PREFACE

India is a country of heterogeneous culture. The position of women in society is still influenced by social and cultural factors like traditions and customs, religion, caste, class and income strata. All these factors are influenced determinants of social perception of women. The progress of a country can be judge by the states of its women as she occupies a significant place in the family in particularly and society in general.

The Central theme of the thesis entitled, "Women’s Empowerment in India Since 1952". Empowerment of women is seen as a key avenue to reduce the imbalance between the twin genders, which are found in nearly all stage. Empowerment involves greater control over the circumstances of their lives.

The whole plan of the study is divided into five chapters, each under specific theme being dealt with some what in detail.

The First Chapter deals with position and role of women under the various phases like Vedic, Anicent, Gupta and Mughal periods and also examined the role of women in Indian National Movement. It gives ample opportunity for women’s participation in social and political activities. It presents vivid activities of few eminent Indian political leaders in pre-independence period. A glimpse at history of our freedom struggle shows that they were on par with men even in politics. These women laid the foundation for women’s struggle for empowerment in 20th Century.

The Second Chapter examines status of women in Indian Constitution. Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of the State Policy not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women have been discussed in this chapter. The Indian Government has passed various Acts to safeguard Constitutional rights
of women and improve their socio-economic status are discussed in this chapter.


The Third Chapter analyses changing pattern of women in the context of socio-economic scenario. The importance of education, health and nutrition is discussed in this chapter as it is the most powerful tools for socio-economic empowerment of women. The Government of India has launched several programmes and policies for promoting empowerment and development of women under Five Year Plan. The Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations are also taking positive initiative for the improvement of women in various sphere of life. Female work participation rate, Report of Committee on the Status of Women in India, National Perspective Plan for Women are highlighted in this chapter.

The Fourth Chapter traces women’s representation in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies and changing patterns of women’s leadership and their role in decision making process. The main focus of this study is to show the level of representation of women in Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies and also in local bodies. The participation of women in the local bodies is considered essential not only for
ensuring their political participation in the democratic process but also for realizing the developmental goals for women. It also covers the recommendations of various committees as regards to women’s participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts giving impetus to women’s development have also been analyzed.

The Fifth Chapter gives a brief summary of the study and contains the major finding of the study and tries to look for the future trends. An overview of the changing position and role of women in politics and also an overall assessment on the extent of their participation in the local bodies after 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts.

Objectives of this Study:

The present study is a modest attempt towards women’s empowerment and address the changing role of women in political process in India. Main objectives of this present study are as follows:

1. To study the actual position of women’s representation in the Parliament, Legislative Assemblies and also in the local bodies, and their role in participatory decision making process.

2. To examine the role of women in political and social movements launched in the various part of the country.

3. To analyze various Constitutional Provisions, Acts and judicial mandate relating to women.

4. To present a concrete picture of employment status of women in India.

5. To study the policies and programme of Government under the Five Year Plans for the empowerment of women.

6. To examine women’s participation in the electoral politics at the national and state levels and also study the participation of women in Panchayats and Municipalities in the wake of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts.
7. To highlights the efforts and administrative support of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations to make the position of women better in the society and in which manner and to what extent.

8. To suggest various measures for encourages women to enter and to enable them to play an effective role in the decision making process.

Hypothesis:

Hypothesis is usually considered as the principal instrument in research. Keeping these destinations in mind the following hypothesis has been tested by research study.

1. Women form political family background, better economic status, joint families, better educated, married and middle of the ages are more likely to contest elections and their percentage of participation is more in comparison to deprived classes of women.

2. Women’s education is a significant factor in determining women’s empowerment. Higher level of literacy among women is likely to exhibit higher degree of participation and representation in the decision making.

3. The processes of modernization change the character of political behaviour of women. They gradually realized their strength and attempt to gain for themselves a share in the process of decision-making by participation in more and more political activities.

4. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts to the Indian Constitution have served as a major break through towards ensuring women’s equal access and increased participation in political power structures. These Amendments are a milestone in the way of women assuming leadership in decision making. The impact of these Amendments cannot be denied in changing the socio economic life of the women.
Methodology:

The present study on women empowerment was an exploratory study. In carrying out this search, both primary as well as secondary sources of data have been used to conduct the intensive study. The primary sources include the officials documents like Government Reports of Election Commission, Parliamentary and Assembly Debates, Women Census and Reports of the Indian National Congress Committee. These sources provided useful statistical information throughout in various Parliament and Assembly Election. Besides these primary sources, several secondary sources are also consulting for this study. Secondary sources are particularly useful in examining the theoretical aspects of this study. The study will however, also takes help from books and articles and journals written by experts on the topical theme, for better understanding of the situation. Thus, all the materials collected would be subjected to critical scrutiny the analytical framework.

Findings:

India has an elaborated system of laws to protect the rights of women which have been enacted form time to time to remove gender discrimination and protect women’s rights.

It is the fact that representation of women in the Lok Sabha has not crossed 10 percent. In the Lok Sabha there were only 22 women constituting 4.4 percent of the House. It increased marginally over the years except in the Sixth Lok Sabha when the House had only 19 women member. In the Thirteen Lok Sabha there were 49 women members, however in the Fourteen Lok Sabha, again the strength of women members has come down to 44. Similarly in the case of Rajya Sabha the percentage of women members has never crossed 12 percent.

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts is a landmark in the history of women’s development as it is a revolutionary step towards women’s participation in decision-making and in political process of the country at least at the grass-root level and Municipalities. Currently, almost
one million women occupy positions as members and chairpersons in three-tier structure introduced by this Constitutional Amendment Act. At present there are 6,81258 women elected to Gram Panchayats, 37,109 women to Panchayats Samities at Intermediate Level and 3,153 women to Panchayats at District Level.

We have found that changes are more vivid in the structure of the expectations. It is hoped that with the spread of education, women will participate more and more in political activities. Women in themselves should develop a favourable attitude towards politics. They should spare time and should come out their homes to take part in political activities. Above all, there is also a need to replace the traditional value system, which is based upon inequality of sexes, and in which women play a subordinate role.

The dream of empowering women can only come true when each and every section of society will be free from gender bias and this advocate empowerment of women. Women should be encouraged to use their expertise of effect positive changes in the society. To empower the women, there is need to adopt an integrated approach towards upliftment It is necessary to raise the economic and social status of women so that they may be brought into the main stream of national development.

If present trends continue, it will give more importance to women empowerment. A day will come in near future when Indian women will enjoy real power in the field of politics which will lead to socio-economic empowerment of women. Women will also get their representation in Parliamarent and Legislative Assemblies. They will be elected as member of Parliament as well as member in the Legislatures.
CHAPTER-1

Position of Women before Independence

Women’s Empowerment in India has a long and rich history. Today, millions of ordinary women live, work and struggle to survive in order to make their families and social lives. Whether fighting for safe contraception, literacy, water, a vibrant and active women’s movement is thriving in many parts of India today and aims to successfully empower them.¹

In Ancient India, reverence was given to women as mother’s image, a symbol of life, strength and purity with immense capacity for patience, sacrifice and suffering. Women was depicted as ‘Shakti’ and it was an accepted belief that where women is respected, there is divine presence.²

During the period of Vedas and Upnishads, Women’s progress kept pace with that of men. Women were men’s friends and co-workers. In oriental society, men without participation of his wife could not perform religious rites.³ Regarding matter of education there was no any difference between a son and a daughter. Many women had become famous as teachers, seers, philosophers, poetesses and debators. The name of Lopmudra, Ghosha, Apala, Vak and Visavara are worth mentioning. Some of them had actually composed Vedic hymns. There were two types of women during the Vedic Period: (1) Brahmvedinis who were life long students devoted to studies and meditation and (2) Sadyovadhus who received education as long as they remained unmarried.⁴

Manu, (the Law giver of the Hindu) had also a soft corner in his heart for a woman. He said that where women are honoured, there deities are
pleased, but where women are not honoured, there all acts of no avail. With the advent of Lord Buddha and rise of Buddhism came happy days of women. Buddhism believed in social and religious equality. The women were assigned an honoured place in society. Buddhist literature is full of example of exalted womanhood. Some of nuns achieved great distinction as scholars, poets, thinkers and writers. They expounded high ethical truth and principles. The Therigatha (the Psalms of the Sisters) was a monumental work in Pali. Buddhism aroused in women feeling of self-confidence and self-respect.

During the Gupta Period, Prabhavati Gupta, the daughter of the Gupta Emperor Chandra Gupta, controlled for a long period the destiny of the Vakataka kingdom during the minority of her sons. Rajyashri, Harsha’s sister helped her brother and listened to the learned discourse given by the Chinese master of law.

Five generations of queens ruled over the Kara Kingdom of Orissa during the 9th and 10th Centuries. Didda ruled Kashmir in the 10th Century. In some areas, women acted as Provincial Governors and heads of Villages. Kurma Devi, a queen of the brave Rajput Chief Samarsi (Samar Singh) of Chittor, headed the Rajputs and gave battle in person to Kutub-d-Din near Amber after her husband had been killed in the second battle of Tairan in 1192 A.D. Tarabai, daughter of Rao Surthar, chief of Bednore, who belonged to the Solanki tribe, was a Rajput woman of remarkable military skill, flourished in beginning of the 16th Century. Rani Karnavati of Mewar took keen interest in political matters of that state and counteracted the evils of maladministration during the inefficient rule of her son Vikramjit. Rani Durgavati of Gondawana was also an example of unflinching determination and selfless heroism. She
repulsed the armed attack of Baz Bahadur on the kingdom of Gondwana and fought against Mughal forces. Some Mughals ladies were writers of distinction and good administrators. Some famous personalities are Gulbadan Begum, Jahan-Ara, Razia Sultana, Nur Jahan, Zibunnisa, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Chand Bibi, and Sahibji etc.\textsuperscript{11}

Razia Sultana became a ruler in the 13\textsuperscript{th} Century. Nurjahan practically ruled over India for 16 years. Chand Bibi, the heroic queen of Ahmadnagar possessed military genius and administrative skill. She had fought and ably defended her fort against the Mughals. She was also a scholar of Arabic and Persian and could speak several Deccani languages fluently. Gulbadan Begum wrote ‘Humayunnamah’. Mumtaz Mahal was a cultured lady. Zebunisa Begum was a renowned scholar.\textsuperscript{12} The above tradition in the royal families was also adopted by the Maratha royal families during 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} Centuries. Shivaji, the great Maratha leader, owed his greatness to his mother, Jijabai who imbued him with great ideas of tolerance and Justice Tara Bai, the daughter- in law of Shivaji and the wife of Raja Ram was also a good administrator. She regrouped the Maratha power and it was due to her strong opposition that Aurangzeb was not successful in establishing his rule in the Deccan during seven years after the death of Raja Ram.\textsuperscript{13}

Remarkable bravery of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi marked a diversion in the character and talent of Indian women in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century (1835-58). She was the great heroine of Indian Mutiny of 1857 who fought the British troops bravely and met a heroic death. Her bravery and administration were even admired by her opponents.\textsuperscript{14} The history shows that in the hour of need, Indian women from royal families, irrespective nature and form of society, proved...
themselves competent enough to lead armies, direct governments and rule kingdoms.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Social and Religious Reforms of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} Centuries:}

The 19\textsuperscript{th} Century reform movement and social renaissance initiated the process of improving the status of women. The struggle for their upliftment took place mainly in making laws for social reforms of women's education, and political rights. Efforts were concentrated on the first two 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} Centuries whereas political rights of women were achieved during the active phase of the independence movement. The religious and social organization like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Ram Krishna Mission fought for the cause of women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who is called the father of Indian Renaissance, opposed the inhuman custom of 'sati' and raised a strong public opinion against it. On 4\textsuperscript{th} December, 1829, sati was declared as “a crime of culpable homicide punishable with fine imprisonment or both”.\textsuperscript{16} Some organizations like the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj actively supported widow remarriage.\textsuperscript{17}

Swami Dayanand the founder of Arya Samaj brought out a revolutionary book ‘Satyarth Prakash’ containing reference from the Dharmshastra in support of widow remarriage.\textsuperscript{18} The efforts of Keshab-Chandra Sen against early marriage facilitated the enactment of the Native Marriage Act, known as the ‘Civil Marriage Act of 1872’.\textsuperscript{19} To remove the obvious evils of child marriage and help the cause of female education, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929, fixing 14 years as the minimum age for the marriage girls. Later, Special Marriage Act of 1954 fixed 18 years as the minimum age at marriage in the case of girls.\textsuperscript{20}
Education and Training:

In the matter of education, the Christian Missionaries made the first efforts towards female education. Female education received support from different quarters yet its progress was rather slow. The Brahmo Samaj, the Aryan Samaj and Prarthana Samaj supported female education and made important contributions to its causes. The formation of the Bethune School of Calcutta in 1847, Hindu Balika Vidyalaya in 1849 in Calcutta, with the effort of Drinkwater Bethune and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, marked a turning point in the history of female education in our country. In Bombay, Francina Sorabji, Ramabai Ranade and Pundita Ramabai dedicated themselves to the education and upliftment of women.21

The Education Commission of 1882 recommended the expansion of girl's education with the result that posts of inspectors of girl's schools were created and a few training schools for women teachers were also established. By the end of the 19th Century there were 12 Colleges, 467 Secondary Schools and 5,628 Primary Schools for girls with a total enrollment of 4,44,470 students.22

Women social reformers were mainly inspired by the urge for the social upliftment of their fellow sisters, but they also made a distinct contribution to the cause of Indian freedom. Prominent amongst them were: Sunanda also known as Maharani Tapasvini and popularly called ‘Mataji’, Pandita Ramabai, Swarn Kumari Debi, Rani Shurnomoyee, Ramabai Ranade, Francina Sorabji and Rani Lady Harnam Singh.

Maharani Tapasvini was the daughter of Narayan Rao, a feudal lord of the fort of Belur (Arcot, South India). She was the niece of Rani Lakshmi Bai.
of Jhansi. Tapasvini is reported to have taken part in the revolt of 1857 for which work she was interned in Trichinopally (South India). After her release she devoted her time to the study of Sanskrit and the practice of Yoga. She went to Nepal where she was able to establish cordial relations with the royal household. Later she came to Bengal and opened a Sanskrit Pathshala known as ‘Maha Kali Sanskrit Pathshala’. She took interest in the education of girls and reported to have been one of the prominent persons who furthered the cause of women’s education in Bengal.

Pandita Ramabai was born in an orthodox Brahmin family in a forest village of the Western Ghats in the year 1855. Her father was an honoured Shastri. After her husband’s death Ramabai left Bengal to settle down in Pune. She came in contact with the social reformers and her desire to do something to ameliorate the conditions of her sisters increased. In Pune she founded the Arya Mahila Samaj, branches of which came to be found all over the Maratha country. In 1882, a Commission was appointed by the Government of India to enquire into the question of education in India. It also included women’s education as one of its special agenda. This Commission was given a pleasant reception by three hundred women of the Arya Mahila Samaj.

Another woman closely associated with education for women was Ramabai Rande who was the wife of Justice Ranade. She established an educational institution called Seva Sadan. Anandibai Joshi was the first Hindu woman to take a degree of Doctor of Medicine in America.

Swarn Kumari Debi was a famous social reformer of Bengal. She came from the famous Tagore family and was the sister of Rabindranath
Tagore, the renowned poet. She was also the President of the Ladies Section of the Theosophical Society of Bengal in 1885-86. Swarn Kumari attended the Indian National Congress, as a delegate from Bengal in its session held in Calcutta in 1900. This was the first time that a woman had attended the session as a delegate.

Rani Shurnomoyee was the widow of Raja Krishna Nath Kumar Rai Bahadur of Cassimbazar in Murshidabad. Rani was an uneducated lady but her financial help without distinction of caste, creed or religion, encouraged the spread of education. She gave five hundred rupees for the erection of a house for the London Missionary School at Khangra close to Behrampore. The Rani also gave help to many schools on monthly basis. Poor students, widows and orphans received her special care. A hostel was opened by her for the women students of the Grant Medical College, Calcutta. Francina Sorabji was another important personage of this time. Her main interest was education and she wanted to bring the children of all classes and communities into common schools. She started her social service in the villages. Rani Lady Hamam was from the royal household Kapurthala state in Punjab. She was the pioneer woman in the Punjab in the field of social reforms. Her enthusiasm for the emancipation of women was great.

**Participation of Women in Indian Freedom Struggle:**

The freedom movement provided a splendid opportunity for women to show their interest and capability in public affairs and brought to prominence some women political leaders. Women’s Association with public activity passed through four phases such as Swadeshi Movement (1905-1911), Non-Cooperation (1918-1920), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934) and Quit India Movement (1942). The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal marked the
beginning of women’s participation in nationalist activities. The agitation against the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi Movement attracted the attention of women in different parts of India. During this period (1905-11) revivalist consciousness, mass mobilization and propaganda contributed to increased involvement of women in public affairs. The Swadeshi Movement emphasized boycott of foreign goods, increase in education and emphasized cultural heritage. This period marked the formation of several women’s organizations. Sunit Devi, Choudhurani and other were some of notable women who founded these women organizations. Margaret Noble Alias Sister Nivedita was involved in these revolutionaries activities of the secret society led by Sri Aurobindo and his brother Barindra Ghosh.

The famine and flood in East Bengal in 1906 was disastrous and Sister Nivedita was an eyewitness of the troubles of the peasants. She addressed women’s meetings and stressed the use of Swadeshi goods. She also emphasized charkha and other useful crafts.

‘Swaraj and Swadeshi’ became the slogans of the nationalists. Women who had begun to participate in the deliberations of the Indian National Congress now further took up the responsibility to share the national efforts through the press. Five hundred women met at Jeno Kand village in the district of Murshidabad to protest against government’s decision and to urge the need of using the country made goods.

Kumudini Mitter, daughter of Kristo Mitter a renowned nationalist, was very active during this period. She preached the cause of the extremists through Suprabhat, a Bengali Magazine. Another lady, Bhag Bati of Noakhali (Eastern Bengal), wrote a song describing the wretched state of Indian people. Har Devi,
wife of Roshan Lal, a Barrister of Lahore, who was a great social reformer and editor of a Hindi Magazine. During this period she arranged meetings and collected funds for purpose of assisting anarchists under trial. Sarala Devi was one of the prominent personages of this period. She formed the link between Punjab and Bengal revolutionaries. She was the niece of the great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, and was born in the year 1872.

The spirit of patriotism was imbibed in Sarala Devi by her mother. She was the editor of ‘Bharati’ form 1897-99. Through the pages of Bharati, she advocated the Hindu-Muslim unity as unity alone could oust the foreigners. At the seventeenth session of the Indian National Congress a song composed by Sarla Devi invoking the people of different provinces of the country to join hands in the national struggle was sung in chorus. Sarla Devi’s efforts came on the heels of several women’s clubs, groups and associations initiated by men. These included the Bharat Ashram (Indian Hermitage) in Bengal, formed by Keshab Chandra Sen (Brahmo Samaj) in the 1870, Arya Mahila Samaj (The Aryan Women’s Association) in Bombay, formed by Pandita Ramabai and Justice Ranade in 1880, Bharat Mahila Parishad (Ladies’s Social Conference), formed as part of the National Social Reference in 1905, Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam (The Muslim Women’s Association in Punjab) formed by Amir-un-Nisa of the Mian family. Sarla Devi founded the Bharat Stree Mahamandal (Great Group of Indian Women) at Allahabad in 1910. Madam Cama was the daughter of Sorabji Francina Patel. Bhikaji Cama in contract with Shyamji Krishna Verma who inspired her to join the revolutionary movement wholeheartedly. She took immediate steps to establish contracts with nationalists of Ireland, Russia, Egypt and Germany. When it was announced that the International Socialists Congress was to meet in Stuttgart (Germany) in
August 1907, Madam Cama was quick enough to grab this opportunity to
acquaint with the cosmopolitan gathering with the conditions prevailing in
India. Her speech on that memorable occasion dealt with the lives of the dumb
millions of Hindustan ‘who are undergoing terrible tyrannies under the English
Capitalism and British Government’ at the end of speech she unfolded the
Indian National Flag, a tricolor in green, yellow and red, with the words ‘Bande
Mataram’ on the middle band. Thus Bhikaji Cama was the first Indian who
unfolded the Indian National Flag in a foreign country before an international
gathering.39

The entry of Annine Besant into Indian politics in 1914 accelerated the
process of women’s association with the freedom struggle.40 Annine Besant
organized movement for the emancipation of women and to put forward the
demand for political rights for women came to be established. Her leadership
gave strength, encouragement and inspired the women of the land to participate
in the national life of the country and to join the national movement in
increased numbers. Annine Besant came under the influence of Charles
Bradlaugh in 1847 and joined his national reformer, Besant made her first
speech at the Cooperative Institute in Castle Street, London, and demanded
political status for women and equality in all spheres. She joined the
Theosophical Society under the influence of Madam Blavatsky. In 1892
Madam Blavatsky died and Annine Besant along with W.O. Judge became the
Joint head of the Esoteric Section of the society. The women who came from
abroad and treated this country as their motherland were Annine Besant,
Margaret Cousins and Margaret Noble Bhagini Nivedita. Annine Besant played
very important role in Home Rule Movement 1916. She was editing a daily
newspaper called ‘New India’ and a weekly called ‘Common Will’. She was
arrested and sent to jail. Margaret Cousins and Annine Besant tried their utmost to obtain franchise for Indian women.\textsuperscript{41}

She was the first President of the Indian Women’s Association and was largely responsible for putting forward the demand for political rights of women. The membership of her Home Rule League was open to men and women above eighteen years of age. In 1917 Annine Besant became the first woman to be elected as the president of Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{42}

Sarojini Naidu appeared for the first time on the political platform as the ‘Ambassador of Hindu Muslim Unity’ in 1913 when she attended and addressed the Muslim League Session. Three years later, in 1916, Sarojini Naidu spoke from self government. Then onwards he took a prominent part in the country’s political life. Sarojini Naidu who saw the salvation and joy of life in the service to the country, fought for self-government on the one hand and women’s rights on the other. In the same year Sarojini Naidu led the deputation of leading women in social and political field in December 1917. This deputation waited on Montague with a view to secure voting rights for women. Next year in September 1918, she attended the special session of Congress at Bombay and was instrumental in getting the resolution on women’s franchise passed whereby they were not to be disqualified on account of sex.\textsuperscript{43} Sarojini Naidu went to England in 1919 as a member of Home Rule League Deputation to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. She took this opportunity to put forward women’s case for franchise as well.\textsuperscript{44}

The year following the First World War most outstanding in the annual of the freedom struggle for, during this period an organization and country-wide attempt to overthrow the foreign rule was begun by boycotting the
government on essential things and by lunching Satyagraha. It was probably
due to this technique that the freedom movement which was more or less a
monopoly of the intellectuals found a fertile field amongst the masses of the
country and invited interest of the rich and the poor, the old and young, the
educated and the uneducated, industrials and labours, merchants and customers,
lawyers, doctors, teachers and social workers women who now came forward
to join the Satyagraha Army.

Women had started more interest in socio-political affairs, fillip to this
was given by the partition of Bengal, the treatment of Indians in South Africa,
the Home Rule League of Annie Besant, and the First World War and by the
Women's India Association which came in existence in 1917. This
organization became the pivot around which women gathered to discuss and
demand their rights. A decade later an All India Organization, The All India
Women Conference was founded and its political goal was self-government.
The members emphasized the need for responsible government, which could
satisfy the aspirations of the people.

The question of suffrage for women brought them to a common
platform. The silence maintained by the Montague-Chelmsford Scheme on this
subject, in spite of the representation made to the Secretary of state, and
accentuated the common feelings. Later the Southborough Committee was
appointed to collect information and elicit opinion of the people of India on the
projected reforms and on the question of franchise. This Committee toured
India. When it was visited Bombay a requisition signed by eight hundred
women of the Presidency was submitted to it. In addition similar requisitions
were sent by the Women Graduates Union Bombay, all the branches of the
Women’s Indian Association which numbered about forty, the Women’s Branch of the Home Rule League, The Bharat Stree Mandal and by the members of the all India Women’s Deputation which had earlier met secretary of state on this subject. The Southborough Committee disfavored the extending of franchise to women on the ground that the prevailing social condition in the country did not warrant franchise for women.

Annine Basant and Sarojini Naidu, who were in England as a member of deputation to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee, took up the case for women’s franchise. Hirabai Tata and Mithi Bai Tata were sent to England by the women’s committee to express strong feeling of Indian women on this issue. The Joint Select Committee, However, left the responsibility of deciding the question of franchise for women to be settled by the future Legislative Council of India for each Province.

Madras was the first Province to remove the disqualification of sex for the legislative franchise on 1 April, 1921 and other Provinces followed in its wake. Thus women of India had begun to understand their rights and responsibilities. They were conscious of the help given to British for successful completion of the war. Some of them had helped in collecting war funds while others in sewing clothes and doing other odd jobs. Many had suffered the loss of their brother’s fathers and husbands as soldiers who fought for the Allies.

Immediately after the publication of the proposed Rowlatt Bill in January 1919, a meeting was convened by the Indian National Congress in Gandhi Ashram (Ahmedabad) where in a resolution was passed to disobey this Act if passed. One of the bills was, however, passed in the teeth of opposition and it gave the government powers in an emergency to judge cases without
trial. The passing of the bill came as shock to the nation as a whole. Gadhiji, therefore, announced his intention of launching a Satyagraha Movement on 30 March, 1919. This date was later changed on 6 April, but unfortunately the news of this change did not reach in time to many places with the result that 30 March was observed as a day of hartal and inauguration of the Civil Disobedience Movement. In the beginning the movement was non-violent, but slowly it became violent due to provocation by the police, and also, perhaps, because people were not trained enough to take part in such a mass movement non-violently. The events moved fast and the situation in the Panjab, as compared to other Provinces, was serious. There was a considerable amount of fermentation in the districts of Lahore, Gurdaspur and Amritsar. People came out in mobs and the rowdy elements damaged the railway carriage, telegraph wires and the government buildings, the post offices and a few places were set on fire as well. The Government retaliated sternly. Martial Law was proclaimed, the Panjab witnessed a reign of terror, which dragged on till 11 June, 1919.

This Movement culminated in the firing, which took place in Jallinwala Bagh at Amritsar. It was in this city that a peaceful assembly of twenty thousand people was fired upon on 13 April 1919, by the orders of General Dyer. According to the Hunter Enquiry Committee Report, four hundred people were shot dead and twelve hundred injured. The whole country demanded redress of the Panjab atrocities and the All India Congress Committee endorsed these demands and asked for an impartial enquiry. The Indian National Congress also appointed another committee for the same purpose.
This action fanned the fire of nationalism in India. Added to this was the unsettled state of Turkey, the ‘Khilafat Movement’ that greatly motivated the feelings of the Muslims of India. The Turkey was the considered the greatest Muslim power. The Sultan of this Empire was ‘Khalifa’ of Islam and as such temporal head. During the war period Muslims were given assurance by the Prime Minister of England that the Turkish Empire would be preserved. A deputation of the Muslim Khilafat Conference also went to England to put forward their viewpoint as regards Turkey and Khilafat. The Government did not pay any heed to these requests and the draft treaty called the Treaty of Severes published on 14 May, 1920, set aside all the promises made during the war and this disquietened the Muslims further. Gandhi felt that was an opportunity to bring the two communities together. He, therefore, warned the government that if justice were not done to the Muslims he would resume Satyagraha. A special session of the Congress held in September, 1920 in a resolution approved the resumption of policy of ‘progressive non-violence, non-cooperation until the said wrongs were righted and Swarajya established. To achieve this end a nation-wide programme of boycotting titles and honours, elections and legislatures, schools and colleges, courts and tribunals was launched. The people were advised not to offer themselves for military service. The government durbars official and semi-official functions were boycotted. The sale and use of liquor and foreign cloth was prevented through peaceful picketing.45

It was the Mahatma Gandhi who gave a new direction, strength and inspiration to the freedom movement and drew into it women in large numbers. The dawn of a new era is brought by Gandhiji call to women to join the freedom struggle. He said, “In the non-violent struggle, women have an
advantage over men, for women are anyway superior to men in their religious devotion. Silent and dignified services is the badge of her sex, women is sacrifice personified. When she does a thing in the right spirit, she moves mountains. He was a great liberator who adopted a revolutionary approach in raising the status of women.

Basanti Devi and Urmila Devi, wife and sister, of Desbandhu Das, were the leaders of the Women's Movement in Bengal. They went about the streets of Calcutta selling Khaddar and propagating against the use of foreign cloth and habit of drinking. They were arrested while selling handloom cloth. The others who were arrested with them were: Anukul Mitter, Surya Shome, Umashi Devi, Satya Devi, and a few boys and Sikh ladies. Basanti Devi also presided over the Bengal Provincial Congress Session in 1922 at Chittagong. In Bombay women also held protest meetings against his Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales's visit.

Parvati Devi, an ardent worker of the congress, was arrested in Meerut for the so-called inflaming speeches. She was taken to Agra Jail in Jailclothes. No one was allowed to be on platform. As a mark of respect ladies took out a procession on 16 December, 1922. She was convicted and was sentenced for two years imprisonment. This was the greatest sentence so far awarded to any lady. The two Muslim leaders of the freedom struggle who sought to bring political awareness to the women of the Muslim majority provinces dominated by them were Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the North West Frontier Province of the United India and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in Kashmir. Both were advocates for women's education and had several schools set up for girl's education. Both were successful in drawing women to their meetings. Badshah
Khan as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was known used to say that men and women were like the two wheels of a chariot and that unless the movement was coordinated the chariot would not move. He would attribute the success of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement to the sympathy of the women who made it deep rooted. It was during Sheikh Abdullah and BadShah Khan’s time that women began to attend Friday prayers at the mosque in Kashmir and the Frontier Province.

Bai Amman mother of Ali brothers was a fiery crusader against British rule and toured the whole country making speeches and collecting funds for the Non-Cooperation Movement. She advised the establishment of Panchayats throughout India. She ardently, advocated the use of Khaddar and the Hindu Muslim Unity. Her service to the cause of the ‘Khilafat’, ‘Swaraj’ and ‘Hindu Muslim Unity’ invaluable. In this connection she visited Rawalpindi, Gujranwala and Kasur. She addressed another Ladies’s Conference at Bombay in which six thousand people attended. A resolution urging the women to enroll as members was passed at the gathering. At another meeting at Ahmadabad, she appealed to the people to unite, for “without co-operation among the different communities we can’t liberate our country or live peaceful and honorable lives.” 49 It was a measure of her forward approach that she involved her daughter in-law Amjadi Begum also in the cause. Abida Samiuddin, Professor in Political Science, Muslim University Aligarh, who has writing book on ‘Muslim Participation in Politics,’ Begum Hazrat Muhani who opened Swadeshi store in Aligarh along with her husband. In the same period women were like Saadat Bano Kichlu from Lahore, Begum Abdul Majeed Khwaja from Aligarh who became a member of the All India Congress Subject Committee in 1921 and Bibi Shfatun-Nisa from Ludhiana. There were a lot of
women who joined the national movement like Fatima Ismail from Bombay, Zatun Kapasi and Heera A. Ahmad, Amina Tyabji, her daughter Rehana, Begum Sakina Luqmani, Ameena Quershi from Surat, Bibi Amatus-Salem from Punjab was the first Muslim woman to join Gandhi’s Ashram.⁵⁰

Table 1.1: Turnouts in 1923 General Elections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Provincial Council (%)</th>
<th>Indian Assembly (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.1 shows that in the 1923 elections, women were enfranchised on the same terms as men in Madras, Bombay, and United Provinces. The basis of enfranchisement under the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms was a series of complicated property and income qualification, which varied from provinces, between urban and rural areas, and among religious groups. In Madras 1923, the male electorate for the Provincial Council comprised 10 percent of the adult male population, and the female electorate was approximately 10 percent of that. In other provinces, the female electorate was even smaller. The qualifications for the Indian Legislative Assembly franchise were even stricter than those for the Provincial Legislative Councils. Less than 30 percent of the women eligible to vote under the Montague Chelmsford reforms ever voted, and thus the actual disparity between the electorate power of men and women was even greater than the eligibility requirements suggested. The following table shows percentage level of female turnout in 1923.⁵¹
The women again participated in the General Elections of 1926. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, who contested election as an independent candidate of Women's Indian Association (WIA), lost to the Congress candidate. The Women's Indian Association organized deputation to government officials to ask that women be nominated to the Legislative Councils. Three women were nominated: Muthulakshmi Reddy in Madras, Ahmed Shah in the United Provinces, and Kale in the Central Provinces. Amongst the Indian States, Travancore was the first to give representation to women. Poonam Ducose was the first woman Health Minister in India in 1925. Madhavi Ammal was nominated to the Cochin Legislative Council.

In British time Madras led again by nominating Muthulakshmi Reddi to the Legislative Council. She was subsequently elected as Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council. Muthulakshmi Reddi was the first woman Medical Graduate of the Madras University. She associated herself with Women's India Association from its very inception, i.e., from 1917, and was one of the members of the deputation, which met the Secretary of state in connection with the women's franchise. Reddi was also an active campaigner for the Sharda Act, which was passed by the Central Legislature. Reddi also became the first elder women of city Cooperation, Madras, for two years during which she took interest in problems like the child education and child welfare and beggary.

A non-tax campaign was launched in Bardoli under the leadership of Sardar Patel. This campaign was undertaken in order to correct an economic injustice. The Government of Bombay, contrary to advise of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and contrary to the resolution of the Bombay
Legislative Council of the Presidency in 1924, considerably enhanced the rate of rural taxation, which was nominally 20 percent but in actual application, in some instances, over 60 percent. The people refused to pay the taxes. The authorities, however, met this challenge with the usual lathi charge, imprisonment, fines, attachments and auctions of land. The women of Bardoli took part in this movement from its very inception but they lacked leadership. Mithuben Petit and Bhaktben Desai greatly strengthened the movement amongst women in Bombay. The women attended the meetings even if it meant covering long distance on foot.

The Simon Commission arrived in India in 1928. Since no Indian was represented on the Commission. The Indian boycotted it. The Dominion State Constitution (popularly known as the Nehru Report) was adopted by the All Parties's Conference during the same year. The Calcutta Congress undertook to adopt this Constitution if the British Parliament accepted it in its present form before 31 December, 1929, failing which Civil Disobedience Movement was to ensure.

The Indian National Congress met in December 1929, at Lahore declared on the midnight of 31 December, 1929. The goals of the Congress have to complete independence instead of Dominion Status. Thus the New Year was ushered in with new hopes, a changed creed and the prospect of an active fight ahead. The Congress members of the Legislature were instructed to boycott elections and 26 January, 1930, was declared as Independence Day, which was to be celebrated throughout the country every year. Mahatma Gandhi was empowered to initiate the Civil Disobedience Movement in any manner he considered best. Gandhiji selected the breaking of salt laws as the
center of gravity. He felt that since salt was a thing of common use, salt tax was unjust for the poor in the land.\textsuperscript{53}

The mode of protest in the Salt Satyagraha was to take out a procession and manufacture salt, thus breaking the salt law. This salt was then sold to collect money for national movement and a bonfire of foreign cloth was lit. Enthusiasm was kept high by the celebrated of ‘days’ and ‘weeks’ such as Mahila Divas (Women’s Day) Charkha Week, Boycott Week etc.\textsuperscript{54} Gandhiji started his historic march to Dandi and formally inaugurated the campaign.\textsuperscript{55} Gandhiji declared his intentions of breaking the salt law and manufacturing salt at Dandi, a small coastal village 241 miles away from his Ashram at Sabarmati.\textsuperscript{56} The Salt Satyagraha launched by Gandhiji in March 1930, was extended to a mass campaign at the beginning of April 1930. At first, women had not been allowed to participate in this campaign as Gandhi thought they would only complicate matters. But the women of the land, coveting place of equality with men, could not stay away from the battle. They protested that men and women should not be separated during such critical times. Margaret Cousins sent a spirited reply on behalf of the Women’s Indian Association protesting the division of work by sex. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya met Gandhi and expressed her desire to be involved in the Satyagraha. Durgabai Deshmukh met the local leaders of Madras and suggested that they be included in the movement.

On 6 April, 1930, the salt laws were ceremoniously broken by Gandhi. Sarojini Naidu and Methuen Patel were with him.\textsuperscript{57} After Gandhi was arrested, and however, Sarojini Naidu directed the Salt Satyagraha until her own arrest. The Women’s Indian Association, Periodical, ‘Stri Dharma’, protested against
women’s exclusion, and women participated actively in mass demonstrations through they did concentrated their efforts on picketing.58

Table 1.2: Turnouts in 1930 General Elections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Provincial Council (%)</th>
<th>Indian Assembly (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.2 reveals that the 1930 election was held during the Civil Disobedience Movement, and in most provinces female turnout was lower than in 1926. The exception was Madras, where the Justice Party was the strongest party and did not support Civil Disobedience Movement. The above table shows the male and female turnout in the 1930 elections.59

Kamala Devi recalls that in 1930, thousands of women strode down to the sea like proud warriors.60 She addressed meetings, prepared salt and picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops. Kamala Devi offered passive resistance and guarded the salt pans when the police raided the Congress House, Bombay. Salt was publicly prepared by her and was sold in the open market. She even gets High Court premises for the selling salt. The salt was sold at a high price. While it was the privilege of Sarojini Naidu to raid the Dharasana Salt Works, it fell to Kamala Devi to plan a raid on the salt fields in
the precincts of Bombay city. Before she could realize her dream, she was arrested. Her parting message to the people was ‘carry on the fight until British imperialism becomes only a dark shadow of the past, India’s freedom will open the gate for world freedom.’

Kamala Devi was taken to court for trial. Instead of taking notice of her trial the fearless soldier invited the Magistrate to buy salt and started selling in the court room. She also asked the Magistrate to resign the job and join the Satyagrah Army. For this Act she was awarded six months imprisonment and a fine of Rs.150, and three months more under the salt act and a fine of Rs.20, or in default two week’s imprisonment.

The women of Bengal not only participated in Mahatma Gandhi’s Civil Disobedience campaign but also in the revolutionary activities. They were encouraged to adopt the revolutionary creed by Subhas Chandra Bose. Several women’s organizations were formed to mobiles women to participate in nationalist activities including processions, pickets, and charka spinning such as the Ladies Picketing Board, Nari Stayagraha Committee, and Mahila Rashtriya Sangh. The Satyagrah Movement was gaining momentum rapidly, snowballing into a nationwide crusade for freedom, which had committed leaders and participants in every corner of the country. In Madras the Salt Satyagrah movement had leaders such as T. Prakasan, Nageswara Rao Pantulu and the remarkable Duragabai. Rukmini Lakshmapati had the honors of being the first lady to be arrested in connection with the Salt Satyagraha. She was the President to the Tamilnadu Provincial Congress Committee. Another famous woman of this time was Durgabai Deshmukh who became the war dictator in the city of Madras and carried on the movement sponsored by the Congress till
Among the scores of Karnataka, women who participated wholeheartedly in the struggle for freedom were Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Umabai Kundapur, Krishnabai Panjikar, Ballari Siddama and even Gowramma and her co-workers to a lesser extent.

In Bihar also many women came forward courageously. Among those in the frontline were Hasan Imam who not only addressed several meetings of students in Patna but along with her daughter Sami and C. C. Das as well as several other women at Patna, organized a procession in the city to inaugurate an intensive campaign of boycott of British goods. During the week ending 25 July, 1930, Patna witnessed two demonstrations in which nearly 3000 women took part and leaders courted arrest.

In the North, Panjab, a massive procession of approximately five thousand like-minded women inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement. Prabhat-Pheries, picketing and meetings became the order of the day. Prominent among the leaders of the movement in Lahore were Lala Lajpat Rai’s daughter, Parvati Devi and Lado Rani Zutshi, a close relative by marriage of Pandit Jawarlal Nehru. On 10 April, 1930, at a ‘Mammoth Rally’ held under the auspices of the city Congress Committee at the Municipal Gardens outside Mori Gate in Lahore, the huge gathering of 40,000 people were briefed in detail about the programme of Civil Disobedience which was to begin in Lahore the next day. Elsewhere in the Panjab, in Jullundur to be precise, the Satyagraha Campaign against the salt law was inaugurated on 17th April, 1930 by Raizada Hans Raj in the presence of an impressive gathering of 20,000 people. A procession consisting of 400 women and 20,000 men marched to the
Gandhi Mandap. Women performed the Tilak ceremony. Then the volunteers manufactured salt.

Lord Irwin's address to the Central Assembly on July, 1930 was marked by picketing on the first day by a specially chosen group of twenty-seven women volunteers drawn from Lahore, Amabala and Shimla. They assembled outside the Central Legislative Assembly Hall, they waved little black flags on his arrival and chanted in unison 'Irwin, go Back.' Then off they went, singing national songs, marching in an orderly procession. Lado Rani Zutshi's daughter, Manmohini Seghal, the President of the Student's Union, organized a series of student's strikes and picketing at college gates and was ultimately arrested along with some of her companions. The grand-daughter of Swami Shardhanand, Satyavati's role in awakening women in Delhi was indeed remarkable.

However, it was in Gujarat, the home State of Mahatma Gandhi where women's participation was the largest and perhaps the most impressive. Special classes were started in the Sabarmati Ashram to train women Satyagrahis. Mrisduka Sarabhai who was the moving force behind this venture, was later arrested and sent to Belgaum Jail. A Women Oriented Organization, the Rashtriya Stree Sabha carried on an intensive propaganda for the widespread use of Swadeshi. Kasturba, Saraladevi Sarabhai, Mridula Sarabhai, Indumati Sheth, Mithubehn Petit (the grand-daughter of Sir Dinshaw Petit), Nandubehn Kanuga and Khurshedbehn Naoroji (Dadabhai Naoroji's grand-daughter and a full time worker), were among the leaders in Ahmadabad.

Similar episodes of unprecedented courage and intense patriotic fervor were etched in blood and sweat on the vast topographical map of India. More
than 80,000 people were arrested during the Salt Satyagraha and more than 17,000 of these were women. Writing from Naini Jail, the pride evident in his words, Pandit Nehru said '...I had a special feeling of satisfaction because of the activities of my mother, wife and sisters, as well as my many girl cousins and friends, and though I was separated from them and was in prison, we grew nearer to each other.' Pandit Nehru’s sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, recall how the great Gandhi transformed their lives. For not only Vijaya Lakshmi and Krishna but the aged Swarup Rani and the ailing Kamala Nehru were in the frontline of leadership in Allahabad.65

Allahabad was very much to the fore in the national movement. It was a centre of activity for the Congress and other liberal parties, and can boast of having been the home of many a prominent political and literary figure. Allahabad takes pride not only in Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, C. Y. Chintamani and Taj Bahadur Sapru but also on equally proud of its literary gaints, Nirala, Pant, Maha Devi and Akbar Allahabadi.

Infact, even before Gandhi gave his inspiring call to women to break the chains and walls of tradition come forward to accept their responsibility and role in the struggle for freedom, there could be seen a kindling of awareness of social inequity of a more meaningful role and destiny for women and of the impediments in the way of fulfilling that role. Women of the Nehru family had become active in the field of women’s upliftment and raised women’s issues long before Motilal and Jawaharlal jumped into the struggle for freedom.66 The spirit of patriotism was ingrained in the Nehru family. There was a time when all the members of the family found themselves in jail. Infact the jail had become a second home to several of them. Kamala Nehru went about like a
whirlwind, organizing women volunteers, peasants and students. She played a prominent part in organizing no-tax campaign in the province. She made a fervent appeal to women to prepare for the forthcoming struggle and asked them to use Khaddar. Another woman who was active in this period was Mukund Malviya, daughter-in-law of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. Chandravati Lakhanpal played a prominent part in this struggle. Her interest in politics dates back from her student days. She took an active part in the movement of 1930. Chandravati went from village to village organization villagers to make them political conscious. Another lady, Uma Nehru who had been interested in the upliftment of women for many years, now came forward to take her place in the Satyagraha Army. She became dictator of the Provincial Congress Committee and as a result suffered imprisonment.

Women of the Nehru family and others such as Gyanwati Devi, Ramkali Devi etc., whose men folk were in prison or in the thick of the struggle, wore khadi, spread the message of Swadeshi and worked for women's upliftment. Gyanwati Devi who began her political work in Bijnor gave up the finery of married women for khadi.

A tragic event in March 1931 grievously shocked the country. Mahatma Gandhi's fervent plea for the release of detenus, which was in fact the nation's appeal for the commutation of death sentence, passed on Bhagat Singh and his Comrades, went unheeded. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged in Lahore Jail on the night of 23 March, 1931. This produced intense indignation throughout India. There was a hartal at Patna on 26 January. Kusum Kumari Devi, wife of Babu Ramayan Prasad, Secretary, Shahabad district Congress Committee also delivered a speech in which she is repented to
have said ‘why are you lagging behind? why don’t you come forward to
sacrifice yourself like Bismil, Bhagat Singh and Khudi Ram? ... come up and
join the movement’. She appealed to the people in these words at the public
meeting organized on 30th March, 1931 in Arrah (Bihar) to voice the people’s
indignation at the hanging of Bhagat Singh and his associates.

Lord Willingdon met Gandhi in August 1931 and as a result the Second
Round Table Conference was organized in London. Gandhi attended the
conference but returned without a satisfactory solution to the Indian
Constitutional problem. It was the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy
under the Act of 1935 that gave Indian women an opportunity to be elected to
the State Legislatures and also act as administrators. This Act no doubt was the
result of long deliberations over a number of years. It was based on various
recommendations of different bodies, such as the Third Round Table
Conference, Joint Select Committee Report, Lothian Committee Report, etc. In
its first part, the Act had envisaged a federal form of government at the center,
but this part never came into operation as it was stoutly opposed by almost all
the political parties of the country. The second part, relating to provincial
autonomy was gone through and under it elections took place for the
Legislative Assemblies of the different Provinces. As a result of these elections
Congress came to absolute majority in seven out of eleven Provinces and in
two it came out as the single largest party. But the Congress agreed to assume
responsibility for running the administration in the Provinces only after it had
successfully secured an assurance from the governor general that Governor
would not interfere in the day to day administration of the ministers that they
would make use of their special powers and discretionary authority only in
exceptional cases. The assumption of this responsibility gave Indian women a chance to become administrators.\textsuperscript{70}

Table 1.3: Turnout in 1937 Provincial Assembly Election:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provincial Assemblies</th>
<th>Electoral</th>
<th>Turnout (%)</th>
<th>Women Enrolled</th>
<th>Female Turnout (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>6,436,760</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>1,584,784</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>2,609,457</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>335,890</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>6,695,483</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>970,033</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>5,335,309</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>520,380</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>2,686,094</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>189,105</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>2,412,229</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>229,044</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>1,741,364</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>263,331</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>815,341</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>45,366</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>246,609</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>4,895</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>520,225</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>79,205</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>639,043</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>32,668</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.3 indicates that in 1937 election to Provincial Legislatures, both the male and female electorates were greatly expanded so that approximately 43 percent of the adult males and 9 percent of the adult female were enfranchised. As a result of the 1937 elections, 56 women entered the Legislatures: there were 41 seats reserved for women in the Provincial Legislative Assemblies, 10 women won unreserved seats, and 5 were nominated to Provincial Legislative Councils. A majority of women who were elected was the Congress candidates. The party affiliations of those who won the election were as follows: 36 Congress candidates, 11 Independents, 3 Muslim League, and 1 Unionist. Two women who had represented the
women's upliftment perspective were nominated to Legislative Bodies: Radabhai Subbaroyan to the Central Assembly and Mona Hensman to the Madras Legislative Council.

Begum Shah Nawaz was elected to the Panjab Assembly as a unionist although she later joined the Muslim League. Several women active in the All India Women Congress as well as the Congress won seats: these included Hansa Mehta, Lakshmi Ammal and Duragabai, Lakshmi Pandit, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, was appointed as minister Local Self-Government and public health in the United Provinces.

The year 1939 witnessed the beginning of the Second World War in Europe. England declared War on the German Reich on 3rd September, 1939 professedly in defense of democracy and weak nations. And yet Britain did not want to grant freedom to India was her dependency. India had no independent foreign policy and had to the follow the one laid down the out by England. Lord Linlithgow, the then Governor General of India, proclaimed India to be at war with Germany the same day (3rd September, 1939). The Congress Working Committee also demanded from the Government a clear declaration of its war objectives and a promise of independent for India. India would be ready to render help to the British Government in her perilous hour if these demands were acceded to. However, the demands of the congress were rejected. The Congress then decided to propagate against and obstruct people from rendering any help in the war effort. To intensify its campaign Mahatma Gandhi launched an individual Satyagraha. It was 'to carry on non-violently and openly anti-war propaganda' and 'to preach non-cooperation with the government in their war effort'.
In 1940, Gandhi started an Individual Satyagraha and followed only a chosen band of workers to participate in it. Vijayalakshmi was one such privileged person. She was arrested, but was released after four months imprisonment. Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with seemingly new proposals to win over the popular support. But all the parties rejected Cripps's Proposal. All hopes of a settlement receded to the background end Cripps’s Mission, interest of goodwill and a calmer atmosphere, left ill will and bitterness among the Indian people. In a mood of desperation, the congress working committee passed a resolution in July 1942, calling upon the British to withdraw from India. The All India Congress Committee, which met in Bombay on 7th and 8th August, 1942, endorsed this decision. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested on 9 August, 1942 and he left a brief but significant message to the nation in three words: 'Do or Die'. This message became a motto for the millions and a source of strength and sacrifice, which was increasingly demanded at the altar of freedom. The moment the news of Gandhi’s arrest was received; there were hartal in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona. On 11th August, 1942 this infection had spread all over the country. Along-side people took out processions, held meetings and demonstrations, the Universities closed down for want of students.\textsuperscript{72}

However, women joined in taking out processions, holding meetings and demonstrations and organizing strikes.\textsuperscript{73} It was on 20 September, 1942 that Kanak Lata Barua, a girl in her teens, marched towards Gohapon Thana, at the head of five hundred people to occupy the Thana building. She was asked to leave the premises by Rabati Mohan Shome, the Officer In-charge, Police Thana, but she boldly replied unless the Thana officer and his men wanted to act as the servants of the people they must clear out and allow the people to
take procession of the place. The Daroga threatened her that firing would be ordered if she did not move. She was not discouraged and told him to do his duty and she would do hers. She was fired in the chest, which killed her and the flag was taken by her male comrade Mukunda was also shot dead.\textsuperscript{74}

Whereas in Midnapur district in Bengal women played a notable part and were, distressingly enough, the victims of police atrocities.\textsuperscript{75} Bombay was greatly affected by the 1942 Quit India Movement. In addition to the usual processions, women's day was celebrated.\textsuperscript{76} Usha Mehta played a stellar role with her daring underground broadcasts. Operating an underground radio station, the 'Congress Radio' news broadcast at precisely 7:30 pm every evening, continued from August to 13\textsuperscript{th} November, 1942 with Usha herself broadcasting the news, till she and her colleagues were all arrested and sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment and sent to Yeravada Jail, where she found herself to a group headed by none other than the highly respected Ram Manohar Lohia.\textsuperscript{77}

Panjab energetically responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi students, both boys and girls unhesitatingly came forward in the field. It was in the city of Lahore that on 10\textsuperscript{th} November, 1942 one hundred and four students were arrested. This number included twenty-two girls. The girl were courageous, they distributed the badges. The girls even did not pay any heed to the presence of the police and did not get into the police van till they were told by their principal to do so.\textsuperscript{78}

During Quit India Movement Rajkumari Amrit Kaur played a leading role in organization processions and protest meetings. Rajkumari came from the royal family of Kapurthala state.\textsuperscript{79} Amrit Kaur was most active, during the Quit India Movement in 1942, she led processions day after day. One such
procession was subjected to ruthless lathi charge in Shimla, the processions led by her from 9 to 16 August were subjected to lathi charge as many as fifteen times.\textsuperscript{80}

In Karnataka, the students took active part in Quit India Movement. The share of the girl students in these activities was by no means small. At Dharwar, on 23\textsuperscript{rd} October 1942, two-lady student’s Hemlata Shenolikar and Gulvadi entered the District Courts and hoisted the tricolor on the Judge’s seat. Gulvadi addressed the members of the Bar present in the court and summoned the judge and asked him to resign and dissolve his Court within eight days, otherwise he would be tried as a traitor. The police came on the scene. Gulvadi escaped. However, Shenolikar was sentenced to pay a fine of fifty rupees or to suffer imprisonment for one month. She refused to pay the fine and preferred to go to jail.\textsuperscript{81}

Sucheta Kriplani’s interest in politics updates back from 1934 from the days. She was a lecturer in Banaras University. Individual Satyagraha launched by the Congress in 1940 and she was one of the chosen ones who was permitted to take part in this Satyagraha and she was arrested. She was again arrested in 1944. After her release in 1945, she engaged herself mostly in the social relief activities. When Mahatma Gandhi went to east Bengal and undertook to work for rehabilitation of the refugees, Sucheta joined him in the work. During the year 1947, when the partition of India took place, riots broke out in Panjab. Sucheta Kriplani rushed to the affected areas and organized relief operations. She was taken as a member of the Congress Working Committee in 1947 in recognition of her work. Sucheta Kriplani was a member
of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly and later became a member of Lok Sabha. She had been the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.\textsuperscript{82}

Aruna Asaf Ali was an ardent soldier of the army of freedom fighters. She became prominent during the days of Salt Satyagraha, when she went around addressing meetings, preparing salt and leading processions.\textsuperscript{83} Aruna Asaf Ali’s courage and resourcefulness during the time was greatly admired by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad testified the important role played by her in the 1942 Quit India Movement.\textsuperscript{84} Aruna Asaf Ali was one of the most important figures of the Quit India Movement. The British Government desperately wanted to arrest her and the then princely sum of five thousand rupees was announced as a reward for her capture. She published bulletins and edited with Ram Manohar Lohia the ‘Inquilab’. Yusaf Mehrally, was to write in later years that “the heroine of 1857 was the Rani of Jhansi, that of the 1942 revolution was undoubtedly Aruna Asaf Ali.”\textsuperscript{85}

**Women in Indian National Army:**

It was about the first decade of the Century that the revolutionary and terrorist activities were at their peak in India. Some of the revolutionaries escaped to other countries such as Japan, China, Siam and Malaya to avoid repression at the hands of British Government and with the object of perfecting their plans for liberating their country. The most important person was Rash Behari Bose who sought asylum in Japan after throwing a bomb on Lord Harding in 1911. There were several organizations established by Indians in the area. The Ghadar Party was active in Shanghai. In Bangkok, Thai Bharat Cultural Lodge was the center of revolutionary activities.
The Indian Independence League was formed on 16th January, 1942 at Kuala Lumpur. Later branches were founded in Thailand and other places. Ever since the formation of the Indian Independence League, the Indian women in East Asia helped to further the cause of India’s Independence League.\textsuperscript{86} Lakshmi Swaminathan was an important woman leader of the Indian National Army. She was in Singapore at the time when the call of Netajee Subhas Bose was there and she responded to this call with wholehearted enthusiasm. She was the commander of the Rani Jhansi Regiments.\textsuperscript{87} When the Indian National Army collapsed, she did not surrender to the British. She was captured and later placed under arrest. Her regiment was disbanded in 1945 and most of the girls were sent away to Singapore from Rangoon. She was sent to Rangoon Jail. There was a great deal of agitation for her release and the Government had to yield and released her on the condition that she would not make any public speech. Lakshmi, however, defied the order and spoke on the anniversary day of the Azad Hind Fauj, 21 October, 1945 the objectives of its formation.

The leaders of the major political parties were in jail for two years between 1942 and 1944. The Government was still reluctant to open negotiations with Indian leaders on the Constitutional set-up. The Labour Party of England became critical of the policy of the British government regarding India and condemned it for its failure to arrive at some workable solution. In December, 1944 the Labour Party passed a resolution wherein it urged the government for the resumption of negotiations with India leaders with a view to securing a place for India as a self-governing member of the British Commonwealth. The next year was significant for it witnessed a new British offer which was announced by Lord Wavell, who was the Viceroy, general
elections in Great Britain, (July 1945) with Labour Party in power, and the ending of the Second World War. During this period Indian became more important than ever before. The war had caused a lot of dislocation in the daily life of the people. The food was not only expensive but scarce as well. In some places there was famine. The war also gave an opportunity to Indian soldiers to handle new machinery and armament.

By now Clement Attlee had replaced Winston Churchill, the wartime Minister. Attlee made an announcement in February that a Cabinet Mission would leave for India to assist the Indian leaders to draw up a new Constitution. The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 24th March, 1946 and held discussions with various political parties and with the Indian Government. The Cabinet Mission offer was accepted by the Muslim League in its entirely by resolution on 6th May, 1946. The Congress, however, only approved the portion relating to the Constitution making on 26th June, 1946. The Government, therefore, had to announce that the Interim Government could not be formed on account of the difficulties arising out of the stand taken by political parties.

The decision of the Government annoyed Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Muslim League passed its famous Direct Action Resolution in which both the Congress and British government were condemned for the breach of faith. Serious riots between Hindus and Muslims broke out in many parts of the country. It was on 12th August, that Lord Wavell invited Pandit Nehru, the President of the Indian Congress, to form the National Interim Government. Elections to the Constituent Assembly were also held and it was met for the first time in New Delhi on 9th December, 1946. It had fifteen women members.
The Muslim League refused to participate. The Constituent Assembly however went on with its work. Lord Wavell was replaced by Lord Mountbatten on 24 March, 1947 as Viceroy. The situation at this time was very tense as a strong agitation for partition was set in motion by the Muslim League. It became evident that unity of India could not be maintained and Jinnah and the Muslim League would have nothing less than Pakistan.

The Mountbatten Plan, which amongst other things provided for the partition of India, was accepted by the Muslim League on 9th June, 1947 and by all India Congress Committee on 15th June, 1947. The Indian Independence Act was passed by British Parliament on 18 July, 1947. This Act marked the end of British rule in India. Many prominent women served on this important work among who were Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray and Malati Chowdhury, Barely, a year later independence came at midnight on 14th August, 1947 with wild rejoicing. On 15th August, 1947 our country became independent. Behind it lay the martyrdom of so many patriots. It was the fruit of sacrifice and dedication of innumerable leaders and workers. Here on the eastern horizon the sun of freedom started shining but on the other side so many households were destroyed, the flowers of many gardens had faded. The reason was the partition of the country. Hindustan was divided into two parts India and Pakistan.
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33. Snehalata Panda, no. 31, p.73.
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45. Man Mohan Kaur, no.22, pp.139-43.


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49. Ibid., pp.145-47.


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63. Vinita Kaul, no.56, p.69.


66. Leela Kasutri, no. 54, p.28-29.


68. Leela Kasturi, no.54, p.35.

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72. Man Mohan Kaur, no.22, pp.204-05.

73. Afsar Bano, no. 57, p.62.


75. Vinita Kaul, no. 56, p.73.
76. Man Mohan Kaur, no.22, p.218.
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85. Vinita Kaul, no. 56, pp.73-74.
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