

WOMAN STUDIES

Abstract

The emergence of Women's Studies marks a significant milestone in academia, reflecting a transformative shift in perspectives on gender, power, and society. This interdisciplinary field has its roots in the feminist movement of the late 20th century, aiming to challenge traditional narratives, uncover hidden histories, and address systemic inequalities. This paper explores the historical trajectory of Women's Studies, tracing its evolution from its early beginnings to its current status as a vital area of scholarship. It examines key themes, methodologies, and contributions of Women's Studies to various disciplines, including sociology, literature, history, and political science. Furthermore, this paper investigates the challenges and controversies that have shaped Women's Studies, such as debates over intersectionality, inclusivity, and academic autonomy. By critically analyzing the emergence and development of Women's Studies, this paper seeks to illuminate its ongoing relevance in promoting gender equality, social justice, and academic diversity.

Keywords: Women Studies, gender equality, social justice, academic diversity, Caste system.

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I. THE EMERGENCE OF WOMAN'S STUDIES

Women's Studies stands as a beacon of intellectual revolution in our contemporary age. At its core, Women's Studies magnifies the entirety of women's experiences through the lens of scholarly inquiry. It subjects these experiences to the most advanced scientific methods available within the academic realm. This chapter explores how researchers meticulously uncover facts, cultivate insights, and how educators and students, spanning a multitude of disciplines, collaborate to refine and enrich these findings. With its comprehensive perspective spanning the natural sciences to the arts, Women's Studies boasts unparalleled breadth, drawing from the diverse expertise of scholars and students alike to propel the field forward.

II. A GLOBAL MOSAIC OF EXPLORATION

Women's Studies is an endeavor that transcends borders, uniting minds across the globe. Simultaneously birthed in various corners of the world, this academic pursuit rapidly gained momentum. Ewha University in Seoul, South Korea, led the way by initiating its inaugural Women's Studies program in 1977. In the United States, Women's Studies programs were introduced at Cornell University and California State University, San Diego, in 1969. Over time, the United States witnessed the growth of Women's Studies from isolated courses in individual universities during the late 1960s to a staggering landscape of more than 600 degree-granting majors and programs today. India, too, embraced Women's Studies with fervor during the early 1970s, establishing itself as a global frontrunner in exploring the dimensions of women's experience and thought. Yet, the remarkable growth of Women's Studies only scratches the surface of the ongoing enthusiasm that propels its practitioners.

III. PIONEERING INDIAN WOMEN

- 1. Jhansi Rani Lakshmi Bai:** Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi, lived in the Jhansi area of Uttar Pradesh, India, during her reign as the Maratha princely state of Jhansi from 19 November 1828 to 18 June 1858. She was a key player in the 1857 Indian Rebellion and became a stand-in for Indian nationalists' opposition to the British Raj. Rani Lakshmibai was born into a Marathi Karhade Brahmin household on November 19, 1828, in Varanasi. She went by the name ManikarnikaTambe and went by Manu. Her mother was Bhagirathi Sapre (Bhagirathi Bai), and her father was Moropant Tambe. Maharashtra is where her parents are from. When she was four years old, her mother passed away. Her father served Peshwa Baji Rao II of the district of Bithoor. She was given the Peshwa's humorous nickname, Chhabili. Her studies included shooting, horsemanship, fencing, and mallakhamba with her childhood pals Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope. She was educated at home, was literate, and was more independent as a child than other children her age. Many of the patriarchal cultural expectations for women in Indian society at the time were contrasted by Rani Lakshmibai. Between the palace and the temple, Rani Lakshmibai was used to travelling by horseback with a small entourage, though occasionally she was carried by palanquin. Sarangi, Pavan, and Baadal were some of her horses. According to historians, when she fled the fort in 1858, she was riding Baadal. The Rani Mahal, Rani Lakshmibai's palace, has been transformed into a museum. It houses a collection of artefacts dating from the ninth to the twelfth centuries AD. In honour of the Hindu deity Lakshmi and in accordance with custom, Manikarnika was renamed Lakshmibai (or Laxmibai) after her marriage to Gangadhar Rao Newalkar, the

Maharaja of Jhansi, in May 1842. In 1851, she gave birth to a son who was later named Damodar Rao but who passed away four months later. The day before he passed away, the Maharaja adopted Anand Rao, the cousin of Gangadhar Rao, who was given the new name Damodar Rao. A British political officer who was present for the adoption was given a letter from the Maharaja instructing that the child be treated with dignity and that his widow be given control of Jhansi for the rest of her life. The British East India Company, led by Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, used the Doctrine of Lapse following the death of the Maharaja in November 1853, dismissing Damodar Rao's claim to the throne and annexing the state to its territory. This was done because Damodar Rao (born Anand Rao) was an adopted son. When she heard this, she exclaimed, "I shall not surrender my Jhansi" (Main apni Jhansi nahi doongi). Rani Lakshmbai was given a pension of Rs. 60,000 per year in March 1854 and instructed to leave the palace and the fort. Before breakfast, the Rani would practice weightlifting, wrestling and steeple chasing, according to Vishnu Bhatt Godse. She was a smart, understated woman who conducted business like. She fought for territory and martyred.

- 2. Annie Besant:** Annie Besant was a British socialist, theosophist, women's rights advocate, author, speaker, educator, and philanthropist who lived from 1 October 1847 to 20 September 1933. She was a fierce advocate for human freedom and self-rule in both Ireland and India. She was a prolific writer, having written over 300 books and pamphlets. She was a pioneer in education, helping to build the Banaras Hindu University. At the age of 20, Annie wed the clergyman Frank Besant, and the two became parents of two children in 1867. However, their formal split occurred in 1873 as a result of Annie's increasingly strange religious beliefs. She later rose to prominence as a speaker for the National Secular Society (NSS), a writer, and Charles Bradlaugh's close friend. They faced legal action in 1877 as a result of their publication of a book by birth control activist Charles Knowlton. Their notoriety as a result of the incident led to Bradlaugh's election as Northampton's M.P. in 1880. She then got involved in union activities, such as the Bloody Sunday protest and the 1888 London matchgirls strike. She was a prominent spokesperson for the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Fabian Society. Despite the fact that few women were eligible to vote at the time of the 1873 separation, she won the election and was appointed to the London School Board for Tower Hamlets. She later rose to prominence as a speaker for the National Secular Society (NSS), a writer, and Charles Bradlaugh's close friend. They faced legal action in 1877 as a result of Charles Knowlton, a proponent of birth control, writing a book. Their notoriety as a result of the incident led to Bradlaugh's election as Northampton's M.P. in 1880. She then got involved in union activities, such as the Bloody Sunday protest and the 1888 London matchgirls strike. She was a prominent spokesperson for the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Fabian Society. Despite the fact that few women were eligible to vote at the time, she also won the election for Tower Hamlets to the London School Board. After Besant met Helena Blavatsky in 1890, her interest in theosophy increased while her interest in worldly issues decreased during the following few years. She joined the Theosophical Society and rose to prominence as a speaker on the subject. She visited India for her theosophical-related studies. She contributed to the founding of the Central Hindu School in 1898 and the Hyderabad (Sind) National Collegiate Board in Mumbai, India, in 1922. She founded Le Droit Humain, the International Order of Co-Freemasonry's first lodge outside of the United States, in 1902. She opened lodges throughout the course of the following few years throughout the British Empire. She was elected president of the Theosophical Society in 1907, while its

world headquarters were still in Adyar, Madras (Chennai). She joined the Indian National Congress and was interested in politics in India. She assisted in the founding of the Home Rule League, which fought for Indian democracy and dominion status inside the British Empire, after World War I broke out in 1914. As a result, she was chosen to lead the Indian National Congress in late 1917. Jiddu Krishnamurti, who Besant claimed to be the new Messiah and Buddha's incarnation, and she moved to the United States in the late 1920s. In 1929, Krishnamurti disputed these assertions. She persisted in advocating for theosophical causes and Indian independence after the war until her death in 1933. 3.

3. **Sarojini Naidu:** Indian political activist and poet Sarojini Naidu (née Chattopadhyay; 13 February 1879 – 2 March 1949). She played a significant role in India's fight for independence from colonial control as a supporter of civil rights, women's emancipation, and anti-imperialist beliefs. Naidu acquired the moniker Nightingale of India for her poetry. Naidu was schooled in Chennai, London, and Cambridge before being born into a Bengali family in Hyderabad. After working as a suffragist in England, she was lured to the Indian National Congress' campaign for the country's independence from British domination. She joined the Indian nationalist movement and adopted Gandhi's swaraj philosophy as her own. The first woman to assume the position of governor in the Dominion of India, she was chosen as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1925 and then elevated to that position in 1947 to become the Governor of the United Provinces. Children's poems as well as poems with more sombre subjects like tragedy, romance, and patriotism may be found in Naidu's poetry. She published "In the Bazaars of Hyderabad" in 1912, and it is still one of her most well-known poems today. She was wed to general practitioner Govindarajulu Naidu and they had five kids together. In a heart arrest on March 2, 1949, she passed away.
4. **Indira Gandhi:** Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi was a prominent member of the Indian National Congress and the country's first and only female prime minister until recently. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, was the father of Indira Gandhi. She was the second-longest-serving Indian prime minister after her father, in office from January 1966 to March 1977 and again from January 1980 till her murder in October 1984. When her father was prime minister between 1947 until 1964, Gandhi worked as his personal hostess and aide. In 1959, she was chosen to lead the Indian National Congress. Upon her father's death in 1964, she was appointed as a member of the Rajya Sabha (upper house) and became a member of Lal Bahadur Shastri's cabinet as Minister of She was appointed to the Rajya Sabha (upper house) upon the death of her father in 1964, and she later joined Lal Bahadur Shastri's government as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. She defeated Morarji Desai in the Congress Party's legislative leadership contest held in early 1966 (after Shastri's passing), and as a result, Shastri's position as prime minister of India was filled. Gandhi's political intransigence and unparalleled consolidation of power during her tenure as prime minister were well-known. She engaged in conflict with Pakistan to support the independence cause and East Pakistan's battle for independence, which led to an Indian triumph, the founding of Bangladesh, and a rise in India's power to the point where it became the leading regional power of South Asia. Gandhi imposed a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977 during which basic civil liberties were banned and the press was censored due to separatist aspirations and a call for revolution. Throughout the emergency, atrocities were committed on a large scale. After transparent elections in 1980, she reclaimed her position as leader. Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984, by her own bodyguards

and Sikh nationalists after ordering Operation Blue Star to take military action against the Golden Temple. Indira Gandhi won the title of "Woman of the Millennium" in a 1999 BBC online vote. Gandhi was listed by Time magazine as one of the 100 most influential women of the 20th century in 2020.

IV. WOMEN DURING THE PRE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Women in the years before independence Male chauvinism has become firmly entrenched in traditional Hindu society as a result of the lack of self-assurance and economic illiteracy of women. The majority of families and society viewed women as objects to be bought and sold. They were not given any respect or freedom in their daily lives. In the nineteenth century, as western philosophy and education proliferated, men began to worry about how the other half of society was doing. The reformation movement's primary goal was to purge society of immoral behaviours. The dissemination of female education was the next and most crucial stage. The leader of social reforms for women, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was adamantly opposed to these cultural vices that were practised at the time. He is the one to whom the legal abolition of this Satidaha is credited. Lord William Bentinck's 1829 prohibition on the practise of Sati was the result of his efforts and endeavour. In addition to having a tremendous impact on women's lives, the legalisation of this traditional practise altered people's attitudes towards it to some measure. He wanted to institute a widow remarriage system and end child marriage in society. They obviously had their own interests in mind, as seen by the upper caste Hindu families' lack of support for the missionaries' work. It was credited to Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule for founding the country's first girls' school. In 1848, he built a school for females from lower castes after educating his wife. This was the second girl's school that the Indians had founded in India. The first free school for females was established in 1847 in Barasat, a suburb of Calcutta, by Peary Charan Sarkar, a former student of Hindu College in Calcutta and a member of "Young Bengal." The school was later known as Kalikrishna females' High School. In order to protect newborn girl children from female infanticide. Mahatma Phule founded the first shelter for widows from higher castes. Another important figure in the 19th-century social reformation movement was Eshwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He researched a lot of ancient Hindu religious literature and discovered that the gender disparity or inferior position of women that was prevalent in society had nothing to do with spiritual texts in the truest sense; rather, it was the result of nefarious politics carried out at the time to maintain women's subordination to men. He had contributed greatly to widow remarriage. His tireless efforts led to the legalisation of widow remarriage in 1856. He played a commendable role in the expansion of women's education. The "Calcutta Female School," founded by J.E.D. Bethune in 1849 (the school eventually went by the name Bethune School), was the first female institution to which revered Hindu families began to send their daughters. Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Vidyasagar, Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay, and others heartily backed his attempt. Own daughters were sent there by Madan Mohan Tarkalankar. From 1857 on, Vidyasagar, who served as the honorary secretary of that institution, founded 50 female schools in Bengal. F.J. Halliday, who was Bengal's then lieutenant governor, provided him with a lot of support. However, the government did not provide any funding during the early stages. The project was entirely dependent on Vidyasagar and his supporters' personal money (Narishikshabhandar). It should be kept in mind that there were no opportunities for girls to receive official or informal education in rural areas due to a dearth of girls' schools, educated parents, and liberal family members. Additionally, wherever there were girls' schools, the orthodox Hindus did not accept the male teachers. Child marriage was another huge obstacle. Brahma Samaj played a

noteworthy role at that time. With the aid of Miss Merry Carpenter, a well-known BrahmoSamaj activist who had come to India to promote female education, Keshab Chandra Sen sought to train female instructors. He founded the Female Normal School (1871) to train female teachers, the Metropolitan Female School (1879), and other institutions. Several girls' schools were established at that time, but the Hindu society's mentality did not support educating the female populace. Only women from Brahmo, Christian, and educated Hindu families had access to formal or non-formal education in the late nineteenth century. However, the majority of the female was hidden by darkness. The founder of the Araya Samaj, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, translated the Veda from Sanskrit to Hindi so that everyone, including women, could grasp the ancient religious text and recognise that it places the highest value on women. He emphasised the need for women and men to have equal rights in all spheres of life. With his Vedic teachings, he made an effort to alter people's perspectives. In the first half of the twentieth century, things started to alter gradually. The social reformers of the nineteenth century may have set the ground for the liberation of women from harmful socio cultural practises, but Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi's initiative gave it a boost and allowed it to reach a wider audience. He was primarily responsible for releasing Indian women from Purdah's and other social ills. Women have taken part in Gandhi's mission to liberate India by fighting for freedom. He believed that women should be freed from the shackles of the kitchen before their full potential could be realised. Despite the fact that women play a crucial role in home duties, in his opinion, this should not be their only obligation. In fact, women ought to volunteer to help in nation-building duties. His efforts were the reason that women's involvement in the independence movement was made public. They left their houses to plan gatherings and processions, preach the Swadeshi ideology, sell khadi, give away their jewellery and ornaments, and picket in the vicinity of the foreign clothing stores. He advocated for gender equality and decried Indians' preference for having male children rather than female children (Patel, Sujata, 1988). Gandhi supported widow remarriage and was vehemently opposed to child marriage. He asserted that girls are just as capable as guys in every way. The 'right to vote' for Indian women after independence was largely a result of his efforts, as opposed to other industrialised countries like England and America where it was only granted after much resistance.

V. WOMEN DURING THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Due to its very core of democracy, sovereignty, and socialistic nature of government, the Indian government has endeavoured to adopt laws, rules, affirmative discriminatory policies, and measures for the protection of women's interests and for their upliftment. The constitutional framework aims to lessen the polarising social forces, and equality with regard to caste, gender, and religion is also attempted. Additionally, enough legislative measures have been passed and developmental policies have been started to increase women's participation in economic affairs by allowing them to escape the rigid and traditional sociocultural constraints, customs, and attitudes; efforts have been made to raise awareness of sex equality, but the mission's success seems to have been found among elite circles. The quality of many individual women's lives has unquestionably improved as a result of occupational, property, and other regulations. Even among the bulk of low caste, illiterate, and poor female population, these improvements do not signal any appreciable improvement in the status of women as a whole. It indicates that when other social problems, such as caste (scheduled caste), religion (minority), and locality (rural), are combined with gender as a socio-culturally constructed reality, the situation becomes worse. According to the 2011 Census, there are 943 females for every 1,000 males in the country. The declining trend in the

sex ratio—from 972 in 1901 to 933 in 2001 and 943 in 2011—indicates that the status of women in society is actually deteriorating. According to biological data, women are more disease-resistant than men. The length of life is evidence of that. In our nation, women have a life expectancy of 65.27 years, whereas men only have a 62.36-year life expectancy. Even while women die at a higher rate up until the age of 34, their chances of survival increase after this point. As a result, there are more women than men who are over 60. However, according to the provisional 2011 Census report provided by the Government of India, the child sex ratio (in the age period of zero to six) in India has decreased to 914 females against 1,000 males, the lowest since Independence. The ratio has decreased from 927 female children to 1,000 male children in 2001 to 914, which was considered a "matter of grave concern" by Census Commissioner of India C. Chandramauli. This is despite laws to prevent female feticide abortion and programmes to encourage families to have girl children. It depicts social discrimination against women beginning with childbirth. Sex-based abortions and the killing of female infants are the main causes of this large ratio difference. The Regulation & Prevention of Misuse Act of 1994 forbids the use of any prenatal diagnostic procedures and sex-selective abortions, despite the fact that abortion is legal in our nation. Abortions in India, though, are increasing in terms of gender. Due to son preference attitudes for economic return, abortion of female fetus in society has a high correlation with poverty, however in certain societies the contrary is imagined. States with robust economies, like Punjab and Haryana, are where the tendency is more pronounced. Even though the 2011 Census showed an upward trend, Punjab and Haryana were still at the bottom of the list for sex ratio. In comparison to 1,000 male children, Punjab has 846 and Haryana has 830 female children. The dowry system in India, which requires parents of girls to give large sums of money to the parents of the groom during marriage, is generally acknowledged as the cause of the practice of female infanticide. A family might save money on the dowry for their daughter's wedding by avoiding a female. Dowry is still a major source of injustice and prejudice against women in India. It has traditionally played a significant role in Hindu weddings. Its evil tentacles are now reaching beyond Hindus and into other faiths as well. Even though the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 made dowry illegal, it is nevertheless heavily institutionalized. The precipitant and dowry provider shall receive a 5-year prison sentence and a fine of Rs. 15,000 or, if more, the dowry's value, in accordance with the Dowry Prohibition Act. In India, dowry abuse is still becoming more common. It is absurd to observe that even among highly educated groups, the practise of dowry is perceived as a dual-sided status signal. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have higher figures, but pitifully, Bangalore, the nation's greatest IT hub, has also seen an alarming surge (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015). According to survey statistics, half of the world's malnourished children reside in India, mostly as a result of their mother's inability to obtain nourishing meals throughout her pregnancy. Girls and women experience malnutrition at every stage of human development, including prenatal, postnatal, infancy, childhood, and adolescence, solely because of prejudice and restricted social attitudes. These discriminatory attitudes are particularly prevalent in lower middle class or households living below the poverty line. Male family members are given priority in terms of food and nutrition in low-income families where there is insufficient money to meet basic necessities without taking the wellbeing of the females into account. In India, poverty is a key contributor to poor health and a number of societal problems. As a result, illiteracy and the lack of access to education for girls are concerns that are strongly tied to poverty. According to census data from 2011, India's literacy rate is 74.04%. where the literacy rate for men is 82.14% and for women it is 65.46%. According to the literacy rate, the difference has significantly narrowed since 2001. The literacy gap in the year decreased from 21.59 percent in 2001 to 16.68 percent in 2011.

Additionally, the trend of literacy growth is stronger among females (11.8%) than it is among males (6.9%), which suggests that the gender gap in literacy is closing. However, there remains a significant gap between male and female literacy. In primary schools, more boys than girls are enrolled. In addition, compared to boys, more girls leave school before earning any form of diploma or credential. The attitude of society regarding the place of women in the home, particularly in underdeveloped areas, is undoubtedly the cause of this study's findings, as it is believed that women do not need an education because they are not responsible for providing for their families financially. It is true that those who live below the poverty line lack the resources to provide for the education of all of their children. As a result, they prefer to educate boys while keeping ladies out of schools and institutions. Even if girls receive a basic education, they are sometimes required to return home when they enter their teenage years in order to assist their mothers with household chores. Lack of career opportunities for educated women in rural areas is another issue. In most cases, parents believe that sending their daughters to college will be very ineffective because they will likely wind up working on a farm or performing other domestic duties like cooking, tending to crops, caring for animals, etc. Parents scarcely found any opportunities for engagement for their daughters, particularly in rural and economically underdeveloped areas. No one's outlook on the future is improved by attending school. As a result, rural areas have a greater gender gap in literacy rates. The government has implemented numerous Acts and programmes, but women continue to be oppressed and mistreated both inside and outside the house. A thorough investigation finds that there is relatively little knowledge of government initiatives. Therefore, it is necessary to build a mechanism for tracking the wellbeing of women and empowering programmers, as well as more effective publicity. Numerous non-governmental organisations work with the government to help impoverished women enhance their skills so they can improve their economic, educational, social, and physical circumstances.

VI. SOCIAL EVIS IN INDIA

The constitution of India imparts equal rights for men and women. But there are certain social evils prevailing in the society which tend to hamper the success of the country. India is a land of cultures and traditions. Many traditions which were set for purpose have taken a worse form today in the name of social evils. Social evils mean a condition which demands to be reformed or totally banned. For the development of the country, it is very important to remove all the social evils else our country will not progress. There have been numerous reformers and socialites who have fought against them such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar etc. All have fought for the rights of people and have successfully helped in removing many social evils from the society such as sati system etc.

Let's look at some of the major Social Evils prevailing in the society.

- Gender Inequality
- Child Marriage
- Dowry system
- Bribe and corruption
- Adulteration
- Child Labor
- Caste system

- 1. Gender Inequality:** Gender inequality is the main ailment that India is still battling. Many places, especially villages, still favour boys over girls. This led to the infanticide of females. People actually murder the unborn girl. As a result, there are fewer girls in the population. Each child is a gift from God, and we ought to appreciate that. In an effort to have a son, many families have many children. Additionally, this causes poverty and an overpopulation of the nation.
- 2. Child Marriage:** Females must be 18 years old to get married, while males must be 21. The children are wed young in some areas, though. In the married lives, this causes complex issues. Also, it has a negative impact on their health. Early in childhood, children are compelled to fulfil family obligations. Instead of involving them in household chores, they ought to be let to enjoy childhood.
- 3. Dowry System:** When parents offer their daughters gifts for getting married, this is known as dowry. But dowry nowadays is in its worst form. The side of the groom requests a large dowry instead of a present. If the bride side cannot pay the dowry, either the marriage is dissolved or she is subjected to physical abuse. There have been several reported instances of brides killing themselves or setting themselves on fire. The government is prosecuting dowry demandors harshly. City dwellers no longer demand it since they are well aware of the implications.
- 4. Bribe and Corruption:** When an official or anyone else accepts presents or money in exchange for doing a task that is corruption. This system has a negative impact on the country's development. There are hardly any trustworthy officers remaining in the nation. But if someone is proven guilty, the Indian government will act harshly. The individual is placed on indefinite leave or suspended. The nation's inhabitants ought to refrain from accepting or taking bribes of any kind. You should notify the police right away if someone offers you or accepts a bribe. so that legal action against that person may be taken.
- 5. Adulteration:** Another social ill that needs to be eliminated as soon as feasible is this one. In order to increase their profits while maintaining the same price, people introduce adulterants or other comparable substances into food products. The most contaminated foods include ghee, sugar, and oil. Milk, turmeric, and other products are tainted with water or yellow powder. Sometimes even the sold medications include adulterants. So, we ought to buy name-brand items.
- 6. Child Labour:** Children under the age of 14 who work in families, businesses, or other institutions for pay are considered to be engaged in child labour. This is primarily due to overpopulation and a lack of knowledge. Child labour can have extremely negative effects, including robbery, criminal activity, and other minor thefts, etc. The Indian government has mandated that no one under the age of 14 may work in coal mines, factories, or houses. We shouldn't manipulate children's emotions and spoil their childhood. Instead, suitable education should be provided for them.
- 7. Caste System:** The largest social ill with the deepest roots is this. The entire population is split up into numerous groups, either on the basis of caste or colour. Lower caste individuals continue to experience numerous issues in rural areas and are stigmatised as

"untouchables." As responsible Indians, we ought to work towards eliminating and opposing these customs. We should all work together to rid our nation of social ills.

VII. FEMINISM IN INDIA AND NATIONAL & STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

The goal of feminist movements in India is to define, achieve, and defend political and economic equality. Indian women. It is the fight for women's rights inside Indian society. Feminists in India advocate for gender equality, including the right to equal pay for equal work, equal access to health care and higher education, and equal political rights. In India's patriarchal society, feminists have also battled against culturally specific problems like inheritance laws. Three distinct periods may be identified in the history of feminism in India: the first phase, beginning in the mid-19th century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of Sati; the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India movement and independent women's organizations began to emerge; and finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women at home after marriage, in the work force and right to political parity. Despite the advancements made by Indian feminist groups, discrimination against women is still a major problem in contemporary India. Due to India's patriarchal society, it is difficult to obtain education rights and property ownership rights. Sex-selective abortion has become more popular during the past 20 years. These injustices are viewed as being important enough to fight against by Indian feminists. Feminist movements in India have received some criticism, just like in the West. They have come under fire in particular for placing too much emphasis on already affluent women while ignoring the requirements and representation of women from lower socioeconomic or caste groups. Feminist movements and organisations that are caste-specific have resulted from this.

VIII. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

According to Kaur, 1932, cited in Kaur, Manmohan, 1968, 106, the Women's India Association (WIA) was "the first purely feminist organisation to arise in India" in 1917. The first WIA president was selected as Annie Besant. Margaret Cousins, an Irish teacher and suffragist, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, the Irish wife of a Sri Lankan Theosophist, Ammu Swaminathan, and Malathi Patwardhan served as honorary secretaries. Margaret Cousins presented her suggestion to a group of Theosophists at Adya following her arrival in 1915, drawing inspiration from the Tamil Mathar Sangam (Tamil Women's Organisation), which was founded in 1906 by women from India and Europe. Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddi, Saralabai Naik, Hera bai Tata, Dr. Poonen Lukhose, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Begam Hasrat Mohani, and Dhanavanti Rama Rao were among the founders. Their goals were to lead the country, serve the underprivileged, advance women's education and mandate universal primary education, end child marriage, raise the legal age of consent to have sex with another person to sixteen, secure women's suffrage, and win the right to hold elected office. They identified themselves as the "daughters of India," its mothers, and wives. Within a year, the Association had approximately 33 branches, and five years later, it had added 10 more branches with 20 centres and 2,300 additional members. It stated that it stood for women of all racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The four sectors chosen for action were philanthropy, politics, religion, and education. First aid, sewing, and adult literacy were taught in schools, and nonsectarian religious engagement was encouraged. Politically, the

first women's trip to Secretary of State Montague to seek the vote comprised a sizable number of WIA members, and in the years that followed, this group was in charge of organising support for female suffrage. Shelters for widows were established, and aid was given to the needy and those affected by disasters. The WIA published the monthly English-language publication Sri Dharma. It was written in English, but it also had pieces in Tamil and Hindi.

IX. PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTS IN INDIA

Over the course of Indian history that has been written down, the status of women has undergone numerous transformations. Early in India's ancient period, particularly in the Indo-Aryan speaking areas, their status in society began to decline, and their subjection persisted far into the country's early modern era. Especially in caste Hindu society in northern India, practises including female infanticide, dowry, child marriage, and the taboo on widow remarriage have a long history in India and have been challenging to eradicate. Improvement-focused laws were passed during the British Raj (1858–1947) and the British East India Company (1757–1857), including the Bengal Sati Regulation (1829), Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act (1856), Female Infanticide Prevention Act (1870), and Age of Consent Act (1891). The rights of women in India are primarily protected by the Constitution, which emphasises equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination. India also has numerous laws that protect women's rights. As of 2018, women have held a number of top official positions in the Indian government, including that of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the President of India. But many Indian women still have a lot of challenges to overcome. The rates of malnutrition are exceptionally high among adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women in India, with repercussions for children's health. Violence against women, especially sexual violence, has been on the rise in India.

X. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

The Indian Constitution's Article 15(3) permits positive discrimination in favour of women. The right to equality section of the article states: "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children." Furthermore, Directive Principle 39(A) of State Policy stipulates that "The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood." To provide loans to Indian women with lesser incomes, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National loans Fund for Women) was established in 1993. The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, the Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS), Conditional Maternity Benefit plan (CMB), as well as the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – Sabla and other more recent initiatives by the Indian government.

- 1. Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS):** In order to make sure that all mothers and their children have access to a variety of services, including as pregnancy care, medical care during birth, and immunisations, the Mother and Child Tracking System, which was introduced in 2009, assists in monitoring the health care system. The system is made up of a database of all births and pregnancies reported to medical facilities from December 1, 2009.

2. **Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana:** In order to make sure that all mothers and their children have access to a variety of services, including as pregnancy care, medical care during birth, and immunisations, the Mother and Child Tracking System, which was introduced in 2009, assists in monitoring the health care system. The system is made up of a database of all births and pregnancies reported to medical facilities from December 1, 2009.
3. **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – SABLA:** An initiative aimed towards adolescent girls called the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) was introduced in 2012. Girls between the ages of 10 and 19 are given access to a variety of privileges under the programme. It is being made available in 200 districts as a test scheme at first. It provides a range of services, such as nutritional augmentation and education, health education and services, life skills and vocational training, to aid young women in becoming self-sufficient.
4. **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh:** The Indian government established Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (The National Credit Fund for Women) in 1993. Its goal is to give low-income women access to loans so they can start small companies.
5. **Priyadarshini:** Priyadarshini, initiated in April 2011, is a programmed that offers women in seven districts access to self-help groups.
6. **National Action Plan for Children:** National Action Plan for Children was initiated in 2017, This Scheme Was Launched by Ministry of Women and child Development.
7. **Digital Laado (DIGITAL LAADO) - Giving Digital Wings to Daughters:** To strengthen and empower girls on digital platforms, FICCI and Google Digital Unlocked launched an initiative. According to the Indian government, 65% of daughters leave their higher education because of home duties. Every daughter will be taught and trained as part of this nationwide drive to develop their ability and skills to work from home and connect with the global platform. Daughters can sign up for these advantages online or offline from anywhere in the world.

XI. WOMEN AND SELF HELP GROUPS

Self Help Group (SHG) is a group of 12 to 20 women of the same socio-economic background who come forward voluntarily to work together for their own upliftment. The unique feature of the SHG is its ability to inculcate among its members sound habits of thrift, savings and banking Regular savings, periodic meetings, compulsory attendance, and systematic training are the salient features of the SHG concept. Each group selects one animator and two representatives from among themselves. The animator is responsible for providing leadership to the group and to maintain the various registers. The representatives assist the animator and maintain the bank accounts of the group.

- Self Help Groups consist of 12-20 BPL women members in the age group 18-60 years residing in the same area.
- NGOs and PLFs affiliated with TNCDW undertake the formation of SHGs.

- They are trained to become cohesive as a group through regular meetings and encouraged to cultivate savings habit.
- Capacity Building Programme such as SHG and A & R training are imparted to the Group members and within a period of six months.
- After a period of 6 months, SHGs are rated for Credit Linkage by a Committee consisting of Bankers, APOs, NGOs, Block level officer and PLF Representative.
- For the eligible Credit rated SHGS, credit facilities are largely made available through Banks, both for revolving fund and economic activity.
- Other sources of funding for Credit linkage are SGSY, TAHDCO, NABARD & SJSRY
- Under various Skill Training Programmes, eligible SHG members are encouraged to start economic activities or undertake self-employment.
- Efforts are made by TNCDW for marketing the products produced by SHGs wherever possible locally and for sale in exhibitions.

In order to enable all poor women living below poverty line to join and benefit from the Self Help Group movement, the group formation is undertaken with special focus on NREGS women workers, urban slum dwellers and in Village Panchayats where SHG coverage is still inadequate