CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF REFORM MOVEMENT OF WOMEN

2.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Functioning of Democracy in Pakistan by Mohammad Waseem, from the Democracy in Muslim Societies, the Asian Experience by Zoya Hassan Sage publication Ltd, in 2007 (177-213):

The basic approach in this was that the exact reasons for the decline of democracy or no growth of democracy in Pakistan could be traced as lack of strong legal restrictions, malfunctioning of parliament, political parties being weak as well as federalism being in turmoil situation. In his study Mohammad Waseem tried to reveal how democracy in Muslim societies with its goals and ways have gone away from its basic agendas of establishing the rule of public representatives. Instead democracy is increased conceived in terms of non violent characteristics of public life and absence of actual Islamic resurgence.

The behaviouralist approach in social science during the 1960 and 1970s made the social scientists to give up collective approach and adopt a new individualistic approach in which the locus of inquiry and research would be an individual. This individual is a decisive factor. Maximum patterns are decided by these individual in the form of voters, opinion holders and corporate or public office holders.

As opposed to the culturalists analysis of relationship between Islam and democracy the case of Pakistan points to the central position of the power structure and its institutional expression in Pakistan as the real source of Islamic ascendancy.

2. Self-Sacrifice" versus "Self-Interest": A Non-Historicist Reading of the History of Women's Rights in India by Srimati Basu From: Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East Volume 22, Number 1&2, 2002 p. 20-35:

This study of Smriti Basu tries to pinpoint at a very crucial question of right to equal property inheritance by Indian women. She tries to reveal that this law of equal inheritance became unimplemented or impractical over four post independence decades. Basu argued that women give up their property rights because they are bound by traditional patriarchal system. At the same time women
consider that sacrificing their long term material gains is one way of showing their love and loyalty to their parents. The story of women’s rights always shows a dichotomy between laws on one hand and sentiments and duty on the other.


In this article Tahira tries to show how in every religion women were given a secondary position. She also tries to reveal how with the passage of time, in the universe of all religions, womanhood has earned respect, honor, status and rights.

Historically speaking both muslims and non-muslim women tolerated exploitation and disrespect at the hands of their men folk. Comparatively muslim women were in acceptable and better position as their religion had protected their status, rights, and virtue.

Whereas the non-muslim women suffered a worthless and lower position due to their religion and holy scriptures. Today’s political scenario has totally changed when we can find non-muslim women holding high position in governance.

It is very hard for the fundamentals to digest the fact that there is continuous elevation of women’s political position. At present there is a hard time for the non-muslim women who are struggling to achieve social liberty and civil rights in all dimensions. Negation of their rights made them more rebellious. In the present scenario female politicians in India such as Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi have worked hard to get the respect and honor of the women. Feminism tends to focus on issues for women as class. In India the subjection of women is being co-related to the systemic oppression of the majority of the population. This is the result of the long set historical hierarchical stratification of the society as a whole.


Samita Sen in her studies tries to reveal that the women reform movement in India which started in 19th century reached its peaks during the period of freedom struggle. The Constitution of Independent India gave equal rights for women and
universal adult franchise. This proved to be an important achievement of women’s struggle. But the guarantees which were given by the Constitution couldn’t bring many changes in socio material positions of most Indian women. A New Women’s Movement articulated to mass and popular politics emerged in the 1970s. In spite of vigorous women’s movement the structure of social and political institutions is determined by the deep rooted patriarchy which denied many equal opportunities to women. The Constitution of the nation state is an evidence of this consent and dichotomy between patriarchy and the women’s movement.

In her studies Samita Sen also tries to show how the platform of Indian National Congress has opened up new horizons for women’s movement. From 1889 every meeting of the Indian National Congress included some women. This gave a new opportunity for women to play new public roles.

5. “Women in Indian Politics Women are as Ever Underrepresented in the Election Fray and in Party Structures but in Many Ways Most of them Qualitative they have never been as important as they are today, by Jayati Ghosh (India’s National Magazine from the publishers of “the Hindus” volume 16-Issue 20 Sept. 20-Oct 08, 1999):-

The researcher tried to cover the case for the reservation of women. What has emerged quite clearly in current election process that various political parties are still dominantly male, women account for only five to ten percent of all candidates across parties and regions. This pattern of canditure is been observed for last 13 general elections in the country. There is a great opposition over the 84th Constitution Amendment Bill even last year also. In fact it is an ironic paradox that the parties which are very much in favor of women reservation bill have put up the same proportion of women as always and certainly not more than other parties that had opposed the bill. This is very much ironic that though Congress Party is headed by a women and though it is very much in favour of the reservation of women has only 10 percent of women candidates as compare to BJP at 7 percent women candidates as well as the communist party India (Marxist) have any 7 percent of candidates are women. The women members in most of the parties are very low in number. Their existence in decision making bodies as well as party decisions couldn’t be felt. They are pushed back at the “women’s wing” of the party where they are supposed to concentrate on so called “women issues” such as
dowry and rape cases and sometimes price rise which are seen as concerns of especially “housewives.”


As a French observer of women’s political representation in South Asia the researcher was particularly interested in Freedman’s work. Her observations drew me to question the impact if any of the Hindu Goddess a uniquely popular positive figure of feminine power- on political representation of women in two countries where non muslim ism is the religion of the majority: India and Nepal.

A cultural explanation is presented by a recent study of women representation in France and the United Kingdom. Freedman who is the author of the study has a hypothesis of his study that the responsible factor which keep women out of political field is political culture which proves to be as a hindrance for offering women any positive model of female power. In this paper the researcher proposes to locate the evidence of associations of women’s political participation with the Hindu Goddess over the last century in India and Nepal. With the help of this the researcher could co-relate the effect of goddess for women’s political empowerment and the nature of functions she performs and the manipulation she undergoes.


In her studies, Hassan Zoya and Menon Ritu reveals that the Women’s participation in elections and political activities is an important means by which Women gain status and autonomy, but their presence in party politics and leadership remains limited. Their low political representation, however, does not appear to have any correlation to their voter turnout or political awareness. Women are quite conscious of the importance of their vote and regularity exercises their franchise. Over the years, the number of women voters has shown a steady rise; while it’s still lower than that of men, the gender gap has reduced from 16% to less than 10% over the past four decades. In the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, for example 58% female voters exercised their franchise. In their study women’s involvement
in political activities, the MWS asked a number of questions regarding their participation during elections and their willingness to contest in elections. Respondents were asked about the age of voting. Overall, 53% of them were aware that 18 years is the correct age for voting; 25% gave no reply and 9% relied “20 years”. Comparatively more Hindu respondents from both rural and urban areas were aware of the correct age of voting. Among Muslims, about 51% replied correctly but lack response amongst Muslims was higher.


In her studies, Hassan Zoya and Menon Ritu reveals that the Women’s decision making capacity and their presence and participation in decision making within the family, in public, at work, and in decision making bodies, weather institutional or political are an important gauge of their autonomy and empowerment. Increasingly both the level and quality of their participation, especially at the political and policy levels has been a major plank of the international women’s movement, which has consistently drawn attention to it and lobbied for it at national and international forums. The united nation system recognize it as a major policy initiative, and most international donor and lending agencies require a gender component whose primary objective is women’s empowerment to be included in all the programs, activities, and organizations they support.

Some data on women in decision making have been compiled by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in their Human Development Reports, and a more detailed analysis is available in Human Development in South Asia. The Gender Question, from which we get a broad idea of comparative study by country. As with most such data, however, the true picture remains elusive, mainly because women’s everyday experiences are not accounted for. Their primary arena remains domestic, not the public, where few enumerators have ventured in order to capture the complicated, and sometimes contradictory, circumstances in which women negotiate bargain, concede, manipulate, and otherwise express agency.

9. The Indonesian Experience in Implementing Democracy by Adriana Elisabeth from “The Democracy in Muslim Societies”, the Asian Experience by Zoya Hassan Sage Publications Ltd in 2007 [75-107]:-
In her study Hassan Zoya reveals that the Muslims constitute the majority in Indonesia. Indeed, it is the largest Muslim community in the world. Yet their struggle for the establishment of Indonesia as an Islamic state based on the Shari’a by constitutional as well as violent means in the form of armed rebellion has been unsuccessful since the beginning of Indonesian independence. Nonetheless, on the part of many Muslims, particularly through a number of Islamic political parties, the aspiration for the Islamic state remain alive to this day, if by less than violent means, albeit with implications involving frequent cases of violence in society. The majority of Indonesian Muslims, most of whom are moderate, seem to be powerless in preventing the growth of militant groups with their intolerance, intimidations and violent actions, particularly against non-Muslim communities in the country.

10. Functioning of Democracy in Pakistan by Mohammad Waseem, from the Democracy in Muslim Societies, the Asian Experience by Zoya Hassan Sage Publications Ltd in 2007 [177-213]:-

In her study Hassan Zoya reveals that the study of Pakistan and other contemporary Muslim societies has been de-contextualized in as much as the means and ends of democracy have lost touch with the agenda of establishing the rule of public representatives. Instead democracy is increased conceived in terms of non-violent characteristics of public life and absence of actual Islamic resurgence.

It is argued that a structural approach to politics has the necessary potential to explain the lack of democracy in that country, while it shared the structural dynamic of the state with India as a legacy of British colonialism; it also inherited certain distinct features, such as economic and political underdevelopment of the territories constituting Pakistan, including Punjab as the catchment area for recruitment of the army. The partition of India was accompanied by a process of structural discontinuity in Pakistan as opposed to India, characterized by the predominant role of Islamic ideology as the *raison d’être* of the new state, relocation of the political center first at Karachi and then in Islamabad, and ascendency of the migrant elite in the state system. Under these conditions, the institutional imbalance between the two state apparatus of the army and bureaucracy on one hand and Parliament and Political parties on the other, created a dichotomy between state and democracy. While state elite gave
priority to national security, Islamic ideology, concentration of authority in the hands of the executive, the center and the president, and developmentalism in general, the political leaders focused on the agenda for representative rule, pluralism, and provincial autonomy, parliamentary sovereignty and a distributive mechanism for allocation of resources across ethnic and class division.

11. **The Struggle for Democracy in Bangladesh by Amena Mohsin & Meghna Guhathakutra from the Democracy in Muslim Societies, the Asian Experience by Zoya Hassan. Sage Publications Ltd in 2007[46-74]:**

   In her studies Amena Mohsin & Meghna Guhathakutra, Bangladesh, with a population of 135 million and as a per capita GNP of the only US$ 350, is one of the least developed countries in the world. Eight percent of the population lives in rural areas. In the post-independence (1971) period, the reconstruction and the rebuilding of the war-devastated nation was topmost priority. Proverbs and poetry are important reflections of the state of a society. Bengali culture and politics are, in fact, quite enmeshed, and the state of politics in Bangladesh is well reflected by a proverb in Bengali popular culture that says, *jar naikononitishaeikorerajniti* (one who does not have any principle doe’s politics). One cannot blame the general people for such a perception. Since its birth, the political history of Bangladesh has been marred by violence; a nation born out of violence with an estimated death of 30 million and rape of 20 million, yet a dream of a golden Bengal has remained unrealized.

   The liberation war of Bangladesh had politicized the Bangladesh Army. The liberation force which formed the nucleus of the Bangladesh army in the immediate aftermath of liberation war, in the past the military had intervened under such circumstances, even under much lesser pretexts, but the non-interference of the military, despite the continued deterioration of general law and order is indicative of the growing maturity of the military and also the power of society. The trajectories for the future of democracy in Bangladesh are mixed and complex. Intense political confrontation marked by pressures all over. Unless political parties come to a minimum consensus the non-state actors will appropriate the state.

12. **A Workshop on “Women’s Law and Strengthening of Counseling Centers” by Maharashtra State Commission for women and YASHADA**
Maharashtra State Commission for Women):

A workshop on “Women’s Law and Strengthening of Counseling Centers” was jointly organized by MSCW and YASHADA on 10th and 11th Jan 2011 at YASHADA Pune. This workshop meant for elected representatives from various Zilla parishads and Municipal Corporation of Maharashtra State. In this workshop it was insisted by Honorable Minister of Women and Development Department Mrs. Varshatai Gaikwad that knowledge about the basic legal rights of women should be imported to grass root level as well so that their participation as peoples representatives could be increased. The major role of the women in the political process as well as development of the country was also appreciated by the lady minster. The need for organizing such workshops is very urgent and organizers were appreciated for their efforts. A very important suggestion of this workshop was to have hotline services for women and commission sub centers at regional levels. It was expected by the organizers that it is the responsibility of everyone to implement National Policy for the empowerment of women.

13. “Women’s Reservations are not sufficient for Responsible Democracy”, an article by Prof. Dr. Sharad Ghodke.(Articles Disciplines Covered Review Team Guidelines for reviewers guidelines to Author FAQ format at Research Paper volume-I, Issue IV May 2011):

In his article the researcher tried to show the correlation between women empowerment and their political participation. Liberty, Equality and Justice are the pillars of a successful democracy. The vigilance of the people is the watchdog of democracy. Voting being the prime responsibility of citizens both urban and rural women have become active voters. The strength of the political system can be added through empowerment of women. The empowerment of women is directly related with responsible democracy. The author tries to reveal a contradiction between the reservations and actual women’s participation in decision making. In spite of reservations to women, role played by women in decision making seems to be weak. In fact decision making and real exercise of real political powers is still the domain of their male counterparts. This is clear from the entirely male composition of the traditional Panchayat, either of villages or of caste groups.
This quota system have provided a new horizon for women to decide and generate the policies for welfare. The opportunity to participate and represent is also assured by this reservation system. The direct benefit of the reservation for women introduced in 1993 was enjoyed by male candidates as women are used as rubber stamps. Now, the scenario is totally changed. Today women are taking this opportunity as a platform provided for social welfare. Women are enjoying the pride to be a representative of people in democratic country.

14. Muslim Women in Indian Politics1947-2002 by Karin Deutsch Karlekar, from “In a Minority, Essays on Muslim Women in India”, By Zoya Hassan and Ritu Menon published in India by Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2005 [222-262]:-

The researcher captioned that throughout India, the 1937 elections were the first major opportunity for women to enter politics at the provincial level. The government of Indian Act of 1935, which introduce a number of wide reaching constitutional reforms and increased the representation of Indians in the structure of British colonial governance, also gave six million women the vote, and 42 seats in the Provisional Legislature Assemblies had been reserved for women. The Muslim separatist movement, which culminated in the partition of British India and the creation of Pakistan, had significant consequences for most Indian Muslims.

The circumstances leading up to partition, coupled with several key trends in post Indian politics, combined to limit the opportunities available to many Indian Muslims to enter public life. Their overall share of position in government and administration has remained low, and the percentage of Muslims who have been able to win an election position in the Lok Sabha is only half their percentage of the Indian population. And Muslim women at most levels of government, Muslims have been and remain under-represented. Scholars such as Minault and Lateef have given the detailed efforts of male reformers to rejuvenate the Muslim community. Thus, women’s organizations quickly became involved in issues of a political nature, followed by participation in national politics and their entrance into the legislatures in 1937. The tussle over sub-reservation and the current impasse over reservation for women in general do not bode well either in terms of increasing women’s representation or of encouraging greater participation in political life by Muslim women in particular.
15. “Women in Electoral Politics, Women In Electoral Process Of India Under Representation In Decision Making Process” (Articles about electoral politics Page No. 3- Times of India Articles.):-

The issue of women’s political participation in decision making has become an international agenda and it has initiated many regional and national plans of action. 1975-85 was declared as Women Development Decade by the UNO. Various recommendation as well as suggestions were given for recruitment, nomination and promotion of women in various branches of government. (By the World Plan of Action).

Late twentieth century was crucial stage for enhancing women’s participation in political decision making. The UNO have adopted many resolutions for women’s participation in 1975. Further recommendations to promote international cooperation and strengthen peace through women’s participation in world is suggested by Copenhagen in 1980. Late twentieth century has focused on the issue of women’s participation in political decision making. The United Nation adopted the convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952.

16. Panchayat Raj and Women in Kerala, the case of Muslims, by Aboobakar Siddiqui. from “In a Minority, essays on Muslim Women in India”, By Zoya Hassan and Ritu Menon published in India by Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2005 [284-309] :-

Aboobakar Siddiqui captioned from the Kerela state Government, From the inception of statehood till 1990, only three elections have been held to the Local Self Government Institution in Kerala. The first was held in 1963, the second after a gap of more than one and a half decades, in 1979 and the third in 1988. Till 1990 the participation of women was very limited in local self-government. In the 1963 election, which was held in accordance with the Kerala Panchayat Act, 1960, very few women contested, in fact, the Act contained no provisions to ensure their participation as candidates. Later, the Kerala District Administration Act, 1979, carried a provision for the nomination of two women with full voting rights in the District Council, but the barred from the assuming the posts of president. In the 1988 election panchayats there was 20 percent seat reservation for women consequently, 2029 women were elected to village panchayat. However only 2.4 percent became president and 12.4 percent became vice president from among all elected women. It has to be noted that there were no
women panchayat presidents at that time in Mallapuram, Kasargod, and Wyanad districts. Despite this scenario, women have largely been absent in public sphere, it is in this context that affirmative action and state initiatives like social development programs, reservation of seats for women in local bodies, peoples plan campaign, etc. become relevant. Nonetheless, neither political parties nor social activists have seriously taken up the issue of ‘women’s invisibility’ in politics, even the intelligentsia had paid it scant attention.

17. The field, Haryana, Women and Panchayati Raj, Pamela Singha from Women’s Participation In Panchayati Raj, Rawat publications, [113-137] :-

The Singha Pamela from Women’s Participation in Panchayat Raj stated that the formation of Haryana, has been a significant increase in the number of women contestants, especially during 1967-87, but this is not true for the number of women elected, both in case of state assembly as well as in the case of their representation in the national parliament. Till now it has been able to send only two women to the Lok Sabha, although the number of women contestants has certainly increased. To the Rajya Sabha too, Haryana did not send any women during the first 25 years of its existence. It is only in 1990 that it nominated two women candidates- sushma swaraj (BJP) and Vidya Beniwal (JPS). In 1990, Chandrawati was appointed the governor of Goa and in 1992, Shelaji was appointed the deputy minister of education in the union cabinet. This analysis reveals that in Haryana the participation of women in politics has indeed been very insignificant [Bala, 1999; 293] This reservation has brought in more women at the grass roots, i.e. both in the rural as well as urban local bodies [ARORA AND Prabhakar, 1994; panchayati raj update 2000] the women of the state, who have been behind the veil for ages, are now getting due prominence under the new panchayati raj act. Though the Act has been in place for a very short period, its mandatory requirements have necessitated participation of women in the decision making process at the grass root level.

18. Political Empowerment of Women in India and Karnataka, Talwar Sabanna, from Political Dimensions of Women Empowerment, the Associate Publishers, New Delhi.201.[23-43] :-

Talwar Sabanna captioned that Women are an integral part of society. They play an important role in determining the destiny of a nation. Therefore, due recognition to them in the society and their greater involvement in socio-
economic and political affairs become all more important. However, history reveals that women have not been given their due status in the society. According to the data collected, women contestants for Loksabha elections held since 1952 show a broad picture of trends of women participation in national politics. The data reveals that the average number of women contestant per seat, share of women among total contestants and their success ratio stand at 0.30, 3.7 percent and 25.1 percent, respectively. It is evident that few women got elected because few women contested. The data also shows that though the number of women contesting elections is going up steadily over the years, the increase is not very appreciable keeping in view the fact that there has been a general increase in the number of candidates both men and women. Further, the fact highlights that the success ratio of women contestants has steadily fallen over the years and ultimately dived from 43.1 percent in 1952 to just 6.8 percent in 1999 election. In Karnataka, things took a different turn, when the ‘Janata Party’ formed the government in 1983. Karnataka became the first state in the country to introduce the policy of reservation for women in the Panchayati raj institutions. The act of 1985 clearly mentions that 25.00 percent of the total seats should be reserved for the women in Panchayati raj institutions. The purpose behind this move was to provide more opportunities for women to participate in the electoral process, in decision making and thereby increasing the possibilities of accruing more benefits of development due to them.

She further stated that in Karnataka, women representatives in state assembly in 1952 out of 99 seats, 4 were won by women members constituting 4.04 percent of the total. Again, women representatives increased in 1957 out of 208 seats, 21 were won by women members making 10.10 percent. Further, in 1962 there was tremendous increase in the representation of women members i.e., 13.46 percent. However, very low women representatives were represented in 1983, i.e. out of 224 seats, only 2 were won by women member making 0.89 percent. Further, the data concludes that representative of women member was very low as compared to male members during 1952-2008.


Bhuyan stated that Women in Politics are least researched topics in our country. It is as neglected as the women are in the Indian society. For a long
time the social scientists did not throw a firm looks at the political behavior of women. It was partially owing to the backwardness of behavioral research in India. Women’s empowerment is a global issue, which has gained momentum in recent decade. Gender inequality is at once ideological (the beliefs, norms and values about the status and role of women in society) and structural (women’s access to and positions within social institutions). As highlighted by Bradely and Khor (1993) political status includes women’s access to power and representation in the state. Social status includes women’s access to education and health as well as their sexual objectification and reproductive rights (Md. Tarique and Ahmed Sultan, 2006). In economic status, we include women’s activities around production, distribution and consumptions of goods and services. However, the more significant aspect accounts for the scarcity of women studies is the lack of due weight according to the women in the society. Even today women studies are very few in number and women politics as a field of research are still in its building stage. The current study is an attempt to fill up this vacuum and throw light on the political behavior of women. Women comprise about 50% of country’s population. However, they are the biggest group roughly in all facets. The male is denying their rights and liberties. Due to the male domination of Indian society, their social, economic and political status has stayed behind comparatively stumpy. From the time immemorial, they have been classified in all activity of life and regarded as “second class citizens”

In this survey Bhuyan’s effort is made to find out the correlation between the social and economic conditions of women, and their political behavior. Secondly, it tried to find out if there has any marked change taken place in the pattern women politics. It is relevant to determine if the change in their socio-economic status have led to corresponding changes in their political behavior. Their political participation in the pre independence period and after 1947 is studied. In order to determine the level of their political modernization, their exposure to communication flow, level of political knowledge and awareness, the degree of their efficacy and legitimacy and political participation is certainly analyzed. The attitudes of women towards various social, economic and political issues are examined.
Mastan Vali stated in his book that women’s study is an interested topic and many scholars have gone through it. The topics like “Women and politics” have become an area of great interest to students and scholars of all social science. Women studies have come to occupy a prominent place in the contemporary scholarly literature. As the women and their organizations throughout the world have been agitated for their rightful place in the society, the attention of the scholars of various disciplines is rightly focused on various issues relating to women’s position in different fields. In India women’s role has been marginal in the society, although they constitute half of the country’s population. Their involvement in politics is negligible all along. Their number in the legislatures including parliament has always remained at a very low, as it never exceed 10 percent of total membership of these bodies at any point of time.

Nevertheless, several women played an active role in the National Movement and also in political process after independence. In recent past, there is a wide spread realization that they should be emancipated and all types of discrimination against them to be avoided to enable them to play legitimate role in the society. It is also emphasized that the emancipation of women could be possible only through their social, economic and political empowerment necessary steps are being mooted in this direction. The most important among them are the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, which provide them reservation in the local bodies. A bill was also introduced in the parliament and state legislative assemblies. Today women are making their ways in every walk of life with the gradual improvement in their position in different fields. Now, the Indian women look forward to play a bigger role in politics at all levels. This ongoing process of women’s emancipation in different fields particularly in political sphere deserves scholarly attention for it is going to bring a radical change in the Nation’s life.

This study makes a detailed survey of the extent of women participation in representative bodies at different levels, at different points of time. It also highlights the role played by the women in the Nationalist Movement. Apart from this the few prominent political profiles, achievements and contribution of women leaders of India have been mentioned in this study.
In the past, women and politics regarded as occupying the exclusively different areas of society. Politics was understood as a public activity dominated by men and requiring typically masculine, while women were identified above all with a private world of family and domesticity. However this particular study tried to prove that male oriented perspective was seriously challenged, particularly, from the beginning of the 20th century contributing to important changes in perspective towards women’s role in politics.


Since recent municipal elections in Pune has shown that no party will gain clear mandate. Though NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) topped the seat tally and has formed post election alliance with Congress to gain majority. It was for the first time more women corporate than men in Pune. They numbered 51 seats out of 152 municipal corporations. If you go to see the political background of these women they are from established political families. They were given canditure as a proxy to their male counter parts. The two female candidates were Vaishali Bankar, daughter in law of corporator Datta Banakar where as Shashikala Kondre, daughter in law of ex-corporator Kailas Kondre. Both were candidates of NCP. Same condition was there in Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation elected Mohini Lande, the wife of MLA Vilas Lande as Mayor. This shows the empty role played by the parliamentary provisions of women empowerment which is in cordial relationship with feudal institutions like caste, patriarchy and dynasticism. Unless the capitalism is not overthrown we cannot expect women emancipation in the real sense of term.

22. ‘Women’s Participation in Elections in Afghanistan 24.12.10 (Helpdesk Research Report: Enquirer DFID Asia Regional Team).:--

In this report the main points of discussion is how women’s participation in politics is viewed in the state of Afghanistan. Since all decision making powers are in the hands of men there is very little opportunity to women to enter in politics. This hampers women’s political life. There should be a total revival of a reform of the entire gendered security and socio
political system. This only will remove all types of obstacles found in the way of women participation fully in political life in Afghanistan.

This report tries to highlight that such a mechanism should be developed which will meet the need of women. It tries to also ensure that election management bodies should be made to operate independently, impartially and transparently and their boards should have women on responsible positions.

23. “Why some women are politically active: The Household Public Space and Political Participation in India.”:-

This paper at the beginning describes the position of women in public political life in India. It tries to highlight how women’s existence is absent in legislative bodies at the state and at the national level. It gives an evidence of Kerala that though women have full exposure to education and good life their proportion of representation at state legislative bodies is very low.

This paper brings to the light an important point that though women are aware of the advantages of being politically active but still they get themselves chained in various social and familiar constraints. Due to a different kind of socialization women tend to think political activity in a different way. This lower level of participation is caused due to the resources that women possess but also a result of the place of women in the family. The paper argues that those women who can negotiate independent space for themselves within the household are more likely participants in political life.

24. Women in Electoral Politics: Empowerment of Indian Women by Pavitra.

Multi party system, with hundred of political parties competing for power both at the central and state levels is the hallmark of Indian democracy which is considered as one of the largest democracies in the world. The tickets for either Lok Sabah election or Vidhan Sabah elections are given to the candidates on the basis of caste, class and religion instead of the capacities and potentialities of the candidates. The women from Maharashtra played a key role in freedom movement as well as various other movements. The first female President of India, Mrs. Pratiba Singh Patil is also from Maharashtra. The government a Maharashtra has set up the State Commission for women
under Maharashtra Act No. xv of commission. The debate about political participation of women in decision making assumed importance in twentieth century. The convention on political Rights of women was adopted by UNO in 1952. Similarly decade of 1975-1985 was declared as Women Development Decade. Many suggestions regarding recruitment nomination and promotion of women in various branches of government and public bodies were also given by the world Plan Action of 1975.

25. Sachar Committee Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India (17 NOV, 2006):

On March 09, 2005 Prime Minster of India appointed a High Level Committee to prepare a report on social, economic and educational status of muslim community of India.

The High Level Committee consists of Justice Rajender Sachar, Mr. Saiyd Hamid, Mr. M.A. Basith, Dr. Rakesh Basant, Dr. Akhtar Majeed and Dr. Abu Saleh Sharif as its members. The objectives of this report were to know the geographical location of muslim population state wise, district wise and block wise. It wanted to study geographical pattern of economic activity, asset base and income levels. It also aimed at studying levels of socio economic development of muslims, their educational progress, literacy rate, drop out ratio, their relative share in public and private sector employment. It also aimed to know the proportion of OBC in muslim community and their problems.

The report was presented to the Prime Minister on 17th November 2006. It was tabled in the Lok Sabha on 30th November 2006. This report contains 12 chapter and 403 pages. Main report is upto page 254. The supporting material of the report presented in the statically appendices.

Sources of data which Sachar Committee used for its reference were census of India 2001, National Sample Survey, RBI, NABARD, SIDBI, NMDFC, and Data from government organizations such as Backward Classes Commission and NCAERT.

Observations of Sachar committee for the educational conditions of Indian muslim is that the literacy rates among muslims in 2001 were below
national average. The gap between muslims and general literacy rates are higher in urban areas and among women. The observation of the committee was that muslim literacy rates are much lower than general and other minorities but almost equal to SC/ST. As many 25% of muslim children in 6-14 age group have either never attended a school or have dropped out. Dropout rates are higher at primary, secondary and higher level. This is pathetic to know that only 4% muslims complete graduation while 2% muslims are able to complete post graduation.

The recommendation of Sachar Committee for elevating the level of education of muslim are that there should be free and compulsory education up to age 14 years. Bias should be removed from text books. High quality schools should be set up in all areas of muslim concentration. An exclusive girls school should be set up to 12th standard. Madrasas should be linked to mainstream education. Technical training should be provided as well as hostel facilities should be provided at reasonable cost to minorities. Madrasas degree should be recognized for competitive exams. The state should run maximum number of urban schools.

The observations of Sachar committee for Economy and Employment of muslim were that there is low work participation for men and women. High share of muslim workers are engaged in self employment in urban areas and for women as well. The participation of muslim workers in salaried jobs both public and private sector is quite low. It is an important observation that muslim women workers undertaking work in their homes (70%) is much larger than for all workers (51%). The participation of muslim in apparel, auto repair and electrical machinery is high amongst muslim. Participation of muslim in security related activities as well as professional and managerial cadre is low. It is a pathetic observation that muslim workers get lower daily earning than others.

It was recommended to provide financial and other supports to initiatives built around occupations where muslims are concentrated. To locate ITs, polytechnics and other institutes that provide skill training to non matriculates in large concentration muslim populations.
It was observed that muslim concentration areas are not well served. No roads, no local bus stops, no toilets, no educational and medical facilities.

The most important recommendation of Sachar committee report was that access to schools, health care, sanitation facilities, dirking water, means of daily transportation are basic facilities one can expect a state to provide for the citizens. This is in the interest of India and not only muslim alone.

It is pathetic to note that though the report is commendable but the Union Government failed to implement the corrective measures with its sincerity and impartiality. The agencies of the government couldn’t do anything to uplift the conditions of muslims. I forcefully advocate that the proper scheme should be once again revised to implement the recommendations of the committee thoroughly.

26. Malala Yousafzai; Christrina Lamb (08 October 2013) , “I am Malala: The story of the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban.”:-

Yousafizai is a memoir I am Malala co-written with British journalist Christina Lamb was published in October 2013 by Little Brown and company in the U.S and by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in the U.K.

A reviewer for the Guardian called the book “fearless” and stated that “The haters and conspiracy theorists would do well to read this book”.

Malala Yousafzai the Pakistani school girl who was shot in the head by the Taliban has declared she is determined to follow in Bhutto in to politics. Malalal Yousafzai is a student and education activist. She is from the town of Mingora in the swat district of Pakistan’s northwestern province. She became famous for the fight of rights to education and for women. In Swat valley the right to education was denied to girls by Talibans. In early 2009, Malala dared to write a blog under a pseudonym for the BBC in which she gave a detail explanation of her life under Taliban rule, their attempts to take control of the valley and her views on promoting education for girls. She was continuously giving interviews in print and on television about the rights of girls to education.
On 9th October 2012 when Malala was going to her school by a school bus in the district of Swat, a gunman boarded up the bus and asked for Malala by name. He shot her by a colt 45. One bullet hit the left side of Malala’s forehead, another bullet went inside her skin and third into her shoulder. She was sent into the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, England for intensive rehabilitation.

U.N. special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown visited Yusafzai on 15th October 2012. A petition was launched under the name “I am Malala”. This petition was in support of what Malala fought for. Mr. Brown made it clear that this petition is with the hope that there is no child left out of school by 2015.

Yusafzai has been awarded the following national and international honours.

- International Children Peace Prize 2011.
- National Youth Peace Prize 2011.
- 2013 Sarkharov Prize for Freedom of Thought awarded by the European Parliament.
- 2013 Pride of Britain, October 2013.
- She won many more other awards also.

27. ‘Lajja’ or ‘Shame’- Taslima Nasrin:-

Born in 1962 author Taslima Nasrin was a Bengali and former physician who was exiled in 1994. Due to her essay and novels depicting feminist views and criticism of Islam in particular and of religion in general, she became world famous by the end of 20th century. Her area of thought was secular humanism, freedom of thought equality for women and human rights. She is known for her powerful writings on women oppression. She published half a dozen collections of poetry between 1982 and 1983, of ten with female oppression as a theme. In the early 1990s she produced three collections of essays and four novels before the publication of her 1993 novel Lajja or Shame, in which a Hindu family is persecuted by Muslims. Publication of Lajja changed her life dramatically. The Islamic fundamentalist attacked Nasrin physically as well as other ways following the publication of Lajja.
Nasrin moved to Sweden in 2008 and later worked as a research scholar at New York University. One can see the influence of her own experience of sexual abuse during adolescence of her own experiences as gynecologist. She talked against treatment of women in Islam and against religion in general. In total Taslima has written 35 books in Bengali which includes poetry, essays, novels and autobiography series. Her works have been translated in thirty different languages.

Taslima Nasreen won great literacy award Anand from India in 1992. She won the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought from the European Parliament in 1994. She received the Kurt Tucholsky award from Swedish PEN. She got the UNESCO Manjeet Singh Prize for promotion of the tolerance and non violence in 2005.

28. Indian Muslim Women, Politics of Muslim Personal Law and Struggle for life with Dignity and Justice; Raziya Patel.

The status overall development of the community as well as the state of Hindu Muslim relation define the issue of justice and progressive laws for Muslim women. A uniform base of constitutional values can be provided by uniform civil code which implies retaining the customary diversity of all communities. This particular articles highlights on the nature of Muslim personal Law in India the politics behind MPL (Muslim Personal Law). It also tries to explain what is expected by the social scientists and activists. Unless there is a mass movement aimed at change and reforms in personal laws will remain impossible.

An important controversies and debated issue in India is of Muslim personal Law. After Shah Bano case in 1986 and with the introduction of Muslim Women Act this debate has got central position. In this article the author tried to show the politics around the Muslim personal law in India. The oral divorce, polygamy and denial for maintenance after divorce lead to the violation of women’s human rights. Therefore women’s rights activists are opposed to these provisions surveys which confirm the plight of women under the present form of Minority Personal Law. Many women’s organizations and NGO’s are working on these issues of reforms in Muslim personal Laws. Many cases have been submitted by the muslim women challenging the unjust
provisions of laws. The laws should be made on the basis of principle of justice equality and human rights. A huge sense of insecurity is developed by the muslim community after Shah Bano case, the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition and Gujarat riots. After Gujarat the priorities of community and muslim women changed from laws to survival.

29. Muslim Dalit and OBC Conference: A report by Yoginder Sikand; 20 November 2005:-

A conference was organized in New Delhi by the Prime Minister’s High Level Committee. In this conference activists and leaders upholding the cause of muslim Backward Cast (OBC and Dalit) communities were present. A prominent Mumbai based Islamic Scholar Asghar Ali Engineer pointed out that Islam does not hold caste distraction. In this conference Asghar Ali Engineer insisted that the reservation should be given to those muslim communities which are Dalits, Tribals and Backward castes.

Mr. P.S. Krishnan former Chairman of the Backward Classes Commission brought to notice an important fact that there is no data available on the socio economic conditions of many OBC muslim communities. He said that these OBC muslim communities rank among the poorest sections of Indian society. He said that the state is responsible for all this. He also opposed state’s stand to deny schedule caste status to muslim and Christian Dalit communities though their socio economic conditions as well as the secondary status they are given in the wider social context as similar as those of Hindu Dalits. He insisted that the census needs to take note of the social conditions of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians.

In this conference Ejaz Ali of All India United Muslim Morcha also stressed that the state should recognize many of muslim OBC communities as Scheduled castes so that it becomes easier for them to compete for government jobs.

Shabbir Ahmed Ansari of Maharashtra State Muslim OBC organization criticized the way in which minority upper castes get the traditional Muslim leadership. These upper castes tend to ignore the interests of these communities and on the contrary tend to raise controversial issues which
as a result perpetuates their own hegemony. Zafaryab Jillani suggested that within the 27% quota in government service reserved for OBC’s under the Mandal Commission a separate provision for Muslim OBC’s should be given. Iqbal Ansari of the Minorities Council of India also claimed that Muslim OBC’s should be provided a separate quota within the general OBC quota.

Ashfaq Hussain Ansari brought to the notice an important point that inadequate political representation is given to Dalits and Muslim OBCs. He said that from first to present Lok Sabha only 60 Dalit and OBC Muslim had been elected whereas in total 400 Muslims had been elected. He noted down a very significant point that in the National Backward Classes Commision, there is no single OBC Muslim.

Dalit Saleem, an activist from Hyderabad stressed that there is an urgent need that madrasas should be modernized because large section of madrasa students are from Muslim OBC and Dalit families since there is only conventional and restricted education given in these madrasas the employment prospects of these OBC and Dalit Muslim children go down.

30. **Muslim Dalit and OBC Conference: A view by Prof. Fakhruddin Bennur.**
(30 November 2005).

Fakhruddin Bennur, an activist from Osmanabad, Maharashtra expressed his view that the issue of representation of Muslim OBCs in educational institutions is not pointed out by the terms of reference of the Sachar Committee. He tried to say that since Muslim OBC’s are not highly qualified there is very less chance for them to get the government jobs. He also insisted that due to the privatization of education professional institutes charge a very high fees which cannot be afforded by many OBC and Dalit families. Fakhruddin Bennur also asked that the Sachar Committee should also look into the issue how neo liberal economic policies and privatization have destructed the livelihood of most of the Muslim OBC and Dalit families.


While presenting his paper on ‘Religious Reform Movement’ and “Othering of muslims”, Prof. Fakhruddin Bennur said that the condition of
Muslims in this country is pathetic. He discussed roughly the factors which were responsible for the plight of Muslims. These factors are anti Muslim genocide, educational backwardness communalism, socio economic backwardness ,no equal opportunities in almost all field of life and riots perpetuated by BJP and Shiv Sena.

Prof. Bennur lamented when a reform movement took place to improve Hindu community by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dr Ambedkar at that time the muslim were under the orthodox dominance of ulemas. He said unfortunately these ulemas in the name of purification of Islam tried to transplant the Arabic social structure. They never thought of having social economic and educational reforms. Prof. Bennar insisted that this was the cause for the Muslim are left alienated from pluralistic culture of Indian society.

32. **Low Representation of Muslim in Indian Politics: Causes and Concerns; Shahidur Rashid Talukdar (May 27 2011):**

One can see very clearly that since Independence the muslim representation in India Politics ranges betwee 6% to 8% as compared to their share in the Indian population which is estimated to be around 14%. The author tries to pinpoint that this representation of muslim is very low. The author tries to enlist various reasons for the low representation of muslims. One of the basic reasons can be lack of effective muslim leadership. Another reason is that political parties presume that muslim candidates have very low chance of electability as the non muslim electorate won’t vote for them because of their religions identity.

Another reason is that muslims are nearly excluded from SC and ST’s. Therefore they cannot compete in the election in the reserved seats. These reasons whether involuntary or deliberate, deprive muslims to have bright chances of their leadership to grow. Additionally due to the Indian muslim community being subdivided into many other religions linguistic and regional groups there are no muslim political parties at the national level. Together all these unfavorable factors have contributed to make muslim community the largest minority group in the country having poor representation in the country’s politics. This is undoubtedly, not the sign of a healthy democracy.
33. Muslim Dalit and O.B.C Conference A Report: By Yoginder Sikand (30th November 2005):-

In this conference of OBCs and Dalits Hafeez Ahmed Hawari raised an issue of low political representation of muslim OBCs and Dalits. He said that it is been observed for long that so called ‘high caste muslim’ degrade their co-religionists i.e. ‘low caste muslims’. He said very sadly that the high caste muslims prefer that a Hindu candidate from B.J.P. should win election but they will not vote for a ‘low caste ‘muslim. Whereas the contradiction of the reality is that the high caste muslim candidate always demand the low caste muslim to vote for them giving them the reason that if they do not vote B.J.P. will win. He asserted that muslim O.B.Cs and Dalits have decided that now no more they will be salves of the so called upper castes. They decided that instead of voting them they will prefer to vote such political party which will promote their rights and demands.

34. Seminar Report: What Ails Indian Muslim (25th October 2013):-

This seminar was organized by Center for Promotion of Democracy and Secularism (CPDS) in collaboration with Department of Political Science of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad and with the sponsorship of ICSSR on 11th and 12th October 2013.

The keynote address of the seminar was delivered by internationally renewed scholar Prof. Mushirul Hasan of Jamia Milia Islamic, New Delhi. He brought to light a bitter fact that in compare to other religions and ethnic community of India, the muslims are lagging behind in all walks of life. He said that both the state and society are biased about the muslim community and therefore the corrective measures which are given by Sachar Commission Report are not been properly implemented by the Central Government. He gave a very valuable advice to the muslims of India that they should act as responsible citizens of the country and should become active in corporate life. He pointed that muslims being the largest minority community of India should strive to win the confidence of the majority community.

35. Indian Women’s Movement by Aparna Basu.:-

The male social reformers discussed issues regarding plight of women and started women’s organizations. The history of Indian women’s movement
can be traced back to 19th century. There was establishment of women’s organization at the local and then at the national level in the end of the 19th century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) focused on women’s issues such as sati, kulin, polygamy and women’s property rights. Throughout the century the reformers highlighted the issues such as women’s inferior status, enforced seclusion, early marriage condition of widows and lack of education. In Bengal a famous Brahma Samaj activits, Keshub Chandra, started women’s journal. Same kind of work was done by Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and Gujarat. In 1882 Swaran Kumari Devi sister of the poet Rabindranath Tagoer formed the Ladies Society in Culcatta. In 1882 Arya Mahila Samaj in Pune was founded by Ramabai Saraswati.

Women’s from urban educated families started organization and association in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other smaller cities. Bharat Stree Mandal was formed in 1910 by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani. This was considered as a platform for women of all castes, creeds, classes and parties. Women’s movement was launched with two main issues that are political rights for women and reform of personal laws. This happened in the inter-war years between 1917 and 1945. Women took active part in national movement as well.

The Constitution on Independent India guaranteed Universal Adult Franchise to all. Women also joined Telengana Movement in Andhra Pardesh, Tebhag Movement in Bengal and Naxalite Movement. Women also joined Shahada Movement in Dhulia District of Maharashtra. Self Employed Women’s Association was also established by Ela Bhat in 1972. Women also joined Chipko movement in 1974. The issues such as dowry deaths, bride burning, rape, sati etc. were fought against forcefully by women between 1970’s and 1980’s. Women’s Sudies as an identifiable area of teaching and research emerged in 1960’s in the United States.

But still the fact is that to bring about a new morality, new values and a new egalitarian relationship women’s movement has a long way to go in its struggle.
36. Muslims and 1857: India’s First War of Independence: Compiled by Mushtaque Madni and A.I. Makki, published by Mr. P.A.Inamdar:-

This particular book is a very good record of all those Muslim leaders and activists who played a very important role in muting of 1857 till the partition of the country. This book discusses the various achievements and works of these Muslim leaders in all fields such as political, social and educational field. They can be enlisted as Sirajuddaula, Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan, Maulvi Ahmdullah Shah, Sharafat Ali, Ashfaqullah Khan, Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan, Khawaja Altaf Hussain Hali, Nawab Muhsin-ul-mulk, Syed Ameer Ali, Shah Nawaz Khan, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Aga Khan III, Badruddin Tayabji, Syed Hasan Imam, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Allama Shibli Naumani, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Maulvi Barkatullah Mazharul Haque, Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Dr. Zakir Hussein. These are the Muslim political leaders, activists, thinkers, social reformers and educationists.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF REFORM MOVEMENT OF WOMEN

Appropriateness of behavior in women has been an issue since time immemorial. What is sanctioned by the society been the basis of rules of what is allowed and what is not when it comes to women and how women should behave. The earliest reference for appropriate behavior in women is found in 200 BC wherein Manu has laid down that independence in thinking and action in women is intolerable. In Indian society the common thread running through all the different cultures and religions is that the exposure of women has been limited to inside the house. Despite revolutionary thinking worldwide, restrictions on women are still prevalent in India. In fact it is an ironic paradox that on hand different Indian cultures and religious traditions worship the ‘Female’ as goddesses for example ‘Durga’ the form of Shakti, ‘Saraswati’ the goddess of learning, ‘Lakshmi’ the goddess of wealth and on the other hand women are not permitted to work, or be active politically. The issue of equality of gender has its earliest reference in revolutionary movements of the 12 the century philosopher Basawashwara who adhered to
the principles of equality of gender, society without demarcations of class and caste.

The reform movements which occurred in the 19th and the 20th century also advocated the cause of non discrimination and a better life for women. Post independence the constitution of India has supported women through different laws, amendments. On the international front the issue of equality based on gender has found reference in UN Charter in 1945 and in the UN Declaration of Human rights in 1948. Improved legal and social status for women was a focal point in the activities undertaken by CEDAW. However most of the efforts undertaken for propagating equality between sexes during the development discourse have remained in theory. Hard core practical reality is another story as all these theoretical amendments and reforms are proposed and adopted by a society which is essentially traditionally male and patriarchal as is observed over the course of history.

In Ancient times there have been references to scholarly Indian women like Gargi and Maitrayi which indicates that ancient society propagated the notion of education. The contributions of women in the economic scene were equally important. The picture on equality between sexes is hazy with no clear reference points but the supposedly modernistic attitudes like freedom of choice of life partners and widow remarriages were clearly advocated in ancient India and it was as the Indian society started ‘progressing’ on the path of civilization that discrimination on the basis of gender set in. It can be said that it was during the Vedic period that the status of women started deteriorating. The probable reasons for this decline may be attributed to solidifying practices of property and lineage being passed on to the next generation through the male progeny. The age of the Dharmashastras saw malpractices like ‘Sati’ gaining popularity and the sphere of economic, political and social participation of women shrinking. Rapid decline in the social importance of women coupled with being the physically weaker sex saw the scope of behavior of women being rigidly defined limits set on what was considered ‘appropriate’. The practice of female feticide can be traced to the Vedic period in the Indian history. The concept of ‘Hinduism’ which evolved around 500 BC saw women as the weaker sex which had to be
dominated and punished for transgressions. The evolving ideology saw women being deprived of opportunities to education and exposure to the world outside the house. Even inside the household there were behavioral rules which were strictly implemented under the guise of religious practices. This phenomenon was also observed in the western world during the Classical period. Grecian women were deprived of political rights, as were the Spartan women who could not own property. The exception to this deprivation was ancient Rome where freeborn women who were citizens and though they were deprived of political office or the right to vote they could influence the political turn of events. Preference for the male child was phenomenon common to the Eastern and Western cultures.

However the picture representing the medieval period is hazy with no clear references on the life lived. It can be observed though that changing social trends like permission for education led to issues like being discriminated in politics. The concept of equality took root like matters like education, property and right to vote via a Declaration of Sentiments. The women’s suffrage moment began in New York in 1848 and England continued till the 19th amendment which was more than 50 years later facing a lot of opposition from the traditionalists who believed that women were the weaker sex and hence not capable of representing their self interests. This social phenomenon of disguised slavery and bondage under the guise of protection and love was evident in India and continued despite rampant onslaughts on culture and cultural synthesis. The traditionally patriarchal Indian society with a few exceptions like Malabar Coast in South western India where Matriarchy prevailed tolerated few transgressions and believed in controlling women through clipping their wings. This phenomenon was observed in Hindu society as well as the Islamic society and though culture showed improved tolerance and adaptations, the status of women remained as ever throughout the times. The nineteenth century saw changing social conditions with different roles being played by the reformers like, Veerasaivism, Verses of Vemana and Sri Vaishnavism in South India who defied the traditional Bramhanicial order and regenerative role played by the British in introducing western culture, liberal ideas and social reforms. A special mention can be made of Kandukuri
Veerasingam who pioneered the social reforms activity in Southern India especially in Andhra Pradesh.

The path of history finds its next destination in the Early Modern Period which follows the medieval age and is essentially framed as starting with the Ottoman Empire conquest of today’s Turkey, then known as Constantinople. In the course of history this period marks an integration of previously isolated parts of the globe with discovery and colonization and thus improved trade and commerce. Philosophies became more defined, strong in their beliefs and thus more rigid. Old world orders gave way to new with decline in feudalism in different parts of Europe, reorganization and revolutions. The science of economics also evolved with the theory of mercantilism and a shift away from traditional commerce and organization. This period is characterized by the world wide spread of Christianity, developments in infrastructure with new inventions, innovations and experiments. The world became a relatively smaller place. As a result of the continued efforts of Suffrage movement women finally earned the right to vote in all the states of USA following states like Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming during this century.

The famed Nineteenth Amendment to the constitution was passed in 1920 finally giving women the right to vote. The Indian scene has seen women evolve from being from being characterized as only homemakers restricted within the confines of home to stepping forth and making their mark on all the fronts including shaping the nation’s destiny on the political front. This transition is observed in increasing enrollments in education. As in is apparent in the age-old paradox, place of women in the political scene of India is always two extremes either as being deprived of political participation, discriminated against by refusal of right to vote on one hand or the quintessential goddess ‘Durga’ or ‘Shakti’ with many arms portrayed by prominent Indian women politicians like Sushma Swaraj or largely ‘Indira Gandhi’ However the majority of women population falls under the first category rather than the second. Beginning with the social reforms of 1920s there was a unification of feminist nationalism in India which resulted in a
specific thought-out frame of identity which accepted some ideology of patriarchy, gave inputs to the nationalist discourse in independent India.

Post independence however the growing exposure of women helped them cross the barriers of class and caste despite the absence of a strong and channelized coordinated effort for equality. It was during the latter part of seventies that an informal network of activities took root and grew which raised a combined voice against violence, abuse by men as well as by women against women themselves, against the traditional practices like ‘SATI’. This informal network was not confined by restrictions of caste, education, race or creed albeit was bound by shared experiences and suffering which assumed an identity in its own right.

The history of women’s struggle for reforms has a common root in oppression and discrimination be it East or West. Illiteracy, lack of independent financial resources, no control over decisions and lives was a common occurrence. In America this produced an antislavery women’s rights movement. Special mention can be made of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who spearheaded the movement. As regards the women’s reforms movement in India, the picture was a little different with male social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidysagar, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Mahatma Phule, Dhondo keshav Karve and others took up struggle for various women oriented issues like condemnation of the practice of SATI, of widow remarriages, of abolishing polygamy and fighting for women’s property rights prior to independence in the eighteenth century. Under their guidance different organizations like the Prarthana Samaj, the Bramho Samaj worked for educating women. Women organizations and their participation in freedom struggle lent the movement strength in the nineteenth century and free India saw women fighting for their rights and against male dominated patriarchal society. It inspired them with the confidence of achievement and earned them respect. Due the efforts of the male social reformers few women like Ramabai Ranade; Savitibai Phule became active social reformers. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani carried the struggle on to the national scale with Bharat Stree Mandal. Year 1927 saw the establishment of the All India Women’s Conference with its first session having major
attendance at Pune. Ansuya Sarabai headed the Ahemdabad Textile Workers strike in 1920. However the women reform movement saw a change in structure with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the political freedom struggle scene. The freedom struggle now saw women from all classes and masses join in large numbers.

Pre independence the women’s reform movement was majorly targeted towards social reforms, abolishing of antisocial and harsh practices. Independent India saw the reformation of society and major evil being destroyed with increasing awareness, participation and exposure. This saw a shift of focus with there being a lull in the efforts of reforms related to women and to industrial and rural poor working class of Indians. Many women activists joined the Telangana movement, the tebhaga movement, the naxalite movement in later years and the Shahada movement. The credit for first organized women’s trade union to come in existence goes to Ela Bhat in 1972, formally called Self Employed Women’s Association in Ahemdabad. Operating on Gandhian ideals the organizations works for deprived downtrodden women from the informal unorganized sector providing training in developing skill sets, loans for starting businesses and collective bargaining. Another movement with which deserves special mention is the movement for consumer protection against inflation initiated by Mrinal Gore and Ahalya Rangnekar. The Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat saw middle class women in large numbers resorting to hunger strikes and ‘Prabhatferis’ for protesting against black marketing, and corruption leading to soaring prices. Importance of environment and ill effects of felling trees started in ‘Gopeshwar’, nicknamed ‘Chipko’ saw the movement succeed due to the efforts of women of women who joined in large numbers.

It has been long believed that Islam as a religion is extremely rigid and averse to change / reforms. However this belief is shallow with no base to the reality of doctrines advocated by the religion. The nineteenth century India saw the appearance of Muslim reformers like Sir Syed and Badruddin Tyabji who were known educationists. Sir Syed was associated with social reforms prior to his work in the education field. His journal Tahzibul Akhlaq set thought processes in motion which lead to revolutionizing the stagnation in
Indian society. However his journey in education in northern India was fraught with troubles as the north had seen many prominent social reformers being executed in the later eighteenth century especially after the revolt of 1857 whereas Badruddin Tyabji faced comparatively fewer troubles in western India. In the north there was decline in the popularity enjoyed by the ‘Ulema’ as the ‘Shariat’ courts were replaced by the secular courts. This resulted in an anti British movement which further turned the muslim populace against what was perceived to a British way of life. As is usually observed the elite class in any system wields a large influence the belief of elite class against social reforms hampered the efforts of the reformers. The elite class of Muslims in northern India had lost comparatively much more than the Hindus for them to adapt to what was essentially British tradition of education. The rigidly traditional beliefs of the ‘Ulema’ were challenged by Maulvi Mumtaz Ali Khan in his book Huququn Nisa (the rights of women) where he proposed the notion of ‘Equality between sexes’ This belief was supported by Justice Ameer Ali in his book the ‘Spirit of Islam’ in which he propounded the progressive ideas and social reforms. However the Muslim social scene was distinguished by two opposing beliefs that of the educated elite and the common people who supported the Ulema. The educated elite were more tolerating towards accepting reforms but post partition there was an exodus to Pakistan. The Ulema on the other hand were rigid, conservative and enjoyed the support of the masses that were mostly poor and uneducated these simple people believed the Ulema out of fear who manipulated them. The Congress party at the time supported the Ulema for selfish, political ends. Social reforms can only become a mass movement if the socially respected upholders of tradition accept changes and the elite class of Muslims who were liberal in their approach had gone over to Pakistan post partition. There was political unrest, bloodshed which has left the masses unsure of what to expect. In such conditions beliefs were too fragile to undergo changes which against traditions. However reformers like Badruddin Tyabji who was educated in England and wealthy supported the Indian National Congress, opposed the partition and formation of Pakistan continued the efforts for social reforms.
History has been witness to the change in the society that took place with the advent of the British. Especially in Maharashtra, cultural and social contact with the English exposed the lacunae of the conservative, orthodox, religious practices of the Indian society. The wide-spread influence of English as a common language benefitted ego for communication acted as a stimulant for the spread of the liberal western ideology, equality and attacked false superstitions, apathy, lethargy and fatalism gripping the Indian, especially Maharashtrian society. References can be traced to as early as 1818 where Lord Moire has said that despite being the rulers the British also adopted a more tolerant approach in order influence the Indian society. British Officers like Mount Stuart Elphinstzone who had come to India in his teens stayed back and was responsible for setting up many institutions so that deserving Indian students studied English and familiarized themselves with the English literature. He also pioneered the education system in Maharashtra with setting up institutions not only for higher studies but also schools for the poor, ignorant masses. He ensured that they received facilities like school books and improved the overall standard of teaching in order to encourage the lower classes to educate their children. Lord Elphiston was also responsible for getting the European science disciplines to India. He ensured translation of prominent works in local languages so that Indian society would have the benefit of research being conducted in physical and social sciences in Europe. His efforts resulted in massive transformation due to spread of education which started questioning the age old dogmas and religious practices. All these reforms were aided by the work of Christian Missionaries who advocated equality between classes, masses and sexes. Their doctrine of no higher and lower caste and an equal right to education for girls resulted in large scale socio-reform movement in Maharashtra which continued well into the nineteenth century.

Transformation of the society. This period of comprehensive social and religious renaissance had the effect of unifying the Indian society. Educated reformists like Dr. Atmaram Pandurang and R.G. Bhandarkar in both the Muslims and the Hindus realized the fallacy of blind faith. This led to establishment of various social institutions like the Prarthana (prayer) Samaj (
The Prarthana Samaj played a very important role in reforming the Indian society as the educated reformers adapted the reforms in a way which was palatable to the illiterate masses whilst ensuring that blind following of traditions was questioned. The Prarthana Samaj which started with prayers, reading and discussions slowly crystallized the philosophy which was later published in its weekly periodical called the ‘Subodh Patrika’. Another institution which deserves special mention is the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ which was established by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. As the name suggests it aimed at finding the truth. He believed in ‘equality’ of the human race with no superior and inferior classes and creeds. The membership of the Samaj was open to anyone who wanted to join it. Mahatma Phule endorsed the British legislation in the beginning but it was after the revolt of 1857 that his views underwent a change. A special mention in leading reformers is deserved by Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade who worked tirelessly for widow remarrying, education of women and other evils. He educated his young wife Ramabai Ranade who went to continue his life’s work and establish the ‘Seva Sadan’ after his death. Summing up the different periods of history it can be said that women in India have been facing evils like ‘Sati’, ‘Mistresses’, and ‘Concubines ’ along with depravations like illiteracy, polygamy, physical abuse and violence which were the ill-effects of a rigidly conservative patriarchal society over the ages.

The advent of the British in a way was beneficial in case of women because English culture believed in equality between sexes which led to Indian reformers taking efforts for educating women and abolishing practices like ‘Sati’, female infanticide and slavery. However the reformists had to face opposition from the religious leaders who were against change which would lead to a decline in their sphere of influence. The reformers fought against practices like child marriages by trying to fix a minimum age of marriage, against illiteracy with the help of Christian nuns and missionaries. Especially in Maharashtra people were progressive, purdah system was not followed which lead to girls being educated. The industrialists in Maharashtra like Shri Jagganth Shankar Sheth and Bhau Dagi aided the reforms with scholarships and donations. Notable contribution was made by Shri Thakersy and Dhondo
Keshav Karve who established “SNDT” Women’s University. B. M. Malbari, Ranade, Bhandarkar and Chandawarkar, Mahatma Jyotiba G. Phule and Pandita Ramabai were the significant names who toiled tirelessly for female literacy. Mahatma Phule along with his wife Savitribai Phule started a private school for girls. Efforts of social reformers like M. G. Ranade, Vishnu Shastri Pandit, D. K. Karve and Pandita Ramabai led to the foundation of Vidhava Vivaha Uttejak Mandal, in 1893 and the ‘Anath Balika Ashram’ near Pune. Any summarization cannot be complete without the mention of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution who as a Law Minister presented the bill for upholding monogamy, raising the age of consent and marriage, treated the ‘Streedhan’ as woman’s property and gave them the right of divorce. Efforts towards equality have been made over centuries with varying intensity and women’s studies as a discipline emerged in the later part of the nineteenth century. The literary references can be found in the works of Virginia Wolf and Simone de Beauvoir. Formally the UN Mid–Decade Conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980. The Indian Association of Women’s Studies which is an institution involved in research and teaching was established in 1981. The recent times have seen the publishing of feminist literature on a massive scale and political participation being increased with almost all the major political parties in India having a women’s section. The rural areas too have witnessed movements like self help groups and women’s cooperative societies which work for the benefit of women. However changing centuries old beliefs and traditions take patience and consistent efforts. The quality of life of women in all classes still has a lot of scope for improvement and the struggle for equality is just as long and as hard as it was earlier.
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