CHAPTER V

WOMEN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

Consciousness began to grow among the women in India and particularly in Marathi women against the rise of socio-religious reforms. In Maharashtra, efforts were made from Mahatma Phule to spread education among women and see that they are getting their legitimate place in the society. However, as other reformers and modernity were also capturing the minds of society, rapidly, women could not remain aloof from the changing currents in Indian society. At the end of the 19th century, there was much at the credit of the movement of women awakening of Maharashtra as stalwarts like Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Mahatma Phule, Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar helped the cause of women to their full womanhood and their status as their counterparts. This had therefore, definitely made women to think that why did not they also start working on their own for the upliftment and the development of the women. Fortunately, in that period some great Indian women like Madam Bhikaiji Rustum K.R. Kama, Sarla Devi Choudhurani, Pandita Ramabai, had strongly propagated the cause of women upliftment and women rights. As it is on record, Pandita Ramabai told to the Hunter commission that the status of the Indian women which was since ages degraded must be brought to the level of human dignity. Even Madam Cama, when in 1. Pandita Ramabai, Op.Cit., introduction PP.XIII,XIV.
England expressed her wish that unless women are brought out of their degraded state or condition, they will not be able to play their role in a manner needed to the modern society. Alike these thoughts some main reformers in Maharashtra preached women to recognise their responsible place in the society and come forward to break the old shackles of Hindu dogmatic life.

In Maharashtra, the social reforms which were started by pioneers like Mr. Jotiba Phule, Mr. M.G. Ranade, Mr. G.G. Agarkar and others and their respective movements like the Satya Shodhak Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Agarkar's "Sudharak" awakened the women especially from the upper caste, i.e., of the Brahmins to understand their deplorable conditions and find out some solutions or remedies for improving them. In this respect mention must be made to the first women organisation in Maharashtra known as "Stri-Vicharavati Sabha". The organisation was established in Poona under the leadership of Sitabai Joshi, and Sarswati Govande, a friend of Savitribai Phule. These two ladies occasionally called the women of Poona in Sitabai's house and they discussed about the education of

3. Sudharak means reformer, in English, and this journal was started by Agarkar in 1888 and its main object was to bring social reforms and equal status to women Shikhare, D.N., G.G. Agarkar (Marathi) Chitrashala Press, Poona, 1950. PP.58-59.
4. Stri-Vicharavati Sabha means the organisation of thoughtful women.
5. Sitabai Joshi was a wife of Vasukaka Joshi, who got her English education in the missionary school in Poona. She completed the course of midwifery and had mastery on English and Sanskrit-Deogirikar, T.R., Op. Cit. PP.17, 135.
women. Though it was not a regular organisation, it played a very important role in discussing women problems, especially education of women and awoke them when the majority of men folks in Maharashtra was in deep slumber and living in the old stereotype social life. Then there is a reference to another organisation known as Arya Mahila Samaj which was started by Pandita Ramabai in 1882 in Poona. Before the establishment of Arya Mahila Samaj, there were two ladies organisations in Bombay and Poona established under the auspices of Prarthana Samaj. In Poona, Kerunana Chhatre, a social reformer discussed various subjects as science, geography etc., in this organisation and he also tried to make women to express their views boldly and appropriately.

The Arya Mahila samaj was established on 1st May 1882 with the main aim of education of girls as well as abolition of evil practices which thwarted the development of women. Soon after the establishment of Arya Mahila Samaj in Poona, Pandita Ramabai toured all over Maharashtra and established the branches of Arya Mahila Samaj in cities like Ahmednagar, Pandharpur, Sholapur, Bombay etc.

Because of all these organisations and their work, these organisations were carried on and due to the philosophy that they preached to the women of Maharashtra, the women had a responsible place in the society and even in the home. This understanding of women then enabled them not only to remove their disabilities but to help the nation also through their voluntary services and patriotism. Atmosphere in those days was very much conducive for widening the scope of women understanding for their self-cause and the cause of the nation. The freedom movement in India had also begun to take new shape in those days as instead of submitting petitions to the British power for removing grievances of the Indian people, it had started to pronounce the rights of citizens and their claim in the administration as well as in the Government working. Naturally, when freedom movement in India began to declare its right for independence and applied its strength to demand freedom from the British power, women organisations in Bengal were very much influenced; Maharashtra was also ahead in the fight for freedom. When stalwarts like Dadabhai Naoroji the Great Grand Old-man of India, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Sir Phirozshaha Mehta, and Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak openly began to declare that freedom of India was an urgent need, women in India particularly in Maharashtra, became conscious of their upliftment and place in the society.

However, the whole process as well as the work of ameliorating women's cause, women upliftment and legitimate place of women in society had a very dull account. There was no speed and urgency. Whatever was going on, it was in accordance with the means of slow speed. But suddenly a turn took place to speed up the process and give momentum to the women's movement, in the form of the August Declaration of 1917 in the British Parliament. It was a good shock to the people of India that after passing of the Council Act of 1892, they were given concrete assurance by that August declaration of the representative form of government in India thereafter and when the First World War ended in 1918, the British Parliament assured a new set of political reforms and elections and selection of people's representatives through adult franchise. A Committee known as 'Southborough Committee' was also appointed to see the pros and cons of the electoral system and possibilities of the success of that system. This was in reality, a beginning of a new system of democratizing Indian soil. People in India, particularly men, were to get an opportunity for the first time to go to the polls and elect their representatives through ballot papers. Indians in India were stirred by the declaration of August 1917 and thereafter by the pronouncement of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and appointment of Southborough Committee.

All that brought an unprecedented impact on Indian society. Those who were deprived of intermixing in the same religion, i.e. Hinduism, were banned since thousands of years to participate in the deliberation of community welfare and so national problems became free. They began to seek place for themselves in the new reforms and acquired whatever they could on their strength. In Maharashtra, the rift among the Brahmins and non-Brahmins is a concrete example to prove that even, the non-Brahmins, who were never allowed to share political responsibilities and places of honour in the British administration were quite enthusiastic in acquiring them on the basis of their caste strength. Women organisations and specially, educated and elite women in Maharashtra were also influenced by that great August Declaration and its aftermath. Such an atmosphere was not going to keep the elite women in Maharashtra mum and aloof from the politics of those days.

Thus, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 had become the genesis of the women suffrage movement in India and Maharashtra also. However, this suffrage movement of women was divided into two phases, the first being from 1917 to 1928 and the second from 1928 to 1937. The issues were liberation of the terms of enfranchisement and increasing female representation in legislatures. In both the phases, the extent to which the interests of women's
movement and those of the political authorities coincided was the main factor determining the outcome of women movement's demands. To context of the colonial situation in India created two sets of political authorities were created to whom women could appeal, the British Governmental elite and the educated India elite in the legislative councils and nationalist associations. In this situation, the relationship between each of these three groups was important in determining whether or not the British Governmental elite, with ultimate authority perceived a coincidence of interests with the women's movement.

**THE FIRST PHASE OF SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT (1917-1928):**

The number of women participants in the first phase of the political representation was very small, but these were women with access to British authorities and Indian political elite. The genesis of the campaign involved the visit to India in 1917 of Edwin Montague, Secretary of state for India, who was soliciting public opinion on the subject of the coming reforms. The deputation of which waited on Montague and on the Viceroy was promoted by the Women's University of Poona, sponsored by Mrs. Cousins and Dorothy Margaret E. Cousins was one of the greatest foreign friends of India. Born in Ireland in 1878, she studied in Ireland and became a batchlor of Music. She married the philosopher and poet James Cousins. She Spent the years between 1906-1913 fighting for Women's Franchise League and imprisoned in England in connection with Suffrage Movement, Mrs. Cousins was one of Mrs. Pankhurst's lieutuents in the votes for women campaign in England and Ireland. In November 1915 Mr. and Mrs. Cousins came to India to join Dr. Annie Besant. They worked in the Theosophical Society, Adyar in Madras. In 1916 she was elected as a member of Women's Indian University, Poona, who was the only and first woman member. She did a great deal of work for the upliftment of women in India. Sengupta Padmini, Sarojini Naidu, Asia publishing House, P.148. also refer to Karve, C.G., Jogalekar, S.A. and Joshi Y.G., Sanyukta Maharashtracha Dnyankosha, Prasad Prakashan, Bombay 1954, P.95.
Jinrajadasa who was also an ardent suffragette. The delegation was led under the leadership of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, and included Annie-Besant, Margaret Cousins, Begum Hasarat Mohini, Dr. Joshi, later Rani Rajwađe, Hirabai Ardesir Tata, Mithan Ardesir Tata—daughter of Hirabai Tata, Dorothy Jinrajadasa, Ramabai Ranade—wife of late justice M.G. Ranade, Sarladevi Chattopadhyaya, Uma Nehru and a supporter by telegram—Amla Bose, who were representatives of various organisations like the Women's Indian Association, the Seva Sadan, the Indian Women's University and the Women's Home Rule League etc.

12. Dr. Joshi was born in Bombay in 1887 she was a daughter of M.V., Joshi, Social reformer and chairman of the Age of Consent Bill in, 1928. Dr. Joshi got medical education in Bombay and Great Britain Married to the General Raja Rajwade of Gwalior. She was the Chairman of Women's sub committee of the National planning Committee— who's who, National Council of Women in India, Bombay 1935.

13. Mrs. Hirbai Tata was a wife of Ardesir Tata an eminent reformer— she was the general Secretary of Women's Indian Association. She organised a number of meetings in Bombay and popularised the women's suffrage movement—Kaur, Man Mohan Op.Cit., P.146.

14. Women's Indian Association was established in 1917. The founding members were Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinrajadasa. It was the first attempt to organise women on all India basis. Within a short period of four years after its establishment the organisation had established 48 branches and a membership of 2700. The organisation played very important role in achieving enfranchisement of women. also refer to India Year Book, 1923, PP.552-55. Agnew, Vijay. Elite Women in Indian Politics, Vikas publishing House, Pvt.Ltd., 1979, PP.104-05.

Negotiations with Mr. E.S. Montague started two months earlier when Margaret Cousins, the elected member of Indian Women's University of Poona, wrote a letter expressing a wish that Mr. Montague, during his visit to India should receive a delegation of Indian women, she had gained the approval for this idea from Maharshi D.K. Karve and contacted twenty prominent women whom she had met through membership in the senate of Indian women's University, which resulted in the delegation of fourteen ladies mentioned above. In the beginning, the delegation was to claim post-war reforms, essential for women, especially facilities of primary and secondary education for girls, increase in the number of Medical colleges etc., In the preliminary draft, therefore, only educational and social reforms were mentioned. But as Mrs. Cousins was informed that only political subjects were to be considered by Mr. Montague, which more or less forced the delegation to include opportunities of political services. Thus began the clamour for vote for women and impetus for women to combine social and political progress and additions made by Margaret Cousins were approved accordingly. A letter from a woman of Jaipur which was written in vernacular and requesting an interview from the women of India was also received by Mr. Montague. This proves that the women of India, though in a small number had become aware of their rights.

16. Agnew, Vijay, Ibid.
EFFORTS MADE BY THE WOMEN DELEGATION:

The women delegation met Mr. Montague on 17th December 1917, in Madras. An address was duly presented by the All India Women's delegation to Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montague. The address stated that the women supported the claim of the people for self-government within the Empire and Mr. Gandhi's scheme for reforms drawn up by the National Congress and the Muslim League. It demanded that the members of the Council should be elected by the people and the franchise should be extended to the people. Women should be recognized as "people" and there should be no sex disqualifications. Local Government should be granted and women should be allowed to represent on it.

Mrs. Hirabai Tata, one of the leaders of women's movement in Bombay in those days, referring to the necessity of clarifying the significance of the word "the people" observed thus:

"The purport of all the resolutions up to 1918 was that the world "people" or "persons" should be taken to refer to both men and women should not be put on par with children, foreigners, and lunatics in any scheme of reforms to be given to the country".

The delegation which visited Mr. Montague said thus:

"Thus the voice of India approve of its women being considered responsible and acknowledged citizens, and urgently claim that in drawing up of all provisions

Regarding representation of our sex exercise of the franchise or for service in public life.

Mr. Montague asked Sarojini Naidu, when the delegation met him, whether men of India would allow such a thing, or would they oppose it. Sarojini answered that so far from objecting to the right being granted to women, they would support them. But when Mr. Montague met the Coorg Land-holders Association, immediately after the women's delegation and asked about women's suffrage one of the members of the delegation opposed it by saying that "but women are women!"

The Women's delegation was sympathetically received but no mention to it was made in the Montague Chalmsford Schemes of Reforms. Women were completely ignored. The silence maintained by the Committee accentuated the common feeling of women and brought them to a common platform. During the period of two years, i.e., 1917-1919, the Indian Women's Association held meetings through most of its branches in various part of India and took part in political conferences both of the Muslim League and the National Indian Congress. They had no difficulty in getting their resolutions passed by these organisations. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu planned to offer a

23. Ibid.
resolution of women's suffrage at the Congress Session in December 1917, but Surendranath Banarjee suggested that she should wait until the issue was more publicised. Three Provincial conferences, five provincial Congress Committees, the Indian Home Rule League, the Muslim League and the Congress passed resolutions in support of women's suffrage. In Maharashtra, Sarojini Naidu moved a resolution on women's franchise in the Eighth Session of Bombay provincial Council held at Bijpur in 1918. The Provincial Congress was of the opinion that franchise would be given under certain conditions and recommended that the resolution be forwarded through the provincial Congress Committee. Such a resolution was, in fact, passed in 1918 by the Calcutta Session of the Congress presided over by Mrs. Besant. It recorded its "opinion that the same tests be applied to women as to men in regard to the franchise and eligibility to all elective bodies concerned with local government and education."


The Montague-Chelmsford report had suggested the appointment of two committees viz. Franchise and Function Committees. The Southborough Committee had to frame electoral regulations for Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. Representative of women's organisations throughout the country attempted to meet the Committee members and to impress upon them their desire to be enfranchised. Prominent among the organisations which met the Committee were the Women's Indian Association including representatives of 40 branches, the women's Graduate Union of Bombay and the women's branch of Home Rule League. In addition, the women of Bombay organised a petition signed by 800 ladies reiterating their demands for the vote.

The Southborough Committee published its report in April 1919 but did not recommend extending the vote to women. The report acknowledged the support to women's franchise, received from their educated counterparts. A distinction was, however, made between the small group of educated women and a general demand for the vote.

The Committee had received no evidence of support from the

local government except from Bombay and Assam. In consideration of the conservative sections of the population and the social customs of the country, the Committee felt that it was not advisable to extend suffrage to include women. The custom of secluding women was specifically mentioned as one of the many problems in recording and registering voters. The Committee concluded that, women's suffrage would be out of harmony with the conservative feeling of the country. Perhaps most important reason cited by the Committee was that it was "premature to extend the franchise to Indian women at this juncture when so large proportion of male electors require education in the use of responsible vote".

While criticising the report Mrs. Cousins observed as follows:

"The decision (in 1919) of the Southborough Franchise Committee and the Government of India to perpetuate this discarded sex qualification to advertise to all the world that the views of these gentlemen are in this particular behind the times, that they consider Indian conditions behind the times, Indian women lagging behind all other women, that they intend them and India to remain behind the times".

32. Ibid.
In July 1919, the women of Bombay assembled at a public meeting to protest against the indignity put upon their sex and to express their deep regret at the recommendations of the Southborough Committee not to include women as a whole in the franchise proposals. But the committee disposed off the claims of women in four pages out of a report of 400, so insignificant did women seen in the eyes of the Committee. At the protest meeting resolutions passed advocating women's suffrage which were sent to government officials and eleven cablegrams were sent to prominent people in England to give their supports to this demand.

DELEGATION IN LONDON:

On the notion of Montague it was decided to refer the Bill to a Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and Commons, which was appointed in July 1919. The Indian delegation went to England to give evidence before the Committee. Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant were present as the members of All India Home Rule League. The Women's Committee sent Mrs. Hirabai Tata and her daughter Mithin Tata from Bombay to express strong feelings of India women on the issue.


On August 6, 1919, Sarojini Naidu handed over her memorandum to the Joint Select Committee. She supported the plea for Franchise of women in India. She gave evidence on August 7th, she enumerated a long list of eminent women and questioned the justification of denying them political rights. The practical difficulties of enrolling and registering purdaha women were no different from protecting the interest of minority groups. There seemed little rational in denying the vast majority of women the right to vote in the interest of a small group. All these ladies so convinced the Committee that Parliament actually had to consider votes for women as a "domestic subject" leaving it for India Provincial Legislature to settle the matter.

While in England the Women's delegation spoke at public meetings and was enthusiastically supported by the British Women's organisation, which also promoted the cause of women's suffrage in India. Finally, in their testimony, the women took the stand that it was the principle of female suffrage which was important, and special polling arrangements were unnecessary. This stand

38. Sengupta, Padmini, Ibid.
important, and special polling arrangements were unnecessary. This stand offered a way of avoiding the expense and complexity of the special arrangements about which the provincial governments had complained. There was no favourable outcome of these various efforts, that in the new reform scheme it was left to the elected legislatures of the provinces to decide the problem of franchise for women in their respective province.

The Indian women leaders were disappointed that the decision was left to the Indian legislatures, but the Indian women's Association began the next stage of its campaign, as soon as the British Government published the Rules for Elections to provincial Legislative Councils in 1920. The suffrage campaign was limited in nature and consisted of offering resolutions and the lobbying of members of the legislative councils. A hard-hitting campaign did not appear to be necessary to attain approval. The educated Indian elite in the legislature for the most part passed proposals willingly when the issue was raised. The province of Madras was the pioneer in the matter when in 1921, its legislature decided to extend the limited franchise to women and Bombay also introduced resolutions subsequently in the same year. United Provinces in 1923, Central Province, Punjab and Bengal in 1926. But the Provisions made for franchise in the Reform Act of 1919 were very much restricted. The qualifications laid down...
for franchise in British India were as follows:

Voters were assessed either to income tax on an annual income not less than Rs. 10000 to Rs. 20000 or to land revenue of Rs. 250 to Rs. 500.

In addition, those who had previous experience in public work or who were recognised as men of high scholarship or academic work were entitled to have their names for the council of state. It means that the right to vote was bestowed on property and educational basis. These qualifications thus excluded not only the masses and large section of the middle classes from franchise but also the entire womanhood, because very few women held property. Further, education was also not widespread among women. Inspite of the limitations it was a step forward. The very recognition of the right of women enfranchise implied equality of men and women in general and their political equality in particular.

FRANCHISE MOVEMENT IN BOMBAY:

Bombay was the first city in India to implement the right to vote to women. The Presidency secured the right under the leadership of Ramabai Ranade. She was the main inspirator to the franchise movement in the Presidency during 1918 to 1923. She arranged a meeting in Poona of the members of Legislative Councils and women of Poona in...

Seva Sadan. Ramabai Ranade continuously carried on the movement by using various media as holding meeting at various places in Poona and writing in the press. She also wrote letters to prominent women and women organisations which resulted in awakening of women and asking unanimously for the right. The campaign appeared to be more vigorous as 19 women's organisations and over 800 women including European women participated in it.

Late Mr. Harilal Desai moved in the Bombay Legislative Council a resolution in favour of the extension of the suffrage to women on certain economic conditions, i.e., the women who were paying certain income tax, were entitled eligible. The members like Wrangler R.P. Paranjpe, Rao Bahadur R.R. Kale and others supported the resolutions while many others spoke against it. But since freedom of expression and the right to vote was given to the Government members, Sir Henry Lawrence spoke in favour of it and referred to Ramabai in very complementary terms in such words as "which of us will not welcome a woman of Ramabai's stature and attainments as member of this Council?" This evoked a spontaneous applause and after three hours discussion the resolution was passed. Thus in 1921, the Bombay legislative Council removed the disqualification of sex for the legislative franchise.

44. Vidvans, M.S., Shrimati Ramabai Ranade; Vyakti Ani Karya (Marathi) PP.25-26 also refer to Parvate T.V. Op.Cit. PP.307-08.
46. Ibid.
In the year 1922, the Corporation of Bombay bestowed the right to vote to women on the condition of education and property. And in the same year women of Bombay implemented the right in the election of the Corporation. It can be said that the Bombay Corporation was more conscious about the right to vote to women as resolutions regarding it were continuously discussed in the meetings of the Corporation since 1906. The prominent persons who put forth the resolution were Jafar Rahemulla and Ram Navalkar.

According to the resolution of 1922, the elections of the Bombay Corporation were held in 1923 and four women, namely, Sarojini Naidu, Bachubai Lotvaia, Hari Hadgikson and Avantikabai Gokhale were elected.

Muddiman Committee and Women's Movement:

Shortly after the first success, the women's movement began to campaign for the removal of the ban on women members in the legislature. Women organised public meetings, met with officials and wrote articles in "Stri Dharma" a journal of Women's Indian Association, to press their demand. When the Enquiry Committee popularly known as Muddiman Committee met in 1924 to solicit

48. Ibid., P.160.
49. The Government of India appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Alexander Muddiman. The Committee made recommendations for the improvement of machinery of the Government and suggested that the parliament should declare such fundamental changes in the constitution of India as would make government fully responsible. It also recommended a Round Table Conference or Convention representing all interests should be held to detail scheme-Sethi R.R. and mahajan V.D., Op.Cit., PP.123-24.
evidence on the functioning of the Act of 1919, Woman took opportunity to represent and Mrs. Deep Narayan Singh represented the women's demand that they be eligible for the legislature. Muddiman suggested that women's associations should send written representations to the Committee. The Committee recommended that the earlier precedent be followed and the legislatures allowed to remove the sex disqualification. This happened without much difficulty with Madras, Bombay Punjab, Central Province, United Province and Assam as well as Indian Legislative Assembly, passing necessary resolution by 1927.

The Madras Legislative Council was the first to remove sex barrier for membership in the time for the general elections of 1926, and women took this golden opportunity. Indian women's Association supported the candidacy of Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya who ran as an independent. She was the only female candidate, and she lost by a margin of 515 votes. The Indian Women's Association did organise a delegation to government officials to demand that women be nominated to the legislative councils, which resulted in the success of nominating three women, viz., Muthulakshmi Reddi in Madras, Mrs. Ahmed Shah in the United Province and Mrs. Anusuya Kale in the Central Province. Muthulakshmi Reddi, a leader

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51. Ibid.
52. Reddi, Muthulakshmi, Autobiography, Madras, P.964, P.47. also refer to Cousins, J.H., and Cousins Margaret E., We Two, Together, Ganesh and Co. Madras, 1950, P.446.
of Women's Indian Organisation, was chosen by her colleagues in the Legislative Council to be the Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council and acquired a distinguished reputation for her legislative work in the area of social reform.

The outcome of the first phase of the campaign for female representation was that both the British Government and the Indian Political elite accepted the principle of female franchise and their representation in legislature. The Congress after formally supporting women's franchise in 1918 turned away from legislative politics, but it did show support for the principle of female representation by electing Sarojini Naidu as Congress President in 1925. Naidu indicated that the interpreted the honour this way. She stated that her presidentship was "generous tribute to Indian womanhood and a token of your loyal recognition of its legitimate place in the secular and spiritual counsels of the nation." Indian liberals supported the women's campaign in legislatures and in their demands for constitutional reforms. Annie Besant organised a National Convention in 1924 which drafted the Commonwealth of India Bill. This Bill included articles stating that there would be no sex disqualification in franchise, in legislatures, and in public services. Many prominent Indians signed a

53. Indian Quarterly Register, 1925, II P.316.
manifesto in support of the Bill, including Home Rulers, Swarajists, Sarojini Naidu and Dorothy Jinrajadas, from the Women's Indian Association.

The Commonwealth of India Bill was introduced into the British Parliament in 1925 but was not enacted. The acceptance of the principle of female political representation by the British seemed to be the favourable response shown by the Indian political elite.

THE SECOND PHASE (1928-1937):

The second phase of the women's campaign began with the hearings of the Indian Statutory Commission in 1928. Another process of the constitutional reform began with this Commission and culminated in the Government of India Act 1935. During this period, the movement campaigned for an extension of women's franchise and increased representation of women in the legislatures. All important political groups agreed to these demands, and the issues of contention were on what terms should the extension be granted and on what terms should women be represented.

During this phase, we come across two groups of women, viz., the Equal Rights Faction, which demanded political representation on adult suffrage and not on reserved seats, secondly, the Women's Uplift Faction, which demanded the right of reserved seats. The demands of the women's

56. The British Government appointed the Indian Statutory Commission in 1927 which was popularly known as Simon Commission, after the name of its Chairman, for the purpose of whether and when responsible Government should be established in India. The Commission was consisted of Seven persons all were Englishmen Aggarwala, R.N., Op. Cit., pp. 149.
uplift faction fit into the strategy of representation being formulated by the British policy makers and many of these demands were incorporated into the new constitution.

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The "Nehru Report" was published in August 1928. The main principles of the Nehru Report were dominion status and responsible government. It also contained several provisions that marked a change in nationalist strategy towards the political representation of women. There was a "Declaration of Fundamental Rights" which included a provision, "men and women shall have equal rights as citizens". The equal rights perspective shaped the Nehru Report provisions on franchise which was to be based on adult suffrage and joint electorates was not accepted by most of the minority groups.

When Simon Commission arrived in India in 1928, the leaders of equal rights faction, i.e., leaders of the women's Indian Association as Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinrajadas, Margaret Cousins signed a manifesto rejecting the Commission. However, the leaders of women's uplift faction did appear before the Commission and argued for an extension of female suffrage and reservation of four seats for women in the legislatures in order to encourage women to better represent women's interest in education and social welfare. The Congress and all other parties decided to boycott the Simon commission and the Congress declared its objective as complete independence. The Constitution formulated by the All Parties Conference was known as "Nehru Report" after its main architect, Motilal Nehru.

58. Ibid.
members of the women's delegation to the Commission were Rani of Mandi, Mrs. Ahmad, a former member of the United Province Legislative council and Mrs. Chitamber. They wanted qualifications appropriate to the particular situation of women and not the same qualifications that had been devised for men. The delegation proposed that women should be enfranchised through "wifehood qualifications" which they recommended to be set as twice the minimum property qualifications for franchise.

The women's uplift faction also represented at the first Round Table Conference held at London from November 1930 to January 1931, which was boycotted by the Congress. The British government appointed two ladies, who were sympathetic to the government's position and shared a women's uplift faction, Viz. Radhabai Subbaroyan and Begum Shah Nawaz. These two ladies again supported the idea of wifehood qualifications and seats reserved for women in the legislatures. They did not, however, want the seats to be reserved on a communal basis. Though Radhabai Subbaroyan wrote to leaders of the women's Indian Association regarding issues to be raised at the Conference, the leaders refused to communicate their opinion to any women attending the conference as their demand for dominion status was refused by the Viceroy.


62. Begum Shah Nawaz was a prominent leader and daughter of Muslim League leader, Muhammed Shafi—Ibid.

63. Indian Social Reformer, October, II, 1930.
Thus it shows that a split had developed by 1930, within the women's movement between those who aligned themselves with the Congress and those who were not involved in the nationalist activities. In 1930, the first group, the nationalist faction participated in the Civil Disobedience movement but it had not considered seriously the issue of the representation of women.

The Simon Commission proposed special franchise qualifications for women along the lines suggested by the women's delegation. Being the wife of 25 or widow of a man meeting the property qualifications of the Act 1919 and it proposed more liberal property and educational qualifications for men and women. Though the Commission did not recommend reservation of seats in the legislatures for women, it did favour to the representation of women and urged provincial governments to nominate women if none was elected.

PROGRESS OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE:

The Congress adopted the policy of adult suffrage and the principle of equal rights for men and women in April 1931.

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64. Indian Statutory Commission, Report II PP. 78-79, 93.
65. In 1931 the Indian National Congress declared All citizens are equal before the law irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex" and "No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex in regard to public employment, office power, or honour and in the exercise of any trade or calling—Shah, K.T. (ed.) National Planned Economy, Vora and Co. Publisher Ltd., Bombay, 1947, P. 29.
The nationalist minded women leaders from three women's organisation, viz, the Women's Indian Association, All Indian Women's Conference and the National Council of Women, India, met together to formulate co-ordinated suffrage demands which supported the policy of the Congress. The three organisations first met in April 1931 under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu and drafted a joint memorandum known as Memorandum I. It outlined the following principles:

1. No sex disqualification in voting, candidacy, public office or employment.
2. Adult franchise and.
3. Rejection of special expedients to ensure women's membership in legislatures.

This memorandum was submitted to the Minorities Committee, at the Second Round Table Conference, which was held from 7th September to 1st December, 1931. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Begum, Shah Nawaz and Radhabai Subbaroyan were present, the first two were the members of equal rights faction. Radhabai Subbaroyan again presented women's uplift faction. She suggested that five percent of the seats in the first three legislatures be reserved for women.

As the Indians could not arrive at any settlement, the Second Round Table Conference was a failure and Ramsay Machdonald gave his famous award known as "Communal Award" on 16th August 1932. The British Government explicitly applied communal principles though both the sections of women's movement rejected women's franchise and representation. In the provincial legislatures, all seats including those reserved for women, would be allocated to members of specific communities and the electorates for each seat would consist of members of a single community. The Government reserved 2.5 percent of the seats in the provincial legislature for women. The equal rights faction sent a cable to the Viceroy which indicated its disapproval on communal electorates.

The Third Round Table Conference, which met during November and December 1932, to which the only woman member, Begum shah Nawaz was present, raised objections in expanding women's franchise too much for the fear of causing instability. The report recommended that women enfranchised through special qualifications should only be put on electoral rolls through application. The British Government published a White Paper on Indian Constitutional reforms in March 1933, which held that all persons enfranchised through wifehood qualifications would have to

apply for putting their names on the electoral rolls. The special literacy qualifications for men and women of a province were established, although, the qualifications varied across the provinces.

Begum shah Nawaz convinced Amrit Kaur, Muthulakshmi Reddi and other leaders of equal rights faction that it was essential to present their case before the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament which was to consider the white Paper. Ten women selected from the above said three organisations met on 25th March 1933 to draft a second joint memorandum and select representative to testify before the Joint Select Committee in London. Amrit Kaur, Muthulakshmi Reddi and Mrs. Hamid Ali were chosen as the representatives. Disagreement developed within the meeting on the issue of joint electorates. Begum shah Nawaz was a member of the Indian delegation to the Joint Select Committee. She and the two of the equal rights faction spent the summer speaking in meetings in Britain about the Indian women's movement and its demands for political rights.

The delegation proposed compromise measures as follows:–

1. Franchise to the provincial and federal legislature for men and women on the basis of the same literacy and lowered property qualifications.

70. Indian Social Reformer, April 1 1933 P.492.
(2) Urban adult franchise and 
(3) The additional of educational qualification for 
   membership in the Council of State and explicit 
   eligibility of women for this body. 

Though, the Indian National Trade Union Federation 
and the South Indian Liberal Federation supported the 
equal rights faction most of the other representatives as 
Muslim League, Indian Government officials opposed the 
women's franchise proposals. Finally, Winston Churchill, 
who presented the conservative British Position against 
constitutional advance, argued against adult suffrage. 

The report of the Joint Select Committee on Indian 
Constitutional Reform was published in October 1934, and 
the proposals for women's representation were incorporated 
into the Government of India Act 1935 with only minor 
changes. The following qualifications for franchise in 
the case of women embodied in the Government of India Act, 
1935, reveal the extent of advance made by women with 
respect to voting. Women of 21 years of age and over will 
be eligible to vote as follows: 

(1) Those who hold some property and taxation qualifications 
as men. 
(2) Those who are able to read and write in any Indian 
   language or dialect in common use in some part of 
   the country. 

(3) Those who are wives and widows of those who were in previous financial year assessed for the payment for income tax and

(4) Those who were wives and widows of a retired, pensioner or discharged officer or soldier of His Majesty's regular military forces.

Though women welcomed the Act as a step forward in the equalitarian struggle, they were dissatisfied with the scheme on account of the qualifications imposed on the right to vote and thereby limiting it. Before these provisions were incorporated in the law, the three leading women's organisations issued a joint statement criticising its major defects. They remarked in the statement that the property qualifications attached to franchise in poor country like India, automatically excluded the majority of women from franchise. The reservation of seats was a pure undemocratic act. Moreover women were not permitted to sit in the second chamber. They expressed the view that all special privileges should be done away with. Moreover, the "wifehood" qualification was objectionable since "It places a premium on men and does not recognise their independent right of suffrage".

The Act extended the franchise to more than six million women, a great improvement on the figure of 3,15,000

under the Act of 1919. Thus women voters increased by no means of twenty-ones times. Even then only 2.5 percent of adult women had received right to vote.

In the 1937 elections 41 seats were reserved for women. Eight women were elected from general constituencies. Five were nominated to the Upper House. When the provincial cabinets were formed six women took office: one as minister and others as Deputy speakers and parliamentary secretaries. Vijalakshmi Pandit became the Minister for Local self Government in United Provinces, and later Anusuya Kale, and T.T. Sipahimalini were appointed as Deputy Speaker in Madhya Pradesh and Sind respectively, and Hansa Mehta and Begum Nawaz took office as Parliamentary Secretaries in Bombay and Punjab.

The Act of 1935 however, did enfranchise a larger number of women. The subsequent struggle of the Indian women for adult franchise was linked with the struggle for national independence.

The movement thus known as Women's Suffrage Movement was deeply rooted in the minds of reformers and educated, so it awakened the women of Maharashtra. On account of the work of Mahatma Phule, Savitribai Phule, G.G. Agarkar, Keith, A.B., A Constitutional History of India. 1600-1935, Kitabstan, Allahabad, 1961, P.359.

75. Report of Indian Franchise 1932 Vol.1, P.166.
76. UNSCO. The Status of Women in South Asia, PP.86-87.
Justice M.G. Ranade and others, women began to get their place in the society. No doubt, many other persons and organisations had worked for the upliftment and welfare of the women in Maharashtra. And when such a chapter of women awakening and progress was opened, the national movement of India was also growing from towns to villages. Demands of people were growing and they required more and more concessions so also there were reforms in the laws, governing the freedom of speech, expression, faith and organisation. The beginning of the First World War gave a new impetus to India's struggle for freedom and developed a real sense of freedom in the minds of the Indian people. They began to demand more political rights and a representative form of Government which was to be responsible to the British Viceroy of India or to the British Crown in England the Crown was to be the king Emperor of British India.

It was under those circumstances in August 1917, that Mr. E.S. Montague, Secretary for the State for India, declared in the British Parliament to grant more political concessions including the right of electing their representative on the basis of adult franchise. Naturally when the right to vote became possible for men, the Indian women like Sarojini Naidu, Hirabai Tata, Mithibai Tata, Ramabai Ranade and others also cherished the same right
to Indian women in Maharashtra. Then a delegation of women was sent to Southborough Committee for demanding the right of adult franchise to women in Maharashtra and this movement ultimately grew so powerful that as mentioned above, about eight women were elected from general constituencies in the election of 1937. This was naturally to effect Marathi women and so they did take part actively in that movement to make it a success. And by the time of Quit India Movement and earlier to that also, Marathi women had become quite aware of their rights and their importance in the struggle for Indias freedom. Thus the Consciousness and vigilence for self-right and prestige so also the understanding of their legitimate place in the society were created in the minds of Marathi women during this period of women suffrage movement.