CHAPTER II

BACK DROP

2.1 Indian women in Vedic Literature
2.2 Indian women in Post Vedic Period
2.3 Indian women during Jain and Buddhist Period
2.4 Indian women in the medieval period
2.5 Indian women in the modern period
2.5.1 Education of Indian women
2.5.2 Women's status and Education in the Indian Society
2.5.3 Indian women from Economic Perspective
2.5.4 Indian women from Sociological Perspective
2.5.5 Indian women from the Political Perspective
2.1 INDIAN WOMEN IN VEDIC LITERATURE

In the age old tradition of India, there was no distinction between man and woman, all being equally the 'BRAHMAN'. The ideals of Indian women were very much the same as those of Indian men, unity and equality, greatness and fullness, purity and perfection. The very high standard of life, culture and all round progress reached by women during the vedic period was even widened by the Rigvedic hymns composed by as many as twenty seven women seers. Women had the freedom to remain single or to enter the married life. Whether a woman was married or remained unmarried was not of importance; what was more significant was her inner inclination and ingrained ideals. Domestic life was not in any way conceived to be inconsistent with spiritual life. Women stood for domestic efficiency and spiritual accomplishment. Gargi proved to be a challenging Brahmavadhini. The learned Gargi, a Brahmavadhini challenged the great philosopher cum vedic scholar Yagnavalkya in the Court of Janaka. In the domestic realm, the wife enjoyed along with her husband full religious rights and participated in all religious rites with him. In fact the performance of such ceremonies would be invalid without wife joining her
husband as his full partner. Wife was the Sahadharmin, the equal partner in the performance of "Dharma", the righteous duties. This is well evident from the great Epic Ramayana. The hero Rama—though banished his Sahadharmini Sita, made a golden statue of Sita and installed it beside himself while performing Asvamedha Yagna.

The Vedic tradition continued in Upanished times. Some of the Smriti texts were written by Bramavadhinis. There were two groups of girls, Brahmadhinis and Sadyovadhhu. The former was eligible for Upanayana, vedic study and other ceremonies. The Sadyovadhhu had only to perform the upanayana in some form before she was married. Girls were eligible and for maunji-bhandhana i.e. upanayana/study of veda and Savitrivachana—exposition of the highest type of mantras or knowledge; Chapter-I of Jaimini's Purvamimamsa was interpreted by Sabara Swami as dealing with the equal right of men and women to the performance of the highest religious ceremonies. Another vedic text, Hemadri, refers to educated Kumars or girls as vidushis who should be married to equally learned husbands called Manishis.
Indian Women in the Post Vedic Period:

The great grammarian Panini, who lived before 500 B.C. in his work named *Ashtadhyayi*, cites illustrations for his grammatical rules that reveal how women had regular Vedic studies similar to that of men.

Some grammatical passages show that women had other careers open to them apart from a mere literary career. The great grammarian Patanjali, author of that monument masterpiece known as *Mahabhashyaa* formed the word *Saktikā*, to indicate a female bearer of a spear. During the period of Emperor Chandra Gupta Mauriya armed women body guards were employed in his palace as described by Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador to his Court. Similarly Kautilya in his *Arthasastra* which is also taken to be a document of Mauryan history, refers to women soldiers armed with bows and arrows. Lastly, it may be noted that there is a sculpture, at *Bharhut*, of about the 2nd century B.C. which represents a woman carrying a standard on a horseback as belonging to the Vanguard of that cavalry.
The position of women in India greatly deteriorated as the Vedic ideal of unity and equality began to fade off with the passage of time. During the period of the Smritis women were not encouraged to study the Vedas, utter the mantras and to perform the Vedic rites. Marriage and domestic life became compulsory for women and the unquestioning devotion and self-effacing service to husbands was their only duty. Manu prescribes that women should be supported by father, husband or son, and they had no individual economic freedom. But where social life was concerned a father excels a hundred acharyas but a mother excels a thousand fathers. He also observes that, that society is honoured where women are honoured. In the role of wife and mother, she was the guardian of the household and preserver of cultural traditions.

2.3 **Indian Women during Jain and Buddhist Period:**

Buddhism kept up the traditions of Brahminical religion in accordning womenhood an honoured place in social life. During the early period of his ministry, Buddha had not encouraged women's participation. But later he admitted
them into his order BHIKSHUNI-SANGHĀ opened to them avenues of culture and social service and ample opportunities for public life. Buddhist church of those early days was also able to attract the sympathy and generosity of many a lay lady. The Buddha fully appreciated the hospitality and offerings of financial support from individual women of sincere religious devotion. The Bhikshuni Sangh (order of Nuns) produced many learned women proficient in the sacred texts. The collection of verses in pali known as Therigatha is believed to have been composed in the Buddha's lifetime by women who were amongst the first to join the order. In these verses they expressed joy at having attained Nirvana, the highest goal. The Theris engaged themselves in social and missionary work and became famous as teachers and scholars. The Buddhist convents opened to women opportunities for education, self culture and varied spheres of social service, in which they made themselves the equals of men, supplementing their work in the spheres of their faith.
Jaina priests gave great encouragement to nuns. They instructed the nuns in philosophy and theology. So intensive was the instruction that the KALPA SUTRA, the great text of Jains referred to many thousands of Jaina nuns having become first class scholars. One Jaina nun, Yakini Mahattara is said to have performed so well in an argument with a brahmin scholar HARI BHADRASURI that she converted him to the Jain faith.

The Jain nuns well versed in logic and philosophy have contributed to Tamil literature. A Jaina sanyasin by name Neelakesi, the heroine of the epic Neelakesi is portrayed as an eminent scholar known for debate and argumentations. It is said that she argued with many Buddhist scholars of her period.

During the active revival of Hindu religion towards the end of 7th century A.D., a women scholar Upayabharathi, wife of Mandanamisra was appointed as the sole judge before whom the contestants argued the case—a debate which was of momentous significance in the history of Indian Philosophical thought in determining
which of the two schools, Advaita or Mimamsa, of thought was superior in which Sankaracharya was adjudged victorious.

2.4 INDIAN WOMEN IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The period from the invasion of India by Mohammad of Ghar to the establishment of British authority in Bengal in the Second half of the 18th century witnessed in general deterioration of the position of women in India. The breakdown of social institutions, which was unavoidable during periods of continuous invasions, the upswelling of traditional political structures, the vast migrations of people and the economic depression which followed protracted unsettlement, all these had contributed to a general depression of social life, especially among women. The facilities of education which the Buddhist nunneries had provided vanished with the total disappearance of convents and monasteries.

During the 15th century this situation underwent a change. The general revival of Hindu life which the period witnessed led to some improvement in the status of women.
In the field of administration, Indian women made a mark during this period. There was RUDRAMBA, the Kakateya queen of whom Marco-Polo speaks about. Razia Begum, of whom it was said, that her one weakness was that she was a woman. Chand Bibi appeared on the ramparts of the fort of Ahmadnagar dressed in male attire and put heart in the defenders of that town against the prowess of Akbar himself. Tarabai in the North and Mangammal in the South whose benign rule is still a green memory in the south and Chand Bibi appeared on the ramparts of the fort of Ahmadnagar dressed in male attire and put heart in the defenders of that town against the prowess of Akbar himself. Tarabai in the North and Mangammal in the South whose benign rule is still a green memory in the south and Mangammal in the South whose benign rule is still a green memory in the south and Ahalybai Holkar are but a few outstanding names among the great women that India can boast of during this period.

The Mogal princessess, of course, played a notable part in the court life of Agra and Delhi, Jehanara, the partisan of Dara Shikoh and Roshanara, the partisan of Aurangzeb, whose poems have come down to us, represented the culture of the court. They were the great ladies, known for their erudition, scholastic abilities, and achievements in life.

The general state of Indian womanhood cannot well be judged from the lives of queens and princesses. Jijibai, the mother of Shivaji was more typical of Indian womanhood than the bejewelled princesses who wrote poetry, played
within the walls of their palaces or administered states. She reflected the true picture of Indian womanhood, a devoted mother with a strong will and autocratic at home but wholly subordinating her self to the interests of her son.

During this period polygamy was, of course, legal and permissible, but outside princely and noble classes and certain very orthodox castes like the kulin Brahmins of Bengal, it was not a widely prevalent custom. The legal position of Hindu Women especially from the point of view of inheritance was again unsatisfactory.

During the medieval period female education of one type or other existed. The daughters of the imperial household and of rich nobles were given tuition in their houses. Middle class women generally acquired some knowledge of Hindi, Persian, or a native language. The percentage of literacy among Hindu women however was very low. Rich and cultured families were no longer in a position to make special arrangements for the education of their daughters due to the changed political situation. Slowly the education of women became negligible and women were eventually relegated to the background.
The advent of the British in India laid the foundation of modern India. The British rule over India which lasted for nearly two centuries was responsible for many important changes that took place in India. By imparting western education to the Indians, the British made Indians familiar with many of the modern ideals and institutions. Today India cherishes concepts like democracy, rule of law and socialism because of the contact with the West through the British. The creation of a number of educational institutions in India by the British helped Indians in many ways. They began to see the evils in their social system and led movements for the reform of the Indian society. Raja Ram Mohan Ray (1774-1833) for example, helped the British Government in putting an end to Sati (widow-burning). In 1823, Raja Ram Mohan Ray, wrote an article "The Encroachment of the rights of the Hindu Females" wherein he stated that women should have rights in the properties of their fathers and husbands. These were the symptoms of socio-economic revolution affecting the fabric of Indian society.
2.5 **INDIAN WOMEN IN THE MODERN PERIOD**

The status of Indian women in the educational, social, political and cultural walks of life underwent great changes during and after the English rule in India. The changes in these walks of life are dealt with in this section.

2.5.1 **EDUCATION OF INDIAN WOMEN**

Education starts with the acculturation of human society and acculturation with its breadth of vision, amalgamates, cultural, social, vocational knowledge, character formation and the utilitarian aims under education. In its cultural aspects, education equips the individual with traditions, customs, language, mores, habits, skills, beliefs and attitudes; New demands, created by education, lead on to new vocations; so the utilitarian purpose solver the bread and butter problem. In its knowledge and character-building aims, education inculcates theoretical and practical realization of values in the individual by developing physical and mental skills, perception, memory, comprehension, thinking and attitudes and values.
Attitudes, values and ideals, that are propagated by education, play a significant role, in building the personality, individuality and the entire mental make-up of an individual.

By the beginning of the 19th century, women were hardly educated. Mass education was not popular. Education became the possession of privileged classes. Women's education was not encouraged. The East India Company was indifferent to the education of the natives. It was for the first time in 1813, that the East India Company accepted the responsibility for the education of the people under the charter act of 1813. But this charter restricted itself to men and did not take any direct action on women's education. The company argues that the social and religious ideas that were deeply rooted in the people's minds would create a commotion, if women's education was attempted. There was an attitude of apathy and a sense of indirect hostility which the official class exhibited towards women's education. The prevalent customs of sati and early marriages were enough problems to be faced. Through the valiant efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Ray and the official
declaration of Lord Bentinck, Sati was made illegal in 1829.

The missionaries were the real pioneers in the field of women's education. The first modern schools in India were started by Christian missions. As a rule the Indians were unwilling to send their daughters to educational institutions run by missionaries. So they started Zenana schools, staffed by women teachers; yet there was the fear of conversion.

The renaissance of Indian social life particularly in the second half of the 19th century was led by persons like Raja Ram Mohan Ray, and Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who vigorously supported the cause of women's education. Socio-religious reform movements such as those of the Brahma Samaj (1828) Arya Samaj (1875) Prarthana Samaj (1849) and the theosophical society (1879) included education of women as an important part of their deistic programme.

A splendid lead in this direction was given by John Drink Water Bethune who started a secular school,
called the Bethune School, in Calcutta in 1847 along with Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. This school proved a great success and it was duplicated all over India. In 1848, Professor Paton established the students literacy and scientific society which organised a number of girls schools. In Bombay, Francina Soralji, Ramabai Ranade and Pundita Rama Bai were the three lady pioneers who dedicated themselves to the education and uplift of their sisters.

In this period it is said that Madras State was foremost in Women's education. The Church Missionary Society in 1821, opened at Tirunelveli, the first of the secondary schools in the then Madras Presidency. In 1840 with the assistance of the Rev. Isaac Wilson and his wife, the Scottish Church Society ventured to start six schools for Hindu girls at Madras.

Wood's Education Despatch of 1854, gave great impetus to education in India. It began anew era of organised educational administration, defined the aim of Indian education, determined the Government's attitude towards religion, stressed mass education and
recognised the need for technical and women's education. Eventnough Wood's despatch had recommended that the British Government should support women's education and give financial assistance for the opening of girls schools, the department of education did not take active measures for another decade or two.

The Hunter Commission of 1882, did not make any important suggestion in regard to the education of women. However, the Indians realised the need and importance of women's education and, made some significant works in this field. The establishment of Maharashtra women education committee in 1883 at Bombay should be reckoned as a landmark in the history of women's education. Important contributions were also made in the establishment of girls schools by Arya Samaj of Dayanand in the North and Western India by Brahma Samaj in Bengal and by Prof. Karve and Ramabai in Bombay.

During the period 1901 to 1921, the resolution on Educational policy of 1904, issued by Lord Curzon stressed the need to raise funds for girls primary schools, start women's teacher training colleges and employ women teachers.
During this period girls were also studying in Industrial schools. The inauguration of the Indian Women's University in June 1916, at Poona virtually marked the beginning of a new era in the history of women's education in our country. Today it has been popularly known as Dr. Karve University at Pune.

The years between 1932-1937, were years of great encouragement to those interested in the progress of education. The women's education committee's report 1936 states that education of girls and women continues to gain ground each year but the rate of progress, if steady, is certainly slow. In 1937 provincial autonomy was introduced. Now the British Government began to take more active part in the promotion of education of women. Other favourable factors during the period 1924-47 were the general awakening in the people on account of the political struggle for independence and the second world war 1939-45 and still further rise in the marriageable age partly due to the Sharda Act of 1929, but mainly due to the social and economic pressure.
WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA

With the attainment of independence there was an awakening of political and social consciousness among the people. In the post independence era women's education made progress beyond expectations. Among the many changes in social life the most striking one was in respect of education. The Government of India appointed University education commission in November 1948, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to report on Indian University and improvements and extensions that might be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country. On the importance of women's education the report observed "there cannot be educated people without educated women". If general education had to be limited to men or to women that opportunity should be given to women, for then it will most surely be passed on to the next generation. The report urged to formulate educational schemes that would affect a harmonious adjustment between women's economic interest within and outside their homes.
Later the Secondary education commission (1952-54), under the Chairmanship of Mudaliar was appointed for the reorganisation of secondary education in India. As regards women's education the commission felt, at the present stage of our social evolution, there was no special justification to deal with women's education separately. Every type of education open to men should also be open to women. This was seen in the fact that various institutions and Universities had thrown open their classes in almost all courses equally to men and women. The Indian Constitution had also laid down that women should have equal opportunities in all respects. It was stated by the Commission that there were two views regarding women's education. One view emphasizes the traditional role of women as housewife within home and the other view emphasizes the importance of women's life in public life. They pointed out that India greatly needed the service of women outside the four walls of their homes and its backwardness in the last century was due, in no small degree, to the low place
in society accorded to women. They insisted that men must be given exactly the same education as men so that they may compete with them on equal terms at school and college as well as in the various professions and service. However, there was a general agreement that for girls as well as for boys, education needs to be more closely connected with the home and community.

On the recommendation of the Central Advisory Board of Education, the Central Ministry of Education, requested the State Governments to take steps to encourage the education of girls in rural areas. By the University Grants Commission Act (1956), passed by the Indian Parliament, the University Grants Commission (U.G.C.) was appointed in 1958 by the Central Government. This University Grants Commission deals mainly with the allocation and disbursement of any grants to Universities for any general or specified purpose out of the consolidated fund of India or the consolidated fund of the state as the case may be, for advancing the cause of Higher Education in India. In 1958, the Government of India appointed the National Committee on Women's Education
under the Chairmanship of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh and this committee recommended certain noteworthy suggestions. The Committee suggested for the provision of fund for Women's education in the five year plans. It also recommended for the establishment of National Council of Women's education at the Central as well as State level. It also drew the attention of the Government to start a special wing for women's education in the education department of the Government of India. It recommended the Preparation of the special programmes for bringing about a rapid expansion in the education of girls. The committee submitted its report in January 1959. The major recommendations of the Committee have been accepted by the Government. The rapid expansion of Women's education in India is one of the most striking facts of the post independence period.

During the first Five Year Plan (1951-1955) the total number of girls in educational institutions increased (Table)*. It has been found from the above table that there was a gradual increase in the enrolment of girls in educational institutions. The main trend of this
period was the diversification of courses which, on one hand were adopted to suit the needs of the country and on the other hand, tried to check the over population of Universities and consequently to some extent, the problem of unemployment of the highly educated. The second five year plan (1956-61), gave provision for larger opportunities for girls and women. During this period, the National Committee on Women's education was set up by the Government of India on 19th May 1958. The significant feature of this report of the national committee on women's education in rural areas, as suggested by the National Committee on National Council of Women Women's education was the to advise the Government on the problems of girls and women's education, at all levels and stages. The main point achieved by this council was the establishment of polytechnics in 1961 for women. Further the Indira Gandhi Committee, appointed by the National Council, recommended the establishment of two women institutions to train women for high level executive jobs in selected fields. The third plan considered the need for increasing the proportion of women students in colleges and universities to take up different occupations.
ENROLMENT OF GIRLS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1950–51 to 1979–80

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Primary Schools Classes</th>
<th>Middle Schools Classes</th>
<th>Secondary Schools Classes</th>
<th>Colleges &amp; Universities (General &amp; Non-Ch)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950–51</td>
<td>53.85 (39)</td>
<td>5.34 (20)</td>
<td>1.61 (15)</td>
<td>0.40 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955–56</td>
<td>56.39 (44)</td>
<td>8.67 (25)</td>
<td>3.18 (21)</td>
<td>0.84 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–61</td>
<td>113.47 (48)</td>
<td>16.70 (32)</td>
<td>5.41 (23)</td>
<td>1.50 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965–66</td>
<td>182.93 (57)</td>
<td>28.46 (37)</td>
<td>11.72 (30)</td>
<td>3.24 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968–69</td>
<td>199.36 (59)</td>
<td>34.93 (39)</td>
<td>15.60 (32)</td>
<td>4.32 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973–74</td>
<td>244.01 (62)</td>
<td>45.37 (43)</td>
<td>23.40 (36)</td>
<td>9.00 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979–80</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kothari Commission 1964-66 which was set up during the third plan period emphasized the importance of women's higher education. To improve women's higher education the education commission recommended two programmes. 1. A programme of scholarship and financial assistance to women students in colleges and universities on a liberal scale and 2. A programme on the provision of suitable but economical hostel accommodation for women students with all the necessary amenities on a large scale. Liberal grants should be provided by the Government of India for this purpose as also by the State Governments. Both these programmes are particularly necessary to encourage girls from rural areas to take advantage of higher education. Further, the education commission suggested that one or two universities should set up research units to deal especially with women's education. They should take and follow up studies of educated women, consider women's education from the viewpoint of employment opportunities available to women and ensure proper planning of women's education particularly at the stage of higher education. The Education Commission opined that the education of women should be regarded as a major programme in education for
some years to come and a determined effort should be made
to face the difficulties involved and to close the existing
gap between the education of men and women in as short a time
possible.

With the recommendation of all the commissions on
education an impetus is given to women's education. It is
felt that the role of the woman goes beyond the home and the
upbringing of children. She is now adopting a career for
her own and sharing equally with man the responsibility for
the development of society in all its aspects. The
impression that higher education makes women unfit for
family life, fast fading, though it may be true in certain
cases. Though women can enter into any professions, they
like teaching, medicine, nursing and social services.
They are the most suitable professions since they can find
time to look after their homes and children simultaneously.
They are the most fitting jobs for their biological and
anatomical systems.
2.5.2 WOMEN'S STATUS AND EDUCATION IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY:

Since Independence, India has been trying to achieve its constitutional goals of equality through democratization, prosperity and industrialization. As the different segments of society are interrelated the changes in one segment affect the others. Thus the education is not an end in itself but relates to the social and political goals of the society. Looking from this point of view towards the higher education of women, it appears that the changes occurring at this stage are not in time with the fulfilment of national goals.

If we look back at the state-wise development of women's enrolment in higher education, it is evident that economically and socially less developed states such as Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have the lowest enrolment at higher educational level and the biggest achievement is of Delhi, Kerala, Punjab and Tripura. The National Committee on Women's Education (1959) had urged the Government to close existing gap between the education of men and women.
in as short a time as possible. This was reiterated by the committee on status of women in India in 1975.

The enlargement of educational opportunities at higher educational level for women has mainly benefitted the higher caste and higher class. Naik focussed on this problem when he said "educational development particularly at the Secondary and Higher stages is benefitting the 'haves' more than the 'have-nots'". Higher education among women has renamed and continues to remain the monopoly of girls coming from higher socio-economic classes. It is also observed that the difference between the sophisticated and expensive women's institution and comparatively inexpensive and moderate institution is increasing the disparity between the upper and lower strata of the society.

Besides this, it is found that the women students from the lower class background join the colleges whose status and academic reputation are not always enviable. This trend in the educational enrolment is increasing the stratification of society by separating upper and lower strata. From the above discussion it appears that the constitutional goal of equality is still not achieved at this level of higher
education of women. To remove this inequality there is a need for concerted governmental efforts. At the same time it is very necessary to bring about community awareness about the importance of women's education.

2.5.3 INDIAN WOMEN FROM ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

With the spread of Modern Education accompanied by new ideas of equality and self respect, women start acquiring freedom to decide the pattern of life in society. However, this advancement is not uniform in all sections of the Indian Society. There are still millions of families where women are kept in subservient position; yet there is a tendency towards social progress in terms of women's liberty and economic Independence. The modern woman is slowly breaking through the shell of 'the narrow domestic walls' and is beginning to partake in the larger life of the nation. Further there is a growing desire among women for participating in outdoor economic and social work. More and more women consider self-respect and development of their personality as necessary goals of life. The fact that they can afford to live as unmarried proves
the change that has come about both in the subjective attitude towards marriage and family life and the objectively social milieu.

A woman can take her own decision on remaining single, married, divorced only when she is economically independent. Economic freedom for women is the only guarantee of social progress. Legal equality of the sexes would help ensure justice to women. In the present economic situation women would like to contribute to family income to meet household expenditure.

With the spread of education, there are increasing opportunities thrown open for their economic independence. Participation in broad extra domestic socially useful activity has also been made possible due to the development of mechanical devices and electric gadgets which arrest to decrease the drudgery of domestic work and permit women more leisure.
2.5.4 INDIAN WOMEN FROM SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The political and social movements and the women's organisations have created an ideology of womenhood which has some broader social purpose in life. The buried ridden women came out of their long seclusion when the nation was fighting for freedom. Women are slowly realising the fact that the home is not the only centre of activity for them. Even the upper-class women think that she should associate herself with some social activity and should not while away her leisure. Roy Strachey has described the role of the women's movement in Britain which is applicable to India also. She observed "The popularity and sources of these organisations was indeed so great that by the end of the seventies, it had become fashionable almost to the point of necessity of wealthy women to engage in charitable work". A number of women are devoting their life to educational, political, trade union, kisan, academic, social, cultural or general emancipation work. Women are thus generally realising that they have personalities of their own as humans and that their mission in life does not end with becoming good wives.
and wise mothers, but also in realising that they are all members of the civic community and of the body politic. The modern woman is not living a passive life. She is not only the wife or daughter of some one but also possesses her own individuality. She is therefore slowly revising her attitude towards caste, joint family marriage and such other social institutions.

Hundreds of women are now participating in serious outdoor work. The new womanhood has been depicted in one of the resolutions of a women's organisation as "we are neither the real damsels nor dolls not bundles of passions and nerves. We are as much human beings as men are and we are filled with the same urge for freedom".

Until now, the connotation of the word service as far as women was concerned, implied the service to her husband, relations-in-law and family quests. Due to the spread of the new liberal culture and the new goals that this culture of the service has undergone a change. Along with men, women of India have also begun to realise that supreme goal of woman's life is not circumscribed to merely love making, dutifulness to husband, child-bearing
and domestic work. They began to realise that women's life has a higher and a more serious objective. This realization of women folk reflects the newly emergent socio-cultural and religious background of the Indian society at present.

2.5.5 **INDIAN WOMEN FROM THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Women's participation in the national movement was practically nil in the early years but in participating in the social reform now their sympathy has been expressed in deeds rather than in words.

In the entry of his Indian diary dated, Nov. 11, 1917, EDWIN MONTAGU noted, "I received a letter from Jaipur in the vernacular and a request for an interview from the women of India. Here is one of the earliest hints of feminine activity on the political plane".

The deputation which on Mr. Montagu and the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford on Dec. 18, 1917, comprised 14 members led by Smt. Sarojini Naidu. In the purely political sphere they asked that when franchise was drawn up, women
should be allowed the same opportunities of representation as men. In March 1921, the Madras Legislative Council passed by a decisive majority a resolution calling for the registration of women on the electoral roll. Prominent among those who helped to introduce this bill were Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Muthulakshmi Reddi, Smt. T. Sadasiva Iyer and Danvanty Rama Rao. Other provinces emulated this example, and by 1926, women enjoyed the franchise on the same terms as men in all provinces so far as elections to the provincial legislative councils were concerned. In April of the same year the Government of India went a step further and granted women the right to sit in the Legislative Councils.

Madras, Bombay the Punjab and the Central Provinces were quick to implement this concession and the women's Indian association lost no time in supporting the candidature of two women nominees in Madras, one of whom was to leave a strong imprint on the women's movement. They were Kamaladevi Chattopadhyya and Mrs. Hanna Angela. The women's Indian association passed for the nomination of a woman to the legislative council, and the Madras
Government in an imaginative gesture reciprocated by nominating Muthulakshmi Reddi to the august body. Muthulakshmi Reddi was thus the first Indian woman to sit in an Indian legislature and also the first to be elected as its Vice-President. She was incidentally the first woman graduate in Medicine from Madras University. She gave up her lucrative medical career for the cause of women's emancipation and also of social welfare, particularly the care and protection of destitute children and orphans. She fought for and succeeded in abolishing the disgraceful devadasi system. She also helped to provide facilities to promote women's education.

It was left to Gandhi to give direction, strength and inspiration to a vast all-embracing national movement which was to draw into its vortex, women in large numbers. Women took an active part in the elections both in the provinces and for the central legislative assembly. Vijayalakshmi Pandit had the distinction of being the first woman to serve as minister in a provincial government. Women legislators simultaneously made their appearance in the central assembly the more notable among them being
Renuka Ray, and Ammu Swaminathan, a social worker from Madras.

The role that Indira Gandhi played in the Indian and the World Politics bore testimony to the par excellence to which Indian women could soar in the 'political sky'.

Indian women have proved their mettle in the political field at various levels, as legislators, ministers, state governors, as the prime minister and even as the World leader. The changing role of Indian women has been viewed with this background.