

Women's Movement In India

A. Anizh Nizy^{*1}, M. Sundara Bharathi², E. Deepa³

^{*1}B.Com (CA), Department of Commerce with Computer Applications, Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women (Autonomous), Periyakulam, Tamilnadu, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce with Computer Applications, Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women (Autonomous), Periyakulam, Tamilnadu, India

³Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce with Computer Applications, Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women (Autonomous), Periyakulam, Tamilnadu, India

ABSTRACT

Women's movements are among the global social movements of the contemporary politics. To enhance the position of women, numerous woman movements were started. It is said that women's movements are among the most important crusade of modern social movements. The goals and structures of women's movements reveal the commonalities as well as the differences among women. For example, feminist movements tend to be related with the aspirations, and the opportunities, of middle-class women. Feminist movements include women's rights movements focusing on the goals of equal rights under the law and equal access to education, careers, and political power; women's liberation movements that challenge cultural patterns of male dominance in the family and personal life through strategies that raise the awareness of women of their own subjugation, often within the context of women-only groups. Black feminist movements address racism along with sexism; and socialist feminist movements look women's empowerment as tied to the role of government, labour, and civil society in safeguarding the rights of all citizens to equity and social security. This paper attempts to analyze the women participation in movements, types of women's movement, social reforms movements and women and institutionalization of women's movement.

Keywords : Feminism, Social Movement, Social Reforms Movement

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's movements are among the global social movements of the contemporary politics. It is well recognized that women are victim of many domestic crime since ancient time. To tackle such situation and enhance the position of women, numerous woman movements were started. It is said that women's movements are among the most important crusade of modern social movements. Historical records indicated that since nineteenth-century, Canadian women's suffrage campaigns to recent direct actions for sustainable development in India, wherever women's movements have been

established, national organizations and local grassroots groups have worked together to support women and girls. Diverse, even conflicting, compassions of women's interests rise from differences in gender, race, class, cultural, religion, and sexuality, as well as from global divisions of wealth and power. However, the rife of oppression against women has resulted in formation of international women's movements with common agendas, linked to struggles for sovereignty, democracy, and secure livelihoods around the world. To honour woman, March 8th is celebrated around the world. It is considered as a historical day, an icon of the struggle waged against mistreatment and

oppression by women all over the world, for over a century. It is a day to express and demonstrate collective strength and to renew struggle of women for equality and justice.

It is documented in many studies that the women's movement has a long history in India. Much longer than the current 'second wave' movement, or even the 'first wave' of earlier this century. The campaigners in feminine movements tend to be working-class women organizing to address problems of poverty and sexism and their overwhelming effects on the health and wellbeing of their families. Womanist, a term invented by the writer Alice Walker, refers to the confidence, strength, and wisdom of African-American women based in their cultures and long struggle to support their children and communities and to end racism and all forms of prejudice.

II. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MOVEMENTS

For social, economic and political rights of specific categories of people like tribal, peasants and industrial workers.

- 1) For improvement in conditions of work and autonomy to women.
- 2) For equal remuneration for work.
- 3) In general social movements on issues affecting men and children like abortions, adoption of children, sexual exploitation.

III. WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS TYPES

- 1) Women's equality movements
- 2) Women's liberation movements

First category may not directly challenge the existing economic or political or family structure, but rather aim at accomplishing an equal place for women in it, and at abolishing the most open remnants of feudal patriarchy, whereas the women's liberation movements directly challenge the sexual division of labour itself.

Kalpana Shah divides the women's movements into three categories on the basis of their approach towards elucidating women's unequal positions in the modern society and ways to liberate them from subjugation. They are:

- 1) Moderate or Women's Rights Position
- 2) Radical Feminism
- 3) Socialist Feminism (1984)

Sangari and Vaid make a distinction of women's movements into two theoretical categories:

- 1) Modernizing of patriarchal modes of regulating women.
- 2) Democratizing of gender relations both at home and the work place.

In general, Women's movements in India are divided into periods (Kumar 1993). They are:

- 1) Social reform movements during the freedom movement.
- 2) The movements from 1947 till 1975.
- 3) The movements emerging during and after the International Women's Decade.

Gail Omvedt also explained four kinds of movements related to women which can be called as women's movement and also distinguishes between them.

A. Movements where women participate

In these movements, men and women together fight some form of oppression. But the oppression due to sexual differentiation is not the focus of these movements. So Omvedt does not call such type of movements as women's movements.

B. Movements of women

There may be movements on general issues (slum improvement, price rise) where women are the only participants. But sole participation of women itself does not make them women's movements. In fact such movements may confirm the gender division of labour where men fight for wage rise and women fight against price rise, without challenging the male-dominated family and social structure.

According to Omvedt, these movements has a progressive role as they give women participants a chance to experience their own collective strength.

C. Women's reform movements

Reform movements include the series of movements on education for women, for abolition of Sati that took place in the pre-independence India. Although these issues were concerned with women, Omvedt refuses to call them women's movements because these movements did not challenge the fundamental structure of oppression in family and society.

D. Women's liberation movements

These are channelled by an ideology of fighting the sexual division of labour and patriarchy. They also act against the specific issue of women's oppression and move in the direction of liberation. Omvedt called these movements, as women's movements.

IV. NGOS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN INDIA

- 1) Joint Women's programme
- 2) National Council of Women in India
- 3) Committee on the Portrayal of Women in Media
- 4) National Commission of Women
- 5) National federation of Indian Women
- 6) Diverse Women for Diversity
- 7) Kali for Women
- 8) Sahile
- 9) SEWA
- 10) Single women's Organization
- 11) Maitreye
- 12) Nav Jargon Women's Association
- 13) Madras women's association
- 14) Women's Indian Association
- 15) AP Mahila Samakaya

V. SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS AND WOMEN

The origin of the modern women's movements in India is often stressed to the social reform movement within the Hindu fold in the last century. Renowned social reformers like Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Behramji Malbari, protested against the dominant religious and social customs subjugating women (Chaudhari 1990). Their influence encouraged the British government to pass certain laws against the sati system, permitting women to remarry, abolishing the custom of child marriage. There were great efforts made to educate girls. Some of these issues continue to affect women even in this century. The difference is that till the turn of the last century, very little effort had been made by the reformers to mobilize women for participation in public life in general around the issues concerning them.

VI. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

A. Women self-help group

Self Help Group foundation is sincere effort to enable the poor women to participate in the process of development. Therefore, the role played by Self Help Groups in the field of empowering women particularly in the rural areas is being recognized. It offers not only economic prospects but also a change to learn new skills, make broader social contacts and experience. It creates an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential. Therefore, the concept of Self Help Group certainly plays vital role in women development. Since the overall empowerment of women is crucially dependent on economic empowerment, these SHGs could generate income and employment to build their empowerment. The Self Help Group system has proven to be very pertinent and effective in offering women the

possibility to break gradually away from exploitation and isolation.

The All India Women's Conference (AIWC)

AIWC was a huge women organization. It was established in 1927 to function as an organization dedicated to the upliftment and betterment of women and children". The organization continues its task and has since expanded into various social and economic issues concerning women. In the 80th year of service to the nation, over 1,56,000 members in more than 500 branches of AIWC across the country carry on the work zealously with selfless dedication. AIWC is popular in the world over as a best organization working for women's development and empowerment.

AIWC was registered in 1930 under Societies Registration Act, XXI of 1860. (No. 558 of 1930) The main objectives of the organization are:

- 1) To work for a society based on the principle of social justice, personal integrity and equal rights and opportunities for all.
- 2) To secure recognition of the inherent right of every human being to work and to achieve the essentials of life, which should not be determined by accident of birth or sex but by planned social distribution.
- 3) To support the claim of every citizen to the right to enjoy basic civil liberties.
- 4) To stand against all separatist tendencies and to promote greater national integration and unity.
- 5) To work actively for the general progress and welfare of women and children and to help women utilize to the fullest, the Fundamental Right conferred on them by the Constitution of India.
- 6) To work for permanent international amity and world peace.

The Centre for Women's Development Studies

The Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) was established on 19th April 1980, in the middle of the International Women's Decade, by a

group of men and women, who were involved in the preparation of the first ever comprehensive government report on the 'Status of Women in India' entitled 'Towards Equality' and who were later associated with the Women's Studies Programme of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The Advisory Committee on Women's Studies of the ICSSR suggested the need for an autonomous institute to build on the knowledge already generated, but with a wider mandate and resources to expand its activities in research and action. The recommendation was accepted by the ICSSR, and communicated to the Women's Bureau of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India. After few months, under the leadership of late Prof. J.P. Naik, the CWDS was registered.

These organizations took up issues such as women's education, abolition of evil social customs (purdah, child marriage) equality of rights and opportunities and women's suffrage. Some women leaders with the support of the Congress party, demanded right of franchise and representation in legislatures.

VII. GLOBALIZING WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

With the process of globalization of the economy and massive growth of international trade associations and governmental organizations, women have found it increasingly useful to organize across national boundaries. The United Nations has a vital role in making women's movements international and in defining women's rights as human rights.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Women's movements are planned efforts made by women's associations to bring about impartiality and freedom for women. The status of women has been the main concern of many reform movements before and after independence. It is well known that the Indian society is an innumerable society with caste, religion, ethnicity and gender as some of the important dimensions influencing politics and the

development of the society. Gender, and the term "women" has been used to both front and confront issues of equality in the society. The gender issue has been the basis of women's movements in India mobilizing against violence and discrimination, and for improved living conditions and their human rights, amongst other Leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj were concerned with issues like sati, remarriage, divorce, female education, purdah system, polygamy, and dowry. Some researchers have scrutinized the role of women in political independence movements at micro level. After independence, an energetic although uneven women's movement has taken shape in India. Women from diverse castes, classes and communities have participated in the movement along with activists drawn from a variety of political trends, parties and groups belonging to various philosophies making the movement highly heterogeneous. It is viewed that Women's movement in India especially after post-Independence formed a new type of challenging movement of social problems and struggle for the social equality.

IX. REFERENCES

1. Neera Desai, A decade of women's movement in India, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1988, p.177.
2. Basu, Amrita. 1995. The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
3. Lateef S., Whither the Indian Women's Movement, Economic and Political Weekly, 12(47), 1948-1951 (1977)
4. Omvedt G., Women's Movement: Some Ideological Debates. In Maitrayee Chaudhuri (Ed.), Feminism in India, Kali for Women and Women Unlimited, New Delhi (2004)
5. <https://www.civildserviceindia.com>
6. <http://sol.du.ac.in/mod/book/view>