CHAPTER IV

ORGANISING AROUND WOMEN'S CONCERNS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to understand the dominant issues the voluntary organisations concerned with women are upholding today, it will be necessary to take a brief overview of the concerns and issues which earlier women's voluntary agencies had upheld. This historical exercise will enable us to view the interlinkages between the dominant women's issues and the other salient movements and events of the period. We will be able to understand how the women's position in India was influenced by the Social Reform Movement of the nineteenth century, the Indian National Movement as well as the other movements, embryonic but significant, of the day such as the environment and ecology movement and the civil liberties and democratic rights movement.

It may be useful to trace the salient issues raised by the voluntary change of women's status in India, by outlining three separate time-spans or phases i.e., (i) the pre-independence phase; (ii) the post-independence phase up to 1975; and (iii) the post 1975 phase, or the period following the International Women's Year of the United Nations.
In the pre-independence phase, women’s issues were touched by two important influences - the Social Reform Movement and the Indian National Movement. It may be important to examine each in order to discover the far-reaching changes they were able to bring into the life of the Indian woman.

There had been an impetus towards change at the initiative of social reformers belonging to the Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj who spoke against prevailing customs like sati, female infanticide, prohibitions against widow marriage, all of which were seen as detrimental to the status of women. These social reformers were largely, "male intellectuals and crusaders",¹ who had been exposed to western education, society and values. Thus in 1829 Raja Ram Mohan Roy succeeded in pressurizing the British to ban sati. Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar drew up a petition on the marriage of Hindu widows and campaigned against child marriage. Age of consent for marriage was fixed at 10 and then raised to 12 years. There was denunciation of purdah and polygamy, and a move towards securing property rights for women.²

The importance of these reformers was that they were able to provide the first public space for women, and create though their unflagging campaigns, a climate...
for "the idea of uplifting women in spite of an orthodox Brahmanic backlash".3

However this movement towards an improved status of women came as "a part of a larger concern for reform within Indian society".4 The motivation for reform did not spring from any consciousness of women's well-being, or the necessity of the equality of her position in society. It was obscurantism and custom which the reforms were fighting. They were imbued with the anxiety of removing from the Indian society, these "blots."5 Says Mazumdar:

"There were only a few reformers who went beyond the need to imitate the West".6

The Reform Movement, also laid a great emphasis on women's education.7 However, the rationale for this was seen in the "strengthening the hold of indigenous culture though the institution of the family".8

There was a concern that exposure of men to education and western influences was widening the gulf between spouses, and reducing the ability of women to influence the men of their family. Education would be the means to narrow this mental gap. It would promote women's efficiency as wives and mothers and would also strengthen the hold of traditional values in society. Thus education was not being viewed in the light of its transformative capacity for increasing consciousness.
This narrow perception of the women's concerns also served to limit the transformative capacity of the reform movement tending it towards being largely concerned with the problems faced by middle class women and therefore limited in scope. Says Mazumdar:

The 19 century reformers being primarily concerned with the problems of the newly emerging middleclass, and concentrated all their concerns for women with the problems experienced by the women of this class.

This limited perspective has been criticised. Its influence as a change-agent for women was limited in scope. It was not able to take cognisance of the plurality of the economic classes, the diversity of the problems of Indian womanhood, the consequence of overlap between social subordination and economic depression and the special nature of oppression of a patriarchal environment.

The *Towards Equality* Report feels that these movements were "elitist in character and limited in approach".10

Thus while contributing in improving the living conditions of a category of women, they left the larger populace untouched.11

Vina Mazumdar states :

The greatest failure of the reform movement lay in its inability to expose the nature of oppression that affected women in different layers of our society and consequently to set any goals that
would be meaningful to all women and those who believed in their cause.\textsuperscript{12}

But some gains definitely emanated from the Reform Movement. The Report, \textit{Towards Equality} (1974), points out the impact of the Movement on Indian society. It states:

Some of the ideas projected by them, namely disapproval of child marriage and ill-treatment of women within the family, ensuring them a position of greater dignity, have become part of the general cultural heritage of this sector of Indian society.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Impact of the National Movements}

During the National Movement, the issues of women's rights and transformation in status was closely intermeshed, with the Movement for Indian independence. Each influenced the other. While the objective of independence was by far the higher and more comprehensive ideal, women too as half the population had to be carried along in the fulfilment of the first objective. The consequence was a distinct influence in the consciousness of women.

The leadership of Gandhi was an eventuality which which was to greatly influence the role and perception of women. It is said that Gandhi:

\begin{quote}
... gave Indian women's movement its particular character and helped it to move from upliftment to the second phase of demanding equality. Gandhi... made the vital shift from the reformist tradition
\end{quote}
which saw women as objects of reform, to projecting them as agents of transformation - their own and the nation's. 14

Gandhiji was able to draw women into the freedom struggle, and his philosophy could bridge the dichotomy between home and society.

Geraldine Forbes states that Gandhi maintained that the relationship between freedom from British domination, and a social and moral regeneration was "germane". 15 Gandhi saw women's role in this regeneration as important. He made women a part of the national struggle, by on the one hand urging them to "come out" and join the struggle, and on the other by insisting that constructive activity like spinning khadi, wearing khadi, teaching and 'serving' were as important as attending meetings. 16

Women were brought into active participation. This helped to reduce social shackles, promote greater awareness. Forbes points out:

Through the involvement of women in picketing and demonstrations, two things happened. Women themselves realised that they were not as weak and helpless as they had come to believe and the men developed a new respect for their strength and ability to suffer. 17

Patel and Bakshi point out to women's participation in other movements of the pre-independence period such as the Tehbharga movement, the Telengana Movement, and in the terrorist groups during the national movement, as
well as in Subhash Bose's Indian National Army. The prime consequence of this participation for women was that they were radicalised and politicised. 18

In the early years of the twentieth century there was a growth of a large number of women's organisations. Among the many other sabhas, samities, clubs and societies with a limited regional focus, this period also saw the advent of two all-India organisations for women, i.e., the National Council of Women in India (1925) and the All-India Women's Conference (1926). 19

Nandita Gandhi testifies that the women now demanded separation from the organisations of the reform movement on the plea that they were not going to set up rival groups, but merely desired to "facilitate the entry of more women into their organisation". 20

The activity of women through the many organisations benefitted women in many ways. Firstly: they created awareness and developed organisational skills among women. Secondly: the debates and discussions on issues in these organisations contributed to greater clarity and sharpness of perception on the women's issues. 21 They were also able to carry out some significant welfare activity. 22

However the wider perspective adopted in those days did not permit a sharp focus on the women's problem as a
principle item on the agenda of social action. Swaraj, at that time appeared to offer the answer to all the problems. Under the compulsions of nationalism, the development of women's consciousness was hampered. Awareness of rights lay at the level of equality with men. Awareness of the oppression as the female sex, or the consciousness of exploitation linked with social subordination had not entered into the cognitive plane of women. In fact the women were careful to keep away from any political advantage distinct from their male counterparts. There was rather a feeling that any positive discrimination too would be a big drawback in the quest for political equality.

A deputation of women waiting upon Mr. Montagu, Secretary of State, who was studying Indian conditions preparatory to initiating constitutional reform in India, made a demand that the term "Indian people" should include Indian women. Indian women were not to be put on par with children, foreigners and lunatics in any scheme of reform for India.

In fact a resolution submitted by the All India Women's Conference in 1931 to the Viceroy asked for, the right of women to fight on par with men in mixed electorates, and for no reservation of seats for women or for any special nomination. Thus apparent in this
period was an assertion by women of their political right of being recognised as citizens.\textsuperscript{27}

Important women leaders, from liberal homes, making a place for themselves in politics however still perceived women’s roles in the traditional idiom. A speech of Sarojini Naidu, quoted by Forbes would make this clear:

> Women would have to learn to act like Hindu goddesses not just inside the home ... but in the community and the larger world as well.\textsuperscript{28}

The leadership not only of the Congress, the Communist and the Socialist Parties, but also of the All-India Women’s Conference broadly shared the Gandhian view that men and women by nature and biology were meant to perform different but complementary roles in the society, and that each had the right to be supreme in his or her domain.\textsuperscript{29}

Thus the complete absence of the feminist perspective in the articulation of the women’s role was evident.\textsuperscript{30}

Also evident was the complete absence of articulation of the rights of the rural women in the term "women’s conditions". Thus there was no discussion on the conditions of rural women or labouring women, or on the issues of equal pay for equal work, or on housing for women in the nationalist women’s organisations.\textsuperscript{31}
Forbes points to the ironical situation where the large scale participation of rural women, and the picketing demonstrations and agitational politics in which they participated helped build a climate in which the endorsement of the demands of women who were largely middle-class, and urban.  

Says S.R. Bald about the consequence of this period of women's activism:

... a discussion of the women's question without a critical examination of the patriarchal tradition, inevitably emphasized differences between men and women, preserved traditional roles, and the male-female hierarchy.  

The Second Phase: The Post-Independence Period

The Women's Movement in the immediate post-independence period was characterized by the following features:

a. Important legislation and other state-initiated change favouring women in the initial period;

b. A sense of complacency bred by the achievements of women's groups;

c. A primacy to the upper and middle-class women and their interests rather than those of the lower classes.

The constitutional guaranteed equality for women was the crowning achievement of the struggle of women in the pre-independence nationalist phase. More legislation was enacted by the government to further the effort to achieve equality between the sexes. The objective was to modify the role of women as defined by
law and custom. These laws were the Hindu Marriage Act (1955) which secured the right to divorce, the Succession Act (1956) which secured the right to property and the Adoption Act (1956). It appeared that with the adoption of the principle of equality, of the vote, of the right to education, entry into public offices, the women's question "was deemed to have been solved". 35

However the issue of implementation of these policies, and the absence of a machinery for the same was not considered. There was a sense of complacency too among the women.

Neera Desai points out the position in the post-independence period:

The upper and middle classes were the beneficiaries both of higher education and new employment opportunities. The academic and medical professions which were most liberal in accommodating an increased number of gifted women ... helped strengthen the illusion of rapid improvement in women's conditions and achievement of equality by them. 36

Moreover, since the government's policies towards women veered towards welfarism and women's development was being confined to education, health and family welfare, women's groups and associations too were influenced by this notion. 37 The women organisations tended to perceive women as beneficiaries of economic developments and not as active participants. 38
class in their origin, they had not developed the awareness that the socio-economic ethos may prove to be a restriction upon the exercise of guaranteed rights. The economic concerns of the poorer sections were not articulated.

The Post 1975 Phase

Some significant political, economic, social and academic issues had made their presence felt in the period of the seventies. There had been the loosening of the colonial ties and several new independent nations had been established. The long drawn out Vietnam war had contributed to a sense of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the US. Campus unrest in the West had raised far-reaching questions. The growing tide of feminist consciousness in the west challenged the accepted, traditional modes of division of social power in a patriarchal society and called for a review of some accepted premises.

In academic circles there was a growing dissatisfaction and discomfort with the notion of development premised on the modernisation theory which had held sway in the post second world war western nations and which had earlier been unquestioningly accepted by the developing countries. This dissatisfaction found voice in newer theories which
attempted to explain the fact of underdevelopment of the erstwhile colonial countries, rather than explicate the notion of development based upon the idea of growth. Theories of dependency, the modes of production and the neo-Marxist schools were put forward as alternate explanations of the economic backwardness of the Third World. The question of alternative strategies for growth were also being raised.

Says Nandita Gandhi

The first and second waves of the women's movement in India emerged and drew ideological and organisational support from the general movements in the country. To a large extent both these phases were successful in eliminating the most blatant atrocities against women and securing constitutional rights. They also expanded the scope of the public and intellectual arena open to women. The experiences of the women in the movements of the 1970s prepared the ground for a more intense and lonely search for freedom and justice.

The post 1975 period in the women's movement revealed two primary characteristics. One was the presence of a large number of autonomous groups — independent of political parties — which pressed the demands articulated by the women's movement. Second is the change in the nature of the issues upheld by the movement in comparison with the salient issues of the earlier phase. Both these characteristics are closely inter-related : the latter pointing to the content and the former to the modes of expression of the issues.

Thus the issues that they take up have a very wide
range and diversity such as price rise, eve-teasing, rape, dowry-deaths; they may take up the activity of supporting women in distress, unionising workers domestics and slum dwellers; they may research on women's issues, set up media groups or publishing houses or cultural forums which centre on the concern for the woman and her situation.41

Nandita Gandhi, considers this form of organisation as a step by which:

the new groups have broken tradition and stepped out from under the umbrella of male patronage, defying both conservative and left ideology42.

This kind of organisational initiative prevented the marginalisation and side-stepping of women's issues evident in most organisations. It also contributed to the furtherance and refinement of the issues of debate within the women's movement. Thus it was able to overcome not only the ideological stagnation in understanding the women's issues, but also bring a certain dynamism to the struggle.

Women's autonomous groups have attempted to carve out an identity separate from other political parties. However, at one level of understanding, women's groups have much in common with the left groups since both are committed to the issue of equality and social justice. This is even more true for those autonomous women's
groups which engage themselves in mobilisational and organisational tasks among the poor.

According to Patel and Bakshi,

whereas the efforts for women made by fronts of established parties had been marked by a certain tokenism, the emerging women's groups distinguished themselves by dealing with the personal and immediate issues. Without waverin on their commitment to the working class, these groups insisted on making the cause of the woman the top priority, not to be subordinate to any party line.

In fact many women's group may have drawn upon the Marxian mode and methodology, without being part of the Left in the form of a political party.

Thus there is an ambivalence in the relationship of the women's groups to the left parties. It initially stems from the perception of the women's groups that women suffer from a unique form of exploitation and oppression, which the economic class question may further reinforce or influence. The Left has traditionally viewed the issue of economic class exploitation as primary.

Traditional left method of agitation and trade union activity have been seen by women's autonomous groups as unable to touch important issues of women's subordination such as wages in the unorganised sector, the issue of oppression within personal laws, shortfalls in legal rights, etc. The left parties on the other hand perceive non-party groups as a challenge to their
hegemony as spokespersons for the deprived and
exploited.44

Many women have however been able to draw
inspiration from their association with the left groups
and have attempted to draw from this association even
while articulating women's unique oppression.45

These autonomous organisations first made their
appearance in the bigger cities, but have gradually
sprouted in all parts of the country. Some of these are
Stree Shakti Sangthana (Hyderabad), Sakhi Kendra
(Kanpur), Forum Against Rape (Bombay), Women's Centre
(Bombay), Forum Against Oppression of Women (Bombay),
Socialist Women's Group (Bombay), Ajivika Press (Patna),
Stree Sangbharsh (Delhi), Saheli (Delhi), Pennuramai
Iyakkam (Madras), Pragatisheel Mahila Samiti (Bombay),
Stree Mukti Sangthana (Bombay).46

The feminist movement in the West has also
contributed to a move towards autonomy in expression of
the demands of women. Vibhuti Patel points out that the
literature and campaigns of the Western women's
liberation influenced many women with higher
education.47

The issues around which autonomous women's
groups have appeared are of a very wide range. They are as

Patel points out in another essay:
born out of the knowledge that sense the power of patriarchy is all pervasive, it is important to fight in at all levels, from the family, to the factory to the fields.

However, this distinctive change in the content and tone of the issues upheld by the women's groups, and the increase in the feminist rhetoric of these demands was a consequence of the radicalisation and politicisation of Indian women—rural and urban—over the years under the impact of several disparate forces. These can be identified as the following:

1. In 1972 there was a strong protest by women against the rising prices of food and against the scarcity of oil and kerosene, under the banner of the Anti Price Rise Front. The idea of protest against price rise spread to different parts of the country. The protest brought out women from their houses in large numbers, involved them in protest action and "politicised women across the board."50

2. India's own brush with authoritarianism between 1975-77 in the form of the nineteen month Emergency served to emphasise the value and worth of constitutionalism and democratic governance. It also contributed to a greater politicisation of the people.51

3. The Report Towards Equality of the National Commission on Women in India (1974-74) was inexorably forced to the conclusion of an increasing
marginalisation of women in the economy and the society.
Say-Vina Mazumdar:

The Committee found in the demographic trends of the declining sex ratio, the growing disparity in the life expectancy and death rates of men and women, and in their access to literacy, education and a livelihood, indication of "regression from the norms developed during the freedom struggle", and an increasing process, which was taking a direction totally opposed to the vision put forward by the fathers of the Constitution.

4. The historic railway strike of 1975 contributed towards a radicalisation of the women, who as wives, mothers and sisters actively supported the strike in which their menfolk participated.

5. Some political activity in regions of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Kerala also served as a major source of radicalisation in the late sixties. These were activities of some radical students groups, some of which had severed ties with the CPI (M), and of some independent groups attempting to organise the tribal and peasants for armed struggle. Women too were closely involved.

6. In Gujarat in the early seventies women actively participated in the student agitation against price-rise and corruption, scarcity, hoarding and black-marketeering. This was termed as the Nav Nirman Movement.
7. In Bihar, a similar agitation took place. The issues here too were linked with corruption and price-rise. This was led by the Sarvodaya leader, Jai Prakash Narayan, who called for a Total Revolution. The women students were closely involved in the stir and had formed a special body called the Mahila Sangharsh Vahini.  

8. A rebellion launched by tribal women of the Garhwal hills against forest officials and contractors which came to be called the Chipko Movement, in 1977 is also cited as an instance of women's politicisation which had an impact on the nature of the women's movement in recent years.  

9. Issues of rape and dowry deaths:  

The campaigns against dowry murder and police rape were, in fact, what 'launched' the women's movement, for they caught the attention of the press and became public issues.  

This issue is also significant because the "first campaign of the developing movement centered on police violence against women".  

Subsequently, under pressure from the women's movement, the government finally decided to appoint a Law Commission to review the existing legislation on rape.  

Thus the collective impact of participation in
agitations, protests, demonstrations and discussions has been not only to draw attention to the impact of changing conditions upon the life of women, but also to empower the women. Women from the working classes and middle classes who participated in these mobilizations and struggles became conscious of themselves as a specially oppressed group.

Thus the post 1975 period in the women’s movement was characterised by a widening of its perspective as well as an improved comprehension of the linkages within which women’s issues were located. The hitherto middle-class nature of the movement gave way to an assimilation of the poverty perspective. This perhaps could be traced to the general dissatisfaction, manifest in the period of the seventies with the development policies which had been quite ineffective in the objective of eliminating poverty. The realisation of the marginalisation of the poorer sections was accompanied by an awareness that the place of poor women in a patriarchal society was at the very bottom of the socio-economic stratification.

This period had also seen the growth of studies relating to women which focussed upon the shortfalls, disadvantages and drawbacks emanating from the social cultural attitudinal and economic constraints faced by women.
This genre of studies focused on expanding the parameters of academic discussion to cover issues hitherto neglected or ignored by the dominant perspective.

Mazumdar has pointed out that:

a new body of literature on women and development, derived from an analysis of sex inequality of formal, legal and political systems, to an examination of new inequalities generated by the pattern of development. Linkages have been discovered at national, regional and global levels that provide new perceptions of an understanding of the changing pattern of women's inequalities, roles and problems.

These studies have aided in generating a huge data and literature on the various facets of women's inequality in the economic, political, legal and social fields. They have pointed out to new facets of inequality which have been generated by the development pattern.

The understanding of the structural violence against women was accompanied by a comprehension of state violence. Familial violence is being understood by the evidence supplied by instances of bride burnings and wife-murders. Religion and feudal customs too may contribute to denial to women of their rights as is evidenced by the devadasi custom and the incidence of sati.

Thus from the legislation-oriented approach of
change in the two earlier phases, the post 1975 phase displays a concern with positive interventions to change prevailing social conditions of injustice for women. There is a consciousness that the explanation for women's subordination lies in societal patterns. There is a consciousness that while law is an important means of bringing about change, nevertheless it can merely act as a directive. The social reformers of the 19th century and the leaders of the national movement phase in the women's movement had manifested their faith in law and their demands were addressed to the state. In the present time the project is more comprehensive and subtle. It is an investigation in the socio-cultural arena which restricts the successful application of the legal directive.

The programme which the women's groups see for themselves today is as follows:

a. to eliminate the shortfall between the legal and social position of women;

b. to eliminate those lacunae in law where they do not empower women equally. They can legally challenge these through judicial remedy or suggest suitable amendments;

c. to specifically criticise and protest and struggle against women-specific crimes, discrimination,
misuse of amniocentesis tests, dowry, dowry deaths/murders, rapes; and,

d. to create through research and documentation, a data-base in order to generate opinion and thought on the issue of women with the objective of achieving social change.
Notes


6. Ibid., p.3.

7. Neera Desai has pointed out, "In fifty years of the history of demand for social reforms, one could identify two different phases. In the first phase, social reformers made a strong plea for social reform. In the second phase, great stress was laid on the education of women". Neera Desai, "From Articulation to Accommodation: Women's Movement in India", Leela Dube, et.al, eds., Visibility and Power: Essays on Women, Society, and Development (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.290.


9. Vina Mazumdar, "Emergence of the Women's Question ...", op. cit., p.3.


11. The Social Reform Movement, states, Vina Mazumdar "touched only the urban middle class and upper class women who were less than ten percent of the female population of the Indian continent at that date". See, Neera Desai, "From Articulation to Accommodation ...", op. cit., p.291.
12. Ibid., p.291.


16. Ibid., p.366.

17. Ibid., p.378.


19. See, Forbes, op.cit., p.366. According to S.R. Bald, "The women's movement, as expressed by these organisations bore a parent-child relationship to the social reform movement that had given it birth, and a sibling relationship with the Indian National Congress", S.R. Bald, op.cit., p.199.

20. Nandita Gandhi, states that it was not ideological differences between the men and women that led the women to organise separately. Ibid., pp.85-86.

21. "Its [All-India Women's Conference] demands and radical terminology showed a shift from the welfare approach to demanding equality for men and women. For example, the earlier demand for education was broadened to a demand for co-education, legislative reform included marriage, divorce and inheritance laws, economic equality meant the right to a husband's income and pension for widows. There was a heated debate on the merits of universal franchise or the acceptance of wifehood qualifications as suggested by the British. Surprisingly even the right to abortion was discussed". Nandita Gandhi, op.cit., pp.86-87.


24. S.R. Bald points out that the decision for women's franchise was left by the British government to the provincial assemblies of British India, which were to be elected on the basis of a limited male suffrage. Consequently the Women's India Association and the Bharat Stri Mahamandal launched a campaign to pressure Indian men to 'allow' women to have voting rights. Op.cit., p.2000.


S.R. Bald points out that Sarojini Naidu "assured the men that the vote for the women was not the beginning of the end of traditional distribution of power and differentiation of roles between the sexes but a new partnership in winning freedom and building the nation". See, Bald, op.cit., p. 200.


33. Bald, op.cit., p. 203.

34. Article 14 gives all persons equality before the law; article 15 states that the "State shall not discriminate against citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth; article 16 grants equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters related to employment under the State".

35. Mazumdar, Emergence of the Women's ..., op.cit., p. 4.

36. Desai, op.cit., p. 293.

37. Ibid., p. 292.

38. Ibid., p. 293.


40. However, Nandita Gandhi points out that the rationale of the increase in the number of women's associations in the pre-independence period was different from that of the seventies. Earlier they had been set up in order to attract more women members. Nandita Gandhi's endeavour at identifying this historical similarity of emphasising associations in two stages of the women's movement defends the women's movement in India from "a common accusation that autonomous women's groups
are a western implant in our society". See Rajni Bakshi, "By way of an Introduction", Lokayan (Delhi), 4/6, p.14.


42. Gandhi, op.cit., p.89.


Sen reviews Vimal Ranadive’s document "Feminism and the Women’s Movement", published by All India Democratic Women’s Association, 1988.


They explicate, "It needs to be mentioned at this point, however, that our proximity to the left provided us with analytical tools and a broader political perspective that many of us felt was invaluable for our growth and for our new understanding to political action at the micro-level. Marxism had provided the basis for our political commitment and growth and continues to do so in many new ways'.

46. According to Radha Kumar, "Though there was no particular uniformity among them, their members were drawn largely from the urban educated middle class ....". See, Radha Kumar, "The Women’s Movement", Seminar, No.355, March, 1989.

47. Patel, "The birth of the women’s liberation movement was the result of a unique sharply polarised political conjuncture between the years 1968 and 1975, which had a radicalizing effect throughout the world. Many of the women who lived in the social and political struggles of that period became the pioneers of an autonomous women’s


49. This was led by Mrinal Gore and Ahilya Rangekar, The former was a Socialist Party and the latter a CPI (M) leader.

50. However it has been pointed out that this protest move was not a purely "women's issue", it was a consumer issue. SR Bald analyses, "The protesting women placed the issues of food and unemployment within the framework of women's traditional role as wife and mother... Women's protest against rising prices, scarcity and unemployment therefore expressed women's frustration and anger with the material conditions that threatened their ability to fulfil their gender ascribed roles, women were not protesting against the traditional differentiation of roles". Bald, op.cit., p.209.

51. According to V Mazumdar, the new momentum in the women's movement may be perceived as "a manifestation of the reassertion of the Indian people of their democratic rights after the experience of national Emergency". Mazumdar, op.cit., pp.5-6.

52. Ibid., p.5


55. Ibid., p.317.

Radha Kumar has pointed out that influenced by J.P.'s emphasis during the period of the agitation to change gender relations, women's groups, from 1979-80 began to organised shibirs, camps in Bodhgaya district. This method of consciousness raising which had been earlier used by the Maoists became popular among various women's organisations. See Radha Kumar, op.cit., p.23.

56. Patel "Womens Liberation in India", "New Left Review", op.cit., pp.78-79. In fact, issues around the Mathura Rape were made the basis of a nation-wide mobilization.
57. Ibid., p. 80.
58. Ibid., p. 80.
59. Bald, op. cit., p. 211.
60. Mazumdar, Emérgence of the Women's Question ..., op. cit., p. 12.