries and become nun. Buddha taught equality to all human beings - men or women. Women thus had an access to equal education. However by this time, society was already neck deep under the strong hold of patriarchy. Her role as a mother raised her to a level of being worshipped but sadly, a
sturdy patriarchal society expected her to give birth to a male child only in order to provide a lineage to the family.\textsuperscript{38}

Women in Buddhist age were considered to be physically weak but mentally as strong as men. Inheritance rights were same for both man and woman. Great women scholars like Sangamitra (Asoka’s sister) went to Ceylon to spread Budhism, Jayant remained unmarried and got teachings form Lord Buddha himself. Hence, women in this Age had special place in the society.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Puran Age:} Women’s position in the society further plummeted during this age. Manu prescribed 8-10 years as marriageable age for girls. Women were abstained from practicing Vedas and \textit{Purdah} system and dowry came into existence. Women neither had any right in property nor in inheritance.\textsuperscript{40}

The Goddess and power of the early ages was reduced to household commodity for her Lord’s pleasure only to bear his children. Even if the lifelong slavery was not enough another shocking practice of \textit{Sati} demanded her to immolate herself on her husband’s pyre. Widows were considered outcasts and remarriage was absolutely out of question. By the end of ancient period, the state of women deteriorated to such an extent that they were only treated as a weak and inferior sex.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{2.2.2 \textit{MEDIEVAL PERIOD (1200 - 1800 AD)}}

The medieval period witnessed foreign attacks on India, and with the invasion of Alexander position of women was literally reduced to ‘war prisoners’. Further with the introduction of Mughal Regimes, women’s position deteriorated in the society
as various evil social practices got strongly entrenched. Women were oppressed both in the feudal social order and patriarchal families. Women and ‘Shudras’ (lower castes) were placed in the same category. With the arrival of Turks in India, the status of women in Islam further worsened with ills like ‘Talaq’ and secluding women at all fronts. This seclusion of women led to the decline in elementary education and health facilities.

During Asoka’s regime, polygamy was in practice in upper sections of the society. Asoka himself had many wives but political importance was given to them. Girls were married between 8-10 years. The ‘svayamvara’ system was in vogue which was actually like putting women on sale.

During this period, scriptures spread the idea that women were unfit to handle freedom, and thereby they do not need any independence. Women should be kept under the authority of men in every stage of life. The custom of child marriages became so rampant that some Hindus daughters were married as infants, with mothers holding them in their laps. Widowhood was mulled over as a great catastrophe. The jauhar was widely practised among the Rajasthan Rajputs, wherein all the wives and daughters of defeated warriors used to voluntarily commit self-immolation to avoid capture and molestation by the enemy.

‘Due to insecurity and uncertainty with regard to women's chastity, purdah became more rigid and women were forbidden to visit the holy shrines.’ Widow remarriages took place during Chandragupta’s reign. There was restriction on women undertaking any profession. Sati system continued but women moved more freely in Gupta period. Both king and queen had
their names inscribed on coins. Thus, during Gupta period women were not neglected in social sphere in fact they were recognised both in political and religious fields.\textsuperscript{47}

The redundant system of \textit{sati} became a part of social culture, sometimes even against the wishes of a woman, she was forced to immolate herself on her husband’s pyre. Female infanticide became prevalent during this period and widows were debarred of remarriage. During this period of history, women were completely deprived of their right of equality with men.\textsuperscript{48}

In Southern India, during the rule of Pallavas, the Chollas, the Panyas the sati system was not common. This system was considered to be more of a political issue rather than a social issue as invaders attacked more often the provinces of North India. Thus, in southern part of the country, women were more safe and given high respect.\textsuperscript{49}

The \textit{purdah} system came heavily in the way of female education but still liberal education was given to elite class. The position of royal women was very powerful but women of middle and lower strata had a hard-hitting time.

‘Inspite of these conditions some women excelled in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion. Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. The Gond queen Durgavati ruled for fifteen years, before she lost her life in a battle with Mughal emperor’s general Asaf Khan in 1564. Chand Bibi defended Ahmednagar against the mighty Mughal forces of Akbar in 1590s. Jehangir’s wife Nur Jehan effectively wielded imperial power and was recognised as the real force behind the Mughal throne. Shivaji’s mother Jijabai was deputed
as queen regent, because of her ability as a warrior and administrator.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{2.2.3 MODERN PERIOD}

The colonial rule brought the concepts of nationalism, equality and rights. The status of Indian women in the modern period may be divided into two main periods -- pre-independence (British rule) and post-independence.

\textbf{2.2.3.1 Pre-independence:} The first phase (1850-1915) was initiated by men to remove the social evils such as sati, child marriage. At the dawn of the British rule, women's position in India was at a receding tide. All evil practices started in the medieval period continued, though British tried to put a check on them. But still women were illiterate and married early. Women were considered as a property transferred from father to husband. They were confined to the four walls and were supposed to do only the house work. Parents often killed female infants to save themselves from the adverse life ahead. Women were treated as slaves without any poise or rights. Though some degree of political regulation was seen but social structure, social custom remain unaffected.\textsuperscript{51}

One of the positive aspects for India after the British took over in 1858 was that it was governed by one cohesive organisation of rule. The social and economic life of Indian people came under one working arrangement of law.\textsuperscript{52}

The second phase (1915 – 1947) saw the struggle against colonial rule getting more intensified. During their rule, with the
introduction of education and the high standards of the ruling class, the British society slowly began to make an impression on Indians. The attitude of Indians, their living style and their behaviour began to change considerably.\textsuperscript{53}

Prostitution was considered as a social sin. British rule also bought revolutionary changes. The foremost was the abolition of sati by law on compassionate basis. A resolution was passed in December 1829 by which sati was made a crime of culpable murder, punishable with fine or imprisonment. A rigid resistance was declared by the orthodox Indians calling it as an interference with religious rights. The abolition of sati directly meant that widow could remarry, but it touched only the fringe of society. The outlook of Indian people was broadened with English education. The missionaries are considered to be the leaders of modern education in India.\textsuperscript{54}

The 19th century brought a new era. Various reform movements led by eminent thinkers, scholars and leaders understood the importance of women’s participation, thereby gradually improving the status of Indian women.

**Reform Movements**

The British raj did not prepare people for self-government. The high administrative posts were only reserved for Britishers and were blocked for Indian people. The natives were treated with cruelty and their aspirations were curbed. This umbrage against the British rule put in action a number of reforms in the society.

**Brahmo Samaj**

The first reformist movement, Brahmo Samaj was founded in 1828 at Calcutta. The founder of Brahmo Samaj was Raja
Rammohan Roy who showed antipathy against the inequality and suppression met by Indian women. Keshub Chandra Sen gave Brahmo Samaj an all India form. He established branches in Bombay and Madras. The members of the Brahmo Samaj are considered to be the founders of the social reform movements in India.\textsuperscript{55}

The leaders of Brahmo Samaj got laws enacted against \textit{sati} (Widow Burning) in 1829 and against obliteration of child marriage (Brahmo Marriage Act) in 1872. They also opposed polygamy and purdah system. Girls’ schools were set up. Thus, Brahmo Samaj was the first organisation that treated women practically as an individual.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Arya Samaj}

This second reform movement was started by Swami Dayanand in Bombay on April 7, 1875. The Arya Samaj started its journey against ignorance. It opened school for both girls and boys. The curriculum was based on vedic culture. The education was imparted in Indian languages, though English was taught as a subject.\textsuperscript{57}

The leaders of Arya Samaj opposed caste system. They believed that birth shouldn’t decide the caste of a person. According to them, as all are equal before God, Vedas could not be impounded to one caste.\textsuperscript{58}

They raised their voice against child marriage, \textit{purdah} system. But they did not encourage widow-remarriage. Though they opened homes for widows and gave them vocational training so that they become economically independent. The Arya Samaj smoothened the way for women’s participation in all spheres –
social, political and economical, cultural life of the country.\textsuperscript{59}

**Theosophical Society**

It was founded by Madam Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in New York in 1875. It came to India in 1879 and had its headquarters in Madras. Mrs. Annie Besant was one of the most prominent leaders of this society. It promoted equality of sexes. Number of girls’ schools were opened. The society was strongly against child marriage. To abolish child marriage from the society Besant didn’t allow admission to married students. Though, she encouraged child widow to re-marry but discouraged elderly widow remarriage.\textsuperscript{60}

Annie Besant condemned the seclusion of women and remarked, “For India’s uplift, the women must have an open field, unfettered hands, and an unimpeded activity. The two sexes were not evolved that one should enslave the other, but they should utilise the fuller life, the differences which pertain to sex. Woman hood as well as manhood must be consecrated to the motherland, for in their union lie the strength, the stability, the freedom of India.”\textsuperscript{61}

**Ramakrishna Mission**

Swami Vivekanand in 1897 founded Ramakrishna Mission with the aim to fight poverty, social injustice by spreading education, thereby bringing development all over the country. Schools were opened both for girls and boys. Disciple Nivedita was given the charge of girl education and to improve their conditions. Vivekanand often described her as real Lioness. The centres of Ramakrishna Mission made woman socially as well as politically aware. It made them free from ignorance and
superstitions. Women became national leaders after realising their responsibilities.\textsuperscript{62}

**Indian National Congress**

Reformists faced difficulties under foreign government, which eventually forced them to enter the political field. Leaders wanted position in the government so that they could endorse the essential social legislation.

Sir Allan Octavian Hume founded Indian National Congress in 1885 in Bombay with the help of leaders. Hume in his first session cautioned that unless reformers bring to the fore female factor, and work together, all their labour for the political suffrage will be futile. The fourth session was attended by 10 women.\textsuperscript{63}

**Women Reform Movements**

The Women’s Indian Association was started in 1917 in South and All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) came up in 1927 in North. They took up women problems related to education and early marriage. In 1917, first Women University was founded in Pune. The Christians and their missionaries settled in South India played a remarkable part in influencing radical modifications in social, cultural and political outlook of all classes of Indians.\textsuperscript{64}

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose formed Indian National Army (INA). It is considered as one of the fearless movements undertaken by country’s men and women. Netaji recruited around 1,000 South East Asian women for the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan led the regiment. The
training was same both for men and women. INA had a psychological impact on the minds of Indian women.\textsuperscript{65} 

**Gandhiji’s role:** Gandhiji regarded women as a mark of non-violence. He is considered as one of the greatest defender of women’s rights and equality. He considered man’s hunger for power and fame to be the main reason of calling women as inferior beings.\textsuperscript{66} 

‘Writing in the *Young India* (1929) on the position of woman he said, “I am uncompromising in the matter of woman’s rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality.”’\textsuperscript{67} He believed that British rule could come to an end if Indian women wanted and understood the meaning of freedom. Gandhi was the one who gave a call to all Indian women to save the nation from clutches of Britishers. He crusaded against child marriage, sati and *purdah* system. He made Indian women fearless and brave. He recognised the importance of women’s involvement in the development of a nation. In his writings he has tried to make women realise their true position in the society. He believed that both Indian men and women have to win *swaraj*. Gandhi regarded women as personification of *Ahimsa*. He considered women to be superior to men as they have the ability of self-sacrificing.\textsuperscript{68} 

**Few Outstanding Women** 

During freedom struggle, Indian women actively participated in rallies and stood out as speakers and tireless volunteers. They fought for the unity of the country. The contribution of Indian women in the struggle for freedom cannot
be forgotten and under estimated. Some of the outstanding women who participated in freedom struggle or in reform movements or for the cause of women liberation are –

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) in Maharashtra fought for women’s right, encouraged women for education and asked people to stop child marriages. Ramabai Ranade (1862-1922) exhorted women to educate themselves. Anandibai Joshi (1865) worked towards women health and resisted child marriages.

Sorabji (1866) was a social reform worker. She was associated with National Council for Women in India and Bengal League of Social Service for Women. She strongly believed that educated women could bring a social change in the society.

Sarla Devi Choudhry (1872-1945) was a political activist, singer and a writer. She worked for women’s education and established small centre’s for educating them. Later on she formed an association – *Bharat Stree Mahamandal* which worked for the advancement of women of all castes and creed. She also edited a journal ‘Bharati’.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) was a great freedom fighter and a poet. In 1917, she presented a memorandum to the British Secretary of State of India demanding good education, health facilities and voting rights for women. She campaigned for Khilafat Movement.

Mridula Sarabhai (1911 - 1974) was dedicated to the cause of women’s equality, rehabilitation of refugees and the country’s freedom. She wanted women to be self independent. She joined Indian National Congress in 1930 and in 1934 she founded Jyoti Sangh in Ahmedabad which provided adult education and
vocational training to women. She also set up Vikas Griha which gave shelter to child widows and old women.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1889-1964) was a freedom fighter and a social activist from Punjab. She was a co-founder of All India Women’s Conference and in 1933 became its president. She participated in Dandi March and Quit India Movement and was imprisoned both the times. She worked to abolish child marriages and purdah system. She was the health minister for ten years (1947-1957). Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the first woman and first Asian to be elected as the president of World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1950.

Rama Devi (1899-1985) was an activist from Orissa. She enlightened the minds of women and asked them to raise their voice against suppression and injustice. She treated everybody equally irrespective of caste and religion.

Durgabai Deshmukh (1909-1981) was a social reformer and a follower of Gandhiji. She protested against English teaching school and participated in Hindi Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Movement. She also joined the campaign against foreign goods and started spinning ‘charka’. She also participated in Satyagraha and was imprisoned thrice by the British Government. In 1922, she established Balika Hindi Pathshala to educate women. Andhra Mahila Sabha was established by her in Madras in 1933 to address the problems of women.

Swarnakumari Devi was Rabindranath Tagore’s sister. She was the first Indian woman editor who along with her husband edited ‘Bharati’ (Bengali Journal). She also started ladies association –‘Sakhi Samiti’.
Vijay Lakshmi Pandit (1900-1990) was a politician and Indian diplomat. She believed that politics was a means which could bring changes in social and economic conditions of the country and also help in empowering women. She was India’s ambassador to the Soviet Union, the United States, Mexico, Ireland and Spain. She was the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1953.

Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988) was a freedom fighter. She helped in upliftment of socio economic standards of Indian women. Kamla Devi was the first Indian woman to be arrested in 1930s. She was the first organising secretary of All India Women’s Conference.

Francina Sorabjee supported women education and opened many schools. Annie Jagannadhan and Rukmabai confronted the Indian orthodox system. In 1928 Latika Ghosh set up the Mahila Rashtriya Sangha.

2.2.3.2 Post-independence: Women became autonomous in their opinions and endeavours only after India got political freedom. During the framing of the Constitution of India there were merely 13 women members in the Constitution Assembly. Indian Constitution framed on Nov 1947 gave women all the rights and privileges which are paramount articulated in its constitution. The Constitution of India is an existing document on which the system of government works. The following Articles in the constitution speak for women, her rights, her equality and privileges.

‘Article14. The State shall not deny to any person equality
before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

**Article 15.** (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

**Article 39.** The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing—

(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

(d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;

(e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;

**Article 51 A (e)** to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;

**Article 243 D (2)** Not less than one-third of the total number of
seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes. 70

Acts
Series of legal reforms and Acts have been passed to raise the status of women. They are:

- Hindu and Widows Remarriage Act, 1856
- Abolition of Sati Act, 1929
- Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
- Hindu Women’s Right to Property Act, 1937
- Hindu Women’s Right of Separate Residence and Maintenance Act, 1946
- Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956
- Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Family Courts Act, 1984
- The Independent Representation of Women’s Act, 1986
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986
- Juvenile Justice Act, 1986
- 73rd and 74th Amendment Act, 1993
- The Act on Women’s Commission, 1993
- Pre-natal Diagnostic Act, 1994
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Plans Incepted Since Independence
Indian women were surely given the rights and liberties,
but still she was struggling against dowry, domestic violence, female infanticide, etc. From 1951 onwards, the development endeavours have been revealed in five year plans. For the development of women various strategies, approaches have been put down in these plans. There have been modifications from Welfare-oriented Plans to Development-oriented and eventually to Empowerment-oriented Plans in all these decades.

**Welfare-oriented Plans:**
The First Five Year Plan (1957-62) basically had welfare approach. The Central Social Welfare Board, 1953 got the responsibility of women and children development. Institutional orphanages, homes for destitute women and girls, nursery schools were opened.\(^7\)

The Second Five Year Plan organised *mahila mandals* at grassroot levels for better implementation of welfare schemes. It recognised special needs of women workers – maternity benefits and crèche facilities for children. The Third Plan and Fourth Five Year Plans paid attention to women’s education, health and nutrition needs. Family planning concentrated on oral pills for women. The need for women’s welfare within the family was promoted.\(^2\)

**Development-oriented Plans:**
The Fifth Five Year Plan (1977-1982) saw a major change towards women’s welfare. Women Welfare and Development Bureau was set up in 1976 to coordinate policies and programs for women’s development. The role of women in the family and family problems were brought at front.\(^3\)

The Sixth Plan (1982-87) included a separate chapter on
Women and Development’. The Plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with main thrust on education, health and employment. Programs like Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), and Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) helped women to take up income generating activities. In 1985, Department for Women and Children was set up.74

The Seventh Plan laid emphasis on bringing women to the mainstream of national development by opening new avenues of work. It emphasised on confidence building measures to generate awareness about women’s right. The National Perspective Plan was set up in 1988 to facilitate mainstreaming of women’s issues in policies and programs.75

The Eighth Plan (1992-1997) was aimed to consider women as equal partner in development process. Women needed to be aware of their contribution to the nation. An autonomous statutory body of National Commission for Women was set up in Jan 1992 to protect women’s rights. It also looks into various women issues. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 created history, which lead to large women participation in local bodies. The Eighth Plan witnessed highest ever enrolment of girls 83.60% in 6-11 years of age.76 The Government of India in 2001- Women empowerment Year gave following themes – human rights for women; economic empowerment of women; social empowerment of women; women in difficult circumstances; women and technology; women and governance; women and education; women and health, nutrition; women and media; entrepreneurship in women; vision for the future.77
Empowerment-oriented Plans:

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) committed itself to review all existing policies, programs of women empowerment. Strong measures were undertaken to eradicate discrimination and violation of women and children rights. Women’s Component Plan was adopted to ensure that 30 per cent of funds are kept for women related sectors and also benefits from other developmental sectors do not bypass women. Task Force for women was set up. National Policy of Empowerment, 2001 was adopted to create awareness among women.78

The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) charts out operational strategy in terms of time-bound action-plan, government and NGOs responsibilities.79

The Eleventh Plan (2007-2012) aims to end multifaceted segregation and prejudice faced by women. The Plan recognises the fact that as women belong to different caste, culture, community and economic group some are more vulnerable than others. For the first time women are not only recognised as equal citizens but also a representative of economic and social growth. The Plan aims to provide women with basic entitlements, ensures violence free surroundings, and also ensures adequate participation in highest policy levels. It aims at reinforcing institutional mechanisms and to construct valuable policy implementation.80

Some of the special schemes/initiatives for women’s development are listed below –

1. **Hostels for working women:** The scheme under Department of Women and Child Development provides
cheap and safe accommodation to working women. It also provides day care centre for children of working mothers.

2. **Support to Training an Empowerment Programmes (STEP):** The program was started in 1987. It aims to provide skills to poor women and provide them employment in traditional sectors of agriculture, handlooms etc.

3. **Employment Income Generation cum Production Units:** It is funded by Norwegian Agency for International Developers (NORAD). It trains women to generate income through non-traditional trades of electronics, computer programming, watch assembling etc.

4. **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK):** Under this scheme poor women are provided credits under Self Help Groups (SHGs) for income generation activities.

5. **National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001):** The main goal of this policy was to bring about the development, empowerment and advancement of women. The objective of this policy includes equal access, participation and decision making in all the spheres of life; changing society’s attitude towards women; elimination of all forms of discrimination against girl child and violence against women; creating an environment for development of women so that they realise their potential; equal opportunity to education, health care at all levels.
6. **Swayamsidha**: In 2001, Indira Mahila Yogana and Mahila Samriddhi Yogana got together and were renamed as swayamsidha. It helps women in forming SHGs and ensures that they have direct access to the on-going sectoral programs.

7. **Mahila Samriddhi Yojna**: It was launched in 1993 to empower women by raising their economic status. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh has been set up to look into the matters of finance for women.

8. **Bal Samriddhi Yogana**: It aims to raise the status of girl child in the community and was launched in 1997.

9. **Swavlamban**: It was launched in 1982 with the aim to help women in gaining skills for self-employment.

10. **Sawa-shakti**: World Bank and International Fund for Agricultural Development in 1998 launched this program to enable women to form SHGs. It helped to improve women’s quality of life by increasing their access to resources.

11. **Socio-Economic Programs (SEP)**: It has been implemented by Central Social Welfare Board for widows, deserted wives and handicapped women of the society.

The Parliament of India has also been making efforts to increase women representation in legislative bodies. To this effect, a resolution was adopted by the House to reserve seats for women. To check the progress and implement policies for development of women’s status both the Houses agreed on having a Standing Committee. Thus a Joint Standing Committee
was constituted on May 6, 1997 to improve the status of women.\textsuperscript{81}

‘Najma Heptulla in the inaugural meeting said, “In order to secure for women equality, status and dignity in all fields there is an urgent and continuing need for changing societal attitudes and elimination of all forms of gender based discrimination in the minds of men and women in the society. Unless women acquire equal status and dignity in all spheres, the development and advancement of any society or country cannot be considered complete. No society can progress without women’s equality, status and development. To achieve the broader objective of equality, there is a need for translation of \textit{de jure} equality of women into \textit{de facto} equality, participation of women in all spheres of life, sharing of responsibilities between women and men, affirmative action wherever necessary.”\textsuperscript{82}

‘In 2002, Shabana Azmi while participating in the discussion on the International Women’s Day said, “All over the world, Sir, it has now been accepted that empowerment of women is the true yardstick of a society’s progress. Men and women are different and this difference needs to be celebrated. I am convinced that when women get truly empowered, they will change the whole notion of power itself, not as one group wields power on the other but both sharing the power. It has been recognised that education is one of the strongest tools of empowerment... I would like to take this opportunity to bring to his notice one thing. I was looking at some textbooks for first standard children. There is a question which repeatedly appears. The question is, where is mother? The reply is that mother is in
the kitchen. Where is father? The reply is that he is at office. My
question is why it cannot be that when it is asked where is
mother? The reply is that mother is at office. And where is
father? The reply is-in the kitchen. Why it cannot be that both
mother and father are in the kitchen or both are in office? We fill
our children with this kind of role playing through the medium of
books which need to be removed. Because education often merely
reinforces gender divide.\textsuperscript{83}

\section*{2.3 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN CONFERENCES}

The signing of the United Nation’s (UN) founding Charter in
Oct 1945 led to the action for development of women Preamble,
which said that human rights should be fundamental and equal
rights should be given to both men and women irrespective of
nation-big or small.\textsuperscript{84}

Common standards have been set up by the UN for
measuring as how the societies push forward the equality
between men and women. The UN has been the main medium for
women’s promotion. The commissions, conventions, conferences
or treaties it adopts legally unite the countries identifying them.
Among such are-

1. \textbf{Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)}: This is one
   of the first bodies, established in 1946 by the UN Economic
   and Social Council. The commission promotes the rights of
   women in social, political, economic, civil life and observes
   their condition in all societies around the world. It prepares
   reports and recommendations on issues affecting women. It
set up universal standards for equality between men and women. CSW deals with various issues such as women’s participation in decision-making and women’s role in development of a country. It has put forward recommendations concerning women’s education and employment rights. CSW lobbied the UN to designate the 1975 as International Women’s Year and various world conferences on women.

2. **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW):** The Commission on the Status of Women is serviced by this division, which acts as a secretariat for world conferences on women. DAW carries out policy research and monitors implementation of programs taken at world conferences on women. It is the central point for synchronisation of various women activities in the UN system as a total.

3. **UN First World Conference:** It was held in 1975 at Mexico to coincide with the International Women’s Year. The First World Conference recommended a UN Decade for Women (1976-1985). It focused on the need to develop effective plans and strategies for the advancement of women. The three objectives identified by the General Assembly that would become the foundation for women work were:
   a. Gender equality and removing gender discrimination;
   b. Assimilation and participation in development;
   c. More involvement in strengthening world peace.

   Most important aspect during conference was that women themselves participated in shaping the discourse. Around 133 Member State delegations were present, out of
which 113 were women. Women have an essential role to play in promoting peace in every sphere of life, be it in the family, the community, their country or the world. And for this woman should have equal participation in decision-making processes, thereby helping in promotion of peace at all levels. The conference urged governments to prepare national strategies. It led to the establishment of International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). INSTRAW and UNIFEM provides an institutional framework for research, training and operational activities in the area of women and development.

4. **Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women:** The UN General Assembly adopted this convention in 1975. This is usually called as International Bill of Women’s Rights. The convention consists of a Preamble and 30 Articles. It provides the basis for comprehending the equality between men and women by ensuring equal access and prospect in voting and education rights. It is the only human right treaty which asserts the reproductive rights of women. It has been accepted by 139 UN Member States. These States are required to submit national reports once in every four years.

5. **World Conference for the Decade for Women:** The Second World Conference was convened in Copenhagen in 1980 to evaluate 1975 actions that were set and targeted
by governments five years earlier. The Copenhagen Conference identified three specific areas where focus was immediately required – equal access to education, equal access to employment opportunity and equal access to ample health care facilities. Inspite of the advancements made, the Second World Conference realised that women were not able to exercise rights even after being guaranteed these rights. The main reasons given were: lack of awareness about the opportunities, less women in decision-making capacity, not recognising women’s contribution to society, not enough political will and men not involved in improving women’s role in the society. For the first time ever domestic violence was openly revealed in an official document of the UN. It also took up measures to ensure women’s ownership and inheritance rights.

6. **Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women:** The UN’s Third World Conference in Nairobi was held in 1985 to culminate the work done on gender empowerment in last 10 years. Around 1,400 official delegates and 15,000 NGO representatives from 157 countries were present. The Nairobi Conference established three basic areas to measure the progress achieved: constitutional and legal measures; equality in social participation; equality in political participation and decision-making. It recognised that gender equality was not an isolated issue, but it encompasses all areas of human activity. It was necessary for women to participate in all spheres, not only in those
relating to gender equality. The strategies adopted gave an outline – from the action for the support and maintenance of peace to the abolition of violence against women in the society.

7. **UN Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW or Beijing):** The FWCW was held in 1995, being the largest and most prominent of all the world conferences on women. Under Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) 12 areas of critical concern were given:
   a. Women and poverty burden
   b. Women and education opportunities
   c. Women and health
   d. Violence against women
   e. Women and armed or other conflict
   f. Women and economy
   g. Women in power and decision-making
   h. Mechanisms for advancement of women
   i. Human rights of women
   j. Women and mass media
   k. Women and natural resources, environment
   l. The girl child.

8. **International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD):** The conference was held in Cairo in 1994. The final official report of Cairo Conference had a special chapter on women – Chapter IV: Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women – thus women concerns were at the heart of ICPD vision. Keeping Beijing Platform for Action as the base, it laid down various objectives to be
adopted by 179 governments. It marked a new realisation that population and development are intricately linked, and undoubtedly women empowerment is related to both. Also for the first time, reproductive health and rights of women became a vital factor in an international agreement on population and development. It considered education as the most important means of empowering women. In India, the ICPD approach has strong synergy with the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which prioritises gender equality and decentralisation as crosscutting themes for all UN system assistance to India. Despite the continuing gender disparity in education in India, gender gaps in literacy appear to be diminishing in some of the states that traditionally have had the most serious problems, according to the 2001 Population Census. Innovative attempts are being made, as in the state of Haryana, to increase girls’ school attendance by providing escorts to reduce families’ concern about threats to their security.

9. **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN ESCAP):** is a regional development division of the UN for the Asia-Pacific region. It holds a membership of 62 governments. It was established in 1947 with its headquarters in Bangkok and Thailand. It basically works in three main areas - reducing poverty, managing globalisation and tackling social issues. In 2002, ESCAP developed gender-based indicators; the main purpose was to provide accurate measurements of change in women’s
situation and to compare between countries of ESCAP region. It gave a set of 152 indicators and six additional indicators were assigned for evaluating women’s situation.

2.4 WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

‘The human rights of women and of the girl-child are the inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional, and international levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.’

The evolution of human rights dates back to the advent of human civilisation. Human rights provide the basic idea of justice which every human being should enjoy; and they also provide a higher sense of purpose to the human existence. Human rights are the basis of development and progress of any civilised society, to this effect these are incorporated in the constitution of every country. An important milestone in this context is the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on 10\textsuperscript{th} Dec 1948. In fact, the Indian struggle for independence was actually a fight against the suppression of human rights of Indians by the Britishers.

and worth of the human persona, *in the rights of men and women* and of national large and small.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 professes the principles of non-discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; without any distinctions, including that of sex. Various efforts have been initiated over the years for implementing gender related dimensions of human right issues.  

The most important of these being the CEDAW. The second World Conference on Human Rights held at Vienna in June 1993 confirmed that Women’s Rights were Human Rights and called for full and equal participation of women in all aspects of public life.  

There are over twenty-three (23) main conventions relating to Human Rights in general and five (5) specially to women. These are:

2. Convention on political rights of women.  
3. Convention on the consent of marriage, minimum age of marriage and registration of marriages.  
4. Convention on the nationality of married women, and  

The discrimination against women is the biggest road block in the development of any society. Gender equality is the cornerstone of development and professes that women are entitled to live in dignity and a world free from fear and violence. Empowered women contribute to social, political, economic and
cultural life and have an important role to play in the family health and productivity. Unfortunately, discrimination against women and girls include bias and prejudices and crime against women such as rape, molestation, child sexual abuse, domestic violence; and sexual harassment at work places still continue unabated across the globe. It is shocking to know that women form a substantial portion of migrant workers and labourers but form merely 10% of elected legislature in the world. The struggle for legal equality has been framed as a major part of women empowerment but sadly most communities across the world still do not have equal property rights.

**Human Rights of Women: Indian Scenario**

*The Constitution of India Women Preamble*

**We, The Women of India**, have solemnly resolved to Unite our Collective Wisdom for the betterment of our Community and Ourselves.

**We hereby vow to strive** towards bringing Peace and Togetherness in our families and neighbourhood and work towards Communal Harmony.

**To Educate Ourselves**, Our Men and Our Children about the Values of Compassion, Love, Integrity, Honesty, Truthfulness, Hard Work, Acceptance, Forgiveness, Sharing, Respect for Humanity and Our Environment.

**To raise a Collective Voice** against those indulging in Suppression, Oppression, Exploitation, Victimisation, and Abuse of Ourselves, Our Men and Our Children.
To strive towards Social, Economic and Political Justice, Liberty of Thought, Expression, Belief, Faith, Worship and Equality of Status and of Opportunity for Ourselves, Our Men, and Our Children.

In our Constituent Assembly this eleventh day of May 2002, do we adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution.’

Right from the Vedic period, the state of women in Indian society has been that of an inferior sex. Even the six decades of development post-independence have not fully provided gender equality to Indian women. Be it the literacy rate, sex ratio, child marriage, rape cases; they all clearly speak of the plight of Indian women.

However, the Indian Constitution confers many rights upon women. Keeping the backyard position of women in Indian society our law makers made adequate efforts in order to make favourable grounds for women. Our Constitution dictates that there should not be any discrimination on ground of sex. The fundamental rights like right to life, right to liberty and right to constitutional remedies are also extended to the women. Few other rights include right to human dignity, right to health, right to privacy, right to education, right to free legal aid. Since our constitutional framework is quite flexible, a number of amendments have been enacted over a period of time in the interest of women in India. Also the feminine protection rights have taken a main stay in the judicial system.
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